

SELECTED QUOTATIONS

CHESTERTON ON WAR AND PEACE

BATTLING THE IDEAS AND MOVEMENTS THAT LED TO NAZISM AND WORLD WAR II

By G. K. Chesterton. Edited by Michael W. Perry.

Contributions by Thomas Aquinas, Winston Churchill, Norman Angell, Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Mahatma Gandhi, and H. G. Wells
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The Author Who Should Have Won the 1933 Nobel Peace Prize

Indeed I was a warm admirer of Gilbert Chesterton.... When Hitlerism came, he was one of the first to speak out with all the directness and frankness of a great and unabashed spirit. Blessings to his memory.—RABBI STEPHEN S. WISE, AMERICAN JEWISH LEADER, 1937.

In 1933 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Norman Angell for his key role in founding modern pacifism. It was perhaps the greatest blunder in the history of the Nobel Prize. The award should have gone to the author of this book.

Few writers have proven as tragically wrong as Angell. Just before the Great War, he assured admirers that Germany posed no threat to peace. Two decades later and after Hitler took power in Germany, he remained smugly confident: “No one pretends now—as the papers above quoted used to pretend—that war was due to the special wicked-

ness of Germans, the sudden swoop of the satanic wolf in a peaceful world lusting to eat such harmless lambs as France and Russia.” This blindness to evil, Chesterton warned, is why “Pacifism and Prussianism [Militarism] are always in alliance, by a fatal logic far beyond any conscious conspiracy.”

Six years later that “satanic wolf” would plunge Europe into the bloodiest war in human history, a war that began—precisely as Chesterton predicted in 1932—over a border dispute with Poland. Even the horrors of the Second World War were foreseen by Chesterton, who warned in September 1917 that, if Germany was not forced to change, “Wars more and more horrible” would follow.

Pacifists were not the only targets of Chesterton’s pen. He directed fierce broadsides at all those who, by word or deed, make peace less likely and war more terrible. On these pages you’ll discover

startling insights into the minds of militarists, internationalists, racial supremacists, and all those who grow weary as a war grows long. Remarkably similar personalities and arguments remain with us in today’s debates about war and peace.

Unfortunately, the book that you hold in your hand did not exist in 1933. It’s a collection of 111 articles that Chesterton wrote for the *Illustrated London News* between 1905 and 1922. In those articles, written some two decades before the Second World War, Chesterton explained in practical terms how the next war could be avoided. He was a true pacifist, seeking genuine peace without sacrificing human dignity and freedom.

Finally, while Hitler was still an unknown soldier, he blasted as foul and absurd then fashionable racist ideas that Nazism would later exploit. It is no exaggeration to call him Hitler’s first foe.

It is the inviolable law of all civilisations that the thing you attempt to extirpate you will certainly exaggerate. Our modern cities, particularly the suburbs of our modern cities, are strictly and carefully designed to be sensible and secular; therefore they will certainly, before long, be on fire with the most senseless kinds of superstition.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 18. *Illustrated London News*, October 7, 1905.

For the truth is that the eternal things are rising against temporary things. The gods are rebelling against men.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 18. *Illustrated London News*, October 7, 1905.

The arguments by which the scientific persons attempt to prove that men must become more mechanical or more peaceful always ignore one not unimportant factor—the men themselves. Civilisation itself is only one of the things that men choose to have. Convince them of its uselessness and they would fling away civilisation as they fling away a cigar.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 18. *Illustrated London News*, October 7, 1905.

If we cannot provide the great cities and the great suburbs with some kind of poetry, they will simply go on breeding these broken fanaticisms that make women wave sabres and men found insane religions.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 19. *Illustrated London News*, October 7, 1905.

For it cannot be too often insisted upon that the way to avoid sentiment becoming too sentimental is to admit the existence of sentiment as a plain, unsentimental fact, a thing as solid and necessary as soap.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 19. *Illustrated London News*, October 7, 1905.

Human history is so rich and complicated that you can make out a case for any course of improvement or retrogression.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 21. *Illustrated London News*, August 4, 1906.

