

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

Our efforts to prevent war have been in vain. The great mass meetings held up to the eleventh hour have failed to change the policy of the Government, entangled as it has been by secret understandings and conversations.

Now is not the time to apportion the blame. One thing however, stands out clearly—this is not a people's war. It has its origins in the military bureaucracies of the Powers, in the mutual suspicions of diplomatists, in the cynical self aggrandisement of the war lords. The Russian peasant and the German artisan are pawns in the deadly game of their governors. The English business man and labourer alike are suffering because of movements in high quarters upon which they have never been consulted. What then must be our policy at the present moment?

We are driven back to fundamentals. The awfulness and sin of war will soon be brought home to every thinking man in the country. There is an absence of the Mafficking of fifteen years ago. In our Northern cities people are gathering sadly and with comparatively but little sign of war fever to discuss the situation.

There is little indication at the present moment of that contempt and hatred of our adversaries which prevailed at the time of the Boer War. This shows that past efforts have not been altogether fruitless. It is for us to preserve this better spirit, to show men that, whatever the quarrels of the rulers, the peoples of the kindred nations across the North Sea are brothers, with the same aspirations, the same ideals, the same home ties, the same love for wife and children. I have heard the remark that a group of Germans might converse one with another in the streets of Leeds without molestation. Let us preserve this spirit, and encourage our fellow countrymen by all means in their power to befriend isolated Germans who may be in the unfortunate position of being in an enemy country at the present time.

May it never be said that our peace principles are an excuse for shirking duty. England needs her Quaker sons and daughters at the present hour. Men and women are wanted who will serve in the humdrum services of life no less bravely than the soldiers on the battlefield.

The great war is a great crime—a crime against God and humanity—a crime against our slowly won civilisation. Cannot we step in at the present time and do our share in conserving that civilisation which is threatened with destruction. The war we trust will be short, but if prolonged how great is the danger—the unemployed crowd, hunger and desperation, panic and destruction, crime and misery. We must do our share by organisation and personal effort in preventing such a set back to barbarism. If the worst comes we shall be needed to spend days and nights in works of help and relief. And there may yet be need for a Quaker corps to carry the message of love and goodwill, to convey hope and material sustenance to the war ravaged districts of Europe, that "England's love" may win back the affections of those whose fields have been trodden under the heel of our armies or whose homes have been shattered by the guns of our fleet.

Modern wars are sharp and brief, and perhaps a few weeks will witness the beginning of the end. Then will be the time for our constructive work. We must show how the

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evil seed sown many years ago has borne its bitter fruit; how the Crimean War produced the Balkan troubles, which in their turn have produced the present conflict; how 1870 made Alsace Lorraine the danger spot of Europe, and by producing fortifications on the Franco-German frontier, has led to the attempt to force a passage through Belgium, which in its turn has contributed to Britain's share in the war.

We must plead for a peace founded upon the basis of absolute justice, a settlement in which the rights of all men are regarded, and by which all nationalities will be entitled and urged to submit all future disputes to a strong international court. We must urge that never again shall England be involved in efforts to support the balance of power—that England shall be the friend of all nations, that she shall declare her intention of not interfering by arms in the affairs of the Continent of Europe, but shall ever be willing to give of her best brains and advice in acting the part of mediator and helper.

Furthermore we must ensure that never again shall the people of England be plunged into war through our secret understandings.

Meanwhile the weeks that are before us are dark and pregnant with evil forebodings. The voice of peace may not be heard in the clash of arms. We may yet be called, however unjustly, pro-Germans and supporters of every country except our own. For the moment, ours is the cause which has gone under, and surely this is the time to test the reality of our faith.

Who'll wear the beaten colours, and cheer the beaten men.

Who'll wear the beaten colours till our time comes again.

When sullen crowds are densest and fickle as the sea,

Who'll wear the beaten colours, and wear them home with me.

Now is the time to stand to our principles. We must at the present moment show that there are men in the country with a burning, living faith who will have no part nor lot in the war system because it is a denial of the Christian faith.

The present is not the time to discuss technicalities. We are driven back upon our unshaken Quaker position and this is the only one in these dark hours.

A prominent Leeds clergyman asked for one of our largest "Think" posters, and displayed it outside his Church. During the last week or two I have passed and re-passed that poster in Boar Lane, and have seen very few people reading it.

On the day of the declaration of war, the case was entirely different. Groups of men and women turned from the Royal Proclamations to read how Christians of an earlier day "no longer took up arms," and that the present day religion of Europe "is not Christianity, but the Worship of the God of War." On this day our Christian message of peace reached thousands in that one spot alone.

Nineteen hundred years ago the Prince of Peace suffered on the cross forsaken by those who had followed Him in days of popularity. But there were men and women at that time ready and willing to wear the beaten colours and proclaim themselves followers of the "beaten" Man. Can we do less now?

R. J. L.

NORTHERN FRIENDS' PEACE BOARD,

LEEDS, 6/8/14.