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XIII

THE TURMOIL OF WAR [1]

(*March, 1917*)

Ladies and Gentlemen:—

I have seldom had a more difficult speech to deliver than that which lies before me this evening. Often enough since choosing the subject, I have had an impulse to turn tail and fly for refuge to some comparatively simple and undisturbing question, like the internal relations of the Ukrainian peoples or the Serbs-Bulgarian Dialects of the district of Monastir. But in times like these if a man undertakes to speak to his fellow citizens in such a society as this, serious and half-religious in its outlook, it seems a clear duty that he should speak sincerely of the subject that is most in his mind. I choose the subject about which I feel most uncomfortable hour by hour of my life; and though I have little to say that we have not all of us thought and said before, I dare say there will be some comfort to me and to others who feel as I do in our having tried to puzzle the matter out together.

The objects of this society are two, and are expressed in its name. First, we are ready to Fight; we are not pacifists; we believe in the duty of fighting. But secondly, we fight only for the Right. We dedicate our effort as a society to the Right and all that it implies: public faith between States and Governments, justice between the strong and the weak, peace and good-will between man and man, between nation and nation. We oppose with all our strength the rule of naked Force, as it seems to us to be asserted by the German Government. And, deliberately and, as we believe, of necessity, in order to overthrow this assertion of the rule of Force, we appeal to Force as our champion. This sounds illogical, but it is not so. We appealed first to all other means. We began with no ill-will, with no touch of secret ambition. We tried to maintain the power of Right by arbitration or conciliation between us and our neighbours. And in the last resort, when we did appeal to Force, it was not to mere naked Force, not to Force as a master. We did not put the sword upon the throne. The Force we appealed to was the obedient minister of a free and constitutional State, which was seeking not conquest nor its own aggrandizement, but the reëstablishment of Right among the nations of Europe. That was the attitude in which Great Britain took up the gage of battle. "We hope," said our great Prime Minister in November, 1914, "that the longer the trial lasts and the more severe it becomes, the more clearly shall we emerge from it the champions of a just cause; and we shall have achieved, not only for ourselves,—for our direct and selfish interests are small,—but for Europe and for civilization and for the great principle of small nationalities, and for liberty and justice, one of their most enduring victories."

Let us take those aims, for a moment, one by one. We shall "achieve an enduring victory," first, "for ourselves, but our own interests are small." That has been made plain, for example, in the Allied Note to President Wilson about our war aims. In that rehearsal of the larger aims of all the Allied Powers, Great Britain was conspicuous in that she asked for nothing. (I do not, of course, say that we shall in the end acquire nothing. But if we end by allowing our colonies to annex certain of the conquered German colonies, or if we ourselves continue to hold the district of Bagdad and Kut, it will certainly not be due to any deliberate plan conceived from the beginning.)

"A victory for the independence of small nationalities": is that too much to claim? No. For clearly the freedom of every nation in Europe is menaced by the policy which forced war upon Serbia in spite of all concessions, and destroyed Belgium in spite of her absolute innocence and her explicit treaty. If that policy triumphed, how much freedom would remain to Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, or any other of the smaller nations?

"A victory for civilization": is that too much? No. The appalling barbarization of warfare, the atmosphere of deliberate and obscene terrorism, the studied contempt for international movements and Public Right which Germany has introduced as an essential element in her war-policy, are not only a danger to civilization in the future, but are in themselves the absolute denial and destruction of civilization. Nor could any movement be compatible with the future of civilization which rested on the exaltation of Turkey, by war in Europe and in Asia by hideous massacre.

"A victory for Europe": is that too much? At least it is clear that almost all free Europe believes we are fighting for

her. Germany and the Austrian Government and apparently the Swedish Government think otherwise. France, Russia, Portugal, Italy, Serbia, Montenegro, Rumania, a large proportion of the subjects of Austria, and most of the peoples of Holland, Norway, Denmark, and Spain are with us, as well as the greatest and most fearless of all neutrals, the United States of America. There might be a Europe, there might be a rich and fairly peaceful Europe, under Germany's domination; but the peace would be, as Lord Grey has called it, "an iron peace," and the riches would be produced for German masters by masses of men without freedom and almost without nationality.

