

***HALL
CAINE***



***THE WOMAN
OF KNOCKALOE***

Hall Caine

The Woman of Knockaloe

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Table of Contents

Editorial Note
Introductory
Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 12
Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Conclusion

Editorial Note

[Table of Contents](#)

BY NEWMAN FLOWER

"I cannot but regard with toarm respect and admiration the conduct of one who, holding Hall Caine's position as an admired and accepted novelist, stakes himself on so bold a protestation on behalf of the things which are unseen, as against those which are seen and art so terribly effective in chaining us down to the level of our earthly existence." -W. E. GLADSTONE.

For the publication of this book I am, perhaps, chiefly responsible, and in that fact I find my excuse for the following Editorial Note. Hall Caine had not intended to publish the story. He wrote it, as he explains, solely for the relief of his own feelings at thought of the present lamentable condition of the world. Accident led to my seeing the manuscript several months after it had been written, when nothing was being done with it or was likely to be done. I read it with very deep emotion and advised its publication-its immediate publication. Therefore I accept whatever responsibility there may be for the publication of this book, but the reader will see that the greater courage is that of the Author who has consented to risk temporary misrepresentation and perhaps serious personal hostility for the sake of what he believes to be the Truth and. the Right.

" The Woman of Knockaloe " is first of all a love story. In my opinion it is a charming and natural love story, beautiful in its purity, and irresistible in its human appeal; so simple in its incidents that it might be a nursery tale, so stark in its

telling that it might be a Saga, so inevitable in the march of its scenes, from its almost breathless beginning to its tremendous end, that it might be a Greek tragedy. In this character alone I think it calls for serious consideration.

But it is more than a love story. It is a parable, carrying an unmistakable message, an ostensible argument. Readers all over the world will so interpret it. They will see that it has special application to the times, that it is directed against War as the first author of the racial hatred, the material ruin, the sorrow and suffering, the poverty and want, which are now threatening the world with destruction; that it is a plea for universal peace, for speedy and universal disarmament, as the only alternative to universal anarchy.

The story is laid in a little backwater of the war-a backwater which has never before, perhaps, been explored in literature-but nevertheless it is not in the ordinary sense a war story. The late Great War does not enter it at all, except as an evil wind which blows over a mile and a half by half a mile of land in a small island in the Irish Sea, an Internment Camp, wherein twenty-five thousand men and one woman, cut off from life, pass four and a half years within an enclosure of barbed wire.

This narrow space of blackened earth is intended to stand for the world in little, from 1914 to the present year, and the few incidents of the simple yet poignant tale are meant to illustrate the effect of the late war on the heart of humanity, to describe at very close quarters the consequences of what we call The Peace on the condition of the world and the soul of mankind, and to point to what the author believes to be the only hope of saving both from the spiritual and material suicide to which they are hurrying on. It is neither pro-British nor pro-German in sympathy, but purely pro-human. War itself is the only enemy the parable is intended to attack.

The battlefield the author has chosen is dangerous ground, but the public will not question his sincerity. Hall

Caine is seventy years of age, and down to 1914 he was a life-long and even an extreme pacifist. More than one of his best known books was intended to show not only the barbarity and immorality of warfare, but also its cowardice and futility. Yet when the Great War broke out no man of letters became more speedily or remained more consistently an advocate of the Allied cause. The paradox is not difficult of explanation. In the face of what he, in common with countless pre-war pacifists, believed to be a deliberate plot whereby liberty was to be violated, civilization was to be outraged, religion was to be degraded, the right was to be wronged, the weak were to be oppressed, the helpless were to be injured, and before the iron arm of a merciless military tyranny, justice and mercy and charity were to be wiped out of the world, he became one of the most passionate supporters of the war of resistance. The Great War stood to him, as to others, as a war to end war.

It cannot be necessary to describe in detail his war activities even at a moment when, by the publication of this challenging book, his patriotism may possibly be questioned. They are matters of common knowledge not only in Great Britain and America, but also in many foreign countries in which his books have made his name known and his opinions respected. For his war services he was honoured by his own nation, and at least one of her Allies, being knighted in 1918, made an Officer of the Order of Leopold in 1920, and a Companion of Honour in 1922.

But the war-propagandist never wholly submerged the pacifist. His last war article was written on Armistice Day, 1918, and it was intended to show that while the price paid for the victory of the Allied cause had been a terribly bitter one it had been justified, inasmuch as it had killed warfare, and so banished from the earth for ever the greatest scourge of mankind.

