

"WAR"

Our New Serial Story

THE MOST FAMOUS WAR NOVEL OF MODERN TIMES, SHOWING GERMANY'S RUTHLESS HAND IN FRANCE, AUSTRIA AND DENMARK



Under the title "Disarm" this novel won for its author, Baroness Bertha Von Suttner, the Nobel Peace Prize

The story contains some passages strangely prophetic of the present world struggle, although the final scene of the story is the Franco-Prussian War of 44 years ago. The hypocrisy of a nation adopting conscription and a policy of huge armaments and pretending to hope for peace is proven to the hilt.

IT IS A WOMAN'S PROTEST AGAINST WAR

START WITH THE FIRST INSTALMENT

I uttered slight doubt whether it was so ignoble of Italy to wish to be free, but I was rudely reminded that our enemies were scornful. In my study of history I had usually found the same sympathetic with the oppressed nation fighting to throw off a foreign yoke and gain its independence. I felt that Italy was playing this part in the drama before our eyes, but I was quickly and scowlingly given to understand that our government—that is, the nation to which we happened to belong—could never oppress, but only confer prosperity upon another people, and when they sought to break away from us they were "rebels," that our control could be no yoke, for were we not always and only and fully in the right?

In early May Arno's regiment was ordered to march. They had to leave at seven in the morning. Ah, the night before—that terrible night! I crept sleepily, my head quietly, with tranquil happiness upon his features. I set a candle behind the screen, for the darkness frightened me and sleep was impossible. I lay quietly beside him, leaning on one elbow and looking into his beloved face.

I wept and reviewed the cruel fate which was separating us. How could I bear it? Would a merciful Father let us soon have peace? Why could there not be peace always? I pictured him wounded, lying on the damp ground, and all the agonies that would be mine should he never return. I could have screamed and thrown my arms about him, but no, he must sleep that he should be better ready for duty in the morning. I was worn-out with my despair, the clock ticked meaninglessly, the candle flickered low, and I slipped into unconsciousness and dropped on to my pillow in sleep. Over and over again I started in my sleep, my heart palpitating with fear and alarm, and when I thus waked for the tenth or twelfth time, it was day, the candle had gone out, and there came a loud knock at the door. "Six o'clock, lieutenant," said the orderly who came to rouse his master in good time.

The hour had come, the dreaded farewell was to be said; I was not to go to the station, but in our own room the sad parting was to take place. For I knew that my agony would overcome me. As Arno dressed he made all sorts of comforting speeches:—"Be brave, my Martha. In two months we will be together again, and all will be over. Many come back from wars—look at your own father. Did you marry a Hussar to keep him at home, to raise hyacinths for you? I will write you lively letters of the whole campaign. My own cheerfulness is a good omen, and I am only out to win my spurs. Take care of yourself and the darling Rudolf. My promotions are for him too. How he will love to hear his father tell of the glorious victory over Italy in which he took part!"

I listened to him and felt that perhaps my unhappiness was all selfishness. I would be strong and take courage. Again a knock at the door. "I am quite ready; coming directly." And he sprang his arms. "Now, Martha, my wife, my love!" I rushed to him speechless; the farewell refused to pass my lips, and it was he who spoke the heart-breaking word: "Good-bye, my all, my love, good-bye!" he convulsively sobbed, covering his face. This was too much, and I felt my mind going. "Arno! Arno!" screamed, wrapping my arms about him. "Stay! Stay!" I persistently called, "Stay, stay!" "Lieutenant!" we heard outside, "it is quite time." One last kiss—and he rushed out.

CHAPTER IV.

Preparing lint, reading reports, following on the map the chess-board of the war with my little movable flags, prayers for the success of our side, talking of the events of the day; such were our occupations. All our other interests lagged, one question alone occupied us: When and how will this war end? We ate, drank, read, and worked with no real concern, only the telegrams and letters from Italy seemed of any importance. Arno was not given to letter writing, but his short notes gave me the cheering word that he was still alive and unharmed. Letters were irregular, for the fieldpost was cut off during an engagement, and then my anxiety and suffering were indescribable. After each battle, the list of the killed filled me each time with fresh terror, as though my loved one had held a lottery ticket, and might have drawn the doomed number. When, for the first time, I read the list and found no Arno Dotzky among them, I folded my hands and prayed softly, "My God, I thank thee." But with the words still in my ears they suddenly gazed upon me. Was I perhaps thanking God that Adolf Schmidt and Karl Muller, and many others had been slain, but not Arno Dotzky? Naturally those who prayed and hoped for Schmidt and Muller would have been glad to read the name of Dotzky instead of those they dreaded to find. And why should my thanks be more pleasing to God than

Muller's sweetheart should break their hearts, this had made me rejoice? And I realized the selfishness of such thanksgivings, and presumptuousness of our prayers.

