

has kept us out of the fray. It is not hard to think of other prominent Americans who, in his place, would have embroiled us long ago! There are many of us who do not like Mr. Wilson's diplomatic methods; they verge too much on a policy of drift. But we prefer them to bellicose methods. The power of the President, moreover, has its limits. Congress has the authority to place an embargo on the export of arms; the Senate has the final word in foreign relations. German-Americans should work toward two ends, I think,—first, to make our neutrality genuine and impartial, and second and more important, to keep America out of the war. That danger has by no means passed. To accomplish these ends they should concentrate on American opinion, try to squeeze out of it unfairness, rancor and intolerance. Already they have accomplished something in this direction. The tone of American opinion has improved since the start of the war. But there still remains much ground to be ploughed.

#### THE AMERICAN VIEW.

The people of the United States have escaped the war fever, although persistent attempts are made to arouse them to a fighting mood. Beyond cavil the citizens of this country are bent on peace.

Rudyard Kipling, whose occupation these days is to out-Junker the Junkers, has proposed the pleasant little toast; "Damn all neutrals!" Undoubtedly Mr. Kipling cocked a baleful eye at the United States when he uttered this. We could afford to smile at Mr. Kipling's spleen if he stood alone. But within the last year many militant non-combatants among the Allies have cast baleful glances at the United States. The indifference of America offends them as deeply, apparently, as the hatred of their enemy. Why, they ask with a gesture of impatience, should Americans stand aside in this crisis of civilization? Why should they allow others to fight their battle for them—the battle of liberty and democracy? And these critics of ours in England and France are none too delicate in attributing motives for this Yankee apathy toward their noble cause. They insinuate we are too busy making dollars out of others' distress to heed the call of the spirit, and they frankly hint that when we say we are too proud to fight we mean too cowardly.

A number of Britons have recently unburdened themselves on this subject of American neutrality.<sup>2</sup> Let me quote a few of the choicer passages:

"We fight not merely for our threatened selves; we fight for

<sup>2</sup> *Everybody's Magazine*, January, 1916.

the liberty and peace of the whole world. We fight, and you Americans know we fight, for you. War is a tragic and terrible business, and those who will not face the blood and dust of it must be content to play only the most secondary of parts in the day of reckoning.

“H. G. WELLS.”

“On the last question, however,—the future of America in face of a German triumph—I can speak, if not with authority, at least with certainty. There is simply no doubt in the world that a German power founded on the breaking of France and England would have ultimately to break America, too, before its work was secure. A rich and disdainful democracy across the Atlantic is something which the German Empire simply could not afford to tolerate. If Germany gets as far as that, it would be vain to discuss whether America should fight, because America certainly will; and in that fight, please God, she would have Burgoyne beside her as well as Lafayette.

G. K. CHESTERTON.”

“The British nation would certainly be much gratified if their kinsmen, the Americans, should take a hand in suppressing the ‘mad bull of Europe.’ England would certainly be greatly benefited if America should go to war with Germany. Sir Roper Parkington, M.P., in a recent speech said: ‘If the Americans should join the Allies, the war would soon be ended.’ SIR HIRAM MAXIM.”

“Personally, I have always held that America would come to England’s assistance if ever England was hard pressed. Great Britain as yet is not, thank God, in a hole. Still, it has puzzled me not a little during the past year to assign a good cause for America remaining neutral in this awful contest. Is not America, just as much as Great Britain, a lover of justice and a hater of such atrocities as those which have characterized the warfare of the Huns? And as a friend she can no longer stand aloof and see civilization, and all that great nations are bound to uphold and hold dear, crushed and trampled under foot by barbarism and ‘frightfulness.’ I am quite convinced that it is the unanimous opinion throughout Great Britain that America should join the Allies, and it is undoubtedly a fixed hope in this country that she will assuredly do so before many months have passed. GENERAL GARNET WOLSELEY.”

