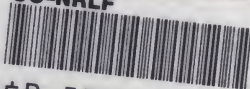


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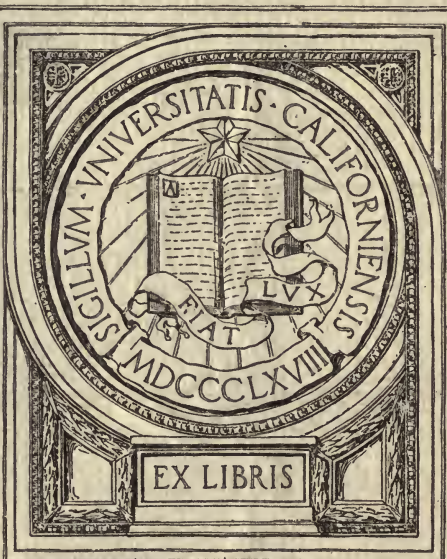
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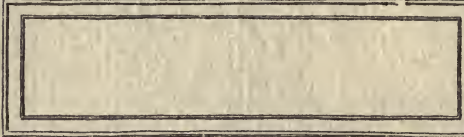


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ADDRESS

BY

ELIHU ROOT

AS TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE NEW YORK
REPUBLICAN CONVENTION
NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 15, 1916



REPRINTED, WITH CERTAIN ELIMINATIONS,
FOR THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE
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ROOT'S SPEECH

FOREWORD

The Address of Elihu Root impressed the undersigned who has taken the responsibility for its re-issue as presenting material that should prove of service and enlightenment for citizens throughout the country.

The portions of the Address here printed have to do with the subject of foreign relations. American citizens who are interested in the welfare of the nation and in the fulfillment of our national obligations will find in Senator Root's clearly thought out argument material for guidance and for inspiration. Legislators and voters have been unduly confused by the specious talk of W. J. Bryan, the political leader who was ready to recommend the payment of debts, national and individual, fifty cents on the dollar, and who is

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still ready to advocate the discharge of all our national obligations on the same basis.

It is well that our people should be placed in a position to combat the heresies of Bryan and his followers with the thoughtful utterances of a real statesman like Senator Root.

“PEACE UNDER THE SWORD.”

March 10, 1916.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CONVENTION:

We are entering upon a contest for the election of a President and the control of government under conditions essentially new in the experience of our country. The forms which we are about to follow are old and familiar; but the grounds for action, the demand of great events for decision upon national conduct, the moral forces urging to a solution of vaguely outlined questions, the tremendous consequences of wisdom or folly in national policy, all these are new to the great mass of American voters. Never since 1864 has an election been fraught with consequences so vital to national life. All the ordinary considerations which play so great a part in our presidential campaigns are and ought to be dwarfed into insignificance.

For the first time in twenty years we enter the field as the party of opposition, and indeed it is a much longer time, for in 1896, in all respects save the tariff, the real opposition to the sturdy and patriotic course of President Cleveland was to be found in the party that followed Mr. Bryan.

But it is not from domestic questions that the most difficult problems of this day arise. The events of the last few years have taught us many lessons. We have learned that civilization is but a veneer thinly covering the savage nature of man; that conventions, courtesies, respect for law, regard for justice and humanity, are acquired habits, feebly constraining the elemental forces of man's nature developed through countless centuries of struggle against wild beasts and savage foes. We have been forced to perceive that a nation which fulfills the conditions on which alone it can continue to exist, which preserves its independence and the liberty of its people and makes its power a shield for the rights of its citizens, must deal with greed and lust of conquest and of power and indifference to human rights. [We have seen that neither the faith of treaties nor the law of nations affords protection to the weak against the aggression of the strong] We have begun to realize that America, with its vast foreign trade, with its citizens scattered over the whole earth, with millions of aliens upon its soil, with its constantly increasing participation in world-wide efforts for the benefit of mankind, with a thousand bonds of intercourse and intimacy uniting it to other nations, is no longer isolated; that our nation can no longer live unto itself

