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YOUNG MEN AND OLD ERRORS

By CHARLES H. DENNIS

Managing Editor of The Chicago Daily News

An eminent professional man more than eighty years old said to me recently: "Never before in all my life have I been so proud of being an American citizen as I am today."

These words express what is in the hearts of all of us. The access of pride in our Americanism is due, of course, to the fact that we see our people rising in stern determination, with no thought of material gain, to beat down organized evil and thus refute in the only effective way certain hateful arguments that threaten to destroy the very soul of humanity.

Through those arguments—which undertake to justify robbery and oppression by advancing the claim that the perpetrators of those crimes are a race superior in intellectual merit and achievement to all other races—unrestrained militarism has established domination over a great empire and its subject nations.

These accordingly have put aside all considerations of honor and justice, all sentiments of mercy, that they may engage in the desperate adventure of world conquest for their own material profit.

Old errors die hard. Each generation in its turn is induced to accept a multitude of them as a part of the accumulated wisdom of preceding generations.

Because of the strong bonds that custom forges as years pass, hope of progress must rest mainly on the young men.

Theirs are the generous hearts and theirs the wide horizons. Some of them go far, even in times when life all about them is cast in molds of precedent and convention.

The young men of today find the

world in conflagration through no fault of theirs. Into this, their heritage, Attila has broken again to ravage and possess. They are rallying to the defense of all that free men hold dear at the command of their own souls no less than at the call of the neglectful, the foolishly unprepared, the long uncomprehending older generation that holds the places of authority.

Young Americans, indeed, have been fighting by thousands in the armies of Britain and France almost from the beginning of the war. The comprehending heart of youth told them long ago what to do and they did it.

When the young men of this and the other democracies shall have rescued the world from its present peril by their heavy toil, their heroism and their blood, they should straightway possess it spiritually, the living and the dead—for bright valor cannot die.

Possessing their heritage in the sense that they—not old forms of error—rule it, they will, I predict, administer it in the spirit of flaming justice that they now carry with them to the war. Youth fights for immortal things—human liberty, human equality, the universal right to happiness.

These and kindred blessings youth shall uphold with unconquerable determination when it returns bearing peace to this dear land.

I see daily among the young men in khaki or navy blue a remarkable number of strong, serious faces, faces prophetic of new days that shall be better days.

Most affectionately, most trustingly, I greet these young men. They have tasks of enormous hardship to perform in the days to come.

In their faces they bear the proof that they are equal to those tasks.

JULY 4, 1918

Speaking before any of the present belligerents had declared war, before the Potsdam Conference was held, before war clouds were generally perceptible on the world horizon, President Wilson said:

"I do not know that there will be a Declaration of Independence and of grievances for mankind, but I believe that if any such document is ever drawn it will be drawn in the spirit of the American Declaration of Independence and that America has lifted high the light which will shine unto all generations and guide the feet of mankind to the goal of justice and liberty and peace."

The occasion of the President's address was a Fourth of July observance in old Independence Hall, Philadelphia. His words have a new significance on this Independence Day. They are seen to be something more than high-sounding abstractions such as fall from the lips of many Fourth of July orators, and the President is seen to be a prophet of the immediate future.

With the historic injunction to beware of entangling alliances; with a comfortable sense of remoteness from the theatre of European misunderstandings and only a jealousy for the Monroe doctrine to foreshadow any trouble with the Eastern world, America looked confidently forward to days and years of peace and prosperity,

Even our Mexican difficulties had not assumed the alarming proportions of the next few months.

It was felt, when the President's address was read throughout the country, that it was a beautiful example of his mastery of the English language. And the address seemed quite innocuous. In other words, it was a document that would have done credit to a monarch in those hair-trigger days of European suspicion that preceded the war.

Four years have gone since the address was delivered—not long in the life of a nation, not long in international relations which often are predated upon a century of anticipation. To-day the man in the street reads again the American Declaration of Independence and sees between the lines the terms of the covenant of peace.

That Declaration of Independence was the charter of American liberty. It was a document that instantly took its place with Magna Charta.

In the broader sanctions to which it is pointing there is in its introductory sentences a warning to the Germanic Allies and an inspiration to the American people, for therein it is stated that a "due respect for the opinions of mankind" demands the statement of the reasons for the action of the Colonies.

It is that due respect for the opinions of mankind which Germany has ignored. Those opinions which Germany held in contempt are founded

upon a higher law of which Germany was not ignorant, but which she appreciated too lightly.

It is that due respect for the opinions of mankind which America has heeded. America, unlike Germany, is not outside the family of civilization, and when her conscience spoke she knew that it was the voice of mankind.