On the same day a letter came from Arno:—

"Yesterday we had another hard fight, and, unfortunately, again a defeat. But cheer up, darling Martha, the next battle we shall surely win. It was my first great engagement. To stand in a thick shower of bullets gives one a peculiar feeling. I will tell you about it by and by; it is frightful. The poor fellows who fall on all sides must be left in spite of their cries—but such is war. When we enter Turin to dictate terms to the enemy, you can meet me there, for Aunt Marie can take care of our little corporal until we return."

Such letters formed the sunshine of my existence, but my nights were restless. Often I awoke with the horrible feeling that at the very moment Arno might be dying in a ditch thirsting for water, and crying out for me. I would force myself back to my senses by imagining the scene of his joyful return, which was much more probable to me my experience than the contrary.

Bad news followed thick and fast. My father was deeply distressed, first over Montebello, then Magenta, and not he alone, for all Vienna was disheartened. Victory had been so certain, that we were already planning our flag decorations and Te Deums. Instead, the flags were waving, and the priests chanting in Turin. There they were thanking God that he had helped them to strike down the wicked "Tedeschi."

"Father dear, in case of another defeat, will not then peace be declared?" I asked one day.

"Shame upon you to suggest such a thing!" he silenced me. "Better that it should be a seven years' war, even a thirty years' war, so that our side may be the conqueror, and we dictate terms of peace. If we fight only to get out of it as quickly as possible, we might as well never have begun."

"And that would have been by far the best," I sighed.

"Women are such cowards! Even you, whom I grounded so thoroughly in principles of patriotism and love of fatherland, are now quite willing to sacrifice the fame of your country for your own personal comfort."

"Alas, . . . it is because I love my Arno so well!"

"Love of husband, love of family, all that is very good, but it takes the second place to love of country."

"Ought it?"

The lists of fatalities grew apace, and contained the names of several officers personally known to me, among the rest the only son of a dear old lady whom I greatly respected. I felt I must go and comfort her. No, comfort her, I could not. I would only weep with her. On reaching her house I hesitated to pull the bell. My last visit there had been on the occasion of a jolly little dancing party, and Frau von Ullmann, full of joy, had said to me: "Martha, we are the two most enviable women in Vienna. You have the handsomest of husbands and I the noblest of sons."

And, to-day? I still, indeed, had my husband, but who knows? Shot and shell might make me a widow any minute. There was no answer as I stood and rang at the door. Finally a head was thrust out of the window of the adjoining apartment:—"There is no use ringing, miss, the house is empty."

"What is Frau von Ullmann gone?" "She was taken to the insane asylum three days ago," and the head disappeared.

I stood motionless, rooted to the spot. What scenes there must have been! What heights of agony before the poor old lady broke into madness! And my father wished that the war might last thirty years for the welfare of the country! How many more such mothers would there be then?

I went down the stairs shaken to the depths. I started to call on another friend, and on the way I passed the Relief Corps storehouse, for there was then no "Red Cross" or "Convention of Geneva" to distribute supplies, and the people were all eagerly offering comforts for the sick and wounded. I entered, feeling impelled to empty my purse into the hands of the committee. It might save some poor fellow—and keep his mother from the madhouse. I was shown to the room where the contributions were taken. I passed several rooms where long tables were piled with packages of linens, wines, cigars, tobacco, but mostly mountains of bandages, and I thought, with a shudder, how many bleeding gashes it would take to use them all—and my father wishing that the war might last for thirty years. How many of our country's sons would then succumb to their wounds?

My money was received thankfully, and my many questions were answered, comforting me much to hear of the good being done. An old gentleman came in, offering a hundred florin bill, and saying: "Allow me to contribute a little toward the useful work. I look on all this organization of yours as the most humane. I have served in the campaign of 1809-1815, when no one sent the wounded pillows and bandages. There were never enough surgeons and supplies, and thousands suffered a hideous death. You cannot realize the good you are doing." And he went away with tears in his eyes.

