

THE MASQUE OF WAR AND PEACE

1915

By

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THE PERSONS IN THE MASQUE

NATURE

EARTH

Rose, Violet, Daisy, Pansy, Snowdrop, Cowslip, Crocus, Primrose, Bluebell,
Forget-me-Not, Foxglove, Lily.
Wheat, Oat, Barley, Hop, Pea, Flax, Hemp, Clover, Apply, Pear, Quince, Plum

WATER

Thames, Medway, Severn, Seine, Meuse, Vistula.

AIR

North wind, South wind, East wind, West wind.

FRIGHTFULNESS

HATE

Hate, Disloyalty, Cruelty.

WAR

BRITAIN

London, Dover, Portsmouth.

FRANCE

Paris, Verdun, Belfort

RUSSIA

Petrograd, Moscow, Warsaw

BELGIUM

Brussels, Antwerp

JAPAN

Tokyo

SERBIA

Belgrade

MONTENEGRO

Cotija

SOLDIER

SAILOR

AVIATOR

CANADA

India, Australia, Africa

PITY

COURAGE

HOPE

The Golden Age, Loving-Kindness, Charity, Science, Painting, Music, Literature,
Architecture, Sculpture.

PEACE

The Peasant and his wife.

THE MASQUE OF HOPE

The scene is a fog and cloud-laden atmosphere in which at first nothing can be clearly distinguished.

On a throne of clouds on the left of the stage sits a great veiled figure – Nature.

NATURE

Unhappy Nature! Here I sit – alone;
Bereft of bliss; my heart is turned to stone.
My face is veiled; the sun is blotted out;
And all is night and mist, and fear, and doubt.
What ails me? O, my children, come and say,
What ails your mother in this woeful day!
Earth, Winter, Air and Fire, I call! Draw near!
Earth! Earth! I summon thee! Appear! Appear!

(Through a break in the clouds a smoke-laden landscape becomes visible. Out of this steps Earth. She is accompanied by faded and crushed flowers and by broken and bruised wheat, fruit etc. She drags herself wearily to the feet of Nature's throne.)

EARTH

Mother, behold me!

NATURE

Thou, in this disguise! I know thee not! What sorrow clouds thine eyes?

EARTH

Alas! Before thy throne I seek redress:
I am convulsed and torn with wickedness.
No more I hear the shepherd's cheerful songs;
I groan and quake beneath my nameless wrongs.
Look, how my flowers writhe, distraught with pain;
See wilting in the dust the wholesome grain.
Man rages o'er me, and with searching breath
He seweth death, and reapeth only death!

NATURE

Whose is the guilt?

EARTH

Her name I do abhor!
Here I arraign her, and her name is War!

NATURE

Water shall wash away the stain. Appear
Water, my eldest-born! Draw near! Draw near!

(Through a break in the clouds a mountain torrent is seen. It is in flood, and is sweeping rocks and uprooted trees away in its rush. Out of it comes WATER, wildly and tumultuously. She is followed by the RIVERS.)

WATER

(Hurling herself at the foot of the throne) Nature, great Mother, to thy feet I flow!

NATURE

This turbid, torrent, Water? Nay, not so!

WATER

In might Dreadnoughts Man across me raves,
Laughing to scorn my anger and my waves;
Great monsters plunge into my depths and tear
Leviathan, who takes his pastime there.
The Mariner no more sings as he works,
For sudden death in every ripple lurks.
With such alarms, with such perpetual fears,
It is a marvel Water is all Tears?

NATURE

Whose is the guilt?

WATER

A hideous Ichthyosaur Ravages me.

NATURE

Its name?

WATER

Its name is War.

NATURE

The winds shall blow it from the seas. Appear
Air; all embracing Air; soft Air! Draw near!

(Through a break in the clouds a lurid sky is seen. Across it flies a Zeppelin, closely pursued by an aeroplane. AIR whirls in, accompanied by the four WINDS. AIR whirls to the throne.)

AIR

Here, Mother!

NATURE

Nay! I said not whirlwind!

AIR

(wildly) Weep!
Wind have they seen, and whirlwind shall they reap!
The world no more by Zephyrs is caressed,
Destruction blows from North, South, East and West!
Engines of death traverse my day and night;

(The winds whistle)

Hark how my children whistle for delight!
Culture hath seized me, and hath wrought decay;
Yea, and the very birds have felt her sway!
For if you put an eagle under culture,
Your eagle promptly turns into a vulture.

NATURE

What vulture gnaws thee?

AIR

Say a meteor
Burns and consumes me!

