

The Supreme Question

There is but one supreme question for the country to decide. Shun it as we will, smother it in partisanship, in quibbles, in lesser and selfish matters, the great insistent call is to decide the part this country is to take in working out the problems of this tormented world. Escape the decision? We can no more do that than we can escape breathing the air that envelops us.

The world is one, its troubles one. How long are we going to wilfully ignore the fact, repeatedly proved, even in the lifetime of us all, that a wrong on the other side of the globe may bring untold catastrophe upon our own nation. An opportunity has come to help work out with our fellows on the earth, those other nations from whose affairs we cannot, however much we may wish it, escape, a new method of procedure,--a method of cooperation, actuated by a new spirit--one of adjustment instead of force, one tempered by some recognition of the other man's needs and ambitions, not solely absorbed with our own.

It would be childish to deny that this plan of cooperation of the nations for peace in which we are asked to join means sacrifice. Like every upward step it involves effort, pain, perhaps severe struggle. To shirk it because

of the possible sacrifices, as we are entreated to do in the name of Americanism is to deny all that is fine and manly in Americanism.

We may close our eyes, dull our minds, stifle our hearts, but that no more ends the matter than it ends danger for an ostrich when he buries his head in the sand. We cannot deny permanently our own national traditions. They call to us to take a hand in all the ennobling adventures of life. What adventure did men ever embark on equal in the grandeur of its motives to this league of all peoples to bring peace to the earth?

It may be that the practical machine devised for the enterprise is defective. What silliness to demand that it be perfect. Our business is to perfect it as defects show themselves. The longer we hesitate the harder we make the new task to which the nations are committed.