

**WATCHFIRES: A
PLAY IN
FOUR ACTS**

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Watchfires: a play in four acts by Tracy D. Mygatt

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TRACY D. MYGATT

**WATCHFIRES: A
PLAY IN
FOUR ACTS**

WATCHFIRES

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By TRACY D. MYGATT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

By DAVID STARR JORDAN

NEW YORK
1917

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Second Edition

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1917
MAIN

INTRODUCTION

Miss Mygatt's play, *Watchfires*, teaches the most needed lesson of the day, that humanity knows no national lines, and that all those who suffer the cruelties of war, suffer alike and together.

One of the noblest scholars the great University of Paris ever sent to America, Robert Pelissier, Professor of French at Stanford, was among the thousands of young men destroyed in the attack on the Somme. His last letter to America said: "The soldiers in the ranks do not hate each other. They say, 'Les Boches, ce sont des hommes comme nous.'" (The Prussians, they are men like us.) It is not the soldier that keeps alive the fear, the lies, the hate, that surround every war like an atmosphere of pestilence, —war which starts with the men who make money by it, and is joyously pushed on by those who welcome it as a backfire against democracy. It is a unique form of crime so adjusted that those only suffer who are innocent.

Meantime, those left behind, since they can do nothing to check the dreaded foe, wait in fear and hate and ignorance. In Norman Hall's poem, the London soldier "is glad to get back in the trenches again where there is more of human feeling."

The number slain in the present war, killed, starved, wounded, mutilated, uncared for, is said to approach forty million. This is only a guess, but if the number were

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divided in half, it would still represent as many people as live beyond the Mississippi river. And each one of these was beloved by someone, cherished in a spirit that knows no political borderlines, the same spirit that holds together your family and mine. This means an aggregate of personal distress with which no other planet in the stellar universe, not even fiery Mars, could compete.

"I cannot help thinking of you as ye deserve, oh ye governments!" cries Thoreau. For it is through the weakness and inhumanity of governments that this cloud of misery is let loose on the world,—governments that have no root in the will of the people, which wrangle with one another over petty private interests and barbaric robberies, and which in time of stress have no resource but to make their people fight.

These matters, war's cause, identical in all countries, its common cost in human happiness, together with the cry of the peoples that will not be stilled, for peace and liberty of conscience, Miss Mygatt's play suggests. It ranks with the very best of the war-dramas. In this dark hour of crisis, I wish all Americans might read *Watchfires*, might love Sidney and Mary, and courageous Frieda as well, breathing meanwhile the play's clear air of international understanding.

DAVID STARR JORDAN.

New York,
March 20th, 1917.

TO

FANNIE M. WITHERSPOON

*Whose fearless scrutiny and creative faith
have helped me to believe that wars shall cease, this play
is dedicated.*



Persons of the Play

(They are named in the order of their appearance)

Mrs. Neville.

Edward Neville, *her son, a Volunteer*

A Maid.

Mr. Henry Matthewson, *Editor of The Patriot*

Sidney Stevenson, *an Active Pacifist*

Frieda, *a Social Democrat**

Gretchen, *Another*

A Little Girl

Herr Knechtbiel, *a Social Democrat*

The Commander

Frieda's Mother

Fritz, a Soldier

Karlchen, a Baby

Jim, *who has fought in "Kitchener's Mob"*

Ijza, *his wife*

Geoffrey, *a Conscientious Objector*

Mary Greer, *daughter of an English munition maker*

First Woman

First Man

Second Woman

Second Man

A Plain-Clothes Man

A Reactionary

*In Germany a Socialist is called a Social Democrat.