NATURE

And thou call'st it?

AIR

War!

NATURE

Ho! Fire this meteor shall singe and sear!
Beneficent and dreaded Fire! Appear!

(Through a break in the clouds the mouth of a volcano is seen, sending dreadful flames and smoke to a great height. Out of this hell leaps FIRE and comes flaming and dancing to the throne. The other elements shrink from her.)

FIRE

I am the scourer!
The pure, the all-devourer!
Light-bringer, life-bringer;
Fly me not, Earth; but for my finger
What flower, or what grain, or tree
Would live on thee?
O. Water, fly me not, for with a kiss
I change thy trickling stream
Into all-powerful steam,
And set thee labouring for human bliss;
Nay, be not overnice,
Lest I forsake thee, and thou turn to ice!
Air, thou my staunch ally,
Without whose aid I die,
Fan me to greater rage
Which nothing may assuage!
I am the noblest of you all;
Mine, therefore, is the deepest, the most dreadful fall.

(She points to the clouds which open and disclose the interior of a cottage, with a family seated round the hearth).

Look on this picture! See
The happy household, sitting merrily
About the lovely hearth, and blessing me!

(The picture changes to the representation of a ruined town)

Now look again!
This was Louvain,
So have I seen
Termonde, Malines;
This ghastliest of dreams
Was Rheims!

NATURE

(with horror) Is this their deed?

FIRE

(as the picture fades)

Not mine the blame;
Sometimes I am the slave of shame,
The unwilling mate
Of cruelty and hate;
Attila's Huns made me conspirator

With their bloodthirsty God, their ruthless Thor.

NATURE

Who prompted thee to such foul deeds, then?

FIRE

War!

NATURE

Summon her now, with awful antiphon;
Bid her make answer here, before my throne!

(A solemn Dance of the Elements and their Attendants)

EARTH

(intones)

War, thou hast ravaged the meadows and mountains, make answer and say,
What is the end, when fleeth the night, when cometh the day?

ALL

War!

WATER

War, thou hast reddened the streams and the ocean; make answer and say
When shall the streams and the ocean be freed of thy horrible sway?

ALL

War!

AIR

War, thou hast riven the air with thy lightnings; make answer and say,
When shall the stars shine out, and the heavens be rid of dismay?

ALL

War!

FIRE

War, thou hast made me abhorred of humanity; answer and say,
How shall the ashes and ruin I leave be hidden away?

ALL

War!

(Slowly, during the dance and the antiphon, the whole atmosphere has turned to a livid green. In the centre, in a horrible white light is a hideous apparition of a shrunken and foul creature holding in his hand a sceptre made of bone. At his side sits HATE. At his feet crouch two other snake like creatures Disloyalty and Cruelty.)

FRIGHTFULNESS

(in a raucous voice) Well? You have summoned me? What is your will?
What shall I burn? What ravage? Or what kill?
Here are my henchmen: blind and savage Hate,
Disloyalty and Cruelty – I wait.

THE ELEMENTS

(together) Witness again him, Nations!

NATURE

(looking off, left) They draw nigh
With single purpose, seeing eye to eye.

(ENTER the Nations and Cities. The Rivers meet them, and each joins her own nation) or City. BELGIUM, a sorrowing and broken figure in the midst, supported by BRITAIN)

EARTH

A world in ruins approaches at our call!

NATURE

Let her who most hath suffered, speak for all.

[ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT INCLUDES HANDWRITTEN PAGE IN FRENCH]

BELGIUM

My fields were fair with ripening corn
The reaper sang a merry tune;
My factories from morn to morn
Hummed like a hive in June.
From hidden depths the miner brought
The treasure Time had garnered there;
In marts the merchant sold and bought,
And I was debonair.

In halls that were a poet's dream,
What painters see and poets write,
And all the lore of Academe,
Lay spread for man's delight;
Labour and art and mirth were mine,

My anvils and my belfries rang;
With rival melodies benign
Earth to the heavens sang.

What am I now? A pallid wraith,
Whom death and misery have kissed,
Pledge of a nation's broken faith,
Crushed in the mailed fist!

BRITAIN

(taking her to her heart) Nay! But engarlanded with fame!
And down eternity shall ring
The epic glory of thy name,
And of thy Here King!

(BRITAIN leads BELGIUM to the throne of NATURE)

HATE

(Coming down behind Britain) Oh, let me reach her! Let me dig my fangs
Deep in her heart, and watch her dying pangs!

BRITAIN

Who art thou, creeping snakelike through the gloom,
And uttering raucous words of death and doom?

