



## **To The Women of Germany and Austria: Open Christmas Letter from Manchester Suffragettes**

Sisters,

Some of us wish to send you a word at this sad Christmastide though we can but speak through the press. The Christmas message sounds like mockery to a world at war, but those of us who wished and still wish for peace may surely offer a solemn greeting to such of you who feel as we do. Do not let us forget that our very anguish unites us, that we are passing together through the same experience of pain and grief.

Caught in the grip of terrible Circumstance, what can we do? Tossed on this turbulent sea of human conflict, we can but moor ourselves to those calm shores whereon stand, like rocks, the eternal verities- Love, Peace, Brotherhood.

We pray you to believe that come what may we hold to our faith in Peace and Goodwill between nations; while technically at enmity in obedience to our rulers, we owe allegiance to that higher law which bids us live at peace with all men.

Though our sons are sent to slay each other, and our hearts are torn by the cruelty of this fate, yet through pain supreme we will be true to our common womanhood. We will let no bitterness enter into this tragedy, made sacred by the life-blood of our best, nor mar with hate the heroism of their sacrifice. Though much has been done on all sides you will, as deeply as ourselves, deplore, shall we steadily refuse to give credence to those false tales so freely told us, each of the other?

We hope it will lessen your anxiety to learn we are doing our utmost to soften the lot of your civilians and war prisoners within our shores, even as we rely on your goodness of heart to do the same for ours in Germany and Austria.

Do you not feel that the vast slaughter of our opposing armies is a stain on civilisation and Christianity, and that still deeper horror is aroused at the thought of those innocent victims, the countless women, children, babes, old and sick, pursued by famine, disease and death in the devastated areas, both East and West?

As we saw in South Africa and the Balkan States, the brunt of modern war falls upon non-combatants, and the conscience of the world cannot bear the sight.

Is it not our mission to preserve life? Do not humanity and commonsense alike prompt us to join hands with the women of neutral countries, and urge our rulers to stay further bloodshed? Relief, however colossal, can reach but few. Can we sit still and let the helpless die in their thousands, as die they must – *unless* we rouse ourselves in the name of Humanity to save them?

There is but one way to do this. We must all urge that peace be made with appeal to Wisdom and Reason. Since in the last resort it is these which must decide the issues, can they begin too soon, if it is to save womanhood and childhood as well as the manhood of Europe.

Even through the clash of arms we treasure our poet's vision, and already we seem to hear

"A hundred nations swear that there shall be  
Pity and Peace and Love among the good and free."

May Christmas hasten that day. Peace on Earth is gone, but by renewal of our faith that it still reigns at the heart of things, Christmas should strengthen both you and us and all womanhood to strive for its return.

We are yours in this sisterhood of sorrow,

**[List of signatories in alphabetical order by surname]**

Many of these signatories became members of the Women's International League (WIL)

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|--|---|
| Laura G Ackroyd (Sub-Editor of Inquirer)               | Isabella O Ford   |
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| The Hon. Lady Barlow                                   | M K Gandhi (Mrs)  |
| Louie Bennett  | Lucy Gardner  |
| Edith M H A Bigland (Mrs Percy Bigland)                | Arthur Garkin (Mrs)   |
| Margaret G Bondfield                                   | Rebecca Garnett (Mrs William Garnett)                                       |
| Gertrude Bone (Mrs Muirhead Bone)                      | Richarda Gillett M.D  |
| Eva Gore Booth   | Catherine Gittins (Mrs)   |
| Edith S Bright   | Katharine Bruce Glasier (Mrs)   |
| Lilla Brockway (Mrs Fenner Brockway)                   | Bella Gossip  |
| Emmeline Cadbury (Mrs W A Cadbury)                     | Lilian Harris (Sec. Women's Co-operative Guild)                             |
| S Cahill (Mrs)   | Elinor J Heaton (Mrs J A Heaton)  |
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| Anne Cobden-Sanderson                                  | Ada Jane Hooper   |
| Mary L Cooke   | Esther Howard (Knutsford's Women's Suffrage Society)                        |
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