The elements that make Europe upon the whole the most humanitarian civilisation are precisely the elements that make it upon the whole the strongest. For the power which makes a man able to entertain a good impulse is the same as that which enables him to make a good gun; it is imagination.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 22. *Illustrated London News*, August 4, 1906.

For if you do not understand a man you cannot crush him. And if you do understand him, very probably you will not.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 23. *Illustrated London News*, August 4, 1906.

When I was about seven years old I used to think that the chief modern danger was a danger of over-civilisation. I am inclined to think now that the chief modern danger is that of a slow return towards barbarism, just such a return towards barbarism as is indicated in the suggestions of barbaric retaliation of which I have just spoken. Civilisation in the best sense merely means the full authority of the human spirit over all externals. Barbarism means the worship of those externals in their crude and unconquered state. Barbarism means the worship of Nature; and in recent poetry, science, and philosophy there has been too much of the worship of Nature. Whenever men begin to talk much and with great solemnity about the forces outside man, the note of it is barbaric. When

men talk much about heredity and environment they are almost barbarians. The modern men of science are many of them almost barbarians.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 23. Illustrated London News, August 4, 1906.

Savages—those that are truly stunted or depraved—dedicate nearly all their tales and sayings to the subject of physical kinship, of a curse on this or that tribe, of a taint in this or that family, of the invincible law of blood, of the unavoidable evil of places. The true savage is a slave, and is always talking about what he must do; the true civilised man is a free man, and is always talking about what he may do. Hence all the Zola heredity and Ibsen heredity that has been written in our time affects me as not merely evil, but as essentially ignorant and retrogressive. This sort of science is almost the only thing that can with strict propriety be called reactionary. Scientific determinism is simply the primal twilight of all mankind; and some men seem to be returning to it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 23-24. Illustrated London News, August 4, 1906.

Another savage trait of our time is the disposition to talk about material substances instead of about ideas. The old civilisation talked about the sin of gluttony or excess. We talk about the Problem of Drink—as if drink could be a problem. When people have come to call the problem of human intemperance the Problem of Drink, and to talk about curing it by attacking the drink traffic, they have reached quite a dim stage of barbarism. The thing is an inverted form of fetish-worship; it is no sillier to say that a bottle is a god than to say that a bottle is a devil. The people who talk about the curse of drink will probably progress down that dark hill. In a little while we shall have them calling the practice of wife-beating the Problem of Pokers; the habit of housebreaking will be called the Problem of the Skeleton-Key Trade; and for all I know they may try to prevent forgery by shutting up all the stationers' shops by Act of Parliament.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 24. Illustrated London News, August 4, 1906.

I cannot help thinking that there is some shadow of this uncivilised materialism lying at present upon a much more dignified and valuable cause. Everyone is talking just now about the desirability of ingeminating peace and averting war. But even war and peace are physical states rather than moral states, and in talking about them only we have by no means got to the bottom of the matter. How, for instance, do we as a matter of fact create peace in one single community? We do not do it by vaguely telling everyone to avoid fighting and to submit to anything that is done to him. We do it by definitely defining his rights and then undertaking to avenge his wrongs.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 25. Illustrated London News, August 4, 1906.

What can they mean when they say that we must not put militarism into boys? Can we by any possibility get militarism out of boys? You might burn it out with red-hot irons; you might eventually scourge it out as if it were a mediaeval devil; but except you employ the most poignant form of actual persecution, you certainly will not prevent little boys thinking about soldiers, talking about soldiers, and pretending that they are soldiers.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 27. Illustrated London News, October 6, 1906.

We are not innocent enough to share the pure appetite of the schoolboy. We are not good enough to be greedy. And exactly as we have corrupted the original appetite for feasting, so we have corrupted the original appetite for arms. A child's instinct is almost perfect in the matter of fighting; a child always stands for the good militarism as against the bad. The child's hero is always the man or boy who defends himself suddenly and splendidly against aggression. The child's hero is never

the man or boy who attempts by his mere personal force to extend his mere personal influence. In all boys' books, in all boys' conversation, the hero is one person and the bully the other.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 27. Illustrated London News, October 6, 1906.

