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AS THE GREATEST OF ALL NATIONS HAVE HELD THE BALANCE LEVEL

By SIR GILBERT PARKER, M.P.

Since writing our editorial remarks of yesterday, we have come across this tribute to the American Nation by Sir Gilbert Parker, and our vanity is touched by the sympathy of agreement between this great man's ideas, and those entertained by our humble self that we are impelled to publish the story.—Ed.

WAR is the supreme test of the qualities of a nation, and it will be admitted by independent opinion in neutral countries that the people of Great Britain have stood the test well.

Peace has its great tests also and the country standing outside the ring of fighters, is tested almost as searchingly as any belligerent country. The belligerent nation has not to weigh its every action with exquisite nicety, because war gives wide liberty, tho it still must walk with guarded footsteps where neutral nations are concerned, it must have strict regard for their rights under the rules of international law and the long precedents of naval warfare.

The neutral country, however, which stands, as it were, between the combatants, holding the balance level, has a task that tests its statesmanship and the character of its people as it is never tested in ordinary peace times, or in ordinary war times.

In this extraordinary war, the American government and American people have been supremely tested, and they have stood the test nobly. The United States—the greatest of all neutral nations—had a gravely important part to play both from the moral and from what may be called the political side.

Put to Severe Test

Four of the greatest nations of the world are at war, and it is natural that each of the two sets of belligerents wish for the moral support of ninety millions of people whose power to affect the ultimate result of the war by their influence with other neutral countries could not be over-estimated.

Official bias in dealing with questions such as contraband, purchase of ships, blockade, and so on, toward either combatant—a preference which would be a variation from the strict rules of neutrality, affecting supplies of all kinds, would have as serious an effect upon the ultimate decision of the war as active participation.

It must be said that, in a position of immense delicacy, the United States has interpreted her official neutrality with an unimpeachable fidelity to long established rules.

Never, since the rules controlling the conduct of nations in time of war have taken form, either by precedent or by the written rule of the Declaration of Paris, has any neutral nation had to face the difficulties attached to its neutrality such as have faced the United States since August, 1914.

She has had to make protest, or to seek explanation, of acts of naval warfare of Great Britain, in which there were certainly elements of anxiety for the British Foreign Office and the government; but whether it was the question of the Dacia and the purchase of ships, or the Wilhelmina and contraband, or the new blockade, a temperateness, a courtesy and a moderation have been shown for which this country cannot be too grateful.

Breathes Spirit of Lincoln

That temperateness, moderation and courtesy, however, have not by a hair's breadth infringed the rights of our foes under international law. Since this war began there has breathed through the official actions of the American government in relation to this country the spirit of Abraham Lincoln, and no higher tribute can be paid to any government than that.

At the time of the Civil War a most delicate question arose between the United States and this country, namely, the seizure of the British packet ship Trent by the United States man-of-war Jactico.

On board the Trent were two representatives of the secession government, Mason and Silldell. The British government demanded the release of the envoys, on the ground that the Trent should not have been seized, and that under the British flag the two envoys were immune from capture.

The cry, "They shall never be given up!" was universally heard in the United States.

Public opinion was stormy and indignant. Then it was that Lincoln, in peril of his own political position, at a most critical time in the history of the Civil War, insisted that the seizure was not lawful under international law, and that Mason and Silldell must be given up.

In the face of threats and wide-

spread anger, Lincoln stood by the principles of international law, not as a pedant, but as a patriot, to whom the perfect honor of his people and his country was more than all else.

Effort to Incite Feeling

Every effort has been made by Germany, through political pressure by German-Americans, by the incitement of racial feeling cultivated by the German Ambassador and by Herr Derenburg's publicity bureau, with its immense ramifications, to move President Wilson toward an abandonment of the strict rules of neutrality by prohibiting the export of munitions of war to Great Britain.

Had President Wilson yielded to this political pressure he would have sacrificed that neutrality which, with a great anxiety and diligent care, his government has steadfastly preserved.

That Germany cannot avail herself of the open market for munitions of war in the United States is due to the fact that with her great navy she is unable in the presence of the British naval force to protect those munitions of war and supplies which she would buy of the United States, if she could.

Great Britain's army on the continent is infinitely smaller than that of Germany, and is, therefore, at a great disadvantage. Germany's navy is small than that of Great Britain, and is, therefore, at a disadvantage, and the United States would indeed be performing an unneutral act if it sought by abandoning the ordinary rules of neutrality to adjust those proportions between the two belligerents on land or sea by whatever means.

The American government has pursued the only policy possible. It has been in tune and sympathy with the high-mindedness and sensible idealism of the American people in regard to great events.

Germany Seeks American Support

The influence of American public opinion is always thrown on the side of right, as that opinion sees it, not on the side of prejudice.

It can be truthfully said that the American people stand for "justice to all and malice toward none." It is not surprising, therefore, that all the combatants in this great war desire at least American good opinion, while Germany has desired, not only the good opinion, but an active support—not through armies and navies, but through the manipulation and distortion of neutral rights in her favor.

