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# "The Causeless War"

AND ITS LESSONS  
=== FOR US ===

A STATEMENT BY  
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## THE WAR AS IT IS, AND ITS INJURY TO NEUTRALS

I shall tomorrow discuss the origin of the war and the reasons which led the nations of Europe to march, as if blindfolded, into the bloody conflict which now rests like a pall over the fairest parts of the Old World; today let us consider the war as it is and the injury it is doing to the neutral nations.

The war is without a precedent in the populations represented: in the number of combatants in the field, in daily expenditures: in the effectiveness of the implements employed: in the lists of dead and wounded; in the wide-spread suffering caused and in the intensity of the hatreds aroused.

No class or condition is exempt from the burdens which this war imposes; the rich bear excessive taxation and the poor are sorely oppressed; the resources of today are devoured and the products of tomorrow are mortgaged. No age is immune. The first draft was upon the strong and vigorous, but the governments are already calling for those above and below the ordinary enlistment zone.

The war's afflictions are visited upon women as well as upon men—upon wives who await in vain a husband's return, and upon mothers who must surrender up the sons whose support is the natural reliance of declining years. Even children are its victims—children innocent of wrong and incapable of doing harm. By war's dread decree, babes come into the world, fatherless at their birth, while the bodies of their sires are burned like worthless stubble in the fields over which the Grim Reaper has passed.

The most extreme illustrations collected from history to prove the loathsomeness of war are overshadowed by new indictments written daily; the most distressing pictures drawn by the imagination are surpassed by the realities of this indescribable contest.

Surely we behold "the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day!"

Neutral nations can not look on with indifference—the ties that bind them together are too strong, the relationship too intimate. This is especially true of the United States. We have a composite population—every nation of Europe having contributed liberally to our citizenship.

These, our countrymen, themselves born abroad or immediately descended from foreign born ancestors, can not but take a lively interest in the conduct as well as in the results of the war and a still larger circle shares the concern of those directly connected. Not a soldier falls on either side but the sorrow expressed in his home finds an echo at some fireside in the United States.

But aside from sentimental considerations, neutral nations suffer serious disturbance because of the war. Duelists, when dueling was in fashion, were careful to select a place where they

could settle their personal differences without harm to unoffending bystanders, but warring nations can not, no matter how earnestly they try, avoid injury to neutrals. As the noisome odors of a slaughter house, carried on the breeze, pollute the air in every direction, so the evil influences emanating from these wide extended battlefields taint the atmosphere of the whole political world. War is an international nuisance. Nearly every neutral nation finds new domestic problems thrust upon it and old problems made more difficult.

No American citizen can note without deep concern the manner in which war questions have intruded themselves into our politics—overshadowing economic issues and stimulating agitation in favor of enlarged appropriations for military and naval purposes.

Business is deranged and expensive readjustments made necessary, while commerce with foreign nations is seriously interrupted. Fluctuations in prices abroad are reflected in the markets of the United States; a fall of one cent in the price of cotton means tens of millions of dollars to our producers and merchants. Added to this freight rates and insurance premiums have been increased to cover the greater risks incident to war.

Scarcity of ships is one of the greatest commercial embarrassments caused by the war. We have depended largely upon foreign ships to carry our commerce and we could not but suffer when the merchantmen of one side were driven from the sea and a part of the merchant fleet of the other side was withdrawn for government use.

The neutral nations are put to a great expense to preserve neutrality and are constantly in danger of being embroiled in the war without intention or fault on their part.

The rules of international law seem to have been made for the nations at war rather than for the nations at peace. It is almost impossible to alter these rules during the war, because any material change, affecting as it would the interests of belligerents, would be a seeming violation of neutrality. As soon as peace returns there will be a demand for an international conference on the subject. The presumption should then be given to peace, for peace, not war, is the normal condition. If nations are determined to fight, they should as far as possible bear the burden themselves and not be permitted to transfer it to the nations which avoid war by resorting to reason instead of force.