But really to talk of this small human creature, who never picks up an umbrella without trying to use it as a sword, who will hardly read a book in which there is no fighting, who out of the Bible itself generally remembers the "bluggy" parts, who never walks down the garden without imagining himself to be stuck all over with swords and daggers—to take this human creature and talk about the wickedness of teaching him to be military, seems rather a wild piece of humour. He has already not only the tradition of fighting, but a far manlier and more genial tradition of fighting than our own. No; I am not in favour of the child being taught militarism. I am in favour of the child teaching it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 28. Illustrated London News, October 6, 1906.

And if I thought that war as such was really as wicked as wife-beating as such or cannibalism as such, I should certainly join with those who resent the rifle class and the cadet corps. Even here, as in so many other questions, the most fanatical position is really the most reasonable. Even the man who thinks war wrong and objects to rifle corps is not so mad as the man who thinks war wrong and does not object to rifle corps. Only to those who disapprove of all war I would add this reminder: Their only conceivable meaning is that they disapprove of bodily violence. In that case they are bound to disapprove of government as much as of war. Surely there is something quite repulsively mean in saying that force must not be used against a conqueror from abroad, but force may be used against a poor, tired tramp who steals chickens. A Quaker has no right to be a soldier; but neither has he any right to be a magistrate. It is not only war that is an appeal to violence. Peace is an appeal to violence. The order and decency of our streets, the ease of exchange, and the fulfilment of contracts all repose ultimately upon the readiness of the community to fight for them, either against something without or against something within. Every city is a city in arms. As you and I and the rest of the respectable Londoners walk down the street we are all clanking with invisible weapons. We have taken the essential responsibility which is involved in war in merely being citizens of a State; we have declared war in favour of certain practices which we approve and against certain practices which we disapprove.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 28-29. Illustrated London News, October 6, 1906.

It is never easy to fix the nameless essential of a nation; but there is one test or dodge by which it may be almost done. The dodge is this: to take the two most divergent figures of that nation that one can possibly imagine, and then to ask oneself what they really have in common.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 32. Illustrated London News, October 20, 1906.

Soldiers have many faults, but they have one redeeming merit: they are never worshippers of force. Soldiers more than any other men are taught severely and systematically that might is not right. The fact is obvious. The might is in the hundred men who obey. The right (or what is held to be right) is in the one man who commands them.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 36. Illustrated London News, October 27, 1906.

It will generally be found, I think, that the more a man really appreciates and admires the soul of another people the less he will attempt to imitate it; he will be conscious that there is something in it too deep and too unmanageable to imitate.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 40. Illustrated London News, June 22, 1907.

The plain fact that no chain is stronger than its weakest link is one of the primary facts at the bottom of democracy and equality. Suppose, for instance, our society, or any society, were in serious danger. The fool would look first to the fortunate members of society to see whether they would lead us. The wise man would look first to the unfortunate members of society to see whether they would give us away. Modern Imperialism and hero-worship asks us to look for what it calls the "strongest man." Ancient religion (with much more worldly wisdom) asked us to consider "the weaker brethren." The simple reason is that the weaker brethren have everything in their hands. No chain is stronger than its weakest link. Therefore, the weakest links are the most important. The weakest links have the greatest power instantaneously to destroy the chain; the weakest links are the strongest.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 40. Illustrated London News, April 25, 1908.

There are some things more important than peace, and one of them is the dignity of human nature. It is a humiliation of humanity that humanity should ever give up war solely through fear, especially through fear of the mere machines that humanity itself has made. We all see the absurdity of modern armaments. It is a grotesque end for the great European story that each of us should keep on stuffing pistols into his pockets until he falls down with the weight of them. But it is still worse that we should only be friends because we are too nervous to stand the noise of a pistol. Let the man stop the pistol by all means. But do not let the pistol stop the man. Civilised man has created a cruel machinery which he now, it may be, finds bad for his soul. Then let civilised man save his soul and abandon his machinery. But the Bloch theory does not really abandon the machinery at all. It hangs the machinery in terrorem over the head of all humanity to frighten them from going to war for any cause, just or unjust. Man is cowed into submission by his own clockwork. I would sooner be ruled by cats and dogs. They, at any rate, are our fellow-creatures, not merely our creatures. I would have any war, however long and horrible, sooner than such a horrible peace. I would run any risk rather than submit to such a spiritual indignity as that man dare not, for the most crying justice or the most urgent chivalry, turn one of his own handles. War is an absolute calamity; so be it. Then let man silence his guns; but, in the name of human honour, do not let his guns silence him.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 43. Illustrated London News, April 25, 1908.

