

great importance!" I am an American citizen and as a citizen I shall exercise the citizen's right of free speech.

I am here because this is a peace meeting and I am here in the interest of peace. In order to have the outside papers print correctly what you say you must write it down and give it to them in advance, and I am enough interested in having them print what I say to meet their requirements. I have, therefore, written down and given to the papers an abstract of what I shall say tonight, and I shall keep faith with them.

(Mr. Bryan here read the abstract which will be found at the close of the following closing extemporaneous remarks):

Now, my friends, I can speak to you extemporaneously, as I have been speaking to you for twenty-five years. Let me first congratulate you that you live in this land where peace prevails; it is a matter for congratulation that three thousand miles of ocean roll between us and the reddened soil of the belligerent nations. Whatever you may have thought about war a year ago, you can not think lightly of war today. These newspapers that talk so glibly about a national honor that would make us parties to this strife—even they tell you of the slaughter that is daily reported. Two million people have been killed upon battlefields in the last ten months and more than five million have been wounded during that time! Travel over your great city and count its population—then think that those who have been killed or wounded in less than a year in this awful war outnumber your inhabitants—every man, woman and child in the city of New York! And the wealth of this great city that has been accumulated during all these years of toil and struggle—measure it against the wealth that this war has destroyed. I read in this morning's paper that one of the nations at war—just one—has voted a credit of five billions of dollars to carry on the war. That is what war means! It devours the people; it eats up their substance; it fills their homes with sorrow; it mortgages the future. That is war! That is war as you have it across the ocean, and yet there are Americans who would drag you into that war and make you share in all its horrors.

But, my friends, that is not all, nor is it the worst. The worst thing about war, if it should come—awful as it is, the worst thing is not the life that would be lost nor the money that would be squandered; our country might be re-peopled and labor might replace the money lost. To my mind the worst thing about the proposed war is that we can not engage in it without surrendering an opportunity that never before came to any nation and may never come again! That is the worst thing about a war now.

This is the only great nation that is not engaged in killing people today. This nation stands at the head of the neutral group; it is not only the nation naturally looked to as the friend of all, when the time for mediation comes—and I pray God that it may soon come; our nation is not only the leading neutral nation, not only the leader in the peace movement, but our nation stands in a position which no other nation occupies, in that we are akin to the people of all these belligerent nations. They poured the wealth of their blood into the United States; they helped to develop our country; they are a part of citizenship; they have shared in establishing our greatness and in shaping our destiny. Ties, stretching from the old world to the new, unite our hearts to all of them; not a soldier dies on any battlefield anywhere in Europe but his death makes us sad. The greatest of opportunities—the opportunity of mediating, lies before us, and yet these subsidized papers are willing to throw away this priceless privilege!

Tonight I plead with the American people against war with Germany; tomorrow, if a similar condition arises and we are brought near to war with England or France or Russia, I shall come here and plead as earnestly against war with any of these nations. This nation can afford to consider actual conditions; and what are the conditions? Is any nation anxious to get into trouble with us? No, not one of these belligerent nations desires war with the United States. What is the explanation of their conduct? Simply this: They are so mad at each other that, in their fight against each other, they forget that there is anybody else in the world; that is the trouble. It is not intentional wrong that they do us; it is unintentional wrong. It would be bad enough for us to go to war at this time to avenge INTENDED wrong; God forbid that we should go to war to avenge UNINTENDED wrong.

What can we do? We can try diplomatic

means as long as diplomacy avails. And then what? Go back a year and you will find that every nation now at war had MACHINERY for war ready to be put into action, but none of them had the machinery necessary for preserving peace. Not one! This nation now has such machinery; and it is in operation. If we get into difficulty with Great Britain, or France, or Russia, or Italy, which does not yield to diplomatic treatment, we promise her that we will submit that difference to an international commission and we agree that there shall be no declaration of war and no commencement of hostilities until that commission has investigated and reported, and we further stipulated that the report shall be completed within a year. Now that is our agreement with Great Britain and France and Russia and Italy; no matter what the provocation, no matter how we feel, there is the pledge; our honor is at stake and I am glad the pledge has been given.

On the fifteenth day of September last, the proudest day in all my life, I signed four treaties with governments representing nine hundred millions of human beings. Great Britain was one; France was another; and on the first day of October following I celebrated my wedding anniversary by signing a treaty with Russia—the treaty with Italy, I should add, was signed before any of these.

We offered to sign this kind of a treaty with Germany and Austria, and they both accepted the principle, but we did not succeed in completing the negotiations. I hope these treaties may yet be concluded. It was a month and a half after the war commenced before our treaties with Great Britain and with France were signed, and two months after the war began before we signed the treaty with Russia. We did not succeed in securing a treaty with Germany; if we had succeeded—if the principle which we offered and which Germany endorsed had been embodied in a treaty as in the case of other nations, even the jingoes could not drag us into war with Germany now.

My position can be stated in a word; if the principle embodied in the treaties was good enough to be offered to Germany and good enough to be accepted by Germany, it is good enough to use now, if diplomatic methods fail.