Under the stress and strain of the titanic struggle in which they are engaged, each side has felt itself justified in encroaching upon the rights of neutrals. The ocean highways, the common property of all, have been to some extent appropriated for war purposes and delicate diplomatic questions are forced upon the neutral nations.

Just at this time when these questions are most acute the belligerent governments are least able to deal with them with the calmness and poise which their great importance demands.

No wonder every neutral nation is increasingly anxious for

the war to end; but of all the neutral nations ours has the most reason to pray for the return of peace—most reason to set its face resolutely against participation in this war. This nation, the head of the neutral group and the sincere friend of all the belligerents, is in duty bound to set an example in patience and self-restraint.

In all history no such opportunity has ever come to any other nation as that which is destined to come to the United States. In all history no other peace-maker has ever been in position to claim so rich a blessing as that which will be pronounced upon our President when the time for mediation comes—as come it must.

### A FALSE PHILOSOPHY, AND ITS NATURAL RESULTS

The conflict now raging in Europe has been described as "The Causeless War," but since no one would be bold enough to lay the blame for such an unholy situation upon an overruling Providence, it must find its origin in acts for which man, and man alone, is responsible.

It is not a race war; on the contrary, the races are quite inexplicably mixed. Latin joins with Saxon; the Frank is the ally of the Slav; while in the opposing ranks, Teuton and Turk fight side by side.

Neither is it a religious war. On the Bosphorus the cross and the crescent make common cause; Protestant Kaiser and Catholic Emperor have linked their fortunes together and hurl their veteran legions against an army in which are indiscriminately mingled communicants of the Greek Church, of the Church of Rome and of the Church of England.

Nor yet is it a rivalry between families. The leading actors in this unprecedented tragedy are related by blood, but kinship seems to be a negligible factor—it explains neither friendships nor enmities.

No; race, religion and family, each with many wars to answer for, can plead not guilty in the present inquiry. So far as can be judged, there appears upon the surface no cause that by any known standard can be regarded as adequate for such a cataclysm as we are now witnessing.

The notes that passed from chancellery to chancellery were couched in most friendly language. These notes could not have been intended to deceive. Sovereigns visited each other and were received with every evidence of cordiality and good will. This hospitality could not have been insincere.

Each ruler declared that he did not wish war; would they all say this if an adequate cause for war had actually existed? They have all denied responsibility for the war—would they have done so if they had regarded the war as either necessary or desirable?

But there is even better proof; aye, indisputable proof, that

no sufficient cause existed—viz., the conclusion to be drawn from inaction.

Would not these rulers have busied themselves trying to save their subjects by the eradication of the cause, had they known of the existence of such cause? Would they have spent their time in social festivities and in exchanging compliments, had they known that they were on the brink of war? It is inconceivable! It would be a gross libel on them—one and all—to charge such a wanton disregard of their sacred duty.

What then was the cause? If I have correctly analyzed the situation, the war is the natural result of a false philosophy. Theories of life are invisible, but they control for good or for evil. They enter our very being and may be as deadly to the moral man as germs of disease, taken into the body, are deadly to the physical man. The fundamental precept of this false philosophy is that "might makes right." It is not proclaimed now as loudly as it once was, but it is often acted upon in particular cases by those who would be unwilling to endorse it as a general principle.

The individual makes this maxim his excuse for violating three commandments that stand in his way; this maxim also leads nations to violate these same three commandments for the same purpose, but on a larger scale.

Strange that men should fail to apply to nations the moral principles which are now so generally applied to the individual units of a nation!

The tendency is to condemn the violation of these commandments, not in proportion to the injury done, but rather in inverse proportion. No one will dispute the validity of the injunction against covetousness as long as the object coveted is of little value or not greatly desired; but the last and all inclusive specification, viz., "or anything that is thy neighbor's," is sometimes interpreted by nations to except a neighbor's vineyard or a neighbor's territory. Covetousness turns to might as the principle to be invoked, and the greater the unlawful desire, the firmer the faith in the false principle.

