

AN ENGLISH CATHOLIC VIEW OF PRESIDENT WILSON

A philosopher, who could be a cynic very easily, said: "Every nation mocks at other nations and all are right." He also said: "The man who is endowed with important personal qualities will be only too ready to see clearly in what respect his own nation falls short; since their failings will be constantly before his eyes; but every miserable fool who has nothing at all of which he can be proud adopts, as a last resource, pride in the nation to which he belongs; he is ready and glad to defend all its faults and follies tooth and nail, thus reimbursing himself for his own inferiority." Some such thoughts must often rise in the mind of President Wilson (says the *London Catholic Times*). When first he came to Europe he received such a popular welcome in all countries that he may have been tempted to think his task was going to be less arduous than he had feared. His second visit has shown him that he has undertaken one of the greatest and most difficult works to which any statesman ever set his hand. He came as the preacher of a gospel of international peace. He found himself in the midst of sordid struggles caused by national rivalry. To say that all the nations represented by their political chiefs at the Paris Conference were engaged in a game of grabbing all they could might not be true; if only because some of them had already seized what they wanted. But the intelligent public opinion of democratic Europe has been painfully impressed by the evidence that each nation has thought far more of its own interests than of the interests of Europe. This Paris Conference is now seen to be not a Peace Conference, arranging for a League of Nations which would prevent war for ever, as far as that is humanly possible, but a conference about the terms on which Germany can have peace and her enemies the spoils of war. The old secret diplomacy has acted on the old diplomatic methods and from the harvest of this peace will come the seeds of future wars.

His Idealism Has Failed.

When the Paris Conference is over and the peoples of Europe have time to consider the fruits of its deliberations, they will find reason to regret that the idealism of President Wilson failed to make itself felt. And they will regret, when it is too late, that they did not rise above the temptation to indulge their national interests at the expense of international security. Mr. Wilson came from the new world to offer a word of counsel to the old. That word was: Remove the curse of war by removing its causes; abandon armaments, imperialism, tyranny; give all peoples their legitimate right of self-determination; let government repose on the consent of the governed; carry your moral law into your politics; be Christians nationally, as you are individually; do to others as you would be done by. He told the rulers of States and Empires that the day was at hand when the masses of the toiling population of all countries would refuse to be regimental and driven to battle, to fight for ambitions of which they knew nothing and which they would loathe if they understood. The slaughter of human beings committed during four years of a world war had seemed to him an outrage on mankind, a scandal to Christendom, and a peril to the continuance of civilisation on the earth. His speeches were as those of an ancient prophet. The people heard him gladly. His voice fell on their ears as one of hope that the curse of war was

soon to be abolished and permanent peace established. They trusted his genius, his wisdom, his power. So strong was their desire to see his ideals realised, that their own rulers were forced to feign acquiescence in them, and to go to the Paris Peace Conference with a proclaimed determination to make the world safe for democracy!

When time permits, President Wilson, we may be sure, will tell the peoples of the world how he struggled for them and why he failed. He will uncover the secret places of diplomacy and let forth a flood of light upon its aims and deeds. It is very unlikely that he will have another term of office. And then, when he is free once more, he will talk freely. His story will shake the world of half-truths and hoary conventions. For it will show to all nations how the seeds of war are sown in the making of peace. And in all probability it will be more provocative of troubles for Governments than the men who, since the certain defeat of Germany, have been abusing him will like. Mr. Wilson, standing as he does for democracy as against militaristic autocracy, has had many enemies and great ones. They have hated him and his policy. Their ideal is war; his is peace. What he has had to bear during the proceedings at Paris may be imagined, but cannot yet be told. Apparently he has been foiled in his noble endeavors to make peace the object which all Governments should cherish and foster. The old sordid ambitions of statesmen have been too powerful for him. Still, for all his apparent failure, he remains the noblest figure at the Conference. Others struggle for purely national interests. He struggles for the general interests of mankind. It may be that his struggle will be largely, if not altogether, in vain. He may have to return to America defeated. Be it so, if so it must be. But let it also be remembered that some defeats are preferable to any victory. Mr. Wilson has held up before the eyes of mankind an ideal which, though it be rejected to-day, will be welcomed to-morrow. If this peace leads to other wars, other wars will create revolutions which will justify President Wilson and make us all regret that the governing classes of Europe ignored him.

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