alone or stand aloof from the rest of mankind; that we must play some part in the progress of civilization, recognize some duties as correlative to our rights. For the first time within the memory of men now living, the international relations of the United States, long deemed of trifling consequence, are recognized as vital. How can this nation, which loves peace and intends justice, avoid the curse of militarism and at the same time preserve its independence, defend its territory, protect the lives and liberty and property of its citizens? How can we prevent the same principles of action, the same policies of conduct, the same forces of military power which are exhibited in Europe from laying hold upon the vast territory and practically undefended wealth of the new world? Can we expect immunity? Can we command immunity? How shall we play our part in the world? Have selfish living and factional quarreling and easy prosperity obscured the spiritual vision of our country? Has the patriotism of a generation never summoned to sacrifice become lifeless? Is our nation one, or a discordant multitude? Have we still national ideals? Will anybody live for them? Would anybody die for them? Or are we all for ease and comfort and wealth at any price? Confronted by such questions as these and the practical situa-

tions which give rise to them, is the country satisfied to trust itself again in the hands of the Democratic party?

When a President and Secretary of State have been lawfully established in office the power of initiative in foreign affairs rests with them. The nation is in their hands. Theirs is the authority and theirs the duty to adopt and act upon policies, subject to such laws as Congress may enact within constitutional limits. Parliamentary opposition can take no affirmative step; can accomplish no affirmative action. The expression of public opinion can do nothing except as it produces an influence upon the minds of those officers who have the lawful power to conduct our foreign relations. Their policy is the country's policy because it is they who are authorized to act for the country. While they are working out their policy all opposition, all criticism, all condemnation, are at the risk of weakening the case of one's own country and frustrating the efforts of its lawful representatives to succeed in what they are seeking to accomplish for the country's benefit. An American should wish the representatives of his country to succeed whatever may be their party unless there be wrong-doing against conscience. However much he may doubt the wisdom of their course he should help them where

he can and refrain from placing obstacles in their way. But when the President and Secretary of State have acted, and seek a new grant of power, they and the party which is responsible for them must account for their use of power to the people from whom it came, and the people must pass judgment upon them, and then full and frank public discussion becomes the citizen's duty.

The United States had rights and duties in Mexico. More than forty thousand of our citizens had sought their fortunes and made their homes there. A thousand millions of American capital had been invested in that rich and productive country, and millions of income from these enterprises were annually returned to the United States not merely for the benefit of the investors, but for the enrichment of our whole country and all its production and enterprise. But revolution had come, and factional warfare was rife. Americans had been murdered, American property had been wantonly destroyed, the lives and property of all Americans in Mexico were in danger. That was the situation when Mr. Wilson became President in March, 1913. His duty then was plain. It was, first, to use his powers as President to secure protection for the lives and property of Americans in Mexico and to require that the rules of law and stipulations of treaties

should be observed by Mexico towards the United States and its citizens. His duty was, second, as the head of a foreign power to respect the independence of Mexico, to refrain from all interference with her internal affairs, except as he was justified by the law of nations for the protection of American rights. The President of the United States failed to observe either of those duties. He deliberately abandoned them both and followed an entirely different and inconsistent purpose. He intervened in Mexico to aid one faction in civil strife against another. He undertook to pull down Huerta and set Carranza up in his place. Huerta was in possession. He claimed to be the constitutional president of Mexico. He certainly was the *de facto* president of Mexico. Rightly or wrongly, good or bad, he was there. From the north Carranza and a group of independent chieftains were endeavoring to pull down the power of Huerta. President Wilson took sides with them in pulling down that power. In August, 1913, through Mr. John Lind, he presented to Huerta a communication which was in substance a demand that Huerta should retire permanently from the government of Mexico. When Huerta refused, the power of the United States was applied to turn him out. Foreign nations were induced to refuse to his govern-

ment the loans of money necessary to repair the ravages of war and establish order. Arms and munitions of war were freely furnished to the Northern forces and withheld from Huerta. Finally the President sent our army and navy to invade Mexico and capture its great seaport, Vera Cruz, and hold it and throttle Mexican commerce until Huerta fell. The government of the United States intervened in Mexico to control the internal affairs of that independent country and to enforce the will of the American President in those affairs by threat, by economic pressure, and by force of arms. Upon what claim of right did this intervention proceed? Not to secure respect for American rights; not to protect the lives or property of our citizens; not to assert the law of nations; not to compel observance of the law of humanity. On the contrary, Huerta's was the only power in Mexico to which appeal could be made for protection of life or property. That was the only power which in fact did protect either American or European or Mexican. It was only within the territory where Huerta ruled that comparative peace and order prevailed. The territory over which the armed power of Carranza and Villa and their associates extended was the theater of the most appalling crimes. Bands of robbers roved the country