HATE

Hate! I am Hate! I hate thee! My hatred parches my throat
I would humble thee, trample thee, crush thee; and on thy misery gloat!

(Pointing to the other Nations)

But these, but there, thou only, thou always, thou art the foe:
Thou foul! That thought'st me thy friend, the while mocked at thy woe!
I have sat thee about with skies; I have choked thy harvest with tears;
I have waited, O gods! How long, to strike at thee unawares!
I wake at the cry of my clarion and know, when 'tis all too late,
That the hand there hast gratified in friendship is clutched on thy heart in hate.
Thy glory shall scatter and vanish like wrack, in a wind blown froth;
I summon the legions of heaven to wither thee in their wrath!
For my god is the god of Hate: he shall punish thee from above!

BRITAIN

(unmoved) Their words are a tinkling cymbal: my God is the God of Love.

(HATE retires)

NATURE

(to Frightfulness, pointing to Belgium)

What answer hast thou for this Niobe?

FRIGHTFULNESS

What should I answer? What is she to me?

(Pointing to Britain)

From her towards whom my way I mean to hack

(Pointing to Belgium)

This paltry thing with treaties held me back;
Shall I, the War-lord, I the empire-shaper
Be thwarted of my will by scraps of paper!

Not so! But thus have I sworn and said:
I will be Lord of the quick and the dead;
On a mountain of skulls I will build me a throne,
And my sceptre shall be a fleshless bone!
My countries shall be sorrow and fear;
And my brightest jewel the widow's tear.
The smoke of my burnings shall blacken the skies:
I will glut my ears with the orphan's cries.
I will wither the harvest with my breath,
And sow plague, pestilence and death.
The conquered nations upon their knees
Shall crawl to my feet and sue for peace!
I seek a place in the sun

NATURE

(sternly) Nay! Answer for

The crime thou hast committed!

FRIGHTFULNESS

(with a contemptuous shrug)

I am War!

*(But meanwhile the atmosphere has turned into a scarlet glow, and behind
FRIGHTFULNESS a magnificent goddess has appeared, seated on a golden throne,
in a panoply of burnished steel, with both hands resting on a cross-hilted sword)*

WAR

Thou art not War! Thou art that loathed thing
A raging people's vain imagining.

(FRIGHTFULNESS crouches whining at her feet. She puts her heel on his neck).

I am the Spirit of War! Behold I fight
To shield the weak, and to uphold the right;
Thy frightfulness I shudder at and scorn,
Slayer of mothers and of babes unborn.
Thou turnest nations into ravening beasts,
Wreckers of temples, murder of priests;
Thou does blaspheme thy God, and, with a whine,
Claimest that very God as friend of thine.
Dream of a beer-sodden professor's brain
Slink to thy lair, and never stir again!
Away, thou shameful counterfeits of Me!
Ignoble monsters, made in Germany.

(FRIGHTFULNESS vanishes with an impotent howl. WAR turns to the Nations)

Ungrateful to implead me! But for me
Which of you would be great, or which be free?
Have you forgotten, or do you now know,
What royal gifts, what virtues I bestow?
First, Love of Country. Patriots, appear!

*(ENTER a grimy, mud-covered SOLDIER, a SAILOR and an AVIATOR arm in arm.
They are followed by the Overseas Dominions, led by CANADA)*

THE THREE *(together)*

Here!

THE SOLDIER

I am the ne plus ultra Knut,
The pink of fascination;
I have the Piccadilly strut;
A year ago
I didn't know
Great Britain was a nation.
Because from morn till night I played,
And all night went on playing,
The spectacled professor said
I must be fast decaying.
A year ago
He gloated, "Zo!"
Der Priton ist degaying!"

Then came the war and all the fuss,
The lion's tail was twisted;
And so three million odd of us
Bought the depot
Six months ago.
And went and got enlisted.
We are the laughing patriots

They dread us who have seen us;
For though we're still the merry nuts,
There is a kernel in us.
Six months ago
We tried to show
There was a Colonel in us!

THE SAILOR

I'm not the sort that gabbles much,
Or blows his trumpet loud,
But there's still a bit of the Nelson touch
Among my little crowd.
And whether you sail by the Southern Cross,
Or by the tail o' the Bear,
Wherever you toss with albatross,
The Union Jack is there!

I've challenged the enemy most polite,
But the enemy he says "Nein!"
His only idea of an ocean fight
Is to scatter the treacherous mine.
So while he sulks in his old canal,
And blows herring into the air,
Or himself or a pal occasional;
The Union Jack's still there.

