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The Evolution of World Peace, 1910

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George Fox College
1911

**The
Evolution
of
World
Peace**

THE EVOLUTION
OF WORLD PEACE

BY

LEVI T. PENNINGTON

EARLHAM COLLEGE
RICHMOND, IND

1910

The Evolution of World Peace

IN the progress of the world, the dream of yesterday becomes the confident hope of to-day, and the realized fact of to-morrow. As old systems fail to meet new conditions and new ideals, they are discarded; and into the Limbo of worse than worthless things is passing the system of human sacrifice to the Moloch of international warfare. For centuries world peace has been the dream of the poet, the statesman, the philanthropist, the Christian. That dream is becoming a confident hope. This generation should see it an accomplished fact.

There was a time when individual prowess determined the issue of every difference, when the winner in any controversy was the man with the strongest arm, the heaviest club or the thickest skull. Man's inter-relationships multiplied as humanity advanced; with each new relation came new causes for quarrel, and for a time human advancement brought but an increase in murders and assassinations.

Presently, however, personal combat began to die out. The duel replaced ambush and assassination; eventually courts of law replaced the duel. But the change came slowly at first. Men who had a difference insisted that it was their quarrel, and they alone could settle it; but Reason saw that two combatants inflamed by passion are least fitted of all men to see where justice lies. Many held that where honor is involved, no one can adjust the difficulty but the principals; but Reason saw that a man's honor cannot be vindicated by killing his enemy or being killed by him. Finally it was urged that there would be no power to enforce the decree if personal differences were left to the adjudi-

cation of others; but Reason said, "That power will come with the need for it." And so courts of law and equity arose. Laws were passed defining rights and limiting aggression; and when a man wronged his neighbor, that wrong was settled in court, and not in personal combat with the bludgeon or the knife.

For similar reasons, wars between states and tribes have ceased; and face to face with the inevitable logic of past progress stands the world to-day. Though humanity has been slow to see it, the truth is dawning in men's minds that international warfare is no more to be justified than civil strife, tribal wars or personal combat.

Men are beginning to realize the terrible cost, the unbelievable wastefulness of actual war and the preparation for possible war. When we read that the armed peace of Europe the past thirty-seven years has cost \$111,000,000,000, nearly as much as the aggregate value of all the resources of the United States, the richest nation on earth, the figures are so appalling that mortal mind cannot conceive them, and they lose their force. When we remember that 72 per cent. of the national revenue of the United States is spent on wars past or prospective, the matter comes closer home. When we realize that the cost of a single battleship, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the junk heap, exceeds the total value of all the grounds and buildings of all the colleges and universities in the state of Indiana, the figures have more meaning for us. And when we reflect that the cost of a single shot from one of the great guns of that battleship would build a home for an American family, a comfortable home costing \$1,700, the common man begins to realize that the richest nation on earth cannot afford to go to war nor prepare for war.

And yet mere money is one of the cheapest things in all the world. The cost of war can never be paid in gold. Not in national treasuries can you see the payment of that cost, where smug, well-groomed politicians sign bonds and bills of credit. If you would see the payment of the price of war, you must go to the place of war. With all your senses open, step upon the

battlefield. Smell the smoke of burning powder, the reek of charging horses, the breath of fresh red human blood. Feel the warmth of that blood as you seek to stanch the wound in the breast of one of the world's bravest, dying for he knows not what. Hear the screams of the shells, the booming roar of the cannonade, the clash of the onslaught, the shrieks of the wounded, the groans of the dying, the last gasp of him whose life has reached its end. Such is the infernal music of war. See the victim of the conflict reel in the saddle and fall headlong. Cast your eyes on the mangled forms of God-like men, fallen in the midst of fullest life. Come in the night after the battle, and look upon the ghastly faces upturned in the moonlight. Gaze on the windrows of the dead—Mars's awful harvest, that impoverishes all and enriches none, and you know something of the cost of war.

And yet we have seen but little. Could we but enter the wasted homes, and see the broken hearts that war has made; could we go to the almshouses and soldiers' orphans' homes, and see widows and children by the thousand suffering the doled-out charity of state or nation because war has robbed them of their rightful protectors; could we but realize the agony of the broken home, worse a thousand-fold than the agony of the battlefield, then might we know more of the real cost of war.