But they say, "What will happen while the discussion is going on?" Well, if those who are opposed to applying the treaty plan will agree that the principle shall be applied, it will not take long to find out what can be done in the meantime. We can tell Germany that, while this investigation is being made, we shall expect her to avoid the creation of any more embarrassments, such as those that are being investigated, and that we will do our part to avoid embarrassments by employing such means as we can to prevent American citizens from taking unnecessary risks. The question is not as to the technical right of any American to travel wherever he pleases; the question is, WHY DOES ANY AMERICAN WHO LOVES HIS COUNTRY WANT TO INVOLVE HIS COUNTRY IN DANGER BY TAKING UNNECESSARY RISKS? If any American citizen, without fault of his own and while exercising ordinary care, suffers and his rights are invaded, I stand for the protection of his rights; but the obligations of citizenship, as I understand them, are reciprocal; the citizen must do his part. If it is the duty of a widow's son to leave his home and die for his country, when his country is in danger, it is just as much the duty of the man who wants to go abroad to take the safest way and not endanger his country by taking unnecessary risks.

Now, my friends, I have spoken of the war and of the way out; I believe there is a way out. The president desires peace as much as you and I; we differ only as to the method of securing it. I am as anxious as he is that his plan, now that he has adopted it, shall succeed. But, my friends, I think that while we are waiting to see how the plan succeeds we should mass the peace-loving people of America back of the president and say to him: "Mr. President, you tell us that you want peace and we believe you; we want peace, too, and we will stand by you in the effort to secure peace. If diplomatic efforts fail, we appeal to you, Mr. President, to propose the plan of investigation as provided in the treaties or to postpone the final settlement of this question until reason is restored, until calmness returns, until these friends of ours can settle with us—with us alone, and not be compelled to consider the effect of that settled upon those with whom they are at war."

It is not a denial of justice to continue a case

because of the sickness of an important witness—all Europe is sick now; it is not a denial of justice to take a change of venue from a community where passion runs riot to a community where they are able to administer justice calmly and impartially.

In other words, let us apply to this question the simple rules of everyday life. If I have a friend whom I love and we fall out about some matter; if our voices begin to rise and I feel the blood surging in my veins, I say to him, "Friend, neither of us is in a condition to talk now; let us think over the matter, let us sleep over it, and tomorrow when we are calm we will take up the subject again." These nations are our friends and I do not care whether it is Great Britain or France or Russia or Italy or Austria or Germany, let us treat them as we would treat a friend; if we can not settle our differences amicably during the war, let us wait until the war is over, and then settle them as friends can and as friends will.

NATIONAL HONOR

(Written part of speech delivered by William Jennings Bryan in Madison Square Garden, New York City, June 24, 1915, under the auspices of the Friends of Peace.)

Will the people support the president in case of war between this country and any other country? Yes, a thousand times yes; but whether or not we should engage in war is a question which is still open for discussion. If war comes all will stand as one man behind the government, but until congress declares war each citizen is at liberty to express his opinion as to whether or not there should be war. If war comes, and the president needs a million men—and needs them in a day—he can issue the call at daybreak and the sun will go down on a million men in line, and the line will stretch through every state. And because these men may have to die for their country they will not be denied the right to register their protest against an unnecessary war.

Not only is the citizen at liberty to express his opinion on this subject, but, in view of the efforts of a portion of the press to force the country into war, it is his duty to enter his protest now; he can not afford to risk the happening of some unexpected event which might make resistance to the war sentiment more difficult.

Shall the nation's honor be maintained? Yes, a thousand times yes; there is no division among the American people on this subject, but what does national honor require? All agree that the honorable course should be followed, but what definition of honor shall we accept? The old blood-stained definition which the jingoes recommend? Or a definition in harmony with the spirit of the age and the aspirations of our people? Upon this question every citizen has a right to speak, and the citizen ought to speak now before a false standard of national honor is set up. Our national ideals determine what is honorable, and those ideals are illustrated by our efforts to promote universal peace—they grow more pacific as our humanitarian work increases at home and abroad.

National honor is a sentiment, it is true, but sentiment is one of the greatest factors in human progress—it is the inertia of the social world, in the sense that it tends to keep at rest that which is at rest; but it is also the momentum of the social world in that it tends to keep in motion that which is moving. Every reform has to overcome existing sentiment, but when the reform is once established the new sentiment which it creates becomes a compelling force and operates against a change.

It is the duty of each citizen to judge between the old and the new—to weigh the arguments, sift truth from falsehood, and then give himself unreservedly to the defense of the right as he sees it. Thus is good propagated; this is the travail out of which truth is born. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve" is not an outgrown command; it comes to us as it came to the children of Israel. The choice then made is the choice which each generation—and each member of the generation—is called upon to make, and upon the choice made hangs the fate of individuals and the destiny of nations.

This struggle has been going on from the beginning with constant victories for reforms—and for reforms, too, that do not turn backward.

It was once the custom in India to compel the widow to join her husband in death—to ascend