Conquest is the word used to describe the means employed for securing the thing desired, if the force is employed by a nation, and conquest violates the commandments, "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not kill."

By what sophistry can rulers convince themselves that, while petit larceny is criminal, grand larceny is patriotic; that while it is reprehensible for one man to kill another for his money, it is glorious for one nation to put to the sword the inhabitants of another nation in order to extend boundaries?

It is a mockery of moral distinctions to hang one man for taking the life of another, either for money or in revenge, and then make a hero of another man who wades "through slaughter to a throne, and shuts the doors of mercy on mankind."

As in the case of the individual, the violation of the commandments—Thou shalt not covet, Thou shalt not steal, and Thou shalt not kill, are usually traceable to the violation of the

first great commandment, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me"—that is, to the putting of self before service of the Creator; so the violation of these commandments by nations is not always but usually due to selfishness—the putting of supposed material advantages before obedience to the Divine law.

War is occasionally altruistic in purpose and the soldier always exhibits unselfishness of a high order, but, as a rule, conflicts are waged for selfish ends.

The individual finds that Jehovah's justice can not be evaded; for wrong-doing works its own punishment on the wrongdoer in the form of perverted character, even when he escapes the penalties of human law. The nation is as powerless to repeal or to ignore with impunity the laws of God—"though hand join in hand they shall not be unpunished."

If I have made it clear that the doctrine that might makes right is the most common cause of war, we may pass to the consideration of a maxim quite sure to be applied in war, namely, that "Like cures like"—the theory upon which retaliation rests.

The two are so closely allied that it is almost inevitable that those who endorse the former will resort to the latter—one represents the spirit of evil, the other its most familiar manifestation. Retaliation is rivalry in wrong-doing—a neck and neck race toward the bottomless pit. And yet there are many believers in the gospel of force who have brought themselves to think that cruelty can be cured by greater cruelty—that the only way to win an antagonist away from inhuman acts is to surpass him in inhumanities. Absurdity of absurdities!

But might must find a pretext for arming itself; and what is the pretext? There was a time when men openly advocated war as a thing to be desired; commended it to each generation as a sort of tonic to tone up the moral system and prevent degeneracy, but we have passed that day.

Now, all join in the chorus for peace. And how, according to the jingoes, shall peace be insured? "By preparedness," say these sons of Mars. Prepare, all prepare; equip yourselves with the most modern implements of destruction; arm, drill; get ready; and then stand with finger on a hair trigger musket and preserve peace—yes, preserve it until some one, by accident or design, gives the signal—then all fall upon each other with cries for blood. Preparedness is the kindling; opportunity is the match.

We dare not trust the peace of the world to those who spend their time in getting ready for wars that should never come. Half the energy employed in preparing for war would effectually prevent war if used in propagating the principles which make for peace.

Instead of preventing war, preparedness provokes war, because it is impossible to coerce the people into bearing the burdens incident to continuous and increasing preparation without cultivating hatred as if it were a national virtue. There must be some

one to fear; some other preparing nation that must be represented as plotting for war.

Hate sets up sham standards of honor and converts every wound into a festering sore; hate misunderstands; hate misinterprets; hate maligns its supposed adversary, while every contractor, battleship builder and manufacturer of munitions of war applauds.

How can preparedness prevent war if all prepare? Each step taken by one nation toward more complete preparedness excites the other nations to additional purchases and new levies, until all have exhausted their productive industries and menaced their moral progress.

The doctrine that preparedness will prevent war will not stand the test of logic and the conflagration in Europe shows that it fails when tested by experience.