The opinions of mankind, which

alone could pronounce judgment upon the actions of the Colonists, will be the final arbiters of the present conflict.

Before that bar America now, as in 1776, has not the slightest fear as to the verdict, for she still lifts high "the light which will shine unto all generations and guide the feet of mankind to the goal of justice and liberty and peace."

Confessions Of A Conscript

(This is the sixth of a series of diary entries written by a young man called from his civilian pursuits by the operation of the selective draft. It is a frank, outspoken record of his own feelings, thoughts and emotions, which, perhaps, have been shared by other American men now overseas or in training. These diary entries are commended to the soldiers of the National Army as a truthful portrayal of the process of converting civilians into soldiers of "the finest army ever called to the colors by any nation." The writer is Ted Wallace, a luxury-loving young man, who, at the outset has no settled convictions, except selfish ones, and who is transformed by the purging process of war into a red-blooded patriot.)

Sept. 6.

I am in uniform. Two hundred of us came to camp yesterday. We were escorted to the train by a great cheering crowd. The trip was not unpleasant. It was only a two-hour run—for our camp is not far from home. That is a consolation at any rate, for I am told that we can receive visitors and occasionally can go on furloughs if our behavior is good.

The cantonment is a revelation. As far as you can see there are buildings. They seem well constructed and there are good shower baths. We will live in long barracks that are like dormi-

nificance from now on. I am in the army and the flag is more than my flag.

Tonight we were called to the General's headquarters. A man who said he was a conscientious objector was there. He had been called in before the General early in the day when he had said flatly he would not fight. The General was not rough with him; instead he reasoned with him. And the upshot of it all was that we were called to headquarters to hear the story from his own lips.

The General introduced him. As nearly as I can remember his speech, it was like this: "Men, this young man was called, like you. But he had a conscientious objection to war. Also let me say that he had the courage of his convictions—a good quality in anyone, and especially in a soldier. But let him tell you his story."

The young man stood out by the General. He was a good-looking young chap, and he, too, was all enthusiasm. "Fellows," he began, "when I came here I made up my mind that no government could compel me to fight. I said so. The General heard about and ordered me to his quarters. He pointed to his uniform and said he was proud to wear it and that nothing he did should ever shame it. He said he too abhorred war—as war. But he loved to fight for the right. He told me he was willing to resort to force when it was necessary and asked me why I, too, could not be proud to fight even as he was proud for the finest of flags and the highest of ideals. Somehow, fel-



"You certainly are in fine physical shape."

lows, I came to see things in a new light and I just want to tell you that conscientious objector though I was, I, too, am proud to fight against violence and against villainess. From now on I am a soldier."

He was tremendously cheered and so was the General, and I came to my barracks thinking very deeply. My mates seem like very decent chaps. Of course, they have not all come from as nice homes as I have had. But they seem all right. And I have made up my mind to get along with them as best I can. In the building with us are six officers. The Captain is a young man only a short time out of West Point and the others are graduates of the training camps. They seem like very decent chaps, too. One of the lieutenants was inclined to be very short in his dealings with the men.—The Captain touched him on the shoulder. We could not hear what he said. But the Lieutenant lost all his shortness and became very pleasant.

Tonight, just before "Taps," I think that's what they call it—the Lieutenant came upstairs. He wanted to know if we had enough blankets and called out good-naturedly, "Don't get lonely on this first night away from home. The army is not a half bad place and this army is organized to do a great job. Good night."



It was a new experience to me to have to wash dishes.

Again we were examined physically and the surgeon who looked me over said, "You certainly are in fine shape. You've kept up your athletics, haven't you?"

When it was all over we were very hungry. We were given mess pans and cups and told to get our "chow." Some of the men ate theirs with great relish. I couldn't go mine. But this morning—wow! I was hungry and everything tasted good.

It was a new experience to me to have to wash dishes. Somehow I always despised the man dishwasher. But here it is different. If your dishes are not washed clean you will be punished. There is a kind of punishment known as kitchen police and it means cleaning up the whole kitchen if you don't clean your own dishes. None of that for me.

This morning we "drew" our uniforms. I have everything from socks to hat. Even my underwear is provided by the Government. It is odd underwear. It is made of some kind of cotton goods with webbing down the sides. It looks cheap and feels cheap. But I bet it will wear like iron.

What is there about a uniform that makes you stand straighter. I am sure I don't know. But I am conscious that I am more erect. And I must admit that this evening, when they had a ceremony called "retreat" and lowered the flag, I had a creepy sort of feeling as "The Star Spangled Banner" was played.

I am not quite reconciled to serving in the army. I am resigned to it. But things must take on a new sig-