

**HESITATIONS, THE
AMERICAN CRISIS
AND THE WAR**

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Hesitations, the American Crisis and the War by William Morton Fullerton

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HESITATIONS /

THE AMERICAN CRISIS
AND THE WAR

BY
WILLIAM MORTON FULLERTON
AUTHOR OF "PROBLEMS OF POWER"



P. T. Z. E.
1916

It is high time to leave a policy of expedients, of opportunisms, of entanglements and crooked ways, of parliamentary hypocrisy, concealment, and compromise that characterizes the languid life of worn-out nations, and return to the virgin, loyal, simple, logical policy that derives directly from a moral standard, that is the consequence of a ruling principle, that has always inaugurated the young life of peoples that are called to high destinies.

—MAGGIORI, "To the Italians."

Neutrals are almost always sacrificed, and peace is usually concluded at their expense.

—Ancient maxim of the Princes of the House of Savoy.

He who, in circumstances so critical, is incapable of foreseeing the future has not the right to assume the responsibilities of public office.

—VENUSTILOS, Speech, Oct. 21, 1915.

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NYOY WEM
OLMUN
MAY 1911

PREFACE

On September 7, 1914, the German Emperor wrote to President Woodrow Wilson asking him for "an impartial opinion" with regard to the war which had broken out in Europe five weeks before.

On October 8th the Dutch papers reproduced from the *North German Gazette* Mr. Wilson's reply to the imperial feeler. Mr. Wilson had read the Emperor's letter "with the greatest interest and sympathy," and he declared that he was "honored" at being the object of such a missive. He prayed God that the war would soon come to an end, and remarked cautiously and sententiously that later on there would be a "day of settlement." "Where injustices have found a place," he said, "results are sure to follow, and all those who have been at

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fault will have to answer for them." He demurred to forming and uttering a definite opinion. Such action, he urged, would be injudicious and even precipitate. Speaking, therefore, "as friend to friend," he informed the German Emperor—who had just sacked Belgium, and whose aviators were then dropping bombs over the statue of Napoleon in the Place Vendome—that he could not doubt that the Emperor would understand if he "reserved his opinion until the end of the war, when all events and circumstances could be regarded in their proper perspective and correct bearings."

The American people had not "reserved" their opinion. Their ignorance as to European conditions has always been profound, but the crime of Germany in violating the neutrality of Belgium—a crime confessed by the German Chancellor—and Germany's atrocious methods of making war among an innocent folk, instantly aroused throughout the United States feelings of horror and of reprobation.

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I was in the United States from mid-November, 1914, to April, 1915, frequenting Americans of every class and of every type in the large towns and villages throughout the vast region from the Atlantic seaboard to the lake cities of the Middle West. I lectured on the causes of the war and on its significance for the United States in schools, colleges, and universities. The students of Andover, Yale, Princeton, and Harvard, the bankers and clubmen of New York, the manufacturers and the social world of Buffalo and Cleveland, the chance acquaintances in the promiscuous company one met in the "smokers" of the great express trains, every one with whom I came into contact, every one, as I recall, without a single exception, declared his stupefaction at the conduct of Germany and his corresponding sympathy for the cause of the Allies. It was obvious that there were many millions of Americans who, however glad that the United States was not at war, were in no doubt as to the entire culpability of Germany, and as to the innocence of France and

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England and Russia. In the music halls and streets one heard, as often as "Tipperary," the doggerel:

I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy.
Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder,
To kill some other mother's darling boy?
Let nations arbitrate their future troubles,
It's time to put the sword and gun away.
There'd be no war to-day
If mothers all would say,
"I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier!"

And nothing, no doubt, could be more characteristic of the heedless pacificism of our community than this popular protest against the very idea of war. But at the same time it was clear that the instinctive sentiment of America, in the early months of the war, vibrated frankly and articulately with the hearts of those peoples who were supporting the shock of the aggression of Germany. And Belgium and France and Serbia were already learning that there was nothing platonic about American sympathy. We were already many millions, those of us whom the

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President of the Republic was to brand, a few months later, almost as with a bull of ex-communication:

There are some men among us and many residents abroad who, though born and bred in the United States and calling themselves Americans, have so far forgotten themselves and their honor as citizens as to put their passionate sympathy with one or other side in the great European conflict above their regard for the peace and dignity of the United States. They also preach and practise disloyalty. No laws, I suppose, can reach corruptions of the mind and heart, but I should not speak of others [the Pan-German conspirators on American soil] without also speaking of these, and expressing the even deeper humiliation and scorn which every self-possessed and thoughtfully patriotic American must feel when he thinks of these things and the discredit they are daily bringing upon us.*

This is a strange document. It is certainly one of the strangest in our annals. In Switzerland, where racial divisions are more clearly accentuated even than in the United States, reciprocally contrary sympathies were manifested at the outset

*"Annual Message," December 7, 1915.