"A victory for liberty and justice": that is the clearest claim of all. No liberty could live either under or beside a victorious Prussia, and it was only Germany's set and deliberate refusal to consider the claims of justice that precipitated the war. Since I wrote these words our claim to represent the cause of liberty has received a tremendous confirmation. Our ally Russia has become a free nation. The event has shown that the cause of autocracy and the cause of the Allies could not remain permanently reconciled; the Russia that is our natural comrade in arms must be Russia free.

The case seems clear. The policy of this League seems both intelligible and justified. We will fight, we will kill and suffer and die, rather than willingly see all conscience banished from international policy, or betray ourselves and weaker nations to the mercy of triumphant wrong.

And yet—is it so plain as all that? We know it is not. We all know—or, if we do not, Thucydides did his best two thousand years ago to explain it to us—that war, at any rate between States of approximately equal power, is not an instrument that can be directed with precision to a perfectly definite aim and turned off and on like a garden hose. It is a flood on which, when once the flood-gates are opened, those who have opened them will be borne away. In August, 1914, for the sake of our own rights, of justice and of humanity, we appealed to Force. Force entered and took the centre of the stage. It became a struggle, not of Right against Force, but of one Force against another. The struggle deepened, became closer, more terrible, more fraught with anxiety. It became very nearly a struggle for existence. We gave all our minds to it. Gradually, inevitably, increasingly, the fight began to absorb us. And while the men who guided England and expressed the spirit of England in the early days of the war were men of lofty spirit and a profound sense of responsibility, idealists like Sir Edward Grey and philosophers like Mr. Asquith and later on Mr. Balfour, as the war proceeded, there came a change. England ceased to be occupied with questions of right and wrong; she became occupied with the questions of fighting and killing. We turned, so to speak, from the men who could give wise counsel; we called on all who could fight, and we liked best those who could fight hardest.

And here comes the subject of my address, a subject that is rather terrible to a man of conscience. Do you remember how Sir Francis Drake once had to hang one of his officers; and how before executing the sentence he passed some time in prayer, and then shook hands with the offender? That is the sort of spirit, perhaps the only spirit, in which any man of conscience can without inward misery approach the killing and torturing of his fellow creatures. He is ready, if need be, to shed blood; but he must know that he does it for the Right, and because he must. It would sicken him to think that while doing it, he was secretly paying off old scores, or making money out of it, or, still worse, enjoying the cruelty. This slaying of men, if you do it for the right motive, may be a high and austere duty; if you admit any wrong motive, it begins to be murder—and hypocritical murder.

And yet, as soon as you let loose in war the whole of a big nation, you have handed over that high and austere duty to agents who cannot possibly perform it: to masses of very ordinary people, and not only of ordinary people, but of stupid and vulgar and drunken and covetous and dishonest and tricky and cruel and brutal people, who will transform your imagined crusade into a very different reality.

When the war was flung into the midst of all this seething, heterogeneous mass of men who make up Great Britain or the British Empire, it called out naturally those who in their different ways were most akin to it. It called out both the heroes and the ruffians. But in the main, as the war atmosphere deepened among the civilian population, the men who were interested in justice became unimportant; those who were specially interested in humanity were advised to be discreet in their utterances. It is quite others who came to the front: the men—for such exist in all countries—who believe in Force and love Force; who love to wage bloody battles, or at least to read about them and lash their younger neighbours into them; who rage against the "mere lawyers" who care about right and wrong; despise the puling sentimentalists who have not deadened their hearts to all feeling of human compassion; loathe the doctrinaire politicians

who dare to think about the welfare of future generations instead of joining in the carnival of present passion.

What is to be our attitude to this change? Does it invalidate the whole position of our Society? I think not.

We knew we should let loose these evil powers, but we believe we can cling to our duty in spite of them. It was part of the price we had to pay, if we wished to save Europe, to save the small nationalities, to save liberty and civilization. And it is by no means all the price. It is only an extra. It comes as an addition to the long bill of dead and wounded, of the mountains of unatoned and inexplicable suffering, the vista of future famine and poverty, and the beggary of nations. And it is not the only extra. There is something that goes wrong in us ourselves.