with unbridled license. Americans and Mexicans alike were at their mercy, and American men were murdered and American women were outraged with impunity. Thousands were reduced to poverty by the wanton destruction of the industries through which they lived. The payment of blackmail was the only protection of property against burnings and robbery. No one in authority could or would give protection or redress. It had become perfectly plain that the terms upon which both Carranza and Villa held their supporters were unrestricted opportunity and license for murder, robbery, and lust. Yet the government of the United States ignored, condoned, the murder of American men and the rape of American women and destruction of American property and insult to American officers and defilement of the American flag and joined itself to the men who were guilty of all these things to pull down the power of Huerta. Why? The President himself has told us. It was because he adjudged Huerta to be a usurper; because he deemed that the common people of Mexico ought to have greater participation in government and share in the land; and he believed that Carranza and Villa would give them these things. We must all sympathize with these sentiments, but there is nothing more dangerous than misplaced

sentiment. Of all men in this world, the man who had vested in him the executive power of the United States was least at liberty to sit in judgment of his own motion upon the title of a claimant to the Mexican presidency or to reform the land laws of Mexico.

The results of this interference were most unfortunate. If our government had sent an armed force into Mexico to protect American life and honor we might have been opposed but we should have been understood and respected by the people of Mexico, because they would have realized that we were acting within our international right and performing a nation's duty for the protection of its own people; but when the President sent an armed force into Mexico to determine the Mexican presidential succession he created resentment and distrust of motives among all classes and sections of the Mexican people. When our army landed at Vera Cruz, Carranza himself, who was to be the chief beneficiary of the act, publicly protested against it. So strong was the resentment that he could not have kept his followers otherwise. When Huerta had fallen the new government which for the day had succeeded to his place peremptorily demanded the withdrawal of the American troops. The universal sentiment of Mexicans required that peremptory demand,

and the troops were withdrawn. Still worse than that, the taking of Vera Cruz destroyed confidence in the sincerity of the American government in Mexico, because every intelligent man in Mexico believed that the avowed reason for the act was not the real reason. The avowed purpose was to compel a salute to the American flag. I will state the circumstances: On the ninth of April, 1914, a boat's crew from the *Dolphin* landed at a wharf in Tampico to take off supplies. The use of that wharf had been prohibited, and the Mexican officer in charge of the wharf put the crew under arrest, but a higher officer ordered him to hold the boat's crew at the wharf and await instructions. Within an hour and a half the crew was set free. No injury or indignity was suffered except the fact of the arrest. Immediate amends were made. The Mexican officer in command at Tampico apologized; General Huerta's government apologized; the officer who made the arrest was himself arrested and his punishment promised. The admiral in command of our fleet at Tampico demanded more public amends through a salute to our flag, but there ensued a discussion as to the facts and as to the character of the salute which the circumstances demanded, the number of guns, and how, if at all, the salute was to be

returned. While that discussion was pending and avowedly because of that incident the American government presented a twenty-four-hour ultimatum and landed an armed force and captured the City of Vera Cruz. Three hundred Mexicans were reported killed; seventeen United States Marines were killed and many were wounded. At that very time Mr. Bryan, with the President's approval, was signing treaties with half the world agreeing that if any controversy should arise it should be submitted to a joint commission and no action should be taken until after a full year had elapsed. This controversy arose on the ninth of April and on the twenty-first of the same month Vera Cruz was taken. Several times the troops of Carranza and Villa had arrested and imprisoned American consular officers and torn down the American flags from the consulates and trampled them in the mire, with indescribable indignities. The proofs were in our hands and no attention was paid to them. Many times soldiers of the United States, in uniform, on duty, had been shot and killed or wounded across the border by soldiers of Carranza and Villa. More than fifty of them have been killed in this way and no attention has been paid to it. The demand of a salute to the flag was never heard of again after Vera Cruz was captured. There is not an

