

THE WAR WITH GERMANY

What Are We Fighting For Clarence Poe, Editor Progressive Farmer.

The United States is at war against Germany for two fundamental reasons. For one thing the present war from the beginning has been essentially a conflict between democracy and autocracy, and a nation, "conceived in liberty," as America was, cannot look uncaring upon the triumph of autocracy anywhere in the world. In the second place, we are fighting for the maintenance of human rights on the high seas. The sea is the "public road" of all nations. No country has a right to make it unsafe for people to travel the high seas of water, just as no man has a right to make it unsafe for other men to travel our highways of earth.

One of my good friends said, "I am not in favor of fighting Germany until she comes within the three-mile limit of our Atlantic Coast." Such a policy would mean the surrender of fundamental American rights and even human rights. Suppose two neighbors should get mad with each other, and one should say to you and your neighbors, "If any one of you travels the public road passing by my house you do so at your peril. My enemy travels along that road sometimes, and I will dynamite without warning every wagon, automobile, or buggy I see coming on that road, regardless of whether I kill you, your innocent wives, your sons and daughters, or babies suckling at the mother's breast."

If such a threat were made, it is easy enough to imagine what you and your neighbors would do. If you lived in an organized, civilized community, you would have the man seized as a criminal, restrained from his purpose, and punished for any execution of his threat. On the other hand, if you lived in an uncivilized frontier community, such as the "Wild West" was fifty years ago, you and the rest of the people would join together to fight that barbarian until he respected the common rights of humanity. And then in recognition of a supreme need, you might set up constables, courts, sheriffs, and jails to prevent any such defiance of human rights in future.

It is just such a threat against human rights that Germany has not only made but has carried into execution. When she brutally sank the gallant ship Lusitania and sent to the bottom of the sea scores and scores of non-combatant men and women, including mothers with little ones as those who prattle at your own fire-side tonight—when Germany did this and a hundred other similar acts previously outlawed by the conscience of mankind, she dyed her Macbeth hands with murderer's blood, which not all her science and skill and boasted "culture" can ever wipe out.

Now, if the nations of the earth were properly organized, there would be some supreme authority that would restrain and punish this murderer-nation, just as courts and sheriffs now punish murderer-individuals. But since we lack such a "league of nations to enforce peace" it is the inescapable duty of America to join in the voluntary effort of other peoples to go up against Germany until she renounces her murderous threats and promises to abide by the standards which Christendom has established.

And then there is one other thing which all good Americans hope will follow the final victory. Just as the outraged citizens in the frontier community, after fighting the outlaw, might set up orderly government to punish all individual offenders in future, so we hope that the nations now allied against Prussian brutality will not rest until they have established a "League of Nations" whereby all the peoples of the earth will unite their military and naval strength for the punishment of any individual nation which again breaks or threatens the world's peace. Ex-President Taft is head of a nationwide organization now working for the organization of such a League of Nations, and President Wilson has eloquently pledged all the powers of his great office to the accomplishment of the same end. Moreover, in France, in England, and in all the allied countries, men are inspired by the same high vision. As the great Frenchman recently visiting America, M. Viviani, declared before our own House of Representatives:

leave at the cost of our common immolation the noblest heritage future generations can possess."

The allied nations now at war with us, in answering President Wilson's note last December, declared their sympathy for "a league of nations to insure peace and justice throughout the world." And Premier Lloyd-George, of England, possibly the greatest personal force on earth today, makes this prediction as to conditions after the war:

"The nations will band themselves together to punish the first peace-breaker who comes out. As to the armies of Europe, every weapon will be a sword of justice in the government of men; every arm will be a constabulary for peace."

In other words, America is now fighting "a war against war," a war to prevent forever hereafter such wars as that which now rages. But the German ideal is militaristic. As a recent authority has declared, "she subordinates the civil power to the military power; she glorifies war and believes it not only to be necessary once in a while but to be a legitimate instrument of policy." As a nation she has no patience with the ideal of a league of nations: executing judgment in righteousness. Such an ideal to her is effeminate. She has freed herself, she declares, from "the contemptible sin of weakness." Force is to her as a god. "The iron hand," or "the mailed fist" is the familiar phrase that springs to any well-informed mind when German policy is mentioned. Bismarck, well called "the man of blood and iron," was the real father of modern Germany, and he has stamped the impress of his warlike and unscrupulous nature upon every feature of the nation. A long list of German philosophers and teachers have reiterated his views until the German mind is thoroughly inoculated with them. Writing in the dispassionate years of the early 90's, twenty years ago, Dr. A. Lawrence Lowell, now President of Harvard, correctly described the trend of German thought when he said:

"The Emperor is indeed an ardent believer in the new monarchical theory which has recently come into vogue in Germany—a theory that decries universal suffrage and proclaims the military monarchy as the best possible form of government—thus furnishing one of many examples of the way the end of the century is rejecting the principles and revising the conclusions that have been laboriously developed during the last hundred years. The fact is that ever since the battle of Sadowa a profound change has been coming over the German character. The dreamy, portical, mystical temperament has given way before the hard, practical, organizing spirit of the Prussians. The unity of the Fatherland which the dreamers failed to accomplish was brought about by means of the drill-sergeant, and hence the nation is ruled by his methods."

Let us consider, for example, the teachings of one typical German philosopher of recent years, Treitschke. Like many others of his class, he preaches that war is necessary for the elimination of weak peoples; and that the government need respect no promises, no moralities, when they stand in the way of its progress. Let us quote his exact words:

"The state has no power to limit its own power; hence no treaty when it becomes inconvenient can be binding; hence the very notion of arbitration is absurd; hence war is part of the Divine order."

In matters of difficulties with other governments, he declares, "it is absurd to bluster about morality, or expect the state to confront them with a catechism in her hand."

Nurtured on such teachings, is it any wonder that Germany, wishing to drive through Belgium to attack unprepared France, calmly ignored the treaty she had signed solemnly promising never to invade Belgium—contemptuously dismissed the "inconvenient" treaty as a "scrap of paper" and declared that necessity was sufficient excuse for her action?

As a matter of fact, the modern German Empire is built on fraud. The war with France in the 70's by which Germany established and enriched itself was brought on by an admitted lie and forgery by Bismarck himself.

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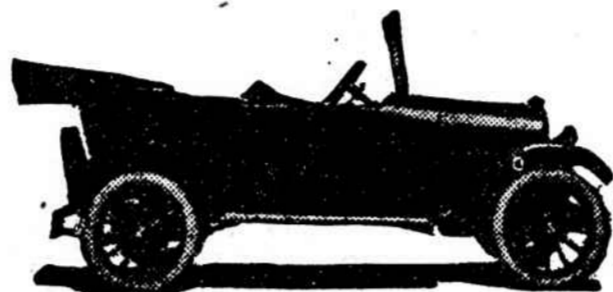
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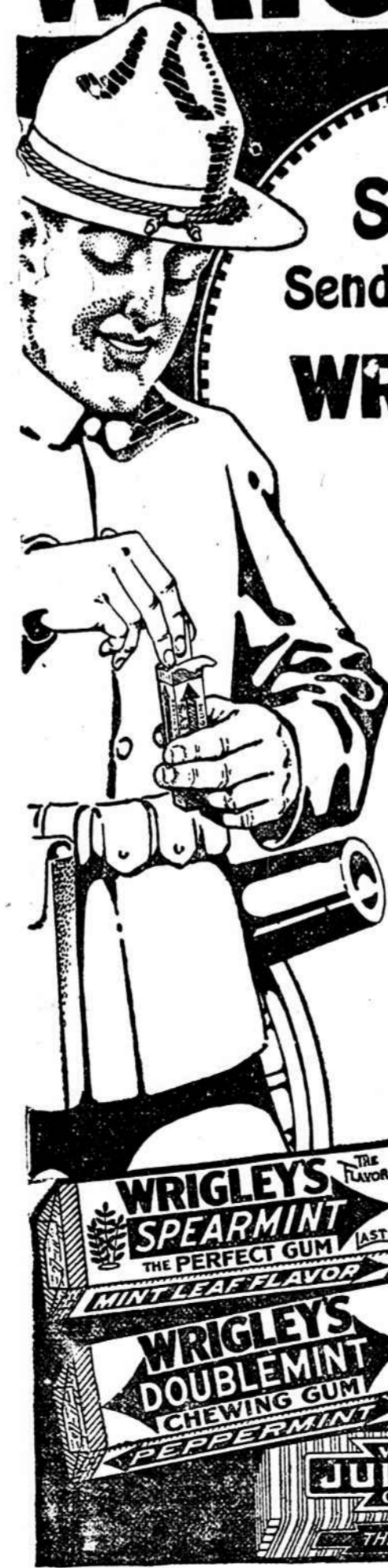


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