

# CIVILIZATION AT THE CROSS-ROADS

[Address delivered by the Rev. Martin D. Hardin, D. D., Pastor of Third Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Ill., to the Union Minister's Association of Chicago.]

Across the last page of European civilization is written in letters of blood the tragic word: "Failure"! Religion, philosophy, science, art, education, commerce and statesmanship — all the constructive forces of civilization, as they have been, are weighed in the balance and found wanting. The religion of the wise and merciful Christ, except in name only, is largely abandoned for the worship of the Moloch of might. Into the red-hot, out-stretched, iron hands of this hideous heathen diety Europe's children are being offered up—offered with a blind devotion and an unquestioning stupidity equal to that of the most benighted Canaanitish woman of thirty centuries ago. Ideals and ideas, morals and money, homes and churches, vast and beautiful cities, priceless treasures of art, manhood, womanhood, youth and maidenhood, and most unthinkable of all, poor, innocent, helpless childhood—all that the heart has loved and the Christian conscience been taught to revere, is being fed to this blind insatiate monster which, with flaming appetite devours, and stands calling, week after week and month after month, for more, more, more!

The cultured, and in many respects increasingly fraternal Europe of yesterday has slipped back into the jungle to imitate the actions of the tiger, and knowing no law higher than that of tooth and claw.

Men who have thought in their boasted modern wisdom that there is no hell awaiting the sin of man against God, awake to find that the fair Europe of yesterday is actually now in a veritable weltering hell of blood and tears, wallings and moanings, insanity and hatreds, demonical, loveless brutality as awful as any vision ever haunting the weird imagination of Dante.

## EUROPE OF YESTERDAY GONE FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH

The beautiful, art-crowned, garden cultivated, happy-homed, marvelously citted, increasingly restful Europe of yesterday is gone from the face of the earth, and, for all the men, women and children of this generation, gone forever. With it have vanished millions of long cherished hopes and golden dreams—the lover's jeweled anticipations, the old man's staff, the father's pride, the toiling, patient mother's comfort and recompense. To every fireside there is appointed not beauty for ashes, but ashes for beauty; not the oil of gladness for mourning, but mourning for the oil of gladness; not the garment of praise for heaviness, but heaviness for the garment of praise. Yes, the heaviness of the destruction of millions of the strongest, bravest and likeliest makers of tomorrow's happiness and greatness; and, added to all this, the heaviness of such a war debt that Europe's peasantry already bowed and bent, shall, like the Christ, stagger and fall fainting to the earth under the weight of the very cross upon which they and their children's children for a century to come are to be crucified.

The mind not moved by this infinite tragedy to seek something radically different in the way of national and international policy from that which has ended thus, is to many of us incomprehensible. And yet, at this very hour, with Europe torn and bleeding, burning and dying before our very eyes, we have here in the United States, men who dare to draw from this situation this lesson only: that America, now on a scale such as she has never before practiced, must arm and give herself to the gospel of preparedness for the mysterious enemy just as Europe has done for the last forty years. Lord Rosebery said recently, and he expressed the sentiment of the best minds in Europe: "I know nothing more disheartening than the announcement recently made that the United States — the one great country left in the world free from the hideous, bloody burden of war — is about to embark upon the building of a huge armada destined to be equal or second to our own."

We are being asked not to see that the very thing which has landed Europe in hell is this same gospel of preparedness. More than anything else, that which has brought Europe to her present plight has been a brutal belief in the efficacy of force—a stupid superstition that national stability, commerce, art, civilization, and in the last analysis, even Christianity itself, rests, not upon conformity to the moral order of the

world, but upon force; and that nation which could mobilize the greatest number of highly trained soldiers, or build the greatest number of battleships would be the strong and safe nation. According to its size and resources, about every nation now engaged in this bloody struggle has lived fairly well up to this military dogma; with the net result that they all together finally fall, through fear and suspicion and mutually engendered hatreds—hatreds which were intensified a thousand fold by their heavy armaments, into this wicked, wasteful and stupid slaughter.

Now the very men who are most insistent that America shall join more vigorously in this armament rivalry, are those who also insist that all pacifists, and all workers for a world court which may serve ultimately to do away with war, are a set of dreaming, impractical fools bent upon ignoring "the most fundamental and unchanging facts of human nature." They tell us that this is a practical world, and that any program which does not conform to "human nature as it is now, always has been, and always will be, is doomed to failure."