intelligent man in Mexico who believes that the dispute about the salute was the real reason for the capture of Vera Cruz. Is there one here who doubts that the alleged cause was but a pretext and that the real cause was the purpose to turn Huerta out of office? The people of Mexico, who saw their unoffending city captured by force of arms, three hundred of its people slain, their soil violated, a foreign flag floating over their great seaport, upon what they felt to be a false pretense, were misled into imputing a more sinister purpose still—to secure control of Mexico for the United States; and they believed that when the American troops departed, that purpose was abandoned through fear. With the occupation of Vera Cruz the moral power of the United States in Mexico ended. We were then and we are now hated for what we did to Mexico, and we were then and we are now despised for our feeble and irresolute failure to protect the lives and rights of our citizens. No flag is so dishonored and no citizenship so little worth the claiming in Mexico as ours. And that is why we have failed in Mexico.

Incredible as it seems, Huerta had been turned out by the assistance of the American government without any guaranties from the men who were to be set up in his place, and so the murdering and burning and ravishing have gone on to this

day. After Huerta had fallen and the Vera Cruz expedition had been withdrawn, President Wilson announced that no one was entitled to interfere in the affairs of Mexico; that she was entitled to settle them herself. He disclaims all responsibility for what happens in Mexico and contents himself with a policy of Watchful Waiting. But who can interfere in a quarrel and help some contestants and destroy others and then absolve himself from responsibility for the results? It is not by force of circumstances over which we had no control, but largely because the American Administration intervened by force to control the internal affairs of that country instead of asserting and maintaining American rights that we have been brought to our present pass of confusion and humiliation over Mexico.

And for the death and outrage, the suffering and ruin of our own brethren, the hatred and contempt for our country, and the dishonor of our name in that land, the Administration at Washington shares responsibility with the inhuman brutes with whom it made common cause.

When we turn to the Administration's conduct of foreign affairs incident to the great war in Europe we cannot fail to perceive that there is much dissatisfaction among Americans. Some are dissatisfied for specific reasons, some with a vague

impression that our diplomacy has been inadequate. Dissatisfaction is not in itself ground for condemnation. The best work of the diplomatist often fails to receive public approval at the time and must look to a calm review in the dispassionate future for recognition of its merit. The situation created by the war has been difficult and trying. Much of the correspondence of the State Department, especially since Mr. Lansing took charge, has been characterized by accurate learning and skillful statement of specific American rights. Everyone in the performance of new and unprecedented duties is entitled to generous allowance for unavoidable shortcomings and errors. No one should be held to the accomplishment of the impossible. The question whether dissatisfaction is just or unjust is to be determined upon an examination of the great lines of policy which have been followed and upon considering whether the emergencies of the time have been met with foresight, wisdom, and decisive courage. If these are lacking as guides, all the learning of the institutes and the highest skill in correspondence are of little avail.

A study of the Administration's policy towards Europe since July, 1914, reveals three fundamental errors. First, the lack of foresight to make timely provision for backing up American diplo-

macy by actual or assured military and naval force. Second, the forfeiture of the world's respect for our assertion of rights by pursuing the policy of making threats and failing to make them good. Third, a loss of the moral forces of the civilized world through failure to truly interpret to the world the spirit of the American democracy in its attitude towards the terrible events which accompanied the early stages of the war.

First, as to power.

When the war in Europe began, free, peaceable little Switzerland instantly mobilized upon her frontier a great army of trained citizen soldiers. Sturdy little Holland did the same, and, standing within the very sound of the guns, both have kept their territory and their independence inviolate. Nobody has run over them because they have made it apparent that the cost would be too great.

