

EDWARD CARPENTER

NEVER AGAIN! A
PROTEST AND A
WARNING ADDRESSED
TO THE PEOPLES OF
EUROPE

Edward Carpenter

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Carpenter E.

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Never Again! A Protest and a Warning Addressed to the Peoples of Europe

Never again must this Thing happen. The time has come – if the human race does not wish to destroy itself in its own madness – for men to make up their minds as to what they will do in the future; for now indeed is it true that we are come to the cross-roads, we stand at the Parting of the Ways.

The rapid and enormous growth of scientific invention makes it obvious that Violence ten times more potent and sinister than that which we are witnessing to-day may very shortly be available for our use – or abuse – in War. On the other hand who can doubt that the rapid growth of interchange and understanding among the peoples of the world is daily making Warfare itself, and the barbarities inevitably connected with it, more abhorrent to our common humanity?

Which of these lines are we to follow? Along which path are we to go? This is a question which the mass – peoples of Europe in the future – and not merely the Governments – will have seriously to ponder and decide.

That bodies of men – as has happened a hundred times in the trenches in Northern France and even on the Eastern Front – should exchange morning salutations and songs in humorous amity, and then at a word of command should fall to shooting each other;

That peasants and artisans, and shopkeepers and students and schoolmasters, who have no quarrel whatever, who on the whole rather respect and honour each other, should with explosive bombs deliberately blow one another to bits so that even their own mothers could not recognize them; That human beings should use every devilish invention of science with the one purpose of maiming, blinding, destroying those against whom they have no personal grudge or grievance; All this is sheer madness.

Only a short time ago a private soldier said to me: "Yes, we had got to be such friends with those Bavarians in the trenches over against us that if we had returned there again I believe nothing could have made us fight with each other; but of course that point was perceived and we were moved to another part of the Line." What a criticism in a few words on the whole War! A hundred times this or something similar has happened, and a hundred and a thousand times these 'enemies' who have madly mutilated each other have – a few minutes later – been only too glad to dress each other's wounds and share the last contents of their water-bottles.

By all the heart-rending experiences which have now become so common and familiar to us;

By the fact that to-day there is hardly a family over the greater part of Europe that is not grieving bitterly over the loss of some dearest member of its circle;

By the white faces of the women clad in black, whom one sees everywhere in the streets of Berlin and Brussels and Paris and Vienna, of London and Milan and Belgrade and Petrograd;

By the sufferings of famine-stricken Poland, ravaged already three or four times in the last two years by opposing and alternate armies;

By the awful sufferings of the six or seven million Jews of the Russian Pale, hounded homeless in winter to and, fro over the frozen earth the old men and women and children perishing of exposure, fatigue, and starvation;

By the agony of Serbia, and the despair of Belgium;

This must not be again!

By the five or six million actual combatants already slain; and, the strange spectacle of millions of Women (over half a million in Britain, more in France, multitudes in Germany and America) manufacturing man-destroying explosive shells in ceaseless stream by day and night; (And it is estimated that on the average some fifty shells are expended for every one man slain) By the terrified

faces – as of drowning men – of those suffering in countless hospitals from shell-shock; by their trembling hands and, limbs and horrible dreams at night – pursued by an ever-living horror;

By the curses of the tender-hearted friend who collects in No-man's-land between the lines the scattered fragments of his comrade's body – the dabs of flesh, the hand, the head he knows so well, a boot with a foot still in it – and puts them all together in a sack for burial;

By the silent stupefaction of wives and mothers trying vainly to picture to themselves a death which cannot be pictured; by the insane laughter of those who having witnessed these things can no longer weep;

This must not be again!

By the beach at Gallipoli covered with the prostrate and writhing forms of men exhausted and emaciated with dysentery, who have crawled down from the hills only to lie out there in the terrible sun tormented with flies and thirst, or to shiver through the frosty night, waiting for the tardy arrival of the Hospital Ship;

By the hundreds of bodies thrown at the last into the sea at sunrise, for their unceremonious end; And each poor body for all its loathsome state so loved, so loved by some one far away;

By the dear Lord who in the beautiful legend descended for three days into Hell that he might redeem mankind; but these have lived in an actual Hell for weeks and months together —

This must not be again!

By the growth and expansion of Science (God forgive the word!) which will inevitably make each future war more devilish and inhuman than the last;

By the cry of the black and coloured peoples of the Earth who have for long enough already said how hard and cruel the faces of the white men seemed to them, and who now think how black their souls are;

By the hardness of heart, the insensitiveness of a certain kind, which during a century or more now has been bred by the institutions of Commercialism;

By the habitual betrayal, through long periods of 'prosperity' and 'peace,' of men by their fellows – of the weak by the powerful, of the generous by the mean, of the simple and thoughtless by the crafty and selfish;

By the huge dividends declared by Armament Firms; by the international agreements of these firms with one another, even to cozen their own respective Governments;

By the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of innocent folk trampled underfoot in the ditch of competition, the mad, race in which the devil takes the hindmost;

By the treacherous internal warfare of the ordinary industrial life of every country, the secret betrayal and murder of bodies and souls for profit – at last written out in letters of blood and fire across the continents, for all to behold —

This must not be again !

Let the Allies by all means accuse Germany of world-ambition and world-plunder, and let the German people accuse their Prussian lords but let every nation also search its own heart and accuse itself.

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