And still our idea would be inadequate, though we realized the full measure of every groan and heartache. Earth's most priceless treasures are still more intangible things—the treasures of justice and kindness and love. The spirit of war in the soldier sets aside the moral law; makes human life seem valueless, human suffering a thing to be disregarded, human slaughter an honorable profession. The war spirit perverts the mind of the publicist, until the achievements of honorable peace sink into insignificance, and the press clamours for a cruel and unjustifiable war. The war spirit blinds the eye of the statesman, until wrong seems right, folly seems expediency, Justice is dethroned, and Revenge takes up the iron scepter and lets fly the thunderbolt. The war spirit takes possession of the pulpit, and the minister,

called to preach the loving message of the Prince of Peace, stirs up the spirit of contention and animosity, of hate and murder. Could we but draw aside the curtain, and back of the tinsel and gold braid see the crime, the hate, the moral degradation that war always brings, never again would a friend of humanity ask for the arbitrament of the sword.

But the eyes of the world are opening. The cost of war is far too high, if it did all that its advocates claim for it. Instead, wars too often leave questions unsettled or wrongly settled. Poland bears witness, weeping over her lost estate; Athens in ashes reiterates the charge. We must have peace. International differences must no longer be settled by brute force, discarded in the settlement of personal quarrels centuries ago. The folly of seeking world peace by war preparation and competitive naval construction is becoming more and more apparent. There is no solution in that direction. The world is recognizing that every argument against the duel of men applies with still greater force against the duel of nations, and humanity has advanced farther toward world peace in the last twenty-five years than in all the centuries of history that have preceded. World peace has become not the dream of the poet, but the confident hope of the world, whose realization is the task set for the men of this generation.

One by one the obstacles to world peace are being broken down. Warfare has been ameliorated by international agreement. Vast reaches of territory have been neutralized. Unfortified cities are no longer to be bombarded in any country. Actual disarmament has taken place between the United States and Canada, between Chile and Argentina. Norway and Sweden have separated peaceably. Bulgaria has achieved her independence without bloodshed. The Dogger Bank incident, which a century ago would have plunged Europe into war, was settled amicably. Two great Hague conferences and a host of minor gatherings have advanced tremendously the progress of international amity. Over eighty arbitration treaties are now in force. The Inter-

parliamentary Union is surely and clearly pointing the way to a world law-making body. Already we have a high court of nations, to which are being referred questions that would once have resulted in certain war. And we are nearer than the dreamer of last century dared to hope to "the parliament of man, the federation of the world."

But not yet has the millenium dawned. In the face of all this progress, armies and navies are larger and more burdensome than ever before. The United States spends more on wars past and prospective than for all educational purposes. England, France, Germany, Russia, groan under the burdens of the armed peace of Europe. The mind of the world is convinced that war is futile and terribly wasteful. The heart of the world has acknowledged that war is cruel and inexcusable. The conscience of the world has admitted that war is wrong and morally unjustifiable. But still the preparation for war goes on, and unless conditions are changed, war is inevitable. What is to be done? The will of the world must be moved, and men must be led to do what they have already admitted is right and just and expedient.

As we have led in other days, so must America lead to-day. The example of the United States will do more than a century of argument and conference. America should begin the disarmament that will eventually mean the triumph of world peace.

We have naught to fear. We are far distant from the storm-centers of the world. We are a conglomerate people, with ties of blood binding us to all the nations of the earth. We have no foes within that demand a large standing army, and there are no enemies without that are anxious to try conclusions with us by land or sea. Then away with war talk and war scares and "jingoism"! In time of peace let us prepare for peace, that all the world may enjoy peace. American disarmament will be a tremendous stride toward the accomplishment of the world's desire—the cessation of international warfare; a world congress, to codify international law and enact new laws as needed; a great

world-court, to settle all international differences; an international police force, to give effect to the decrees of this court; and an end to the burdens of armies and navies under which the whole world is groaning.

This is a part of the world's larger hope. Pessimists there are who insist that human nature is belligerent, and that war will never be abolished. But international warfare has already seen the handwriting on the wall. Mars has been "weighed in the balances and found wanting." The fruitless slaughter of the millions is not to be forever nor for long. Let us hasten the day when the rolling war drum will be hushed forever, the bugle note no longer call to carnage; when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Some day in the not distant future the nations that have all these centuries bowed before the throne of the god of war shall own eternal allegiance to the Prince of Peace. "And of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end."