

Fighting the Peril of

By A. EVELYN



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*"Drums and battle-cries
Go out in music of the morning star—
And soon we shall have thinkers
In the place of fighters."*

—Mrs. Browning.

WHEN war was declared in Europe in that black August of 1914, the women of America were dazed and shocked, as was the rest of the world; but to the vast majority of them the tragedy was so far removed that they scarcely comprehended the suffering of their European sisters. There were, however, certain groups all over our country who realized that the calamity of Europe had come not only through the greed of wealth and power on the part of a few, but also through the carelessness and selfishness of the many throughout the world. These enlightened ones knew that wherever men declared "business is business" rather than "business is ethics and right"; that wherever women were willing to accept the best for little in return, to be luxuriously comfortable through special privilege while others were poverty-stricken through special hardship and injustice; that wherever human beings thought only of selfish interests, there blame for the war must be laid. Women there were, and many of them, who with prophetic vision saw that the tragedy of Europe must become the tragedy of the world.

It was such a special group—leading suffragists, teachers and social workers, mothers, sisters, friends of men—who in those first days of the war marched in solemn procession down Fifth Avenue, New York. Black-clad and with bowed heads, they passed to the slow strains of the Dead March from Saul or the haunting melody of Chopin's Funeral March, along the great and fashionable thoroughfare, a striking symbol of the world's suffering. And during work abroad with our soldiers, I never marched in funeral procession to those same sweet, sorrow-burdened strains of Chopin's death song or stood beside an open grave, listening to the heartbreakingly beautiful notes of taps, without seeing the bowed and mourning figures of these women as the type of stricken motherhood throughout the world.

Some months after war's declaration, American women organized themselves for work toward the alleviation of suffering and the banishing of war's menace in the future. On the tenth of January, 1915, more than three thousand gathered in the New Willard Hotel at Washington, D. C., and formed the Woman's Peace Party of America. Its declaration of principles was as follows:

"As women we are especially the custodians of the life of the ages. We will not longer consent to its reckless destruction. As women we are particularly charged with the future of childhood and with the care of the helpless and the unfortunate. We will not longer accept without protest that added burden of maimed and invalid men and poverty-stricken widows and orphans which war places upon us. As women we are called upon to start each generation onward toward a better humanity. We will not longer tolerate without determined opposition that denial of the sovereignty of reason and justice by which war and all that makes for war today renders impotent the idealism of the race.

"Therefore, as human beings and the mother-half of humanity, we demand that our right to be considered in the settlement of questions concerning not alone the life of the individual, but of nations, be recognized and respected.

"We demand that women be given a share in deciding between war and peace in all the courts of high debate.

"So protesting and so demanding, we hereby form ourselves into a national organization to be called the Woman's Peace Party and state as our purpose: 'To enlist all American women in arousing the nations to respect the sacredness of human life and to abolish war.'"

In the Century, February of that same year, was published Marion Craig Wentworth's intense drama, "War Brides," which was almost immediately staged by one of the leading vaudeville houses of New York, Nazimova taking the part of the tragic heroine—Hedwig. No woman could see this play without realizing that all war lays its heaviest burdens upon women and children. In a more limited way, Miss Went-

worth's "War Brides" is as fine a contribution to the peace literature of the world as Baroness Von Suttner's great book—"Lay Down Your Arms."