On every side one sees the influence of that queer, distorting force which protects our tired nerves by cheapening and marring all our high emotions. We entered on this war in a state of moral exaltation. If ever in the course of my life I have been privileged to look on pure heroism, it was in some of the young men who volunteered for military service in the first few months of the war. It is not difficult to get vigorous young men to risk their lives. But the men I mean did far more than that. They gave up almost all they cared for in life, all their enjoyments, their intellectual aims, the causes for which they were working; they gave up a life of constructiveness and brotherly love, to which they were devoted, to undertake a life, not only of great hardship and danger,—that is simple,—but one consecrated to malignity and destruction, which they loathed. And the motive which impelled and inspired them was a faith, a very high faith, that a crisis had arisen in the history of mankind which made this strange sacrifice desirable. A vast crime was suddenly before us; a crime striding to accomplishment, almost triumphant, and so dire in its ultimate meaning that each of these men felt within him, "That must never happen while I live!" In that faith they turned from their old ideals, from their hopes, their causes, their books, their music, their social work, or their philosophy; they served to the utmost of their strength and the greater number of them are now dead.

I speak of the class of men I knew best. But the same spirit in different degrees ran through the larger part of Great Britain.

That is how it happens. You face the beginning of a war with intense feeling. You feel the casualties, you feel the pain of the wounded, you feel the horror of what your friends have to do, as well as what they have to suffer. You feel also the uplifting emotion of sacrifice for a great cause.

But you cannot possibly go on feeling like that. War is a matter of endurance, and if you allow yourself to feel continually in this intense way, you will break down. In mere self-protection a man, whether soldier or civilian, grows an envelope of defensive callousness. Instinctively, by a natural process, you avoid feeling the horrors, and you cease to climb the heights of emotion. After all, an average man may be sorry for the Czecho-Slovaks; he may even look them up on a map; but he cannot go on grieving about them year in and year out. He may realize in flashes the actual meaning in terms of human misery of one hour of the war which he is not fighting indeed, but ordering and paying for. But he could not live if he did so steadily. He proceeds, quite naturally, first to put the enemy's suffering out of account. *He* deserves all he gets, anyhow. Then the sufferings of the victim nations: he is very sorry, of course, for Belgium, Poland, Serbia, Rumania, the Armenians. But it is no good being sorry. Better to get on with the war! Then the sufferings of his own people, the young men and middle-aged men who have gone out to France or the East. He cannot quite forget these; he must think about them a good deal and the thought is painful. So he transforms them. When they once put on khaki, they became, he imagines, quite different. They were once James Mitchell the clerk, Thomas Brown the railway porter, John Baxter the Wesleyan carpenter. But now they are "Tommies." And we invent a curious psychology for them, to persuade ourselves somehow that they like the things they do, and do not so very much mind the things they suffer.

And then, in spite of all this protective callousness, in spite of the pretences we build up in order to make ourselves comfortable, there continues underneath the brazen armour of our contentment a secret horror, a raging irritation—how shall I put it? It is the ceaseless, bitter sobbing of all that used once to be recognized as the higher part of our nature, but now is held prisoner, stifled and thrust aside...because the need of the world is for other things. And some of us throw up the moral struggle and go blindly for pacifism. (I met a man lately who had left the useful and peaceful work he had been allowed by the military authorities to follow, because he felt he could never find peace except in prison or on the scaffold.) Most of us, I believe, do our duty as best we can; trying amid so much heroic fortitude to show a little decent power of self-denial, and amid such oceans of cruelty to scatter the few drops of personal kindness that we can. And a third set, almost all civilians, led partly by party passion and self-interest, partly by the overflow of angry impulses which cannot find vent in honest fighting, partly by mere vulgarity and love of excitement, dance a kind of devil's chorus in fury lest any calm wisdom, any reasoned judgement, any scrupulous honour, should still be allowed a voice in the

future of England.

