

The New York Times
July 11, 1915

An Insult to War

Miss Addams Would Strip the Dead of Honor and Courage

Mount Kisco, N.Y., July 11, 1915.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

On Friday night at Carnegie Hall Miss Jane Addams stated that in the present war, in order to get soldiers to charge with the bayonet, all nations are forced first to make them drunk. I quote from THE TIMES report:

In Germany they have a regular formula for it [she said]. In England they use rum and the French resort to absinthe. In other words, therefore, in the terrible bayonet charges they speak of with dread, the men must be doped before they start.

In this war the French or English soldier who has been killed in a bayonet charge gave his life to protect his home and country. For his supreme exit he had prepared himself by months of discipline. Through the Winter in the trenches he has endured shells, disease, snow, and ice. For months he had been separated from his wife, children, friends—all those he most loved. When the order to charge came it was for them he gave his life, that against those who destroyed Belgium they might preserve their home, might live to enjoy peace.

Miss Addams denies him the credit of his sacrifice. She strips him of honor and courage. She tells his children, "Your father did not die for France, or for England, or for you; he died because he was drunk."

In my opinion, since the war began, no statement has been so unworthy or so untrue and ridiculous. The contempt it shows for the memory of the dead is appalling; the credulity and ignorance it displays are inconceivable.

Miss Addams does not know that even from France they have banished absinthe. If she doubts that in this France has succeeded let her ask for it. I asked for it, and each maitre d'hotel treated me as though I had proposed we should assassinate General Joffre.

If Miss Addams does know that the French Government has banished absinthe, then she is accusing it of openly receiving the congratulations of the world for destroying the drug while secretly using it to make fiends of the army. If what Miss Addams states is true, then the French Government is rotten, French officers deserve only court-martial, and French soldiers are cowards.

If we are to believe her, the Canadians at Ypres, the Australians in the Dardanelles, the English and French on the Aisne made no supreme sacrifice, but were killed in a drunken brawl.

Miss Addams desires peace. So does every one else. But she will not attain peace by misrepresentation. I have seen more of this war and other wars than Miss Addams, and I know all war to be wicked, wasteful, and unintelligent, and where Miss Addams can furnish one argument in favor of peace I will furnish a hundred. But against this insult, flung by a complacent and self-satisfied woman at men who gave their lives for men, I protest. And I believe that with me are all those women and men who respect courage and honor.