Great, peaceable America was farther removed from the conflict, but her trade and her citizens traveled on every sea. Ordinary knowledge of European affairs made it plain that the war was begun not by accident but with purpose which would not soon be relinquished. Ordinary knowledge of military events made it plain from the moment when the tide of German invasion turned from the Battle of the Marne that the conflict

was certain to be long and desperate. Ordinary knowledge of history—of our own history during the Napoleonic Wars—made it plain that in that conflict neutral rights would be worthless unless powerfully maintained. All the world had fair notice that, as against the desperate belligerent resolve to conquer, the law of nations and the law of humanity interposed no effective barriers for the protection of neutral rights. Ordinary practical sense in the conduct of affairs demanded that such steps should be taken that behind the peaceable assertion of our country's rights, its independence and its honor, should stand power, manifest and available, warning the whole world that it would cost too much to press aggression too far. The Democratic government at Washington did not see it. Others saw it and their opinions found voice. Mr. Gardner urged it; Mr. Lodge urged it; Mr. Stimson urged it; Mr. Roosevelt urged it; but their argument and urgency were ascribed to political motives; and the President described them with a sneer as being nervous and excited.

But the warning voices would not be stilled. The opinion that we ought no longer to remain defenseless became public opinion. Its expression grew more general and insistent, and finally the President, not leading, but following, has

shifted his ground, has reversed his position, and asks the country to prepare against war. God grant that he be not too late! But the Democratic party has not shifted its ground. A large part of its members in Congress are endeavoring now to sidetrack the movement for national preparedness; to muddle it by amendment and turn it into channels which will produce the least possible result in the increase of national power of defense. What sense of effectiveness in this effort can we gather from the presence of Josephus Daniels at the most critical post of all—the head of the Navy Department; when we see that where preparation has been possible it has not been made; when we see that construction of warships already authorized has not been pressed, and in some cases after long delay has not even been begun.

If an increase of our country's power to defend itself against aggression is authorized by the present Congress it must be largely through Republican votes, because the representatives of the Republican party in Washington stand for the country no matter who is president; and all the traditions and convictions of that party are for national power and duty and honor.

As to the policy of threatening words without deeds.

When Germany gave notice of her purpose to sink merchant vessels on the high seas without safeguarding the lives of innocent passengers, our Government replied on the tenth of February, one year ago, in the following words:

“The Government of the United States . . . feels it to be its duty to call the attention of the Imperial German Government, with sincere respect and the most friendly sentiments but very candidly and earnestly, to the very serious possibilities of the course of action apparently contemplated under that proclamation.

“The Government of the United States views those possibilities with such grave concern that it feels it to be its privilege, and indeed its duty in the circumstances, to request the Imperial German Government to consider before action is taken the critical situation in respect of the relations between this country and Germany which might arise were the German naval forces, in carrying out the policy foreshadowed in the Admiralty’s proclamation, to destroy any merchant vessel of the United States or cause the death of American citizens.

“. . . If such a deplorable situation should arise, the Imperial German Government can readily appreciate that the Government of the United States would be constrained to hold the

Imperial German Government to a strict accountability for such acts of their naval authorities and to take any steps it might be necessary to take to safeguard American lives and property and to secure to American citizens the full enjoyment of their acknowledged rights on the high seas."

By all the usages and traditions of diplomatic intercourse those words meant action. They informed Germany in unmistakable terms that in attacking and sinking vessels of the United States and in destroying the lives of American citizens lawfully traveling upon merchant vessels of other countries, she would act at her peril. They pledged the power and courage of America, with her hundred million people and her vast wealth, to the protection of her citizens, as during all her history through the days of her youth and weakness she had always protected them.

On the 28th of March, the passenger steamer *Falaba* was torpedoed by a German submarine, and an American citizen was killed, but nothing was done. On the 28th of April, the American vessel *Cushing* was attacked and crippled by a German aëroplane. On the first of May, the American vessel *Gulflight* was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine, and two or more Americans were killed, yet nothing was done. On the 7th of May, the *Lusitania* was torpedoed

and sunk by a German submarine, and more than one hundred Americans and eleven hundred other non-combatants were drowned. The very thing which our government had warned Germany she must not do, Germany did of set purpose and in the most contemptuous and shocking way. Then, when all America was stirred to the depths, our government addressed another note to Germany. It repeated its assertion of American rights, and renewed its bold declaration of purpose. It declared again that the American Government "must hold the Imperial German Government to a strict accountability for any infringement of those rights, intentional or incidental," and it declared that it would not "omit any word or any act necessary to the performance of its sacred duty of maintaining the rights of the United States and its citizens and of safeguarding their free exercise and enjoyment."