First of all, it is surely a mistake to suppose that wars arise merely from a barbaric ignorance. A man does not fight another man because he does not know him. Generally he fights him because he knows him uncommonly well. Many modern peace societies act on the supposition that if they bring a great many Germans to see Englishmen, or a great many Englishmen to travel in Germany, they will never want to fight each other. But this seems to assume that all ordinary Englishmen believe that Germans have tails. It assumes that an average German regards an average Englishman as a monster from the moon. The moment the German has seen the Englishman, counted his arms and legs, ascertained that he has the normal number of eyes or ears, realised, in short, that he is human, he will then drop all dreams of hostility. But this is missing the whole point of the modern antagonism. It is a morbid and suicidal thing for two great nations to hate each other. But when they do hate each other it is not because their aims are different, but because their aims are alike. A Prussian would not dislike an American for being an American Indian. On the contrary the Prussian, if he disliked him at all, would dislike him for being too like a Prussian: for rivalling Prussian commerce, or Prussian education, or Prussian Imperialism. Modern hostility is a base thing, and arises, not out of a generous difference,

but out of a sort of bitter and sneering similarity. It is because we are all copying each other that we are all cursing each other.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 43-44. Illustrated London News, April 25, 1908.

There is no more deadly delusion, none more full of quite practical peril, than this notion that trains and wires have created a real understanding between the nations. Do you think that Chinamen will love you because you can write a Chinese telegram? Chinamen (and very right they are) will not love you until you can write a Chinese love-letter. The world has not shrunk at all. It is not one iota more easy at this moment to understand the Cannibal Islands. It is only more easy to look at them and misunderstand them. The misunderstanding has actually grown greater, because we ourselves have abandoned many healthy and instinctive things which would have helped us to sympathise with the savages.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 45. Illustrated London News, April 25, 1908.

Again and again I have found this a sound tip or test in the justice of any matter: wait until the people who like it have argued in favour of it; if they can once be induced with open hearts and mouths to say what is good in the thing, you are pretty certain to discover whatever is bad in it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 47. Illustrated London News, August 15, 1908.

In other words, the whole trouble is this: that a very small, innocent proposal often has tied on to its tail a whole huge and guilty philosophy. What people do is often not the supreme question, even if they blow up cities or lay waste continents. What people do is often of far less importance than why they do it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 48. Illustrated London News, August 15, 1908.

Tolstoy is not content with pitying humanity for its pains: such as poverty and prisons. He also pities humanity for its pleasures, such as music and patriotism. He weeps at the thought of hatred; but in "The Kreutzer Sonata" he weeps almost as much at the thought of love. He and all the humanitarians pity the joys of men.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 49. Illustrated London News, September 19, 1908.

Of these humanitarians it is hard to say otherwise than that they hate humanity. They are compassionate to it doubtless, as one may be compassionate to the most revolting animal. But their dislike of it appears to be general and fundamental.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 49. Illustrated London News, September 19, 1908.

These people are always telling us to make a larger morality and a more universal creed that shall take in all sorts and conditions of men. But the truth is that they themselves are the chief obstacle and exception to such a universal agreement. There really are some things upon which humanity is practically agreed, but unfortunately these are exactly the things with which the humanitarians do not agree. In short, there is sympathy between all men, with the exception of these apostles of sympathy.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 50. Illustrated London News, September 19, 1908.