If any nation is without excuse for entering into a mad rivalry with the belligerent nations in preparation for war it is the United States. We are protected on either side by thousands of miles of ocean and this protection is worth more to us than any number of battleships. We have an additional protection in the fact, known to everyone, that we have the men with whom to form an army of defense if we are ever attacked; and it is known also that we have the money, too—more money than we would have had if all the surplus earnings of the people had been invested in armament. We not only do not need additional preparation, but we are fortunate in not having it, since it seems impossible for a nation to have what is called preparedness without having along with it a disposition to use its preparedness on the slightest provocation.

The leading participants in the present war are the nations that were best prepared, and I fear it would have been difficult for us to keep out of this war if we had been as well prepared as they.

Happy for our nation that we have in the White House at this time a President who believes in setting the old world a good example, instead of following the bad example which it sets in this matter! What an unspeakable misfortune it would have been if, in such an hour as this, the nation had been under the leadership of a President inflamed by the false philosophy which has plunged Europe into the abyss of war!

## THE WAY OUT

### A ROAD TO PERMANENT PEACE

Having considered the war as it is and the injury which it does neutrals, and then the origin of the war and the causes which led up to it, we are now ready to make inquiry as to the way out, that is, the means by which hostilities can be brought to an end and permanent peace restored. To state in a sentence the propositions which I shall proceed to elaborate: Mediation is the means, provided by international agreement, through which the belligerent nations can be brought into conference; time for the investigation of all disputes is the means by which future wars can be averted and the cultivation of international friendship is the means by which the desire for war can be rooted out.

What are the nations fighting about? No one seems to know, or if anyone does know he has not taken the public into his confidence. We have been told, in a general way, that the Allies are fighting against "militarism" and in defense of "popular government," and that Germany is fighting in defense of "German culture" and for the nation's right to "a place in the sun." But these generalities are so differently interpreted as not to convey a definite idea. When the President offered mediation at the very beginning of the struggle the answers which he received from the various rulers were so much alike that one telegram might have served for all. The substance of each answer was "I *did not* want war and I am not to blame for the war that now exists." But that was ten months ago; the question now is not whether those in authority in the belligerent nations did or did not want war *then*; we may accept their answers as given in good faith, but the important question is still unanswered. "I *did not* want war" may have been deemed sufficient at the time the answers were given, but the real question is, *Do you want war now?* If not, why not say so? The months have dragged their bloody length along—each more terrible than the month before—and yet the crimson line of battle sways to and fro, each movement marked by dreadful loss of life. While warriors die and widows weep the sovereign rulers of the warring powers withhold the word that would stop the war. No chief of state has yet said "I *do not* want war." No one in authority has yet publicly declared his willingness to state the terms upon which his nation is ready to negotiate peace. Are not these dying men and these sorrowing women entitled to know definitely for what their nation is fighting? Is it territory? Then how much territory and where is it located? Is it the avenging of a wrong done? Then how much more blood must be spilled to make atonement for the blood already shed? Some day accumulated suffering will overflow; some day the pent up anguish which this war is causing will find a voice. Then, if not before, the rulers in the war zone

will pause to listen to the stern question "Why do we die?"—the question which shakes thrones and marks the farthest limits of arbitrary power.

And is not the outside world entitled to know the price of peace? Must the neutrals bear the penalties which war necessarily visits upon them and yet remain in ignorance as to the issues at stake? Their trade is interrupted, their citizens are drowned, they are the victims of stray bullets—have they no right to know what it is that, being done, will draw down the curtain on this dark tragedy? Has any nation a purpose for continuing this war which it does not dare to state to the world, or even to its own people?