Still nothing was done, and a long and technical correspondence ensued; haggling over petty questions of detail, every American note growing less and less strong and peremptory, until the *Arabic* was torpedoed and sunk, and more American lives were destroyed, and still nothing was done, and the correspondence continued until the Allied defense against German submarine warfare made it unprofitable and led to its abandonment,

and the correspondence is apparently approaching its end without securing even that partial protection for the future which might be found in an admission that the destruction of the *Lusitania* was forbidden by law. The later correspondence has been conducted by our State Department with dignity, but it has been futile. An admission of liability for damages has been secured, but the time for real protection to American rights has long since passed. Our government undertook one year ago to prevent the destruction of American life by submarine attack, and now that the attempt has failed and our citizens are long since dead and the system of attack has fallen of its own weight, there is small advantage in discussing whether we shall or shall not have an admission that it was unlawful to kill them.

The brave words with which we began the controversy had produced no effect, because they were read in the light of two extraordinary events. One was the report of the Austrian Ambassador, Mr. Dumba, to his government, that when the American note of February 10th was received, he asked the Secretary of State, Mr. Bryan, whether it meant business, and received an answer which satisfied him that it did not, but was intended for effect at home in America.

The other event was the strange and unfortunate

declaration of the President in a public speech in Philadelphia the fourth day after the sinking of the *Lusitania* that "a man may be too proud to fight." Whatever the Austrian Ambassador was in fact told by the Secretary of State, the impression which he reported was supported by the events which followed. Whatever the President did mean, his declaration, made in public at that solemn time, amid the horror and mourning of all our people over the murder of their brethren, was accepted the world over as presenting the attitude of the American Government towards the protection of the life and liberty of American citizens in the exercise of their just rights, and throughout the world the phrase "too proud to fight" became a byword of derision and contempt for the Government of the United States. Later, in another theater of war—the Mediterranean—Austria, and perhaps Turkey also, resumed the practice. The *Ancona* and then the *Persia* were destroyed, and more Americans were killed. Why should they not resume the practice? They had learned to believe that, no matter how shocked the American Government might be, its resolution would expend itself in words. They had learned to believe that it was safe to kill Americans,—and the world believed with them. Measured and restrained expression, backed to the full by

serious purpose, is strong and respected. Extreme and belligerent expression, unsupported by resolution, is weak and without effect. No man should draw a pistol who dares not shoot. The government that shakes its fist first and its finger afterwards falls into contempt. Our diplomacy has lost its authority and influence because we have been brave in words and irresolute in action. Men may say that the words of our diplomatic notes were justified; men may say that our inaction was justified; but no man can say that both our words and our inaction were wise and creditable.

I have said that this government lost the moral forces of the world by not truly interpreting the spirit of the American democracy.

The American democracy stands for something more than beef and cotton and grain and manufactures; stands for something that cannot be measured by rates of exchange, and does not rise or fall with the balance of trade. The American people achieved liberty and schooled themselves to the service of justice before they acquired wealth, and they value their country's liberty and justice above all their pride of possessions. Beneath their comfortable optimism and apparent indifference they have a conception of their

great republic as brave and strong and noble to hand down to their children the blessings of freedom and just and equal laws. They have embodied their principles of government in fixed rules of right conduct which they jealously preserve, and, with the instinct of individual freedom, they stand for a government of laws and not of men. They deem that the moral laws which formulate the duties of men towards each other are binding upon nations equally with individuals. Informed by their own experience, confirmed by their observation of international life, they have come to see that the independence of nations, the liberty of their peoples, justice and humanity, cannot be maintained upon the good nature, the kindly feeling, of the strong towards the weak; that real independence, real liberty, cannot rest upon sufferance; that peace and liberty can be preserved only by the authority and observance of rules of national conduct founded upon the principles of justice and humanity; only by the establishment of law among nations, responsive to the enlightened public opinion of mankind. To them liberty means not liberty for themselves alone, but for all who are oppressed. Justice means not justice for themselves alone, but a shield for all who are weak against the aggression of the strong. When their deeper natures are

stirred they have a spiritual vision in which the spread and perfection of free self-government shall rescue the humble, who toil and endure, from the hideous wrongs inflicted upon them by ambition and lust for power, and they cherish in their heart of hearts an ideal of their country loyal to the mission of liberty for the lifting up of the oppressed and bringing in the rule of righteousness and peace.