These gentlemen take their malice and themselves very seriously. But they have, as it seems to me, totally misjudged the trend of American opinion since the outbreak of hostilities. They do not see that Americans—outside of the Anglomaniacs, found chiefly along the Atlantic seaboard—passionately desire peace because they have come to believe that peace serves not only the best interests of

themselves but of civilization itself. The Middle West, the West, and the South, do not want war, will not have war. Even in the hypnotized East there is a great sober element which would regard a plunge into this welter of slaughter as the worst possible calamity to the Republic. Only the pro-Ally fanatics (who are the most dangerous hyphenates we harbor, as I shall attempt to point out in a moment) want war and work for war.

Americans, in other words, have traveled far from that naive partisanship for the Allies which characterized them eighteen months ago. What has wrought this change in sentiment? Chiefly the growth of a healthy cynicism. I am speaking now of the bulk of Americans, who lie in opinion between the red-hot pro-Germans on the one extreme and the red-hot pro-Ally sympathizers on the other extreme. This great sane mass of the nation has disallowed the high-sounding declarations, the grandiose pretensions, of either side. It has come to some very definite conclusions: it believes that this war was willed by governments, not by peoples; that it sprang directly from a system of diplomatic groups and military alliances, each of which was trying constantly to tilt or upset the balance of power in its own favor; that the only significant rivalries behind the mutual hostilities were imperialistic rivalries; that the real stakes in this war are colonies, trade pre-emptions, strategic ports and straits, and above all military prestige; that militarism may be indicated by a predominant navy as well as by a great army, and that its essence is neither, but an itch for power and a muddle of selfish national ambitions; that militarism is not exclusively or even principally a Prussian disease, but a European, indeed, a world disease; that despite all the fine phrases about freedom, justice and democracy, the real danger to civilization lies in the war itself and in its spread; that a war of imperialistic rivalries enlists the support of great populations by cant and by lies about the enemy; and that as the struggle grows in bitterness and in extent of bereavement, both sides—but especially the losing side—become fanatic in hatred of the foe.

In brief, Americans refuse to be impressed longer by sham and pose. They are inclined to agree with Francis Delaisi, who predicted in 1911 that the business magnates and the politicians were about to plunge Europe into an imperialistic struggle.<sup>3</sup> They are inclined to agree with Bernard Shaw, who asserted early in the conflict: "All attempts to represent this war as anything higher or more significant

<sup>3</sup> *The Inevitable War (La guerre qui vient)*, by Francis Delaisi. Paris, 1911; Boston, 1915.

philosophically or politically or religiously for our Junkers and our Tommies than a quite primitive contest of the pugnacity that bullies and the pugnacity that will not be bullied are foredoomed to the derision of history." Bryan voiced American sentiment when he called it a "causeless war." Of course the phrase is inaccurate; there were causes enough, such as they were. Rather it should be called a witless war.

Another reason why most Americans cannot share the views of the solemn Englishmen above quoted is that Americans have not given way to hatred of Germans. We regard them as human beings much like other men and women, not as "Huns," "savages" and "beasts." The American does not have the Briton's naive belief in German atrocities. He knows that many of these tales (such as that of the Belgian child with severed hands) have been disproved a hundred times. He hears quite as frightful reports of Russian atrocities and of French outrages. He understands that war is a gruesome business, and that it brings out some of the basest traits in human nature; but he is unwilling to heap all the abuse due to human nature at its worst on Teutonic nature. And not only does the American show a wholesome skepticism toward the atrocity yarns paraded by the Allied governments; he goes further; he feels a revulsion of disgust. He wonders why men who are gentlemen attack the reputations as well as the soldiers of their foes, and keep up a campaign of calumny which they know in part at least to be false, a campaign at once malicious and mendacious.

Still another reason why the American feels kindlier toward Germany is that he has a high respect for German civilization, in times of peace at any rate. The British upper classes seem always to have regarded Germans with the contempt that the established feel toward the *nouveau riche*. They are unappreciative of German poetry, art and literature; they speak of boors and canaille; they appear to have gathered their estimate of the German nation by watching a fat Berliner eat sauerkraut in a beer-garden. The American on the other hand gives German civilization its due, even though he be one who deplores its "militarism." He knows that German music and German science lead the world; he admires the Germans for their educational system, for their municipalities, for their social insurance. Englishmen have often commented on the paucity of learning in America, and compared our culture unfavorably with their own; and perhaps in general the boast is justified. But in their ignorance of the real Germany and of German cultural attainments the English upper classes have shown them-

selves to be precisely what Matthew Arnold called them— "barbarians."