Surely neither side thinks it can annihilate the other. Great nations can not be exterminated—population can not be wiped out by the sword. The combatants, even though the war may have made them heartless, will shrink from the task of carrying this slaughter beyond the point necessary to win a victory. And it must be remembered that war plans often miscarry. Predictions made at the beginning of the war have not been fulfilled. The British did not destroy the German fleet in a month, and Germany did not take Paris in two months, and the Russian army did not eat Christmas dinner in Berlin. But even if extermination were possible, it would be a crime against civilization which no nation or group of nations could afford to commit. If it is vandalism to destroy the finest specimens of man's workmanship, is it not sacrilege to engage in the wholesale destruction of human beings—the supreme example of God's handiwork? We may find cases of seeming total depravity among individuals, but not in a nation or in a race. The future has use for the peoples now at war: they have a necessary part in that destiny which mankind must work out together, regardless of these ebullitions of anger. The Lord might have made all flowers of one kind, of one color and alike in fragrance—but He did not. And *because* He did not, the world is more attractive. Variety, not uniformity, is the law among men as well as among the flowers. The nations which are actively participating in this war are what they are because of struggles that have lasted for centuries. They differ in language, in institutions, in race characteristics and in national history, but together they constitute a great living bouquet of surpassing beauty.

We may put aside, therefore, as wholly impracticable, if not inconceivable, the thought that this war can continue until one side has annihilated the other. What then can be the purpose? The complete domination of Europe by one nation or group of nations? The absurdity of such a plan is only second to the absurdity of the thought that either side can annihilate the other. The world is not looking for a master: the day of the despot is gone. The future will be gloomy indeed if the smaller nations must pass under the yoke of any power or combination of powers. The question is not, Who shall dictate on land? or, Who shall dominate upon the sea? These questions are not practical ones. The real question is, not how a few can

lay burdens upon the rest, but how all can work together as comrades and brothers.

Even if it were possible for one side to force the other side to its knees in supplication—even if it were possible for one side to write the terms of the treaty in blood and compel the other side to sign it, face downward and prostrate on the ground—it could not afford to do so: and unless the belligerents have read history to no purpose, they will not desire to do so. Time and again some nation, boastful of its strength, has thought itself invincible, but the ruins of these mistaken and misguided nations line the pathway along which the masses have marched to higher ground. Despotism has in it the seeds of death: the spirit that leads a nation to aspire to a supremacy based on force is the spirit that destroys its hope of immortality. Only those who are unacquainted with the larger influences can place their sole reliance on the weapons used in physical warfare. They see only the things that are transient and ephemeral; they do not comprehend the higher truth that “the things that are seen are temporal; the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Christian nations need to read again Christ’s prayer upon the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” All the participants in this war have sinned enough to make them anxious to exhibit that forgiving spirit which is the measure of the forgiveness which can be claimed.

When can peace be restored? Any time—now, if the participants are really weary of this war and ready for it to end. If any nation is not ready, let its ruler state in clear, distinct and definite terms the conditions upon which it is willing to agree to peace; then if an agreement is not reached, the blame for the continuance of the war will be upon those who make unreasonable demands.

What can be done by the advocates of peace?

First. They can crystallize the sentiment in favor of peace into a coercive force, for public opinion at last controls the world. There is a work which the neutral nations can do; they can offer mediation, jointly or severally. It is not an act of hostility, but an act of friendship. The Hague Convention, to which all the governments are parties, expressly declares that the offer of mediation shall not be considered an unfriendly act. The duty of offering mediation may seem to rest primarily upon the United States, the largest of the neutral nations and the one most intimately bound by ties of blood to all the belligerents. The United States did make an offer immediately after the war began, but why not again and again and again, until our offer or *some other offer* is accepted? Why not stand at the door and knock, as we would at the door of a friend if we felt that the friend was in need and that we could render a service?

But our action or failure to act need not deter any other neutral country from acting. This is not a time to stand on ceremony: if any other country, for any reason—no matter what that reason may be—is in a better position than we to tender its good offices, it should not delay for a moment. It is for the

belligerents to decide which offer, if any, they will accept. I am sure they will not complain if, following the promptings of our hearts, we beseech them to let us help them back to the paths of peace.

