

at the sun just now through smoked glasses and blue spectacles, and their hair is rising in horror at that lunar shadow which is more and more obscuring it. They have not the firm faith of the other sky-gazers, and tell us, amid shrieks for the police (and quite illogically for the fire brigade) that as soon as that sanguinary shadow, Labor masquerading as Bolshevism, gets over the sun, darkness will settle upon England, not to lift again. The capitalistic light of day will be put out and chaos only remain. We retain our belief in the fundamental sanity of the English people. They may rise in their strength against the evil conditions of our present social system, but they will not seek to destroy the England they fought to save. The shadow will pass, the sun may shine on a new earth, but it will still be the same sun.

### WOODROW WILSON: A VALEDICTORY ESTIMATE

This week's retirement of Woodrow Wilson into the tempered oblivion of ex-Presidency is an irresistible temptation to moralizers (says the *Nation and the Athenaeum*, London, for March 5). What a sermon upon the vanity of human wishes! For among the little list of men whom the tumultuous tide of the War lifted to a dizzy height of fame and worship and then let down into the depths, the ex-President holds a unique position. His case alone carries all the authentic marks of human tragedy, upon the highest plane. Other lesser figures intervened from time to time, soldiers or statesmen, bringing a momentary hope of victory or of pacific settlement which should release the world from its long torture. But these hopes were too slender, the moral and material resources on which they rested too exiguous, to command the world's confidence. Only when the words of the great President began to float across the Atlantic into ears deadened with the noise of battle, did we begin to believe that the Lord had raised up a new Prophet, with a Message of Salvation. No man, we felt, standing in his own strength, would dare to utter these high political commandments. The inspiration of the great American democracy, the latest and the tallest child of liberty, lay in these words. America was not in the War when first they came. Indeed, it seemed at first as if the guarantee of her great mission rested in this aloofness. For only a disinterested nation can help justice to prevail in the day of judgment. This was undoubtedly the first concern of Woodrow Wilson—to keep his nation out of the War in order to conserve the whole strength and authority of America for an early and an equitable settlement.

Even before the War, it may rightly be claimed that the President conceived for his country the moral leadership of the world. Take this striking passage from his Fourth of July address in 1914:—

"My dream is that as the years go on and the world knows more and more of America, it will turn to America for those moral inspirations which lie at the basis of all freedom: that the world will never fear America unless it feels that it is engaged in some enterprise which is inconsistent with the rights of humanity."

It is part of the tragedy of Woodrow Wilson that neither he nor any sincere American can to-day repeat these words. But no one who knows Mr. Wilson or his country can doubt that when he spoke them they were the passionate desire of his heart and the profound belief of his mind. In this faith when the War came, and America as yet stood out, he solemnly dedicated her to the post of world-arbiter. There was nothing arrogant or at all excessive in this vision. When Europe was weary of its War, broken in resources and perhaps contrite in spirit, to what other earthly providence could it turn? Then would come the great moral opportunity for America. His country stood firmly and enthusiastically behind him in the autumn of 1916, and gave him the full right to speak as he was speaking.

If America could have stood out! But America could not stand out. War blinds and maddens its executants, and Germany's madness inevitably drew in America. This was the first step in the spiritual tragedy, for the entrance of America into the War, however politically necessary,

began at once to waste the moral capital of her great mission of impartial peacemaker. It is a part explanation of the collapse of the President at Versailles that he failed adequately to realise that virtue had gone out of him as a necessary implication of American belligerency. He had issued his Fourteen Points, the greatest and the truest application of the moral law to the collective conduct of nations ever enunciated by any man in a position of authority. Was he deceived into a conviction that the inherent virtue of these moral truths must soften the hearts and convince the intellects of hardened, war-seared European statesmen? He was not without excuse for this belief. The Liberals of Europe had responded with joyful enthusiasm to this splendid expression of their hearts' desire. Even the accredited statesmen of the warring nations had done something more than lip-service. For they had formally adopted the Points and their exegesis, and had offered them to Germany as the basis of the peace. Germany laid down her arms upon this express stipulation. The Word seemed already to have blossomed into the Deed.

The perfidy of this betrayal has never yet been branded as it ought upon whatever substitute for conscience the Allied representatives possess. How should Mr. Wilson have known that these diplomats merely saw in his principles a bait for Germany, and had no intention whatsoever of applying them to the conditions of peace which this successful trick placed them in a position to impose? It is true that Mr. Wilson was not an innocent professor, rushing suddenly into the arena of politics, a natural prey for the beasts or gladiators that abound there. His acquaintance with American politicians, indeed with the special New Jersey brand, had been fairly long and intimate. He knew something of the gulf which lay between profession and practice. Could he have supposed that the more elevated and responsible statesmen of Europe were prepared to stoop to fouler play than ever stained the annals of New Jersey? All Europe was staggering under the shock of the most devastating war that had ever been. Famine and bankruptcy and revolution threatened all the belligerents. Surely the sanity, if not the justice or magnanimity, of his Principles, must carry conviction to the statesmen of a Europe in such a plight! It was a gospel of sheer self-preservation he was preaching. Could they reject it? Well, they did. They built the Bad Peace upon the ruins of his Principles, and using them not as foundation stones, but as occasional, convenient stopgaps and ornaments in their gincerack edifice.

Why did he let them do it, or if he could not stop them, why did he consent? The answers to these questions have been tossed to and fro in a heated rejoinder for the past two years, with no conclusive result. Generally speaking, they fall into two classes, according to the stress laid on circumstances or on character. Friends and defenders insist that he yielded to something they call *force majeure* which confronted him at Paris, and for which he was not prepared. The political philosopher and moralist was drawn by the unexpected collapse of the War prematurely and without preparation into the Den of Diplomacy, where he was lost among the barbed-wire entanglements which European "realists" had made ready for him. Having first dragged away from him his shield of "Open covenants openly arrived at," they plunged him into dark intricacies with which he could not cope. When he grew unduly restive, they threw to him scraps of self-determination, economic equality, and other principles to keep him quiet and to divert him from the peace terms on to the supreme object of his personal devotion, to the League of Nations. And in the end he came away with his name to a Peace Treaty which he thought to be consistent with his Fourteen Points, and the Covenant of a League which was his special contribution to the history of human progress.

In the face of events since the Armistice, no clear-thinking man now maintains either of these two claims. Some of his defenders, indeed, from the beginning threw over the virtue of the Peace Treaty, holding the quite plausible view that Wilson, like the good politician in all times and all countries, bartered away the terms of Peace in return for the Covenant, persuading himself that with that instrument all that was bad or impracticable in the Peace could finally be remedied. If so, he hardly