Long before the war, the new fellowship of women had been growing for years through the club movement; and the generally widened sphere of work and knowledge had given women a new understanding of one another's hardships and difficulties. The rich woman and the poor one, the college professor and the factory worker, the shop girl and the debutante had been uniting in a democratic effort toward bigger opportunity and achievement. But nothing has helped more in uniting women's lives, so broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls, than the suffrage movement throughout the world. The last congress of the International Suffrage Alliance was held in Budapest in June, 1913. There it was voted that the next convention meet in Berlin in June, 1915. Meanwhile, war broke out and the hatred it kindled between nations destroyed all thought of an international suffrage gathering. But broad minded women in many countries still held fast to their ideals of world organization, especially the members of the National Suffrage Committee of Holland. These women communicated with the suffrage groups in the twenty-six separate countries affiliated in the International Alliance and found that many women looked upon the idea of an international conference with favor. However, they all understood the great difficulties of gathering internationally in war time. In spite of discouragements, a meeting was held in February of 1915 in Amsterdam. Here British, German, Dutch and Belgian women laid the plans for the International Congress of Women, arranging a preliminary program, appointing committees and sending out invitations to the different countries. These invitations urged the women to turn from thoughts of political equality to thoughts of constructive peace. The Hague was named as the center for the conference and, for the sake of a new world after war, the international suffragists were urged to attend.

Needless to dwell upon the difficulties and hardships that the women delegates from the various countries suffered in reaching The Hague. Everywhere, governments in the hands of the military were opposed to such a gathering. Out of one hundred and eighty British delegates only three succeeded in reaching the conference—Miss Courtney and Miss Macmillan, who had gone to Holland weeks ahead on committee business, and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, who came from the United States where she had been lecturing. German women had even greater difficulties. Dr. Augspurg and Fraulein Heymann, the suffrage organizers of Germany, came in spite of threats of imprisonment. No French or Russian delegates could obtain passports, and the five heroic women from Belgium literally walked for miles and were subjected to the most embarrassing and difficult military examinations, before being allowed to cross over into neutral territory. Rosika Schwimmer, of Hungary, Frau Kulka, of Austria, and Madame Genoni, of Italy, all endured many hardships of travel and military inspection. Finnish women could not reach The Hague. The forty-nine American delegates after many passport troubles in their own country, were held up by the famous Dover patrol off the coast of England for three days and nights. Finally, after receiving word from the American Ambassador to England that nothing could be done for them, their ship was mysteriously released one morning and allowed to go on its way to Rotterdam. So the delegates reached The Hague just in time for the opening meeting of the conference. The Scandinavian countries of Norway, Denmark and Sweden sent a magnificent representation of women. Among them stood out such names as Anna Lindhagen, of Sweden, Inspector of Children's Institutions and a member of the town council of Stockholm, and Thora Daugaard, of Denmark, who represented fifteen thousand suffragists. The Dutch women came in crowds that swelled the number to more than fifteen hundred. Mr. Carnegie's ugly little peace palace was far too small for such a large and enthusiastic assembly and the Dierentium—the assembly hall of the zoological gardens—was used for the conference, giving an opportunity to hostile members of the press to declare that "the peace cranks were gathered along with the other animal freaks out at the museum."

It was but natural that among such a group of women, under such circumstances, there would be great and dramatic incidents and tolerant world thought. Never shall I forget the moment when the five weary Belgian delegates, led by Eugene Hamer, entered that assembly hall. It was the second day of the conference. When word came that the Belgian women had arrived, it was Dr. Augspurg, of Germany, who moved that they be brought to the platform in recognition of their courage. It was Miss Macmillan, of England, who seconded the motion. Scarcely had the motion been put to the house before the fifteen hundred women in the audience were standing as one in assent.

At this first conference more than three hundred women from eleven different countries met together with the Dutch delegates and members-at-large, who crowded the meetings night and day, and in three languages but in one triumphant spirit formed a constructive program and a set of resolutions which forever will stand as a proof of the solidarity, the organized mind and the sympathetic heart of women. Most of the resolutions were passed unanimously, such as:

"The protest against women's suffering in war.

"The demand for democratic control of foreign policies.

"The demand that the education of children be directed toward spiritual values rather than material ones, toward international understanding and constructive peace.

"The demand that women be represented in the conference of the powers after the war.

"The demand for universal suffrage."

Among other resolutions passed by a vast majority were the following:

"That all investments in a foreign country be made at the risk of the investor.

"That there should be open seas and free trade routes.

