

**THE MONROE JOURNAL.**

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**Why War?**

In the issue before the last The Journal had an editorial calling attention to the lack of an adequate explanation of the existence of war in general and especially the present war. It was pointed out that the present war shows none of the ancient lines of cleavage by race, religion or other differences which formerly caused wars, and it was asked what was the predisposing cause of war in modern times, anyway. The Greensboro News, whose editor writes with great versatility and often fine analytical power, copied the editorial and answered it. The sum of its answer is that war is a result of human nature, and that "the individual will fight under many of the same conditions and for the same reasons that other animals will fight. Men have fought and died for ideals; therefore it is clear that the fight-impulse in the human is partly psychic. Nations, or groups of men, fight together in common cause partly because they are composed of individual animals and individual souls, and partly because there is a considerable degree of similitude between the individual and the nation."

It is precisely the fact that there is no similitude between a civilized man as an individual and a modern nation at war that The Journal is asking the question. The average civilized man is gentle, he is kind, he abhors the idea of causing even the guilty, to say nothing of the innocent, to suffer. He regards human life as so sacred that there is no ethical sanction for relieving the hopelessly wounded from suffering by inflicting a merciful death, and we will not even permit the sub-normal child to die, and we care for the congenital idiot with the tenderest care, when it would be a mercy to put them out of the way. All the world today protests against the logical development of war as practiced by Ger-

many, whereas, if the theory of war is correct, we should admire her cruelties and her wholesale murder of innocents. We assert flatfooted that every step in the mental, social and moral development of man as an individual is a condemnation of war, and that the individual of every civilized nation is a standing denial of the belief that war is a result of anything inherent in man. For that reason, we again ask, why do modern nations, all the while protesting that they abhor war and are really arguing to maintain peace, find themselves at war?

It is commonly asserted that in going to war men revert to the primitive instincts of man. We deny it. Go as far back as you wish in the history of man as an animal and you will find no instinct to fight except that common to other animals—for defence or sustenance, or perchance in the heat of anger. Even the lower animals do not fight against their kind except as a last extremity. Even the primitive savages of America did not fight their friends. Yet in nations at war among civilized men, brothers will fight brothers. Among white nations of the earth there is no enmity whatever among individuals. English, French, Germans, Russians, Americans, intermarry and there is not even a trace of racial feeling or prejudice. The very crowned heads of Europe now in a death grapple are nearly all of blood kin. The old Emperor of Austria has long been called the grandfather of Europe, so largely intermarried has his blood with other nations. The poets, the philosophers and the christians of each of the nations love each other as individuals and kindred souls. It is folly of the rankest kind to say that when these nations are plunged into war that it is on account of a reversion to individual instincts. It is in spite of every individual impulse. The whole course of civilization and christianity has been to bring men from their former habits of harshness and cruelty, and in the individual this has been almost perfectly accomplished. So true is this that a nation has to be lashed to fury by its militarists and false philosophers before it will engage in war.

In national warfare there is not the excuse of individual self preservation, or hot blood, or personal advantage. The soldiers who fight have nothing personally against their enemies and we herald as the finest quality of human nature the action of one enemy doing something for another. No individual in the

war hopes to gain a personal advantage by slaying innocent men and women and children with whom he has no enmity. He is only screwed up to it by being made to believe that in some way he is helping his own nation, yet every one will admit that no matter what the outcome, his nation is to be on the whole injured, and not benefitted by war. For these reasons war between nations is absolutely illogical, and so far unexplained, and we are where we started, namely, why do nations go to war?

