

fluence of high example. If we adhere to this policy we LEAD the world and we should be satisfied with our primacy. If, on the other hand, we are to revolutionize our methods, we must be content to follow at the rear end of the European procession. We can not take the lead if we join the European group, for leadership in that group requires the acceptance of the doctrine of conquest. We could at best be a poor second if we so changed our national policy as to become a part of a European police force. We would not be "one of the finest" on parade day — we would limp along apologetically, with downcast eyes and blushing cheeks. No, the advocates of the European police force plan can not silence opposition with an intellectual frown; they cannot dismiss their opponents with such epithets as "pacifist" and "non-resistant" — they must come out in the open and admit: First, that they are willing to repudiate the teachings of Washington; second, that they are ready to abandon the Doctrine of Monroe; third, that they favor such an amendment of the constitution as will transfer the power to declare war from congress to the nations across the sea, and, fourth, that they are tired of being good and hunger for the excitement of the camp and the man hunt.

Let the people understand the real purpose of the "League to Enforce Peace," and not even the prestige of the deluded scholars who have cast in their lot with it can save it from the execrations of an indignant public.

W. J. BRYAN.

A REFERENDUM ON WAR

A southern congressman, in speaking on the prospects of war, recently said that he believed in war if the people wanted war, but that he would prefer to have the people vote on the subject so as to be sure they did want it. He added the suggestion that a vote be taken with the understanding that those who voted for war would enlist first and that those who voted against war would not be expected to enlist until after the others had been enrolled.

Mr. Bryan repeated the suggestion to the newspaper men and it has gone over the country. The first echo comes from the Express, Lititz, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. The Express has taken a referendum vote and so far the vote against war between the United States, Germany, Mexico or any other country is 203; the vote for the war is so far 0. The idea is a good one. If the other papers take it up we will soon know what public sentiment is on the subject—if anybody has any doubt now.

AS THE FARMER SEES IT

At Hedrick, Oklahoma, an agricultural community, the following petition was prepared, signed by nearly 80 citizens, (95 per cent of those to whom it was presented) and sent to the president:

"We do not believe that war-crazed Europe could offer any insult that would justify our country in joining in this monstrous crime against civilization."

How unpatriotic such a petition must seem to a man who is figuring on a million dollars profit on an ammunition contract! And yet there are many sensible people in the United States who think that there is as little glory to be won in entering into this fight as there would be in challenging the inmates of an insane asylum.

If it hadn't been for the war, thunder the republican editors, there wouldn't have been any American prosperity and the great structure of American industrialism would have been sapped at its foundations. After which they throw unopened into their waste baskets the statistical record of imports and exports showing just how small a proportion of the increased business is due to the shipment of munitions of war.

A GLADSOME CHANGE

Did you notice the change? And isn't it gratifying? For ten days before the second German note was published, the jingo press was filled with lurid predictions as to what this country was going to do to Germany. She was to be "old where to head in" and "where to get off" and "what's what." Patience was exhausted; no peace treaty parleys; it was time to act. And then (about June 8th) presto change, "how friendly the spirit," "how mild the tone!" "Who could regard such a note as irritating?" "Why should negotiations be cut off?" "What is to interfere with an amicable understanding?" etc., etc. Well, it is worth something to have contributed even a little to the change.

W. J. BRYAN.

Force Only a Last Resort

On another page will be found an editorial which appeared in the Nebraska Daily Journal, published at Lincoln, on the morning of July 1st. The editorial is written in a kindly spirit and is duly appreciated. The Bryans find it quite comforting to compare the attitude of this "home city" paper today with its attitude when Mr. Bryan first entered politics.

Reference is at this time made to the above mentioned editorial because it displays a certain blindness of which the editor of the Journal, unfortunately, has no monopoly. The readers of The Commoner, having had an opportunity to read all Mr. Bryan has said on the subject of peace, do not need the enlightenment which this editorial is intended to furnish, but it will still further equip them for the discussion of the subject. The title, "Force only as a last resort," has been selected because the purpose which I have in mind in writing is to assist, not the wilfully blind—for no one can help them—but those who, because they have not read, or having read, do not understand my position. The intentional misinterpretations, however, could not go further or be more hurtful than this unintended one. My chief contention is, and has been, that the treaty plan should be adopted. And what is the treaty plan? Is it possible that any intelligent reader does not understand the plan embodied in the thirty treaties which I have had the honor of negotiating? For the benefit of those—if there be such—who do not understand these treaties, let me emphasize the following points:

First: The treaties apply TO ALL disputes of EVERY kind and character. There is NO EXCEPTION whatever. Those treaties were intended to make it impossible for war to begin without a period of investigation, during which anger may cool and questions of fact be separated from questions of law. This provision in the treaty is pretty generally understood, but many are not so familiar with the fact that the treaties expressly RESERVE to each country the right of INDEPENDENT action WHEN the investigation is completed. Those who believe that a resort to force may become necessary ought to rejoice that the way is thus left open for war, if other means fail. The friends of these treaties believe, NOT that war is made IMPOSSIBLE, but that the POSSIBILITY of war is made REMOTE. Can any friend of peace mourn that under these treaties war, instead of being probable, becomes merely possible? Is this not a long step in advance? In order to make the treaties include ALL disputes it was necessary to permit a FINAL resort to war if peaceful methods fail.

