

Canadian Suffrage Association

WAR  
AND  
WOMEN

BY

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*Printed by request of Biennial Meeting  
held at King Edward Hotel, Toronto.*

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**I**N recent years it has dawned on the consciousness of all well-meaning people that war is not only Hell, kept alive and burning by hatred and malice, but that as malice and hatred can be evolved out of human beings by love and common sense, so war can be evolved out of nations by the same method.

In a few short years so rapidly did this peace idea grow that in 1913 a palace of peace was actually dedicated to mankind in the city of The Hague in the quaint little country of Holland.

Representative delegates congregated in that charming city and not only "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men" was shouted through the length and breadth of the land but also the cry for general disarmament.

To-day the United States and Canada are celebrating a hundred years of peace.

Three thousand miles of frontier stretches between two young nations without a fort or gun or ship to guard or menace.

A gigantic river flows peacefully to the ocean, great lakes wash peaceful shores, tremendous sweep of prairies having homesteads on the boundary line are peace blessed, and the wonderland of Giant Mountains war only with the thunder clouds that burst and kiss their snow-capped summits.

The peace idea has been tried out and not found wanting, and with this splendid New World revelation and celebration which was going to

culminate with a great world exhibition to celebrate all commerce joined in peace by the completion of the Panama Canal—just as the world seemed ready for a step up the ladder of progress—behold a war cloud bursts, and eight nations—five of which are major powers, are involved in war.

The poor little white Dove of Peace fluttered and fell at the first cruel scratch from the talons of the Eagle of War, and the world is wondering and suffering and gasping with horror and terror.

The peace conference even laid down rules and regulations for "civilized warfare," and the cannon and the bomb, the rifle and the bayonet have hissed back their cruel laugh and shown us all that there is no such a thing as "civilized warfare."

And what does it all mean?

Have the Altruists all lived and worked and thought for nothing?

Have women come into the game of life in the past generation with their wondrous power of organization as shown at their world's represented congresses and passed resolutions of peace and arbitration to be absolutely ignored by the sons to whom they have given birth?

Has Democracy appeared on the stage only to have the curtain rung down at the beginning of the first act and slapped in the face by autocracy?

Is there any meaning to the great platitudes about the "Brotherhood of Man" and "Love your Neighbor as Yourself," and "We're all one human family."

Is Neitzche right and will war eternally return to tell its gruesome story?

Faith has been wrested from the faithful.

Hope has been buried by the hopeful.

Ambition no longer builds and aspiration receives no inspiring help.

But—It is only yesterday that a social conscience was born.

It is only yesterday since a gleam of light entered the human brain relative to the meaning of psychology and suggestion—of heredity and environment, and the evolutionary theory is still in its infancy.

A barbarian race of human beings evolved through stress and strain of the necessities of existence, has carried the attributes of combat continuously because it meant primarily self protection and self preservation.

The human, and especially the male, has thought in terms of combat and of dominance through force.

But through it all the better and greatest thinkers have been planning a wiser way.

When the brain of man was able to conceive and materialize a great Ocean Liner, it was not expressly to carry guns with which to destroy life and property.

When the brain of man invented a heavier-than-air ship to sail above the clouds it was not simply to carry bombs to drop and destroy life and property.

Steel was not tempered to unheard of hardness to pierce through an army of human flesh.

But the male through centuries upon centuries has been combative and war has resulted and how quickly this dominant note took advantage of the inventions of the keenest brains and utilized them to the killing industry.

To-day we do know something of psychology and the subtle telepathy which reaches mind after

mind tuned to the same key, and we can explain scientifically the mob spirit and the war spirit.

Tribes grew into greater tribes through dominance and conquest, nations grew into greater nations by the same methods, and ever and ever the worshipped hero was the warrior.

Travel over Europe and who are the heroes flaunted in the face of the people.

Look at Wellington and Nelson in Great Britain. In Germany Frederick the Great is heralded in statue and story the length and breadth of the land, and Napoleon's tomb in Paris is awe inspiring beyond description.

When we studied history, what was the keynote of it all? Battles, battles, battles.

A reign was of importance or not according to the degree and length of the wars.

If we cultivate a piece of land and sow it with thistles and nettles we cannot expect to reap a crop of roses and lilies.

If we cultivate race hatred and militarism we will get war.

No one nation is to blame, it is the outcome of the custom of generations, the outcome of false and cruel standards.

That this war is so much more deadly than all previous wars is that the world has reached the maximum degree of efficiency in warfare.

In its deadliness lies our hope, and when it is all over a new standard of values will have to be written.

In writing this another pen than that held by Mars will have to be used.

Venus must be the star in the ascendant and the mothers of the race must assist in tracing out a new code of ethics.

Woman's thought and action have always been constructive.

They have made the homes in which all sons are born, and they know the cost of life.

Every man who went to battle meant that some woman had gone down into the shadow of the valley of suffering to give him birth.

Women paid the first great price and at last women are demanding that she have some say as to how her property and her sons shall be treated.

Woman demands a say in the social scheme which has cost her so much.

She demands not only protection for her young but the conservation of human life by a more humane civilization.

The women of England have no quarrel with the women of Germany.

Both were standing together like sisters asking, pleading, and petitioning that International Arbitration keep peace between nations and that women be given the power of the ballot to assist in protecting their homes and making their laws.

The world howled and shrieked in derision at a little property being destroyed in order to awaken it to the existence of unjust conditions, but now, with whole cities being destroyed and lives swept away by the thousands, women can only bear the burden of slaughtered sons and husbands and ruined homes.

Their voices were not yet strong enough to make a dent in the murderous giant of militarism.

What now of woman's place being in the home, and what will home be with the darling boy rotting in the trench, the devoted husband crippled for life and the brother diseased and ruined.

For every man killed there is also killed a wife—a mother and a family of children.

Dead men will make no homes, and widows and childless women will take little heart in just houses.

Many women are now filled with the spirit of patriotism, and the primal instinct to conserve and help is meritoriously showing itself in the work being done, but let not the glamor of victory nor the sorrow of defeat blind women to the real important issue.

The important issue before, during, and after the war is Democratic Freedom, and there is no freedom and no democracy while women are a disfranchised class.

Had women stood shoulder to shoulder with men in thinking out world problems this war would never have been.

This war is the most conclusive argument that has ever blazed its electric message across the sky of human consciousness in favor of political equality.

“Prevention is better than cure.” We are learning to apply this great truism, and besides, war never cured.

The conquered Napoleon left behind a legacy of hate which is bearing fruit to-day.

The battle of Waterloo was not decisive and the only decisive battle will be a bloodless one, fought out by representatives from nations who will be elected by the whole people.

In that court of arbitration great men and great women will discuss side by side what is best for their children—best for the human race.