Our first answer to them is that, so reasoned "the wise and practical" men of Europe, and yet, how Europe could be any more of a failure than it is at this moment, is inconceivable. It has been suggested that if every cabinet and council over there had been made up of members taken from their lunatic asylums, it is doubtful if they could have wrought such havoc and universal misery as that into which these "wise and practical statesmen" have led, who are supposed to hold a monopoly of all knowledge concerning human nature. Europe's wise and practical statesmen, who know all about human nature, have been just wise enough to take all the surplus earnings of her toiling millions, and then mortgage the bodies, brains and bread of the unborn generations for a hundred years to come, with which to buy instruments of death and destruction, so that when war has come, it has come on such a scale and with such havoc as bleeds Europe to death, and staggers and largely paralyzes all the rest of the world. Marvelous wisdom! Two more generations of such wisdom and practical guidance, and civilization will lose all that it has gained in the last thousand years. Oh! they know all about human nature; but they don't know this: that it is of the very essence of human nature to grow suspicious and fearful and finally mad to the point of fighting if a mailed fist is always shoved up under a man's nose, saying: "You dare not." No big preparedness man in Europe has known enough about human nature to believe that men of other nations would resent and fear and finally fight over what they themselves would not stand. If a man can look back through the long, fighting history of this earth, and not see that it is in human nature to resent with the last drop of blood the bullying fist and the brute's might, he is—but a tyro in his knowledge of what is in the human heart. He who does not know that men of every race under Heaven can be led farther through intelligent kindness and trust and justice, than they can be driven with a club, morally still lives in the stone age.

## CHRISTIANITY WIELDS GREATER POWER THAN MAILED FIST

The hands that were pierced on Calvary have wielded a power incomparably greater over human destiny than all the mailed fists of the centuries. And the sword has never been substituted for the cross, Caesar for Christ, without a moral loss ultimately culminating in a tragedy like that which at present engulfs Europe. Tolstol, in his open letter to the world at the time of the Russian-Japanese war, said: "No enlightened man can help knowing that the universal competition in the armament of states must inevitably lead them to endless wars, or to a general bankruptcy, or else to both the one and the other." If every prophecy in Scripture had been fulfilled as literally as Europe is now fulfilling this one, there would not be found an infidel on earth.

But to this side of the preparedness program American advocates of the doctrine seem today as blindly ignorant as were their kindred minds across the sea. The horrible war, its suffering, its waste, its insanity, its diabolical wickedness seems to have taught them nothing. Preparedness was foisted on Europe by military minds which insisted that this program would insure peace; that it was "a cheap form of national in-

surance." Yes, the cheapest swindle that was ever worked off on a poor, gullible humanity! But with the whole philosophy of preparedness, as a rational way of insuring peace between nations, as completely exploded as any shell which has burst over the bloody trenches, America, at a time when she never was in so little danger from Europe, is being frightened into its advocacy. At a time when every rational mind in Europe is praying that the war may have at least one beneficial effect, the end forever of the nightmare of dread under which Europe has constantly lived for a generation or more, America is being asked to set an example which will be used by every military mind in Europe as a cogent reason why when this war is over Europe should proceed to re-arm. When America ought to be ringing from one end to the other with a cry of horror over the madness of an armed world, and the moral imbecility of a race that can not today find some less expensive and dangerous way of keeping the peace, than by adopting an adage that was coined in the bloodiest days of heathen Rome, she is, under the adroit hands of absolute unbelievers in the power of Christian truth, being swept into a course which has landed Europe in torment, and which will fearfully handicap the peace minds of the world in persuading their own nations when this war is over to find a new and better basis for international relations.

## UNITED STATES WILL BECOME GREAT NATION OF THE WORLD

The United States at the close of this stupid struggle in Europe will stand forth incomparably the great nation of the world. In men, in resources, in undisturbed industry, in all that ministers to human happiness we will be largely where we were before this bloody slaughter began across the sea—with this difference only, that we will be in the possession of much of the wealth Europe has by her madness lost. Already even England, the creditor nation of the world, is letting go by the billions the accumulated interest bearing bonds of the last century.

The Europe, on the contrary, that emerges from this conflict will have had its economic and industrial order shattered from top to bottom; will have been well nigh bled to death in men and resources; will be under a debt so vast that the interest on it alone can not be paid, to say nothing of the principal. It will be a Europe no more resembling that of eighteen months ago than the battered, bloody body with half its bones broken from the fall over a hundred foot precipice, resembles the strong, well man at the top before he went over. It will be a Europe saddened, disillusioned, infinitely broken, lying amid its ebbing life's blood, facing an indefinite period of long, hopeless invalidism. Those who prophesy danger from any nation now engaged in this life and death struggle, surely know little of the modern problems of war. They are reasoning about this war from the past wars of the world, when every man who has really studied the problem knows that history presents nothing from which a parallel can be drawn.

The greatest book which has been written on this war and its probable outcome came out of Russia a dozen years ago. Maurice de Bloch, the great Russian financier, spent twenty odd years of his life in the most scientific investigation which has ever been made of modern warfare. And he arrived at the conclusion that if ever the great nations of Europe, after their enormous preparations, engaged in war, it would be of such a length, and on such a scale, and so enormously costly, that neither side could win a decisive victory. All which engaged in it would end in financial bankruptcy and economic ruin. I earnestly recommend to all men in America who are today tormented with fears of what some country in Europe may do to us when they get through fighting over there, to read de Bloch's "Future of War"—the book which led to the calling of the first Hague Conference—the book which is, day by day, being verified by everything that is happening in Europe. Though written twelve years ago, so scientific were de Bloch's conclusions that there is scarcely a detail which would need restatement in the light of the actual struggle which is now going on. The military minds of Europe which were under the illusion, so strikingly portrayed by the unanswerable argument of Norman Angell, that war could be made to pay its own way, already see the hopelessness of recouping their losses