Our British critics should remember that Americans are fully competent to judge for themselves what the effect of a German victory would be on the United States. We are not affrighted over hypothetical German schemes. We know perfectly well that a German victory would not lead to the "enslavement" of either England or of France, and we are not worried about the fate of Suez or of India. We do not forget, again, that a German defeat means not only the triumph of British imperialism, but the triumph of Russia and Japan. We would rather see the Balkan peoples, or the races of the Near East, Prussianized than Russianized. And most vividly of all, Americans realize that the trend of world politics after the war is a matter of sheer speculation. It is all guesswork; no one knows. The dread designs which the British attribute to the German government are deduced from enmity and malice, not from reason or clearheaded calculation. America's answer to all this alarmist talk is military and naval preparedness; we shall be ready to meet aggression, from whatever quarter! So far as South America is concerned, Englishmen would do well to ponder a bit the pregnant remark of Israel Zangwill: "But the Monroe Doctrine would lose its last vestige of meaning if America intervened in a European war."

The American people have come to the conclusion that peace is their duty. This is not from fear, greed or sluggishness. We are not ultra-pacifists in this country; we do not want peace at any price, especially at the price of honor. But that is just the point: we are not convinced that any great moral principle, or even any fundamental issue of nationality, is at stake in this conflict. As the strife in Europe grows more desperate, as the non-combatant populations show a more revengeful and hateful temper, the war seems more and more remote (except to the Anglomaniacs) from American interests. After all, why should America feed her sons to this carnage by the thousands, or the hundreds of thousands? Why should boys from the farms of Ohio, Kansas and Texas die to help France take Alsace-Lorraine, or the Romanoffs to victimize more peoples? What have we to gain by becoming, for the first time in our history, entangled in murderous European rivalries? Why should we abandon our one opportunity of service, that, as President Wilson has expressed it, of keeping the "processes of peace alive, if only to prevent collective economic ruin"?

At the start the mass of Americans felt both an intense loyalty

to the cause of the Allies, and a gripping horror at the catastrophe to Europe. Both of these feelings have to some extent weakened. The intellectual classes are not now so much concerned over the military outcome as over the prospective terms of settlement. They hope that both sides will act with a measure of magnanimity and restraint which will give some basis for a permanent peace. By the common man, by the man in the street, the war is now regarded with indifference, indeed with boredom. Our vast American irreverence has asserted itself, even in the face of the most awful battle of history. In many places "war talk" is tabooed, considered bad form. The majority of Americans, probably, still hope to see the Allies win; but their interest is sentimental rather than vital. It is not the breathless solicitude of one who watches his champion do battle to save him; it is rather the enthusiasm of the baseball "fan" who cheers for the home team. At the beginning of the war the favorite American quip was: "I'm neutral; I don't care who beats Germany." At present Americans are so neutral they are reconciled to the prospect of seeing Germany win, if she can muster the strength. This growth of indifference may gall Englishmen, Frenchmen and American Tories. But it is, I submit, a patent fact.

#### THE ANGLOMANIACS.

There is a conspicuous element in America which has persistently refused to see this war through American eyes. When these persons look at contemporary history they look at it from the point of view of Englishmen and Frenchmen; when they urge action they urge it in the interest of the European coalition to which England and France belong. They are our pro-Ally fanatics, our Anglomaniacs, our American Tories. By whatever name they may be called, they have one distinguishing mark: they make mock of our neutrality.

August 18, 1914, before the war was a month old, President Wilson issued an appeal for restraint in discussing the conflict. The President said in part:

"The effect of the war upon the United States will depend upon what American citizens say or do. Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned.

"The people of the United States are drawn from many nations, and chiefly from the nations now at war. It is natural and inevitable that there should be the utmost variety of sympathy and desire