Just then there was commotion outside, and throwing open the double doors, the guard announced: "Her Majesty, the Empress!" I velier than in her court costume or beautiful young sovereign, who in her simple street dress appeared even lovelier than in her court costume or ball dress. "I have come," she said gently, "because the Emperor writes to me from the seat of war how useful and acceptable is your work." She examined the rolls of linen. "How beautifully doted it is," she exclaimed. "It is a fine patriotic undertaking, and the poor soldiers—" I lost the rest of the remark as she passed into another room, so visibly content with what she was seeing. "Poor soldiers!" These words sounded strangely pathetic in my ears. Yes, poor indeed, and the more comfort we sent them the better. But the suggestion that ran through my head was: "Why not keep them at home altogether? Why send these poor men into all this misery?"



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But no, I must shut out the thought, for is war not a necessary thing? I found the only excuse for all this cruelty in that little word: "Must."

I went on my way and passed a book-store. Remembering that my map of the war region was worn to shreds, I stopped in to order one. A number of buyers were there, and when my turn came the proprietor asked: "A map of Italy, madam?" "How did you guess it?"

"No one asks for anything else, nowadays." While wrapping up my purchase, he said to a gentleman standing by, "It goes hard nowadays with writers and publishers of books. So long as war lasts no one is interested in intellectual matters. These are hard times for authors and booksellers."

"Yes, this is a great drain on the nation, and war is always followed by a decline in intellectual standard."

For the third time I thought: "And father, for the good of the country, would have the war last thirty years." "So your business suffers?" I asked. "Not mine alone, madam. Except for the army providers, all tradesmen are suffering untold losses. Everything stands still in the factory, on the farm, everywhere men are without work, and without bread. Our securities are falling and gold rises in value, while all enterprise is blocked, and business is being bankrupted. In short, everywhere is misery, misery!"

"And there is my own father wishing—" I found myself thinking as I left the store.

My friend was at home. The Countess Lori Griesbach in more than one respect shared the same lot with me. Her father was a general, and like me she had married an officer. Her husband as well as two brothers were in the service. But Lori's nature was very light-hearted. She had fully convinced herself that her dear ones were under the special protection of her patron saint, and she was confident that they would return. She received me with open arms.

"So glad to see you, dear; it is good of you to come. But you look worried. Any bad news?"

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"WAR"

A SERIAL STORY BY BARONESS BERTHA VON SUTTNER

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we are apt to forget our heavenly home, but when sorrow and sickness, fear and death come in upon us—or if those we adore are stricken, then—

In this style she would have continued, had not the door been thrown open and my father rushed in, exclaiming:—

"Hurrah, everything is decided. The Italian dogs wanted their whipping, and they shall have it, they shall have it!"

War was declared. All was excitement. People seem to forget that two sets of men are voluntarily thrown at each other's throats upon the assumption that there is a mighty third power which irresistibly forces them to fight. The whole responsibility is thrown upon this mysterious element, which regulates the ordained fate of the nations. (At this period of my life I felt no trace of a revolt against war as a system. Because my beloved husband was forced to go and I to remain—this alone was my anguish.)

I consoled myself with all my old convictions that the highest duty of a soldier was to be ready for service. History made it laudable to desire honor and glory through patriotic devotion. It was a peculiarly elevating thought that I was—

THINGS WHICH I CAN NOT SAY ARE GIVEN A SHARE IN ONE OF THE GREAT EVENTS OF HISTORY?

Nothing was being talked of but the war. The newspapers were full of it. Prayers were said in all the churches for the success of the army. Everywhere were the same excited faces, the same eager talk. Business, pleasure, literature, art, everything was secondary, insignificant, while the scenes of this great drama were being played on the world's arena. We read the proclamations, so confident of victory; we watched the troops march through with glitter and clash of arms, and battle-flags waving; leading articles and glowing speeches were filled with patriotic ardor, appealing to honor, duty, courage, self-sacrifice.

Assurances were made on both sides to the people, that their nation was known to be the most invincible, each had the only just cause, each had the noblest and most heroic cause to defend. Thus were the people filled with enthusiasm, and the conviction that war was the most glorious, necessary, and ennobling thing.

Every one was encouraged to think that he was a great citizen of a great state for which he must be willing to sacrifice himself. Evils of war were merely regarded as a necessary adjunct, and always "the enemy" alone was found guilty of the evil passions, and the brawling, rapine, hatred, cruelty, and all the other iniquities attached to warfare. Consequently we were doing the world a noble service in punishing these wretched Italians—this lazy, sensual, upstart nation. And Louis Napoleon, with this consuming ambition, what an intriguer! It was with a storm of indignation that Vienna received the proclamation: "Italy free to the Adriatic."