

## **Edith Wharton's Writings from the Great War**

Julie Olin-Ammentorp



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Edith Wharton resided in France during World War I, visiting combat zones and hospitals and working tirelessly with refugee and children's relief organizations. In magazines and newspapers such as the New York Times, Saturday Evening Post, and Scribner's, she wrote prodigiously about the war - dispatches, feature articles, and poems. During this time she also completed a number of short stories, two books (Summer and The Marne), and the essays that were collected in French Ways and Their Meaning. The war remained a topic for her after its conclusion, most notably in her 1923 novel. A Son at the Front. Yet none of this work has received the critical attention it deserves. Julie Olin-Ammentorp, through her detailed examination of a wide range of texts, including archival sources and materials long out of print, reclaims Wharton's war writings and places her in the company of other Great War writers. discusses common themes, and examines issues such as Wharton's exclusion from the canon of Great War writers; the effect of the war on her choice of subject, style, and tone; her shifting perspective on the war itself; her sense of personal, social, and literary destabilization during the war; and her increased sense of the role of history during and after the war. Olin-Ammentorp quotes many evocative passages from Wharton's wartime correspondence - most notably to Henry James, who avidly read Wharton's letters to him during the war as if they were dispatches from the front. Particularly new is the inclusion of Wharton's poetry composed during the war years, most of which has remained unpublished until now. In addition to providing a thorough analysis of Wharton's war writings, the book includes two appendixes of her out-of-print and scattered writings; this book makes them available for the first time in over 85 years. Wharton's war-related nonfiction prose, including newspaper reportage, magazine articles, an obituary for her young friend Ronald Simmons who died in the war, and a speech she gave to American servicemen.

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