The argument that war is necessary to make nations virtle and permanent is even a greater absurdity. All the military nations have been destroyed, either because of their militarism or in spite of it. Take either horn of the dilemma that you choose. Take the present war as an illustration of the fallacy of the argument. According to the best opinion of the world the very nations that are most unwarlike are the ones that deserve to win: The German philosophers held in the nations most contempt the people of France and England and said that they were decaying and would go to pieces when they came in clash with Germany. Yet today the world knows that man for man every French soldier is equal to every German soldier. And because of her accomplishments as a nation of peaceful and contemptible traders, England today is the most powerful enemy that Germany has and is the object of the deepest hatred of German militarists. Why? Because against the despised Englishman devoted to peace, a nation that has not conscripted a soldier, German militarism huris itself in futile hatred. The pope of Rome once divided the world between Spain and Portugal, both military nations with huge empires based upon force, yet they are today of no consequence. Today the last fruits of Spanish militarism are over-ripe in blood stained Mexico. If fighting makes fine people we must admit the great superiority of Mexico. Peaceful, guzzling swine, the Spaniard declared the Americans to be a few years ago, yet when the clash came, which went down? The sun never sets upon British possession today, yet the Spanish Armada was built to crush the life out of the young nation devoted to trade and freedom.

In all his relations man has left behind the idea of fighting, except in his relation of nation to nation. And nations make war upon each other not because it is a natural or neces-

sary or useful thing to do, but simply because man hasn't yet taken his last forward step. It is the next. He is getting away from the idea as fast as the jingoes, militarists and false philosophers will allow him to. The militarist writers of every nation bewail a lack of military spirit in their own countries and say that it exists in others. Yet the present cataclysm was brought about by the militarist caste of Germany who feared to let the non-military spirit grow longer. They precipitated the war not because the German people wanted it, but because they knew that the growing spirit of peace meant their undoing. They took the sword in hand and by the sword they will die.

How absurd and criminal for America to take up the outworn cudgels and methods and arguments of a savage caste fattening in peace upon the toil of the masses of its own country and in war perpetuating outrages that savagery might well have balked at a hundreds years ago. The fiction of national honor will pass away as the fiction of personal honor has passed. A hundred years ago personal honor upheld the code duello, but today that code is in the same criminal class with assassination. We have found that national honor is vindicated by honest demeanor and not by murdering one who questions it. We are as certain to find that national honor can be vindicated by national honesty, and not by Zeppelin bombs dropped in cradles of babies.

To say that men will not soon learn that war between nations is as great a folly as butchery among individuals is to deny the plainest facts of history. So far have we traveled away from the idea of the necessity for fighting, that we cannot today conceive of a war between England and the United States. The mantle of our government covers more territory than continental Europe, yet who dreams of another civil war in this country? To show that national enmities are false beliefs, we have only to look back within our own living memory. A few years ago the militarist of England and France said that these countries must fight and Englishmen advocated an alliance with Germany against France and Russia. Rudyard Kipling is not yet an old man, yet his fame had already been made secure before he wrote the anti-Russian poem which fired the militarists of England—"Beware of the Man That Walks Like a Bear." Japan and Russia today are allies. The statesmanship of England kept the Sick Man of Europe alive for half a century, yet today her guns are thundering upon his last stronghold in Europe, and another christian nation holds his garments while he outrages the women of christians whose God the blasphemous Kaiser claims as side partner in his own butcheries.

Men will not outgrow war? They will unless history is fiction and truth offers no hope.

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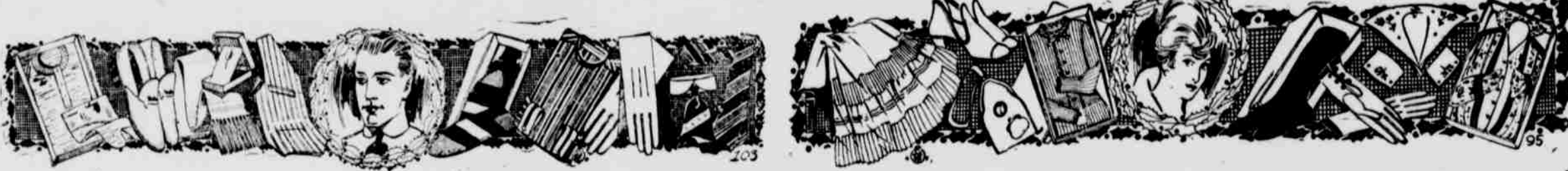
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