

What War Is

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the zest and joy of living, you convert earthly existence into a tragedy and an unfathomable mystery. The war day by day adds to the vast company of mothers who are weeping, and who, like Rachel, can not be comforted, because their sons are dead. Day by day the multitude of widows grows, hour by hour the number of orphans is increased. Every day God alone knows how many women die of a broken heart. War kills women as well as men. But you can not kill men and women without killing children. An American who has just returned from Europe after a sojourn there of several months reports that fully 500,000 children have perished in the present war, chiefly from the lack of nourishment. He says that in parts of Poland there is scarcely a child left under six years of age.

If then war is the killing of the strongest of a nation's men, war means the impoverishment of the blood of the human race. War reduces the physical stature of mankind. In peace we are under the law of the survival of the fittest. In the years of peace it is the strong who flourish and grow stronger, whereas in time of war humanity passes under a different law, the survival of the unfit. Peace kills off the weak, war kills off the strong. War, therefore, is contrary to nature. It is a law of nature that all living beings shall struggle, but it is not a law of nature that human beings shall kill one another. Killing men is a violation of the law of God, and nations which delight in war are soon or late, eliminated from the earth. The great empires of antiquity went down because they were all warring empires. In war they sacrificed their strongest men, and today many of them are only heaps of dust. The Almighty will beat into dust the empires and kingdoms of our modern world if men do not beat their swords into ploughshares and agree to make war no more. The art of killing men has been so elaborated and perfected by the inventions of the last fifty years, that war is deadlier than it has ever been before, so that Europe is today reducing the stature of the men of generations yet

unborn, and is enfeebling the physical and moral stamina of the nations through more than a hundred years to come.

We can see what war is more distinctly because science has unrolled it and spread it out. It has increased the intensity of its movements, and so concentrated its energy that we can see better what its purpose is and what is the temper of its spirit. Its spirit is murderous, and now that its spirit can utilize more effective weapons, it piles up the dead with such celerity that the heart stands aghast. War is killing men, and the more swiftly it kills them, the more successful war is counted. The savages used to tomahawk one man at a time. War now exults in the trick of snuffing out a thousand lives at once. Science has given new dimensions. Formerly it had only length and breadth. Men now wage war above the clouds and beneath the surface of the sea. They go into the air to kill, they descend into the ocean to kill. Wherever they go they go to kill. Three kingdoms, the earth, the sea, the air, are all now under the dominion of war, and all of them are bespattered with blood. War, wherever it is waged, is the slaughtering of men. The Almighty has stretched war out to unprecedented dimensions in order that we might know more unmistakably what war is.

Not only has the present war colossal dimensions, but it is hung up against a background different from any which the world had heretofore furnished. Ours is a humanitarian age. The hearts of men the world over have been growing gentle through the last hundred years. Men everywhere are thinking of human betterment, and are touched with pity for those who suffer. To alleviate the sufferings of mankind has become in widening circles a passion. Great companies of men and women have dedicated themselves to the task of fighting disease. Pain is one of the enemies upon which our age makes unceasing war. Millions of dollars have been invested in laboratories and hospitals around the world for the purpose of investigating the causes of diseases, and of healing the multitudes who are sick. Men are increasingly sensitive to the needs of their fellows, and to save life, not destroy it, has become the

ambition and aim of society. City officials look carefully into the milk bottles every morning, determined that even the babies shall be in no wise cheated or wronged. Clinics are opened for the poor, and wherever men and women suffer, are found skilled and sympathetic servants eager to minister to their needs. The whole world has within a half century been fitted up as a hospital, and the supreme aim of civilization has been the saving of life. And then, after we had gotten the wards all in order, and had supplied ourselves with anaesthetics, antiseptics, and antitoxins, and a thousand appliances and remedies for the warfare against pain and the redemption of human life, all at once war burst through the door, shouting: "I come not to save but to destroy." Then, if never before, we realized that war is a devil, that war is from the lowest depths of hell. We never realized his hideousness until we saw him in the light of a world that has learned from Jesus of Nazareth the joy and glory of social service.

War is no longer half hidden in the darkness. War stands out before us, in the limelight, naked. We Americans occupy a box seat in the theatre, and the bloody drama is enacted before our eyes. We can see it as no other non-European people. We are connected with the scene of conflict by electric wires and the more subtle wires of the ether. Photography had been perfected before the war began that we might see the pictures of its most hideous details. No other war has ever been exhibited to the world in such unending panoramas of pen sketches, and no other has ever been shown in moving pictures. It is clear to all who have eyes to see that war's crowning ambition is destruction. Science has sharpened its features, and we see it through an atmosphere which has been cleansed by the new dreams of a Christianized heart.

And what do we behold? We see that war is an atrocity. Much has been said about the atrocities of the various armies engaged. Why should we be surprised at these? War itself is an atrocity, and is the mother of every other atrocity which the human mind can conceive of. It can not do its work without lying and stealing and killing. Wherever it goes it spreads desolation and slaughter, and the ruin of everything which the heart holds dear.

We see now that the nature of it can not be changed. We talk sometimes of civilized warfare, and some have gone so far as to speak of Christian warfare, but there is no such thing as Christian warfare, and you degrade the adjective "civilized" whenever you apply it to war. War is barbarism, and you can not eliminate its barbarity. War is savagery and you can not make it humane. War is now in essence what it was in the days of Tamerlane and Attila, in the time of Ramses II, and Ashurbanipal. As soon as the German army crossed into Belgium men began to do precisely what men did there two thousand years before when Julius Caesar carried the Roman Eagles across that land, they proceeded to butcher other men, and graves were filled with the mangled bodies of the slain. A library was burned just as the Alexandrian library was burned, a cathedral was ruined just as the Parthenon was ruined, homes were demolished just as they were in the days of Genghis Khan, innocent men and women were done to death just as they were in the days of Tiglath Pileser. We now know that war can never be refined, purified, or rendered human. War is a monster of the primeval slime. Warriors no longer fight from the backs of prancing chargers, they lie on their bellies in the trenches. Performing the work of the cave

dweller it is fitting that they should take the cave dweller's posture. War is of the earth earthy, it is appropriate that those who engage in it should be compelled to wallow in the mud.

We now see that war is a blunder, an absurdity, a form of foolery, a species of insanity. Can you conceive of anything more idiotic than that which Europe is now doing? Not one of the nations is fighting for a glorious principle. They are all fighting in self-defense. They are putting into the furnace all the money they have earned during the last hundred years. They are consuming not only their present possessions, but are mortgaging the future. They are tying a millstone around the neck of generations not yet born. The nations are spending, it is estimated, one hundred million dollars a day. The debts of all of them mount into the billions, that of one of them standing now at eleven billions. The wise men of Europe are piling on the backs of the nations burdens under which they will stagger for generations.

War is a wrong, a monstrous crime against mankind. Europe is showing us what an unspeakable crime it is. The war is covering Europe with graves, but that is not all. It is covering Europe with maimed and crippled men. That is not all. It is covering Europe with pauperized and homeless women and children. That is not all. It is impoverishing society. It is eating up the foundations for education and research, and the multiform work for social amelioration. That is not all. It is impoverishing the mind. It is blunting sensibilities, feeding wild



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