Hall Caine has lived long enough since to see the falseness of that judgment. No one can have suffered more from the disappointments and disillusionment of the war, its political uselessness, its immeasurable cruelty, its limitless waste, its widespread wretchedness, and above all its inhuman demoralization. That the Great War has been in vain, that so much sacrifice, so much heroism, so many brave young lives have been thrown away, he would not for one moment say, being sure that in, the long review of a mysterious Providence all these must have their place. But he is none the less sure that the late war has left the world worse than it found it ; that the after-war, which we call The Peace, has been more productive of evil passions than the war itself was; that violence has never been more rampant or faith in the sanctity of life so low ; that the poor have never been poorer, or the struggle to live so severe; and that Christian Europe has never before been such a chaos of separate and selfish interests or so full of threats of renewed and still deadlier warfare in the future-in a word that the Great War has not only failed to kill war but has frightfully strengthened and inflamed the spirit of it.

And now he publishes his parable, the little story called " The Woman of Knockaloe," in the hope of showing that there can be "no peace under the soldier's sword," that the salvation of the world from the moral and material destruction which threatens to overwhelm it is not to be found in governments or parliaments or peace conferences, but only in a purging of the heart of individual man of the hatreds and jealousies and other corruptions which the war created-in a personal return of all men, regardless of nation or race, or politics or creed, or (as in the case of the American people) remoteness from the central scene of strife, to the spiritual and natural laws which alone can bring the human family back to true peace and real security-the laws of love and mutual sacrifice, above all the law of

human brotherhood, which was at once the law and the first commandment of Christ.

That this is a great Evangel none can doubt, and that it will go far in the beautiful human form in which it is presented, that of a deeply moving story, few will question. But is the world prepared for it ? Is this the hour for such a plea ? Is the Great War too recent to permit any of the nations who engaged in it to forgive their enemies ? In this new book Hall Caine touches upon wounds that are not yet healed and sometimes the touch hurts. If it is an all-healing touch the pain may be endured. But is it? What will the British people think ? What will the Belgians, the French and the Americans, who are still suffering from, their bereavements, say to a writer who asks them, in effect, to shake hands with the Germans who caused them? Will not the nations which have suffered most from the war say that, having beaten the Germans, it is their first duty to themselves and to humanity to keep them beaten? Will not a residue of bitterness against an author who calls upon the peoples of the world to make an effort that is impossible to the human heart at such a time obscure the sublimity of his message ?

On the other hand will it not be agreed that the Christian ideal of the forgiveness of injuries and the brotherhood of man is the only remaining hope of the redemption of the world from the lamentable condition into which the war, and the passions provoked by the war, have plunged it; that without this ideal, politics are a meaningless mockery, religion is an organized hypocrisy, and the churches are a snare, and that, however hard it may be to learn the lesson, and however cruel the pain of it, there never was a time when it was more needed than now ?

Here lies the theme for many a sermon, and judging of " The Woman of Knockaloe " by its effect upon those who, besides myself, have read it, it is hardly possible to question its missionary value, apart from its human beauty and

charm. At least it is certain that readers in many lands will think and continue to think of some of the greatest of human problems long after they have closed the book.

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
It hath not been my use to pray
With moving lips or bended knees,
But silently, by slow degrees,
My spirit I to love compose,
In humble trust mine eyelids close,
With reverential resignation.
No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
Only a sense of supplication,

A sense o'er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, everywhere
Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.
But yester-night I prayed aloud,
In anguish and in agony,
Upstarting from the fiendish crowd
Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
A lurid light, a trampling throng,
Sense of intolerable wrong,

And whom I scorned, those only strong
Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
Still baffled, and yet burning still I
Desire with loathing strangely mixed
On wild and hateful objects fixed,
Fantastic passions ! maddening brawl !
And shame and terror over all !

COLERIDGE.

Introductory

Table of Contents

I should like to say, for whatever it may be worth in excuse and explanation, that the following story, in all its essential features, came to me in a dream on a night of disturbed sleep early in December, 1922. Awakening in the grey dawning with the dream still clear in my mind, I wrote it out hastily, briefly, in the present tense, without any consciousness of effort, not as a smooth and continuous tale, but in broken scenes, now vague, now vivid, just as it seemed to pass before me.

Only then did I realize, first, that my dream contained incidents of actual occurrence which had quite faded from my conscious memory; next, that it could not claim to be otherwise true to the scene of it ; and finally, that it was in the nature of a parable which expressed, through the medium of a simple domestic tale, the feelings which had long oppressed me on seeing that my cherished hope of a blessed Peace that should wipe out war by war and build up a glorious future for mankind, had fallen to a welter of wreck and ruin.

There were reasons why I should not put aside an urgent task and write out my dream into a story, and other reasons why I should not attempt to publish anything that was so much opposed to the temper of the time, but I had to write it for the relief of my own feelings, and here it is written. And now I publish it with many misgivings and only one expectation-that in the present troubled condition of the world, in the midst of the jealousy and hatred, the suffering and misery of the nations, which leave them groaning and travailing in pain, and heading on to an apparently inevitable catastrophe, even so humble and so slight a thing

as this may perhaps help the march of a moving Providence
and the healing of the Almighty hand.

It was a dream. Ah, what is not a dream?