

CHRISTIANITY AT THE CROSSROADS

(Continued from Page 19)

hour to do for Europe what American philanthropy has done for Belgium, we would put an end among the common people of every nation over there of the power of any mad set of fools who would be insane enough to want to fight us.

But to all such ideas it is replied that the German people have gone mad, that they are in the hands of men who, when they find that they can not get indemnities from the devastated Europe about them, will cross the sea, because we are rich, and take it from us unless we are immediately armed. There are thousands of our people, one regrets to acknowledge, who have been so badly frightened that they honestly believe this. Fear hath torments. And frighten a man bad enough, and his imagination will turn every sound in the house into an invading thief. When I was a child and "saw things in the dark" I spent a night of absolute terror looking at the bull's eye of a burglar's lantern, which, when daylight came on and sanity returned, turned into the kindly coals in the fireplace before which I dressed in warmth and comfort.

NATIONS STILL OWE FOR DEBTS OF FORMER WARS

Are these terrors justified by the facts? We turn our eyes to Europe and what do we find? Nations whose combined wealth when they went into this war, roughly speaking, was in the neighborhood of two hundred and seventy billions of dollars. What it is today since the falling of their stocks no one can tell. The fright over the Morocco incident sent German's stock tumbling down at the rate of millions. But these nations, before going into this war, owed for wars already fought, twenty-seven billions of dollars. A debt so vast that it could not be paid and never will be paid.

It is difficult for the human mind to grasp an idea of a billion. When we get into military expenditures, we ascend up into astronomical distances and measurements. It is the only "Heavenly" thing about the whole military program. But, if you will figure up, you will discover that there have been comparatively only a little over a billion minutes since Christ was born into the world. Well, when this war began, Europe owed for wars she had already fought twenty-seven dollars for every minute of the Christian era. That war debt was a veritable millstone around the necks of Europe's peasantry. But now, in this year and a half of fighting, Europe has already run up a war debt larger than for all the wars of the preceding Christian centuries. And she now owes more than a dollar for war, for every second, every tick of the clock, since the Son of Man was here on earth.

These nations are engaged in a mad struggle which is eating into their common possessions during the first year at the rate of twenty billions of dollars in actual borrowed money. If we add the cost of what they have destroyed it runs up, from the best estimates I can find, into forty or forty-five billions a year. Now, this year, according to the statement of Dr. Karl Helfferich, secretary of the German treasury, in a recent speech before the Reichstag, it is costing all the belligerents 82 and one-half million dollars a day; more than thirty billions a year in money, and a corresponding destruction of property goes on. How long are they going to fight? Of course, no human being can tell with certainty; but they all declare, even after this year and a half of mutual slaughter, that it is a finish fight, and

that they will conquer or spend the last man and farthing in the effort to do so. Would that they could be stopped at this very hour; but unfortunately nations mad enough to begin fighting are like men pushed over a precipice, they can't be reached, and they don't come to themselves until they have all struck bottom. The time to stop war is not after they are over the precipice. The neutral world can do little to stop this war; but God pity humanity if after forty years more of scientific invention the earth ever knows another war. It is that war of forty years hence that all friends of humanity and of peace ought to be preventing right now. How long are the nations going to fight? Lord Kitchener, said to be one of the greatest soldiers in Europe, warned the English nation at the outbreak of the present hostilities, that they were in it for at least three years. Here is a nice mathematical problem to work on. If it took England three years and cost her one billion five hundred millions of dollars to conquer a hundred thousand Boers in South Africa; how long will it take her and her allies, and what will it cost them to whip more than a hundred millions of people who have been preparing for forty years for this particular conflict? And, if it has cost Germany the best soldiers of her marvelously prepared military machine, millions and millions of men who were in the prime of their fighting efficiency, so that today she is employing mere youths and men over forty years of age, and billions and billions of dollars to conquer but a relatively small and insignificant part of her enemies' territory; how long will it take her and what will it cost her to conquer two hundred millions of people who have, and will keep for years the possession of the seas, and can draw on the ends of the earth for their supplies?

The war has swept over little Belgium, and men with hearts can not think of Belgium's condition without tears leaping to their eyes. It swept over a goodly part of France and left the land in ashes. It has swept back and forth over Poland and that is in ashes. It has gone into the edge of Russia and that is a wilderness. It has passed over Serbia, and Serbia is no more. It has swept over a goodly part of Urumia, and more than a million of inoffensive men, women and children are decimated and wiped out of existence by the hand of those whom German chancellors call "Our noble Allies." It has turned the Austrian Alps which reached into Heaven, into veritable pits of hell. Once let those splendid German battle lines give way and Germany too, will go up in smoke, and become in every part where war flames have spread a charred chaos in which the unhappy survivors will be kept alive only through soup kitchens. Meanwhile, what of the navies whose deadly powers we are taught so much to dread? Week by week, and month by month, German, French, English and Russian cruisers and battleships go down from shot and shell, torpedoes and mines by ones and twos and fours.

COMPLETE EXHAUSTION FACING EUROPEAN NATIONS

Months ago it was announced that Germany in her terrible game of hunting down English commercial ships had lost over sixty of her submarines. It is true that thus far the main body of the English and German fleets are untouched; but the war is not yet ended, and those last desperate efforts that dying nations will make before surrendering are not over. If the time ever does come, and it may, nay, in all probability, it will come, when the Eng-

lish and German fleets clash, and before that day's battle is over, it is within the realm of possibility that America may find herself in the unenviable position of being not the second or third but the first rate sea power of the world — and all this without building another battleship.

