The Arabic Case

Interview given by Mr. Bryan to the press, August 23d.

I have read the editorial opinions concerning the sinking of the Arabic, as those opinions were reproduced in the daily papers, but they seem to me to avoid the most important question. The real question is not whether American citizens have, under international law, a right to travel through the danger zone on the ships of belligerent nations; that is admitted. The question just now is whether an American citizen should put his convenience, or even his rights, above his nation's welfare. If American citizens refuse to consider their own safety or the safety of the nation, then, a second question arises, namely, whether the government should permit a few persons to drag this country into this unparalleled war. Our government has made its protest, and there is no doubt that the position taken is abundantly supported by precedent, but that does not necessarily mean that we are going to war. Diplomacy has not concluded its work and even if diplomatic efforts fail, we have recourse to the treaty plan which MUST be resorted to in case of disputes with Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia, and SHOULD be resorted to before going to war with any other belligerent nation. If the treaty plan fails, we still have a choice between entering this war and the postponement of final settlement until peace is restored. In the meantime, it will be well to think of the thousands, or possibly hundreds of thousands, who would be sacrificed if we entered this war; these brave men are entitled to consideration as well as the few who, by deliberately incurring unnecessary risks, bring harm upon themselves and danger to their country. It is time for the unneutral portion of the press of the United States to lay aside its bias and unite in helping the president to keep the country out of war. The pro-ally papers are insisting upoff war with Germany for the benefit of the allies, and the pro-German papers are insisting upon an embargo on arms and ammunition for the benefit of Germany. If these two groups of papers would join together and urgo measures restraining American citizens from going into the danger zone on belligerent ships, and prohibiting American passenger ships from carrying arms and ammunition—if they would do this they would aid in preventing war and in preserving for our nation the priceless opportunity to act as peace-maker when the time for peace arrives.

THE FRIENDS OF PEACE

On another page will be found the resolutions adopted at Chicago by the Friends of Peace. They present a powerful indictment against the brutal, barbarous doctrine that might makes, right.

It will be noticed that the convention did not declare for an embargo on arm, and ammunition. The leaders are to be congratulated upon ignoring this subject. The advocacy of an embargo has impaired the influence of those who took that position and at this time the Friends of Peace need all their energy for the support of the cause of peace and for the opposing of frenzied preparedness.

The plank opposing the manufacture of arms and ammunition for profit raises a new issue, but it is a domestic issue and can be discussed upon its merits without invading the realm of international politics. If the world adopts the policy of making the manufacture of arms and ammunition a government monopoly, it may give some encouragement to those who urge that each country should prepare in advance for every possible contingency—this is, in fact, a strong objection to the policy—but the matter can be considered as a domestic question. The Friends of Peace disappointed the jingoes and strengthened the movement toward peace.

W. J. BRYAN.

BUT WILL THEY COME?

The next time ex-President Taft presides over a religious-gathering he should reserve the "Amen Corner" for his special friends, the brewers, distillers and saloon keepers, who, according to his Saturday Evening Post article, can be entrusted with the ballot more safely than the women who find inspiration and moral strength in church services.

OH YE OF LITTLE FAITH!

A minister who is nearing the crose of a long and highly useful life, writing to Mr. Bryan in commendation of his resignation, said: "You are right. You stand on solid rock. The laws of God are older and greater than national or international law."

Mr. Bryan greatly appreciates the encouragement which he has received from ministers throughout the United States. As his position is based upon Bible authority he expected the support of the clergy of all denominations, but the fact that it was expected makes it none the less appreciated. If the readers of The Commoner have followed what Mr. Bryan has said in his statements and speeches they will know how fully he has relied upon the autnority of Book of books. Those who bethreats lieve that of force are more potent than that persuasion which prompted by a spirit of friendship will have difficulty in reconciling their beliefs with Holy Writ. The excuse which they usually give is that the world is not ready for Bible remedies. The fallacy of this reasoning is-first: That they can never test a remedy until they have faith enough to try it; and, second: They overlook the fact that this remedy is the only one that has proven successful in individual relations. If the moral principles that apply to individual units are not to be applied to international groups then there is no accepted code of morals for nations. Even the most servile worshipers of Mars do not attempt to formulate a theory which will explain the preference they give to force; they simply ignore the plain teaching of the moral law and take counsel of their courage instead of their consciences. Christ's rebuke-"Oh ye of little faith" - may well be administered today to those Christians who profess to believe in the gospel of the Prince of Peace, and yet are afraid to put it into practice.