To this people, the invasion of Belgium brought a shock of amazement and horror. The people of Belgium were peaceable, industrious, law-abiding, self-governing, and free. They had no quarrel with anyone on earth. They were attacked by overwhelming military power; their country was devastated by fire and sword; they were slain by tens of thousands; their independence was destroyed and their liberty was subjected to the rule of an invader, for no other cause than that they defended their admitted rights. There was no question of fact; there was no question of law; there was not a plausible pretense of any other cause. The admitted rights of Belgium stood in the way of a mightier nation's purpose; and Belgium was crushed. When the true nature of these events was realized, the people of the United States did not hesitate in their feeling or in their judgment. Deepest sympathy with downtrodden Belgium

and stern condemnation of the invader were practically universal. Wherever there was respect for law, it revolted against the wrong done to Belgium. Wherever there was true passion for liberty, it blazed out for Belgium. Wherever there was humanity, it mourned for Belgium. As the realization of the truth spread, it carried a vague feeling that not merely sentiment but loyalty to the eternal principles of right was involved in the attitude of the American people. And it was so, for if the nations were to be indifferent to this first great concrete case for a century of military power trampling under foot at will the independence, the liberty and the life of a peaceful and unoffending people in repudiation of the faith of treaties and the law of nations and of morality and of humanity—if the public opinion of the world was to remain silent upon that, neutral upon that, then all talk about peace and justice and international law and the rights of man, the progress of humanity and the spread of liberty is idle patter—mere weak sentimentality; then opinion is powerless and brute force rules and will rule the world. If no difference is recognized between right and wrong, then there are no moral standards. There come times in the lives of nations as of men when to treat wrong as if it were right is treason to the right.

The American people were entitled not merely to feel but to speak concerning the wrong done to Belgium. It was not like interference in the internal affairs of Mexico or any other nation, for this was an international wrong. The law protecting Belgium which was violated was our law and the law of every other civilized country. For generations we had been urging on and helping in its development and establishment. We had spent our efforts and our money to that end. In legislative resolution and executive declaration and diplomatic correspondence and special treaties and international conferences and conventions we had played our part in conjunction with other civilized countries in making that law. We had bound ourselves by it; we had regulated our conduct by it; and we were entitled to have other nations observe it. That law was the protection of our peace and security. It was our safeguard against the necessity of maintaining great armaments and wasting our substance in continual readiness for war. Our interest in having it maintained as the law of nations was a substantial, valuable, permanent interest, just as real as your interest and mine in having maintained and enforced the laws against assault and robbery and arson which protect our personal safety and property. Moreover, that law was written into a solemn

and formal convention, signed and ratified by Germany and Belgium and France and the United States in which those other countries agreed with us that the law should be observed. When Belgium was invaded that agreement was binding not only morally but strictly and technically, because there was then no nation a party to the war which was not also a party to the convention. The invasion of Belgium was a breach of contract with us for the maintenance of a law of nations which was the protection of our peace, and the interest which sustained the contract justified an objection to its breach. There was no question here of interfering in the quarrels of Europe. We had a right to be neutral and we were neutral as to the quarrel between Germany and France, but when as an incident to the prosecution of that quarrel Germany broke the law which we were entitled to have preserved, and which she had agreed with us to preserve, we were entitled to be heard in the assertion of our own national right. With the right to speak came responsibility, and with responsibility came duty—duty of government towards all the peaceful men and women in America not to acquiesce in the destruction of the law which protected them, for if the world assents to this great and signal violation of the law of nations, then the law of nations no

longer exists and we have no protection save in subserviency or in force. And with the right to speak there came to this, the greatest of neutral nations, the greatest of free democracies, another duty to the cause of liberty and justice for which America stands: duty to the ideals of America's nobler nature; duty to the honor of her past and the hopes of her future; for this law was a bulwark of peace and justice to the world; it was a barrier to the spread of war; it was a safeguard to the independence and liberty of all small, weak states. It marks the progress of civilization. If the world consents to its destruction the world turns backwards towards savagery, and America's assent would be America's abandonment of the mission of democracy.

