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BY W. W. SWANSON, DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN.

The meaning of the Great War is now sufficiently clear to all who have given serious thought to the matter. It was, indeed, a terrible calamity to the world, but it was not entirely and wholly evil. Consider the frightful tyranny of the Czar's regime in Russia with its brutal bureaucracy and drunken democracy. Recall the reign of Abdul the Damned in Turkey when tens of thousands of Christians were put to the sword. Think of Leopold of Belgium, who had his emissaries torture and flay and slay the natives on the Congo, that red rubber might bring millions into his coffers. Call to mind the brutality of the Prussian Junkers; the soulless and sordid scramble of the Great Powers for markets and military prestige while the common people groaned under the burdens of taxation and the iniquities of conscription. Think of the iniquities of a civilization that tolerated the Putumayo atrocities and the oppression of the unprotected natives of Brazil and Peru, that industry might wax ever greater in the United Kingdom, the most enlightened nation in the world. And recall, finally, that effete American political philosophy which had such a hold upon the Republic that its citizens would openly boast that they were not their brothers' keeper—or, to put it in more familiar terms, that the United States had no concern with the affairs of Europe or of the other nations of the world. Each country was armed to the teeth; each proclaimed itself Christian or highly moral in its ambitions and program; and all gave themselves over to the struggle for wealth, prestige and power. Such conditions could not endure.

The jungle that impeded the progress of man has been swept by a ravaging fire. So terrible has been the destruction that peoples of the world are still dazed with the overwhelming sense of personal and national loss. The calamity has touched almost every home. Relatively few have escaped personal bereavement, and not one will escape the burden of taxation and debt that will encumber the entire world for decades to come. The Great War, surveying these aspects alone, appears as a great futility and an irremediable disaster. So, on a lesser scale and in smaller measure, appeared the destruction of London two hundred and fifty years ago. To those of that day the fire that laid London low in ashes was an appalling calamity. To their descendants it was an undisguised blessing. It consumed slums and wretched hovels and wiped out narrow lanes and crooked streets—it prepared the ground for something nobler and more beautiful. The Great War finds its chief, if not sole justification, in the fact that it has obliterated and utterly destroyed, tyrannies and anachronisms and oppressions that otherwise the common people would have been subjected to for generations to come. It has cleared the jungle for the march of progress and of civilization.

To those who have given sufficient thought to the problem it is clear enough that little or no cultural advance can be achieved for the people as a whole without a corresponding advance, first of all, in the control of the material things of life. The old saying that "Poverty is a good school of success" is the basest of all falsehoods. No progress can be made by the individual or the nation apart from a greater control of wealth. In last analysis, types of governments and the character of politics and the broadening of education and cultural opportunities depend upon, and are controlled by, the standard of living which the people have attained. Economic freedom, the rising above the mere business of living to live a life, is fundamental in the deepening of human liberty. Thus it is that the war must alter profoundly the economic situation for men and nations if any real advance is to be made. How will all this affect agriculture and those who obtain a living from the soil—mankind's oldest and noblest calling?

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