THE AVIATOR

I'm only a baby, so to speak,
I'm not yet out o' my teens,
I'm rather by way of being a freak,
In my newest of new machines.

The Zeppelin, she's a sausage balloon,
She goes for excursions around the moon,
With a sleeping car and a grand saloon,
And a full string band with a loud bassoon,
And she's coming to London to play us a toon,
To-day, or to-morrow, or , anyway, soon.

But I loop the loop, and I slope and slide
I punch her poor old head;
I smash her ribs and I batter her side,
Till she wishes she was dead.
And when I've done with the Zeppelin,
I wring my way to the sun;
And over the enemy's lines I spin,
And I have my fun with the Hun.

CANADA

(stepping forward and addressing BRITAIN)

And what of us? Thy sons have allied, they come from the South and the North,
From East and West at thy trumpet-call thy war-man have issued forth;
Turn where there wilt, the nations win as one to bless thy name;
In her own borders Africa is fighting for thy fame;
Australia and New Zealand send, their mother-land to shield,
Champions who oft have rivalled thee upon the slaying field;
From lotus-scented land, where Ganges rolls his sacred flood,
The Princes bring their treasure, and the warriors bring their blood.

"We love thee, Mother!" the cry goes up, "for thou hast given us birth,
And never the glory of Britain shall fade from the face of the shuddering earth!"
Be comforted, comforted, Mother of Nations, thy light shall shine anew,
For the love of the many shall gladden thy heart, made sad by the hate of the few.
No foe shall touch thee; he cannot strike thee; his hands, made ready to kill,
Fall palsied and dead, for thy warriors wake, and Britain is Britain still!

WAR

I'm proud of you; and so should Britain be.
But now another of my children see:
Come, gentle pity, and set forth thy task.

(ENTER PITY, as a War Nurse)

PITY

Not to forget, is all I dare to ask.

(She turns to BRITAIN)

For what of the debt thou owest thy sons, and how shalt thou repay,
Unless thy heart be as great as theirs, and thou be as lavish as they?
It is no trivial work they do, no trifling gift they bring;
Privation and peril and wounds and life, are these a little thing?
So while they watch in the deadly trench or shield thee upon the seas,
Or dare the air on a fragile wing, that thou mayst take thine ease,
Forget not those they leave at home, who suffer as much as they;
For the debt thou owest those lonely ones, is greater than thou canst pay.

The home of Britain's warrior
Shall not be cold and bare;
The mate of Britain's warrior
Shall never know despair.
Upon her bosom sleeping
His child to us is dear;
Britain, they're in thy keeping,
Mother or warriors, hear!

WAR

And see where comes the courage I arouse!
The poor soul waiting in the empty house.

(ENTER COURAGE, as a Soldier's wife)

COURAGE

(As she speaks, she and the Soldier set the scene)

Are you coming, Mr Atkins, are you coming from afar?
(Oh what is the fife and the drumming?)
Have you done your deeds of glory, have you finished with the war?
It's your footstep, Mr Atkins – are you coming?
Are you coming overseas,
Coming home to take your ease,
Coming home to kiss the girl you left behind you –
Left behind you in our care?
Hope you'll say we acted fair,
For she's well, and she's waiting here to find you.

Don't imagine, Mr Atkins, that it's worse to go and fight
(Oh, the thrill of the fife and the drumming!)
Than it is to wait and wonder in the silence and the night,
Whether you're among the thousands that are coming.
You've been hammering the foe,
You've been letting of him know,
And compiling pretty stories worth the telling;
She's been straining eyes and care,
She's been sobbing down her fears,
When the noisy little newsboys come a yelling.

Yes, she's waiting, Mr Atkins, and her heart is very sore
(Oh, it aches to the fife and the drumming!)
Something trembles on her eyelid as she hides behind the door,
And she thinks she hears your footstep! Are you coming?
She's a-waiting with the kid,
And she don't care what you did,
She'll hear about your glorious deeds to-morrow;
But to-day, ah! to-day,
Take and kiss her tears away
Take and lift her into heaven out of sorrow!

WAR

Patriotism, Pity, Courage, have I brought;
Now see what Friendship out of War is wrought!
Friendship, appear!

THE NATIONS

(advancing with linked hands)

Friendship is here!

FRANCE

L'hiver s'anfoid, la printemps fleurs

.....
C'est l'subs, camarades, des grands jours,
Courage! Et sus aux hiboux et vautours!
Maintenant cote a cote et glaive en main
Nous gravirons le raids et dur chemin
Trace pour nous par Dieu et par la gloire
Vers la victoire! Aims, vers la victoire!