Let me read you some passages from a letter written by a soldier, not an officer, about his impressions of us civilians in England when he returned after a long and meritorious time of service in France. He seems to see us across a gulf of mutual misunderstanding.

> You speak lightly [he says]; you assume that *we* shall speak lightly of things...which to us are solemn or terrible. You seem ashamed, as if they were a kind of weakness, of the ideas which sent us to France, and for which thousands of sons and lovers have died. You calculate the profits to be derived from War after the War, as though the unspeakable agonies of the Somme were an item in a commercial proposition. You make us feel that the country to which we have returned is not the country for which we went out to fight....We used to blaspheme and laugh and say, "Oh, it's only the newspapers. People at home can't really be like that." But after some months in England I have come to the conclusion that your papers don't caricature you so mercilessly as we supposed. No, the fact is you and we have drifted apart. We have slaved for Rachel, but it looks as if we had got to live with Leah.

He speaks of the ideas with which we entered upon the war.

> How often, fatigued beyond endurance, or horrified by one's own actions, does one not recur to those ideas for support and consolation! It is worth it, because...It is awful, but I need not loathe myself because...We see things which you can only imagine. We are strengthened by reflections which you have abandoned....While you seem to have been surrendering your creeds with the nervous facility of a Tudor official, our foreground may be different, but our background is the same. It is that of August to November, 1914. We are your ghosts.
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> I can forgive you for representing war as a spectacle instead of a state of existence. I suppose that to a correspondent who is shepherded into an observation post on a show day, it does seem spectacular. But the representation of the human beings concerned is unpardonable. There has been invented a kind of conventional soldier, whose emotions and ideas are those which you find it most easy to assimilate with your coffee and marmalade. And this "Tommy" is a creature at once ridiculous and disgusting. He is represented as invariably "cheerful," as revelling in the excitement of war, as finding sport in killing other men, as "hunting Germans out of dug-outs as a terrier hunts rats," as overwhelming with kindness the captives of his bow and spear. The last detail is true to life, but the emphasis you lay on it is both unintelligent and insulting. Do you expect us to hurt them or starve them?
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> Of the first material reality of war, from which everything else takes its colour, the endless and loathsome physical exhaustion, you say little; for it would spoil the piquancy, the verve, of the picture. Of your soldiers' internal life, the constant collision of contradictory moral standards, the liability of the soul to be crushed by mechanical monotony...the sensation of taking a profitless part in a game played by monkeys and organized by lunatics, you realize, I think, nothing. Are you so superficial as to imagine that men do not feel emotions of which they rarely speak: or do you suppose that, as a cultured civilian once explained to me, these feelings are confined to "gentlemen" and are not shared by "common soldiers"?...
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> They carry their burden with little help from you. For when men work in the presence of death, they cannot be satisfied with conventional justifications of a sacrifice which seems to the poor weakness of our flesh intolerable. They hunger for an assurance which is absolute, for a revelation of the spirit as poignant and unmistakable as the weariness of their suffering bodies....To most of us it must come from you or not at all. For an army does not live by munitions alone, but also by fellowship in a moral idea or purpose. And that, unless you renew your faith, you cannot give us. You cannot give it us because you do not possess it.

These are grave charges. I will presently say a word or two in answer to them, but for the present the serious fact for us to realize is that such charges are made. The man who makes them is not a pacifist, but a good soldier; not an eccentric, not a sentimentalist nor a man of immature judgement. Quite the reverse. And he feels, on returning to England after two years of war, that we have not only sent him and his fellows out to die for us, but that in their absence we have betrayed them. We sent them out to fight for an England which was the champion of Freedom and the Human Conscience

and International Right; and when once they were gone we cast these phrases away, having no more use for them, and left them to fight and die for the "Times" and the "Daily Mail."

Now, there are many pleas that can be urged in extenuation of these charges. I will mention them presently. I wish first to urge another point. Admit for the moment that they are largely true; that we *have* fallen from our ideals. Would it have altered our action, ought it to have altered our action, in August, 1914? If we had known that, in addition to the awful waste of human life, in addition to the incalculable sum of suffering, in addition to the desperate impoverishment of Europe, the war was likely to bring upon us a certain lowering of the national ideals, and a time of bitter and perhaps sordid reaction; if we had known all this, should we still have declared war against the German Empire? My answer is, Yes.