Will they object on the ground that they will not consent to any peace until they have assurances that it will be a *permanent* peace? That suggestion has been made—I think both sides have expressed a desire that the peace, when secured, shall be permanent—but who can give a pledge as to the future? If fear that the peace may not be permanent is given as the reason for refusal it is not a sufficient reason. While no one can stand surety for what may come, it is not difficult to adopt measures which will give far greater assurance of permanent peace than the world has ever known before.

Second. The treaty in which they join should provide for *investigation* by a permanent international commission of *every dispute* that may arise, no matter what its character or nature. The United States has already made thirty treaties embodying this principle and these thirty treaties link our country to nearly three-quarters of all the inhabitants of the world. We have such a treaty in force between the United States and four of the countries now at war—Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy. The principle of this treaty has been accepted by three other belligerents—Germany, Austria and Belgium—although treaties with these nations have not yet been negotiated. *These seven warring nations have endorsed the principle embodied in these treaties, namely, that there shall be no declaration of war or commencement of hostilities until the subject in dispute has been investigated by an international commission.* Why can they not apply the principle as between themselves? What cause of war is of such magnitude that nations can afford to commence shooting at each other before the cause is investigated? A treaty such as those which now protect the peace of the United States would give a year's time for investigation and report, and who doubts that a year's time would be sufficient to reach an amicable solution of almost every difficulty? Does anyone suppose that the present war would have been begun if a year's time had been taken to investigate the dispute between Austria and Servia? It will be remembered that Servia had only *twenty-four hours* in which to reply and it will also be remembered that during this brief time the rulers of the old world endeavored to find a means of preventing war. If they had only had some machinery which they could have employed to avert war, how gladly would they have availed themselves of it! The machinery provided by treaty can be resorted to with honor—yes, with honor—no matter how high a sense of honor the nation has. The trouble has been that while the nations were abundantly provided with *machinery for conducting war*, they possessed no machinery for the promotion of peace. A year's time allows passion to subside and reason to resume its sway—it allows man to act when he is calm instead of having to act when he is angry. When a man is angry he swaggers around and talks about what

he *can* do, and he often overestimates his strength; when he is calm he considers what he *ought* to do. When he is angry he hears the rumbling of earthquakes and the sweep of the hurricane; when he is calm he listens to the still small voice of conscience.

Third. While the period of investigation provided for in our treaties will go far toward preventing war, still even a year's deliberation does not give complete protection. In order to secure the investigation of all questions without exception, it was necessary to reserve to the contracting parties liberty of action at the conclusion of the investigation. War is thus reduced from a probability to a mere possibility, and this is an immeasurable advance; but the assurance of permanent peace can not be given until the desire for war is eradicated from the human heart. Compulsory periods of investigation supply the machinery by which nations can maintain peace with honor *if they so desire*, but the final work of the advocates of peace is educational—it is the cultivation of the spirit of brotherhood condensed into the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Is it impossible to imagine a civilization in which greatness will be measured by service and in which the rivalry will be a rivalry in doing good? No one doubts that the lot of each member of society would be infinitely better under such conditions; why not strive to bring about such conditions? Is it visionary to hope and labor for this end? "Where there is no vision the people perish." It is a "death grapple in the darkness twixt old systems and the Word." The old system has broken down; it can let loose the furies, but it can not bind them; it is impotent to save. The question is not whether the Word will triumph—that is certain—but when? And after what sufferings?

Thomas Carlyle, his voice rising clear and strong above the babble of mammon, asked, in the closing chapters of his *French Revolution*:

"Hast thou considered how Thought is stronger than Artillery-parks, and (were it fifty years after death and martyrdom, or were it two thousand years) writes and unwrites Acts of Parliament, removes mountains; models the World like soft clay? Also how the beginning of all Thought, worth the name, is Love."

The truth which he uttered is still truth, and, no matter who uttered it, the thought is the thought of Him who spake as never man spake; who was described in prophecy as The Prince of Peace; whose coming was greeted with the song of "Peace on Earth; Good Will to Men," and whose teachings, when applied, will usher in the enduring peace of an universal brotherhood.

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