RUSSIA

Deep in her heart lies brooding Russia's thought,
Slowly she moves, slowly her deeds are wrought,
But when she stirs, she never rests again,
For lo, her strength is as the strength of Thor
And as her strength, so is her loyalty,
To thee, O Serbia; Britain, France, to thee!

JAPAN

From the other side of the world
The common enemy I've hurled.
Never upon my sacred strand
Shall any boastful stranger stand.

SERBIA

Against my walls in vain besiegers beat;
Twice have I thrown them back in full retreat.
But I am drained of blood: my heart is dry;
So far away, how shall ye hear my cry?
What I have won, 'tis in your pow'r to save:
Great-hearted sisters, send the help I crave!

MONTANEGRO

I am the smallest, but my soul is strong,
And fierce my courage as my battle-song!
My sword is drawn; the tyrant I defy!
My mountain-warriors will be free or die!

BELGIUM

(Now restored and armed)

Sudden betrayal, like a thief at night,
Has forced me to my knees, but still I fight!

BRITAIN

The statesman spake a trumpet-roared,
In a golden scroll new created:
“Not lightly have we drawn the sword;
Not lightly shall we sheathe it!!
Then spake the King: - “Our purpose is
A lofty one, we will not cease
Till we achieve our purpose, lasting peace!”

WAR

Peace – At the word my soul is thrilled and shaken!
Ah, could I sleep, and then as Peace awaken!
For I am only here to speed the birth
Of everlasting Peace o’er all the earth.
But in the night of hate I vainly grope
For my deliverer.

NATURE

Behold her!

ALL

(with outstretched arms)
Hope!

NATURE

And lo! She brings the new-born golden age,
Wherein the world shall be love’s heritage!

*(ENTER HOPE, leading a little child (the Golden Age) and followed by LOVING
KINDNESS, CHARITY, SCIENCE and the ARTS)*

HOPE

(to the child)
Child, for whose birth the universe
Has prayed with agony and tears,
To free it from its age-long curse,
Thou herald of the coming years.

(indicating WAR)

With Loving-kindness, Charity,
Science and all the arts of man,
Go forth, and in a little span
With roses crown her stately head
Which now in steel is helmeted,
And to the sickle turn her sword,

That henceforth she may be adored;
Go forth to her release;
Disarm her, change her, let her be
Eternal Peace.

(While the CHILD, helped by the others, does her bidding, NATURE speaks)

NATURE

Life-giving Fire, the factories wait,
The ovens are disconsolate;
Warm the chilled hearts, go swiftly, fire,
Summon the sun, they glorious airs.
Winds, shall the warrior wait in vain
For you to waft him home again?
Oh, gentle water, be astir
To help the patient mariner.
Streams, ye have idled far too long,
The millwheel has forgot his song!
Clouds, flee away, and be again
The bearers of God's blessed rain
Fall on the parched earth and bring
Her kindly fruits to blossoming.

HOPE

To work, ye Nations! Work and pray!
This is the dawn of God's good day.
Be of good hope! Be of good cheer!
For Peace, Eternal Peace, is here!

(Now WAR, transformed into a radiant vision of Peace, is led in a stately procession to another throne, facing NATURE. In her train follow the ELEMENTS (now smiling and benign) the WINDS, the NATIONS, RIVERS, CITIES, FLOWERS and FRUITS. They salute NATURE as they pass, who herself has cast off the mists that veiled her, and laughs in the rising sun. The CLOUDS have drifted away and disclose a pastoral landscape through the midst of which a river winds. In the meadow a humble peasant and his wife stand bent in their morning prayer before beginning their toil. The air thrills with the song of birds. A cock crows.)

NATURE

(Standing on the top step of her throne; very solemnly)
The sun ariseth, and man goeth forth unto his labour and his toil until the evening.

PEACE

(Similarly)
O, thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end.

HOPE

Dance, all ye Elements, with merry noise;

Dance, O ye Principalities and Powers;
Dance in the morning light, ye fruits and flowers;
Give thanks with pipe and tabor, and rejoice!

(A May-pole is set up. The Child figuring the New Era is seated on a little throne at its foot. Now in two circles, the NATIONS and CITIES within, and all the rest without, all dance and weave great wreaths of flowers round the May-pole. When the Dance is finished:)

PEACE

When ye are stirred with some great happening,
When ye lift up your hearts to some high thing,
When ye are grateful for new blossoming,
For labour's end, or end of sorrowing,
O happy folk, what is the song ye sing?

ALL

God save the King!

THE END