As a matter of fact we did know it, or at least surmise it. I was looking back at some speeches I made myself in 1914 and 1915 and I find that I mentioned explicitly every one of these evils among the probable results of the war. And I have no doubt that others did the same. We foresaw it; and we disliked and dreaded the prospect. We would have done almost anything, have sacrificed almost anything, to avoid both the war and its consequences; but we were faced by the one thing we could not do, we were asked for the one sacrifice we could not give. We could not agree that, while we still had life and strength, the world should with our consent be conquered by naked Force and held down by Terrorism.

However badly we may have been, or are yet likely to be, demoralized by this war, that is a lesser evil than if all free Europe were conquered by Germany. And even to be conquered by Germany now, after all we have suffered, would be a lesser evil than to have submitted to her without a struggle. If after the invasion of Belgium the rest of Europe had submitted to the Germans without a struggle, it would have saved millions of lives, tons of treasure, oceans of suffering; but it would have meant a greater evil to mankind than any such measurable losses. It would have meant that the Spirit of Man itself was dead.

And now for my pleas in extenuation. I think the charges brought by my friend in that letter (the whole letter, by the way, has been printed as a leaflet and can be bought from the "Nation" office) are in some degree true. At least they waken in my own mind a feeling of mixed guilt in myself and resentment against others more guilty. But I believe that, in the natural pain and shock of his disappointment, he has felt the marks of our corruption to be more permanent and deep-rooted than they are. Many of the symptoms that seem worst are really misinterpreted.

Have you noticed how, at a play, when a particularly moving or touching moment occurs, you will always hear some people laugh? You probably feel in your fury that they are brute beasts, outcasts from the human race; but they are not. The explanation merely is that, as is usual at touching moments, they had two contrary impulses at the same time, one bidding them cry and one bidding them laugh. And, in a natural self-protection, they checked the first and indulged the second.

All this callous cheerfulness, all this gay brutality, with which people sometimes speak of bursting shells and "the leg of a fat Hun performing circles in the air," or of poking into dug-outs with bayonets and "picking out the Boches like periwinkles on a pin"...all that loathsome stuff is to a great extent mere self-protection. It is a kind of misplaced tact. Something more real, more near the truth, more undisguisedly horrible, is just round the corner of the speaker's mind, and he is determined not to let it show itself. If it emerged, it would make every one feel awkward....I do not say that this sort of language is not bad; it is, very bad, both in origin and in effect. But I do say strongly that it is not profound, and is not what it appears to be.

Similarly, when a man with a conscience or sense of justice in him goes along the streets of London and looks at the posters, his heart sometimes fails him and he thinks, "Is this the nation for which I am fighting, and for which my friends have died?" And the answer is No. It is not. Those posters do not represent the nation. They do not really represent even the wretched man who made them. They are based, no doubt, on something in his mind. But that something has been first distorted in the way he imagines will please people inferior to himself; next, concentrated and squashed so as to be expressed in two or three words; and then "gingered up" to attract the notice of a tired and busy crowd whose eyes are dazed with hosts of similar placards.

Our nation itself is nothing like as unjust and greedy, nothing like as factious and fond of lies, as intolerant, as cruel, or as stupid as it would seem, and does seem, to a foreigner studying the streets and the newspapers. For a purely temporary cause, we cannot express ourselves freely while the war lasts. "Why not?" asks some unrepentant Radical, and the answer is easy. Simply because there are sixty million people listening who want to kill us, and we must be

careful that they do not overhear anything that may help them in doing so. Parliament is muzzled and largely impotent; and Parliament is the one place, the one great institution, in which any statement, however unpopular, can be made; and where any false statement made can be challenged and answered.