Let this war go on for another eighteen months, as it will go on unless it ends in an absolute draw, in which case Europe will herself seriously propose some less dangerous method of keeping the peace than that of preparedness, but let it drag on for months more, possibly years, costing every day it lasts fifty millions of dollars a day (eighty-two and a half millions a day according to the most recent statement of the German secretary of the imperial treasury) a sum sufficient to build one, or one and a half Panama canals once a week, and there will not be left free money anywhere in all Europe sufficient to fit out a formidable expedition against the United States.

WAR CHANGING WORLD'S FINANCIAL CENTERS

Already the money centers of the world have moved from London and Paris and taken up their permanent headquarters for the next half century at least, in New York city and Chicago. The only formidable wars which are going to be fought, or by any human possibility, can be fought by any of the great modern nations after this war closes, will be on borrowed capital. Borrowed from where? From the Asiatic nations? They have not got it. From Africa? Africa has not got it. From Europe? Does any man who has not lost his faculties imagine that by the time European statesmen get through settling with the people of Europe over more than a hundred billion dollar debt which can't be paid, and much of which must ultimately be repudiated, that these people can be immediately hoodwinked into giving up what little they have left, to embark on a new venture of blood and death which, if the conquest of America were its object, would be longer, and in the end costlier than the insane struggle that has just closed? No, the money for the conquest of America can not be found in Asia, Europe or Africa. The only spot on the face of the earth where there will be any free money for a long time to come is in the United States. America because she has thus far kept comparatively free from the domination of military minds and the philosophy of preparedness finds herself great, free and prosperous while all the rest of the earth has destroyed its fittest manhood and hopelessly engulfed itself in debt which can be dealt with only by repudiation. Once let nations begin to repudiate their debts and the bankers of the world will, for a long time to come, have far less interest in the loan game for preparedness and war than they have ever before shown. Let the United States say to Europe: "We will help you to rebuild your cities and factories; we will furnish capital for every legitimate venture which looks to the rehabilitation of your industrial, economic and social order, but not one dollar will we supply to any nation in Europe which proposes to rebuild its military equipment so that it is a menace to civilization; not one dollar will we loan to any nation that holds back from a world organization which will to a large extent limit the possibility, dread and costliness of war"—let America say this, and there is not a nation in Europe, no matter what its military minds think, that can force back on the world the horrors of preparedness. The trade and good-will of the United States, because we alone possess free cap-

ital and purchasing power, will be absolutely essential to the rehabilitation of every European state. When they quit fighting among themselves, unless they do it immediately, their free capital will be gone—nay they will have eaten into their own very marrow. Where all are poverty stricken, no matter what the needs, trade is dull indeed. We literally are the hope of the world. Would that we had at the head of our affairs, business and political, men who are not so easily frightened into blindness to the supreme opportunity to free a world.

At the close of this stupid slaughter, a slaughter which never would have happened if first submitted to the people, the common people of Europe are going to ask as they have never asked before "Who is it and what is it that led us down into this inferno? Was it the aspirations of our own democracy? Or, was it those from above who loaded us down with arms, against our repeated and impassioned protests, and taught us to love that which our honest hearts hate, and to hate that which by all the dictates of our better manhood we love?" And before the people of Europe get through answering that question much that was high and mighty a year and a half ago and that, even yet, looks menacing to all men who love a free humanity will be pulled down from its pedestal of irresponsible power to go the way of all the other tyrannies of the past. America's supreme opportunity to do something glorious for herself, and for this European democracy, and for the free and untrammelled life of tomorrow's larger, juster day among the nations, is to give these down-trodden, deceived common people of Europe a great leverage and a great hope and a great courage to down their war-lords and blood-letters of every kind, by pointing across the seas to the great, free, unmilitarized republic which has set the example to the world of one nation enlightened enough to arrest for once the mad gospel of ever more preparedness.

With such military equipment as we now have on hand, and with Europe's utter exhaustion in men, money, industry, and, before the war closes, in the very implements of war itself, we are absolutely safe from European aggression certainly for the next score or more of years. Let America during those years with the full weight of her vast moral, industrial and money power put herself on the side of those peace forces in Europe that will see the crime of repeating the conditions out of which their present sorrow came, and she will usher in the rule of the people in all Europe. And with real democracy enthroned there is a possibility of a federated world in which all men may be comparatively free and safe.

ETERNAL FEUD BETWEEN MILITARISM AND DEMOCRACY

The hour this war closes rings the death-knell of old, tyrannical, war-cursed Europe if America is true to the ideals which have made her great. Between militarism and democracy the feud is eternal. The cause of democracy is the cause of the only kind of Christianity in which the modern mind can believe. If America in this hour had any of the vision, faith and forward-looking spirit of the pioneer souls who gave their lives to found her, and of those who died to save her, she would not now in timorous fear be repeating those damnable shiboleths coined in king's houses and foisted on dying Europe by those who hate democracy. She would be ringing from coast to coast with the cry that European democracy shall be helped out of its bondage of debt and imprisoning