"THERE'S A REASON"

When a man takes a position on a public question, you naturally inquire the reason. Ex-President Taft advocates a 60 per cent increase in the appropriations for the army and navy, and suggests that a part of this increase might be raised from a tax on sugar.

When it is remembered that Mr. Taft, when president, favored a tax on sugar, but did not favor any such preparedness as he now urges, the question arises, Does he favor a tax on sugar as a means of preparing, or does he favor preparedness as an excuse for taxing sugar? "There's a reason" why protectionists favor extravagant appropriations—they want an excuse for increasing the tax on imports.

The National Defense league is demanding the resignation of Congressman Hay as chairman of the military affairs committee because he does not accept the league's program. The animal is already showing its trunk and ears — the whole body of the elephant will be visible soon, and then the country will understand the connection between the Defense league and the republican party.

Have you noticed how the country has accepted the currency law, and is adjusting itself to it? It is a valuable law, and reflects great credit on the democratic president and congress responsible for it.

If the inhabitants of belligerent countries prefer to hold American securities rather than exchange them for the war loans of their own governments, why should the American people prefer European war loans to American securities?

Nations may prefer to buy arms and ammunition abroad rather than provide in advance for every possible emergency, but that logic does not apply to finance. A nation should look to its own people for the money to carry on war.

If you doubt that preparedness would PRO-VOKE war, just think where we would be NOWif we had in the White house a hair-trigger jingo with a scent for blood.

Taft's Disgraceful Confession

In a recent article written for the Saturday Evening Post, ex-President Taft says:

"It is said that women will vote for prohibition, and that, therefore, if they are given the vote we shall be rid of the saloon evil. To those of us who do not think that the saloon evil can be abolished by general prohibition, either national or statewide, in states with large cities, and that the result of the effort would be worse than present conditions, this argument does not appeal. The lack of experience in affairs, and the excess of emotion on the part of women in reaching their political decisions upon questions of this kind, are what would lower the average practical sense of self-restraint of the electorate in case they were admitted to it now."

This is, so far as I know, the first time that any man with any claim to standing or public respect has given as a reason for opposing woman's suffrage his fear that they would vote against the saloon. It is known that this is the reason that leads the brewers, distillers and saloon keepers to fight woman's suffrage so bitterly, but they have their money invested in the business-they fatten upon the ruining of homes and the debauching of society, and it is no great surprise that their pecuniary interests sear their consciences. But an ex-president, who has received from the people the highest office within their gift-is it not amazing that he should become so subservient to the liquor interests as to give this as a reason for opposing the extension of suffrage to women?

It is known that Mr. Taft had the support of the liquor interests in 1908, and that he paid the debt by vetoing the Webb bill, which, fortunately, was passed over his veto. But even this pandering to a degrading and debasing element was not as disgraceful as his recent confession of abject servitude to the saloon. His statement will not only arouse the womanhood of the nation, but it will disgust the men to see such an unblushing bid for he support of the most sordid and shameless element that ever attempted to control American politics.

W. J. BRYAN.

NEUTRALS ARE SUFFERING

The president of the Swiss republic is quoted as expressing himself as follows on the injury which the war is causing to neutrals:

"Past wars affected only belligerents, but nowadays, owing to growth, the change in ideas, habits and wealth, there is a community among peoples. The rupture of this community by war between certain states affects all the rest.

"The will of neutrals is less respected in time of war. It is not, then sufficient that they await the end of the conflict. For them passiveness has ceased to be a duty and energy has become the proper policy. They have a right to raise their voice against war because they are its victims. It is legitimate for them to unite their influences because they are injured in common, but the hour has not come for that effort. Words, like spent bullets, would glance off the armor of belligerents without penetrating it, but armor finally becomes heavy even for the strongest arms.

"The first sign of that fatigue will not find Switzerland inattentive or hesitant. She will act in concert with other neutral governments, convinced as she is that the cause of peace is the cause of all. Necessary peace is not one which will be glorious, for it can not be glorious for all, but equitable justice alone is lasting in effects."

President Motta is right—the neutrals are suffering, and will continue to suffer until the war ends. The neutrals are not only suffering but they are in constant danger of being drawn into the war by their efforts to protect the rights of their citizens. The nations at peace have a right to ask from the nations at war a plain statement of the terms on which peace is possible—in other words, they have a right to know for what each nation is fighting. While the Vatican is moving toward peace for humanitarian reasons all the neutrals have an additional reason in that their welfare demands the restoration of peace.

W. J. BRYAN.