That is what makes Parliament the unique and irreplaceable guardian of our liberties. The newspapers can never possibly take its place. Many of them, I gladly admit, do their best under uphill conditions. I am often filled with admiration for the power with which some few of our great journalists maintain day after day, under every circumstance of trial, the same high level of thought and style, of self-command and of patriotism. But such men are striving against the stream. Such censoring of newspapers as there is tells almost entirely in one direction, and that the same direction as popular prejudice. It is no corrective. While war lasts, every voice, every fact, every principle, which seems likely to weaken the war-spirit is feared and disapproved and often suppressed. I do not wish to complain of this one-sided censorship, though every one admits that its working is far from perfect. I only want to point out that it is one-sided. In every subject you can take, as it were, a sort of central line which represents roughly the opinion of the moderate man; other opinions are either to the left of it or to the right of it. I do not, of course, say that the moderate man is necessarily right. But suppose you suppress or fiercely discourage all expression of opinion on one side of that line while allowing it perfect freedom on the other side; the result is obviously not a fair representation of the opinion of the country. Opinions which tell in favour of justice, of moderation, of all the qualities which mankind once thought good and will assuredly think good again, are suppressed or discouraged; the opposite opinions are let loose like wild asses stamping and braying above the graves of the dead. The spectacle that sickened my friend was not a true picture of the nation as it is, nor any reflection of the minds of the real men and women who go home at night to think much of their sons and husbands in the trenches, and a little also of the unhappy people in Serbia or Poland or France, or it may be in Germany. The outside spectacle presented by any nation is, I believe, nearly always a worse and uglier thing than the nature of any average individual. The men and women themselves are better than the newspapers and the streets.

Some of you will remember Plato's words in the "Republic," answering those who talk violently of the corruption of the young by false teachers, and his description of the real false teacher, the real sophist, to whom the corruption of the world is mostly due. Plato was not much afraid of sophists like Mr. Shaw or Mr. Morel or Mr. Snowden; what he dreaded was the great intangible sophist, with no body to be kicked and no soul to be damned, who lurks in posters and headlines and triumphant majorities.

> Do you believe in young persons corrupted by bad teachers, and in individual bad teachers who corrupt them, to any serious extent? Don't you know that the people who talk like this are themselves the great False Teachers, and always educating people and finishing them off, young and old, men and women, exactly to their own taste?
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> When do you mean? said he.
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> Whenever they sit down together in a crowd, in a public meeting or a law court or a theatre or a camp, or any other collection of human beings, and make a great noise and shower praise on various things that are said or done and blame on others, always exaggerating, whichever it is; and they shout and clap their hands, till the walls of the place where they are and the rocks outside reëcho and multiply the noise of all the praise and blame? Where do you think a young man's heart sinks to then? What sort of private education can hold out, and not be flooded and swept away on the torrent of all that praise and blame? Till the lad agrees and says all the same things are good or evil as the crowd says, and follows the same lines as they follow and becomes just like them?
>
> Of course he must.
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> Why, I have not yet mentioned the great Must. The real Must which these teachers and sophists bring to bear, if their words are not enough. Don't you know what waits for the man who is not persuaded, confiscations and outlawries and death?[2]

I do not mean to say that these words specially apply to us. We have no confiscations or executions. We have, considering the greatness of the crisis and the prolonged strain, comparatively little of the persecuting spirit. The old Liberal England cannot be killed in a day. But I quote these words as a reminder of two things: first, that at present, as in all times of great public excitement, there is necessarily this huge, intangible sophist at his work, perverting wisdom and stirring up the impulses of terror and hatred; and secondly and with more emphasis, that, after all, he will not be there forever. Peace must come some day, and after peace eventually a return to normal life.

First, that the heart of England must not be judged by these outward manifestations; and next, that even these outward manifestations are not things that will last.

To those who are troubled, as I have been troubled, by thoughts of the kind raised by my friend's letter, I would venture to say, therefore, these words of counsel: First, let us be sure in our hearts that we are not ourselves false to the ideals of 1914; that the cause for which our friends have died or suffered, the cause for which we have assented to the shedding of torrents of innocent blood, shall never by us be degraded to anything lower than the cause of Public Right and of Human Freedom. Let us be sure that, to the best of our powers, we do not, we Englishmen for whom others have died, let the champion of Public Right turn aside to persecution or to lawlessness.