We have twenty-six arbitration treaties with as many countries, and these treaties preclude the possibility of war over the issues to which they apply, but unfortunately arbitration treaties contain certain important EXCEPTIONS, namely: "National honor," "independence," "vital interests" and the "interests of third parties." The mere enumeration of the exceptions shows how many disputes, being unprovided for, MAY result in war. And these disputes which are not covered by the arbitration treaties are the very disputes about which wars arise. "National honor" alone would suffice for an excuse for any war that a nation really wanted to wage. "Independence" is also a sufficient cause for war if nations want to fight. And "vital interests," what phrase could be more comprehensive? Every interest becomes "vital" when nations are angry. The fourth exception—"the interests of third parties"—covers nearly everything else. A nation can not fail to find that third parties are interested if it is looking for a pretext for a fight.

The arbitration treaties, while preventing war over disputes to which they apply, leave a big door wide open—a door through which our nation could, if so desired, march into almost any conflict.

The thirty treaties which have been concluded under this administration, do not, as I stated, make war impossible, but they apply to ALL disputes of every kind and interpose a period of investigation and deliberation between the time when diplomatic efforts fail and the time when war can be declared and hostilities commenced. I trust that as civilization advances our arbitration treaties will include more and more of the disputes that arise between nations, but for the present we must content ourselves with the in-

vestigation of ALL questions and hope that this investigation may result in the finding of an amicable solution.

If the editor of the Journal will re-read my statements, interviews, and utterances on the subject of peace, he will find that the peace plan which I advocate does not contemplate passive acquiescence in wrong; it is far from non-resistance. I do point out, however, that the spirit which tends towards peace is diametrically opposed to the spirit which has during past ages lead nations into war and is even now leading nations into war. With the growth of the peace sentiment, diplomacy more and more turns toward the employment of persuasion and away from the "firmness" which contains a hint of force—firmness which appeals to fear rather than to love. I believe that it is wise to cultivate a belief in the effectiveness of appeals to friendship; I dissent entirely from the theory that a nation's rights can best be preserved by language which but thinly veils a threat. My complaint against the jingo is that he would put this country in an attitude of unfriendliness to peaceful means and thus contribute toward the possibility of war; that he would leave to the nation with whom we have a dispute the prestige to be won by proposing a peaceful solution.

I have faith in the persuasive methods inspired by the spirit of friendship, and crave for my country the honor, not merely of ACCEPTING, but of PROPOSING peaceful methods. Our nation can not afford to be behind any other nation in its efforts to avoid war.

In the present dispute there is every reason why our country should make the advances toward peace. There is no pressure upon us—Germany, on the contrary, is excited. She feels, as do other belligerent nations, that the struggle will tremendously affect her position and her people. She is not, therefore, as free as we are to suggest the measures to which people naturally turn when they are calm—measures which it is much more difficult to propose when passion runs riot.

A word more. If the editor of the Journal will do me the honor to read what I have said and written he can not fail to notice that I have tried to apply to the question under discussion the fundamental principles of Christian religion, AS I UNDERSTAND THEM. I do not claim the right to interpret Christianity for anyone else; but I have felt it my duty to present Christianity as I see it. I believe that Christianity presents not only a solution but the BEST solution of international problems, as it presents, in my judgment, the best solution of the everyday problems which confront the individual; and I feel that this is an opportune moment to press upon the world the difference between the new system of the Prince of Peace and the old system which has during the centuries collected its toll in blood and treasure, and left after each war a legacy of hatred, the fertile soil in which new controversies germinate. I may be mistaken, but I have sufficient confidence in my interpretation of the Scriptures to appeal, not only to all Christians in the United States, but to all Christians everywhere, to consider whether the time is not ripe for the application of the teachings of Christ to international affairs. I recognize how little one person can do, but God does not require of us that we do great things; he only requires that we do what we can. The measure of responsibility is the same for all; each must improve the opportunities that come to him. To me there came what seemed to be an opportunity to testify to my faith in the wisdom of Christ's teachings; I could not shirk the responsibility which accompanied that opportunity.

It is a joy for me to know that none of my official associates have doubted that I have followed my conscience—not a tie of friendship has been broken, so far as I know. It is an additional joy to know that my neighbors and the friends of a lifetime not only concede that I did what I thought was right, but increasingly approve of the course which I felt it my duty to pursue.

W. J. BRYAN.

After having spent months manufacturing rhetorical chips for Uncle Sam's shoulder and after making themselves hoarse shouting war commands to him, the jingo papers unanimously resent the making of any speech or the writing of any editorial by any one who opposes their plans. Can you beat it?

It would be difficult to catalogue anything arising from the gigantic clash in Europe as beneficent, but it is not assailing the verities to say that it is giving the republicans an excellent alibi for the existing prosperity.