"That there should be the establishment of a permanent international conference for future international co-operation and for the appointing of councils of conciliation and arbitration.

"That there should be no transference of territory without the consent of the residents of that territory.

"That the manufacture of arms and ammunition in all countries should be taken over by the governments of those countries, that there should be limitation of armaments, and that international traffic in munitions should be forbidden."

At the close of the conference, a committee of chosen representatives from each of the eleven countries was appointed to visit the governing power of each country and lay before its Prime Minister these resolutions.

When the women returned to their home centers after this inspirational experience, they found no encouragement for their hope and idealism in the world of blood and iron the war had made. Even in America, we soon realized that little in constructive ways could be done until the nightmare of fighting was over; and so, rather than become defeatists, rather than yield to the surrender of all world effort, thousands of American women who were in sympathy with this first International Congress entered into war welfare work of every kind at home and abroad, soothing their harassed minds and broken hearts with the consoling cry of "this is a war to end war." If a war to end war, then all of us would gladly give our lives with those of the men to stop the frightful carnage for the future.

On May 15, 1919, the forces of enlightened womanhood were again called together at Zurich and a second International Congress of Women was held. While the difficulties of attending the first conference had been great, they were even greater for the delegates of the second, because the period of reaction and autocratic government was at its height both in America and in Europe. But in spite of the difficulties, two hundred women met together from seventeen different countries. Three women came from Australia. They had started in March. Four came from Holland led by Dr. Jacobs—suffragist and internationalist—whose life labor had just been rewarded by the Dutch Parliament's passing the universal suffrage bill. There were six women from Norway, four from Denmark and eleven from Sweden. They had journeyed eight days through Germany carrying their own food and sometimes waiting all night long for trains. There were twenty-seven delegates—Social Democrats, Independent Socialists and one Communist—from Germany. There were two delegates from Hungary and four from Austria. Twenty-six came from England—among whom were Mrs. Despard, sister of General French, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, Mrs. Philip Snowden and Dr. Ethel Williams from Cambridge University. The heroic little Belgian group was absent, since their government threatened them with expatriation if they attended, but Mme. La Fontaine was a sympathetic listener in the audience. Mme. Genoni was the one Italian representative. The Italian Government forbade all passports, but Mme. Genoni, being a designer of costumes, persuaded them to allow her to come to study the fashions. Only three French delegates were able to reach Zurich, one of whom was from Nancy. Mme. Duchesne, head of the French women workers' group, and all of her followers were forbidden passports by the French Government.

MANY of the delegates were poor working women and, since all paid their own expenses and sacrificed much personally and professionally to attend, their sincerity and faith cannot be questioned. Some of the German delegates had been imprisoned for their ideals throughout the war. Fraulein Heymann, of Germany, and Frau Kulka, of Austria, who had been strong leaders in the first conference at The Hague, both showed war-weariness but still kept the faith in a better future.

As the first conference had protested against war, even so did the second protest against the blockade. English women declared that the blockade could only mean warfare against women and children such as Germany had waged. Scandinavia and Switzerland knew how responsible it was for the rationing of bread and milk and fats, and Germany knew only too well that it was the cause for under-nourishment which was making their old die, and their children suffer from all phases of diseases. The women of Austria and Germany were indeed well-nigh hopeless as to their economic future. There are now five million surplus women in Germany. With industry paralyzed, hearts broken and energy diminished through lack of food, what can be the future of these women? A unanimous resolution was passed urging "that the Peace Conference take immediate action, first, to lift the blockade; second, to organize all the resources of the world for the relief of the people from famine and pestilence; third, to prohibit the transportation of luxuries until necessities are provided." This resolution was sent to Versailles. President Wilson returned the following message:

"Your resolution appeals both to my head and to my heart, and I hope most surely that means may be found, though the present outlook is exceedingly unpromising because of unfortunate practical difficulties."

The Congress urged the Allied governments to accept such amendments of the terms as would bring