

**AMERICAN'S
RELATIONS TO
THE GREAT WAR**

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American's Relations to the Great War by John William Burgess

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JOHN WILLIAM BURGESS

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By

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PREFACE

AS the great World War draws towards its close, our country approaches the crisis of its relation to it and its participation in it.

I do not hesitate to affirm that we have participated in it, although I do not necessarily intend by this that we have not been neutral according to the letter, if not in spirit. What I mean to say is that the exigencies of the war and the negligence of our diplomacy have turned the assistance which we could lawfully render both belligerents alike to the practically exclusive advantage of one, and that the question which we shall have to face at the close of the war, and which we ought to face now before it be too late to change our course, if we have taken the wrong tack, is whether, wittingly or unwittingly, we are or are not aiding that belligerent to victory whose triumph will contribute to the furtherance of our own legitimate interests and the welfare of the world

3-19-46 R.R.R.

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in times of peace and under normal conditions.

It is with the hope and the purpose of aiding in the solution of this all important question that I have made the effort to add the following pages to my volume on the causes and occasions of the European War published a year and a half ago.*

I have also another purpose. I have observed, with pain and dismay, that the desire for the cessation of the war is apparently weakening, it may even be said is gradually dying out, among a large number of our people.

It is probably true that becoming accustomed to the recital of its horrors has some part in the production of this manifestly growing indifference, but I fear that it is a minor part. I fear that the opportunities which the war affords to make money out of the slaughter, misery, and misfortunes of our fellowmen in Europe constitute the

* *The European War of 1914—Its Causes, Purposes and Probable Results.* A. C. McClurg & Co., Chicago.

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main reason of this unnatural and inhuman psychology.

I said to one of the munition venders recently, "This so-called prosperity is partial and ephemeral. The destruction of Europe cannot mean the permanent prosperity of America or the welfare of the world."

He replied flippantly, "I hope and expect the war will last long enough for me to make my pile."

This is simply appalling! The spirit which it manifests is, however, to our everlasting shame and disgrace, rapidly spreading. Let those who are not yet infected by it look it boldly in the face now and brand it with the infamy it deserves, lest, while the nations of Europe come out of the great struggle with diminished populations and depreciated property, we may come out of it as depreciated and degraded men!

JOHN W. BURGESS.

Newport, R. I.

November, 1916.



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