Next, let us keep our faith in our fellow man and our fellow countryman. He has astonished you by a heroism and self-sacrifice which seemed to carry us back into the great ages of legend; do not now lose faith in him about lesser things. I do not ask you to idealize soldiers as such. It is a foolish practice. But remember that our soldiers are men, and very brave men, and that they have seen with their eyes and touched with the hands realities of which we scarcely dare to think. They have learned many things that we shall never know. And one thing they have learned is the nature of war. The general may possibly be a lover of war; while war lasts he is a very great man, indeed, and when peace comes he may have to retire upon half-pay to Brighton. But the men in the firing line are not lovers of war; hardly more so than the ravaged and tortured peasants of the invaded territories.

The women and old men at home may hate the enemy. Hate is an emotion which grows when you cannot give vent to normal anger. But the soldier has given more vent to his anger than he ever needed. He has often more sympathy than hate for the man in the trenches opposite, labouring miserably in the same mud and snow as himself, caught in the same bewildering net, deafened by the same monstrous noises and torn by the same shreds of iron.

Mercy has not passed out of the world, nor yet justice.

We are driven back to a sort of mysticism. Mankind knows that suffering itself is evil, but the wish to cause suffering is incalculably and disproportionately worse. All the cruel deeds, all the killing and maiming that is done day by day, night by night, over most of Europe, are not the real will, not the real free actions of any man. It is all a thing that has happened. Who among men ever wished for this war? We know that our own statesmen strained every nerve to prevent it. The soldiers fighting never wished it, nor yet the nations behind the soldiers. The world itself, the great, suffering world, never wished it. No one wished it. Not the great criminals and semi-maniacs in Germany and Austria who brought it about; not even they wished for this. What they wished was wicked enough, Heaven help them; when they dreamed of their triumphal march on Paris and the rest of the *frischer fröhlicher Krieg*, the "fresh and joyous war." But they never wished for this that has come. They thought it would be quite different. They are staring aghast, like Frankenstein, at the monster they have created.

It makes some difference in one's ultimate judgement, it saves one from a wild reaction against all organized human society as an accursed thing, if we realize that the war is not really the work of man's will. It is more a calamity to pity than a crime to curse.

The man who would prolong the war one day longer than is necessary for the establishment of the Right, if there is such a man, is if possible more wicked than the wretches who caused the war. Because he will know what he is doing, and they did not. Yet neither must we wish to end it a day sooner.

One is sometimes bewildered by this drag in two contrary directions, bewildered till it is hard to see clear. Then the right thing is to go back to August, 1914, and remember how we first faced the question of war, and how the great leaders of the nation then guided us. We knew the war was horrible, and we faced it as the alternative to something worse. I believe that, among the statesmen and others whom I knew personally, almost every thoughtful and honest man who then made up his mind to support the war, faced it very much as he would face his own death. We made our choice, and we are paying, and for many months still shall go on paying, the price that we agreed to pay. All these deaths, all these broken hearts—we agreed to them beforehand.

But we agreed to them as the price to be paid for a certain result, the only result in the range of human practice which

could justify so ghastly a traffic. We agreed to pay this price in part, perhaps, for the saving of our national existence, but beyond that, not for the aggrandizement of ourselves or our country, not for territory or trade or profit, most certainly not for the sake of injuring our rivals or taking revenge upon our enemies, or stealing advantages over our political opponents. We agreed to pay this price in order that the idea of Public Right should not be swept out of existence; that the free peoples of Europe should remain free, and some at least of her ancient sores be cleansed; and that the issue of our great ordeal should not be fixed by the mere tug of war between opposing national ambitions, but be permanently based, so far as we can attain it, on the organized conscience of Europe and the free judgement of the civilized world. In some such cause as that we will endure to any limit. For a baser cause the war would be murder.

FOOTNOTES:

Address to the Fight for Right League, March 4, 1917.

Plato, *Republic*, p. 492.

THE END

[The end of *The Turmoil of War: XIII from "Faith, War and Policy"* by Gilbert Murray]