

AMERICA AND THE WORLD WAR

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America and the World War by Theodore Roosevelt

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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THE WORLD WAR**

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BY
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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PRAYER FOR PEACE

Now these were visions in the night of war:

I prayed for peace; God, answering my prayer,
Sent down a grievous plague on humankind,
A black and tumorous plague that softly slew
Till nations and their armies were no more—

And there was perfect peace . . .

But I awoke, wroth with high God and prayer.

I prayed for peace; God, answering my prayer,
Decreed the Truce of Life:—Wings in the sky
Fluttered and fell; the quick, bright ocean things
Sank to the ooze; the footprints in the woods
Vanished; the freed brute from the abattoir
Starved on green pastures; and within the blood
The death-work at the root of living ceased;
And men gnawed clods and stones, blasphemed and
died—

And there was perfect peace . . .

But I awoke, wroth with high God and prayer.

I prayed for peace; God, answering my prayer,
Bowed the free neck beneath a yoke of steel,
Dumbed the free voice that springs in lyric speech,
Killed the free art that glows on all mankind,
And made one iron nation lord of earth,
Which in the monstrous matrix of its will
Moulded a spawn of slaves. There was One Might—

And there was perfect peace . . .

But I awoke, wroth with high God and prayer.

I prayed for peace; God, answering my prayer,
Palsied all flesh with bitter fear of death.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

The shuddering slayers fled to town and field
 Beset with carrion visions, foul decay,
 And sickening taints of air that made the earth
 One charnel of the shrivelled lines of war.
 And through all flesh that omnipresent fear
 Became the strangling fingers of a hand
 That choked aspiring thought and brave belief
 And love of loveliness and selfless deed
 Till flesh was all, flesh wallowing, styed in fear,
 In festering fear that stank beyond the stars—
 And there was perfect peace . . .
 But I awoke, wroth with high God and prayer.

I prayed for peace; God, answering my prayer,
 Spake very softly of forgotten things,
 Spake very softly old remembered words
 Sweet as young starlight. Rose to heaven again
 The mystic challenge of the Nazarene,
 That deathless affirmation:—Man in God
 And God in man willing the God to be . . .
 And there was war and peace, and peace and war,
 Full year and lean, joy, anguish, life and death,
 Doing their work on the evolving soul,
 The soul of man in God and God in man.
 For death is nothing in the sum of things,
 And life is nothing in the sum of things,
 And flesh is nothing in the sum of things,
 But man in God is all and God in man,
 Will merged in will, love immanent in love,
 Moving through visioned vistas to one goal—
 The goal of man in God and God in man,
 And of all life in God and God in life—
 The far fruition of our earthly prayer,
 "Thy will be done!" . . . There is no other peace!

WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON.

FOREWORD

In the New York *Evening Post* for September 30, 1814, a correspondent writes from Washington that on the ruins of the Capitol, which had just been burned by a small British army, various disgusted patriots had written sentences which included the following: "Fruits of war without preparation" and "Mirror of democracy." A century later, in December, 1914, the same paper, ardently championing the policy of national unpreparedness and claiming that democracy was incompatible with preparedness against war, declared that it was moved to tears by its pleasure in the similar championship of the same policy contained in President Wilson's just-published message to Congress. The message is for the most part couched in terms of adroit and dexterous, and usually indirect, suggestion, and carefully avoids downright, or indeed straightforward, statement of policy—the meaning being conveyed in questions and hints, often so veiled and so obscure as to make it possible to draw contradictory conclusions from the words used. There are, however, fairly clear statements that we

are "not to depend upon a standing army nor yet upon a reserve army," nor upon any efficient system of universal training for our young men, but upon vague and unformulated plans for encouraging volunteer aid for militia service by making it "as attractive as possible"! The message contains such sentences as that the President "hopes" that "some of the finer passions" of the American people "are in his own heart"; that "dread of the power of any other nation we are incapable of"; such sentences as, shall we "be prepared to defend ourselves against attack? We have always found means to do that, and shall find them whenever it is necessary," and "if asked, are you ready to defend yourself? we reply, most assuredly, to the utmost." It is difficult for a serious and patriotic citizen to understand how the President could have been willing to make such statements as these. Every student even of elementary American history knows that in our last foreign war with a formidable opponent, that of 1812, reliance on the principles President Wilson now advocates brought us to the verge of national ruin and of the break-up of the Union. The President must know that at that time we had not "found means" even to defend the capital city in which he was writing his message. He ought to know that at the present time, thanks largely to his own actions, we