Yet the American Government acquiesced in the treatment of Belgium and the destruction of the law of nations. Without one word of objection or dissent to the repudiation of law or the breach of our treaty or the violation of justice and humanity in the treatment of Belgium, our government enjoined upon the people of the United States an indiscriminating and all-embracing neutrality, and the President admonished the people that they must be neutral in all respects in act and word and thought and sentiment. We were to be not merely neutral as to the quarrels of

Europe, but neutral as to the treatment of Belgium; neutral between right and wrong; neutral between justice and injustice; neutral between humanity and cruelty; neutral between liberty and oppression. Our government did more than acquiesce, for in the first *Lusitania* note, with the unspeakable horrors of the conquest of Belgium still fresh in our minds, on the very day after the report of the Bryce Commission on Belgian Atrocities, it wrote these words to the Government of Germany:

“Recalling the humane and enlightened attitude hitherto assumed by the Imperial German Government in matters of international right, and particularly with regard to the freedom of the seas, having learned to recognize the German views and the German influence in the field of international obligation as always engaged upon the side of justice and humanity,” etc., etc.

And so the Government of the United States appeared as approving the treatment of Belgium. It misrepresented the people of the United States in that acquiescence and apparent approval. It was not necessary that the United States should go to war in defense of the violated law. A single

official expression by the Government of the United States, a single sentence denying assent and recording disapproval of what Germany did in Belgium, would have given to the people of America that leadership to which they were entitled in their earnest groping for the light. It would have ranged behind American leadership the conscience and morality of the neutral world. It would have brought to American diplomacy the respect and strength of loyalty to a great cause. But it was not to be. The American Government failed to rise to the demands of the great occasion. Gone were the old love of justice; the old passion for liberty; the old sympathy with the oppressed; the old ideals of an America helping the world towards a better future; and there remained in the eyes of mankind only solicitude for trade and profit and prosperity and wealth.

The American Government could not really have approved the treatment of Belgium, but under a mistaken policy it shrank from speaking the truth. That vital error has carried into every effort of our diplomacy the weakness of a false position. Every note of remonstrance against interference with trade, or even against the destruction of life, has been projected against the background of an abandonment of the principles for which America once stood, and has been weakened by the popular

feeling among the peoples of Europe, whose hearts are lifted up by the impulses of patriotism and sacrifice, that America has become weak and sordid.

Such policies as I have described are doubly dangerous in their effect upon foreign nations and in their effect at home. It is a matter of universal experience that a weak and apprehensive treatment of foreign affairs invites encroachments upon rights and leads to situations in which it is difficult to prevent war, while a firm and frank policy at the outset prevents difficult situations from arising and tends most strongly to preserve peace. On the other hand, if a government is to be strong in its diplomacy, its own people must be ranged in its support by leadership of opinion in a national cause worthy to awaken their patriotism and devotion.

We have not been following the path of peace. We have been blindly stumbling along the road that continued will lead to inevitable war. Our diplomacy has dealt with symptoms and ignored causes. The great decisive question upon which our peace depends, is the question whether the rule of action applied to Belgium is to be tolerated. If it is tolerated by the civilized world, this nation will have to fight for its life. There will be no escape. That is the critical point of defense for the peace of America.

When our government failed to tell the truth about Belgium, it lost the opportunity for leadership of the moral sense of the American people, and it lost the power which a knowledge of that leadership and a sympathetic response from the moral sense of the world would have given to our diplomacy. When our government failed to make any provision whatever for defending its rights in case they should be trampled upon, it lost the power which a belief in its readiness and will to maintain its rights would have given to its diplomatic representations. When our government gave notice to Germany that it would destroy American lives and American ships at its peril, our words, which would have been potent if sustained by adequate preparation to make them good, and by the prestige and authority of the moral leadership of a great people in a great cause, were treated with a contempt which should have been foreseen; and when our government failed to make those words good, its diplomacy was bankrupt.

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