The use of German-American political influences, and the threat of what it could do, was not a very logical position for a logical nation like the Germans to take up. Because if the influence of sections of the American people are to be considered, then, on the basis of the majority ruling, the American government must abandoned its strict neutrality in favor of the allies. For we are assured from a thousand quarters in the United States that the overwhelming majority of the American people are in sympathy with our cause.

That is acknowledged, bitterly and viciously, by the Germans themselves. There are those, however, in this country, who have been as illogical, as unreasonable and as unwise as the Germans. They have been unable to understand why, when the American people in an immense majority favored the allies, the American government should remain neutral, or should not completely and openly support the allies.

The cannot understand why the United States should not officially have condemned Germany for its violation of Belgian neutrality. The position is short-sighted, is unjust, and is pedantic.

Should Maintain Neutrality

The newspaper and the people of the United States have been free to express themselves untrammelled by any complications which might have occurred if, for instance, Germany had told the United States to mind her own business on the receipt of an official note conveying reproach.

The reply to the few dissatisfied people in England to this would be, "Ah, then, the United States, if she were challenged by Germany, would abandon her neutrality and take part in the war on the side of the allies!"

To very many others, however, it is infinitely better for the world's sake, and I believe for our own, that the United States should not abandon her neutrality.

It may be that many more nations than are now at war in Europe will be involved before Summer has come.

In the interests of a stable civilization it is essential that the steady, wholesome, dispassionate and honorable influence of the United

States should, unhampered by the terrible restrictions of belligerency, be used in the interests of the whole world, and particularly in the interest of the small nations when the end of this war comes.

Against militarism and the results of militarism the United States is opposed to a man. She will decide—she has decided for herself—whether this nation and this empire is a militaristic nation and empire.

We do not fear her scrutiny in this regard. We welcome the closest study of our policy and our practice and that is why the vast majority of us in England feel that the United States can serve the best interests of civilization by remaining outside the ring of this contest—her government neutral officially and firmly impartial.

Aids Belgium by Neutrality

Conceive what would be the state of Belgium today if the United States had abandoned her neutrality in favor of the allies? Millions in Belgium would be starving. Since August last the United States has been busy in the interests of humanity, lessening the horrors of war by hospital relief, providing comforts and necessities through an awful winter for the wounded of all nations engaged.

Every week there comes from the United States special gifts from each State, ships loaded with flour and food of all kinds for a people whose land has been denuded as locusts ravage the fields of ripened grain and leave them bare.

If for no other reason, the neutrality of the United States should be welcomed by every British man because of what she has done for suffering, starving, tortured Belgium.

If humanity is indebted to the United States government for the incalculable service it has rendered in bringing relief to Belgium, how grateful should this country be to the American government for the services rendered to our thousands of poor prisoners in Germany.

The American ambassadors in London and Berlin and the whole ambassadorial staff have been placed at the service of our suffering wounded and our helpless officers and men, who have had insufficient clothing, insufficient food, and have suffered as no German prisoners have been compelled to suffer in this country. Even at this day, in spite of what the American embassies have done, the suffering still is unpardonably great. It would have been terrible, however, had not the American Embassy officials performed a daily service as chivalrous as it was insistent for our unfortunate fighting men in captivity.

Few people in the United States conceive that it is the duty of their government to join in this conflict. But if it were the duty of the American government to engage in it and it refrained, it is the American people, not ourselves, who should protest and make their government do its duty. The American people have a certain prejudice in favor of making up their own minds.

Newspaper men in Great Britain will gallantly agree that the American press has exhibited the greatest enterprise and shown extraordinary ability in dealing with the war in their editorial columns. We hear more often than is agreeable to those who know the real facts of the sensationalism of American newspapers.

Well, in any case that sensationalism in most cases does not extend to editorial columns. Bold type and leading and catch headings are no longer the monopoly of the American press. Sometimes I am not sure whether I am in Broadway or Piccadilly when I open a newspaper in my bed in the morning.

When I see a heading running across a page in type a half-inch in size I feel that I ought to order a clam chowder and Johnny-cake for breakfast.

The treatment of difficult questions between England and the United States, like that of contraband, purchase of ships, blockade, etc., has been remarkably restrained and courteous—far more so than if the questions were purely local ones and concerned only their own government.

Independent of Racial Prejudice

The American people have made up their minds regarding this war, as they do about most questions relating to Europe, quite independently of any racial prejudice.

The American people are not with Great Britain in this war because so many Americans are come of British stock. They were not with us in the Boer War. They do not allow the fact that they speak the English language to influence them in favor of the English. The South spoke English when the North determined to compel it to remain with the Union.

No, the American people are with us not because of common racial origin or sentiment, but because they think we are right and that Germany is wrong; because of their hatred of the violation of Belgian neutrality; because they detest the militarism which would impose one civilization and one set of national theories by

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