Everyone is talking just now about machines of death made out of steel or iron. People whisper in a panic-stricken way that Germany is building ironclads of the size of small islands; and one can almost fancy that the sun is darkened at noon with flying ships, like a flight of iron birds. I have my doubts about both the moral and the military value of this sort of imagination. Machinery is only armour, and armour is only clothes; and a very superficial study of some suburban dandies will suffice to show that it is no good to have clothes if you do not know how to put them on.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 52. Illustrated London News, March 27, 1909.

If you perceive your enemy plunging on blindly in a particular direction, the real thing to do, if you have any spirit and invention, is to calculate the weakness in his course and advance yourself in some other direction. You ought to take advantage of his infatuation, not to imitate it; you ought to surprise his plan of campaign, not copy it laboriously.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 53. Illustrated London News, March 27, 1909.

It is all nonsense to say that we Europeans could not have an agreement about disarmament. We could have it right enough if we were Europeans. We could have it well enough if we loved our civilisation as much as we hate each other. People cannot love Europe, because Europe is either a map or else a mythical lady who was carried off by a bull. But men could love Christendom, because it was an idea.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 54. Illustrated London News, March 27, 1909.

In short, I disbelieve in this modern war exactly because it is always talked of as a war of guns and ships, and never as a war of men. And secondly, I doubt whether this competition of longer spears or larger ships need go on at all, if once the nations could find something positive upon which to combine. Of course they cannot combine on mere peace; peace is a negation, like darkness. Is there any affection or institution or creed on which we can combine?—that is increasingly the question. It is our dreadful condition that we agree too much on all the things in which we ought to vary—arms, methods, and the arts of war. And we differ hopelessly on all the things on which we ought to agree—motives, reasons, and beliefs. In the things of life and love we are separated; in the things of death and blood we imitate each other. In a healthy existence the inmost thing should be secure, but the outer gestures energetic and varied. But with modern Europe it is the limbs that are heavy and the heart that has unrest.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 54. Illustrated London News, March 27, 1909.

Never once would it flash across the Aryan mind on the heights of Hampstead that all such race theories are rubbish; that political, religious, and commercial groups of men come together because they agree about politics, religion, or commerce; and that there is no group which does not contain, within the range of local possibility, all shapes of skull and all shades of complexion.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 60. Illustrated London News, April 30, 1910.

But another kind of international criticism has arisen which is more mischievous than the most ignorant of these denunciations. And that is the habit not of wildly and ignorantly blaming, but wildly and ignorantly praising, another nation. This, I say, is worse: because it hinders the real patriots of that nation in their attempt to cure its real abuses.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 62. Illustrated London News, September 17, 1910.

Evidently, however, it has not crossed the lady's mind that Prussian discipline may, perhaps, arise not from the fierceness of the people, but rather from their tameness.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 63. Illustrated London News, September 17, 1910.

I never can quite understand why it is that when the newspapers mention Christmas and its lessons they begin to talk at once about international disarmament. It is certainly a Christmas ideal that unjust wars should cease; but not more than unjust Governments, or unjust trades, or unjust law-suits, or any of the numberless other ways in which men torture or betray their kind.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 65. Illustrated London News, December 31, 1910.

I have put up, as best I might, with millionaires of my time when they decreed war, sudden and sensational war, as everyone admitted; mean

and immoral war, as I believed. I have got used to millionaires when they dictate war. But if they begin to dictate peace I positively rebel.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 65. Illustrated London News, December 31, 1910.

A real soldier does not fight because he has something that he hates in front of him. He fights because he has something that he loves behind his back.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 66. Illustrated London News, December 31, 1910.

It does not require wealth or culture to love one's country: on the contrary, one has to be in rather an advanced and alarming stage of wealth and culture to avoid loving one's country.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 67. Illustrated London News, December 31, 1910.

There are certain people who are always using distant things that we don't understand in order to confuse much closer things that we do understand. Those direct acts of evil which in healthy communities call forth a blow in the face, with us often call forth some elaborate excuse founded on some far and fantastic parallel. If I object to some vulturous old usurer who has grown fat on the toil and panic of the poor, there will always be an academic Socialist who will explain that nothing can be done till we have abolished interest itself; and that therefore any old lady who has a few pounds in a railway company is just the same sort of person as the usurer.... All these remote parallels are fallacious for a perfectly simple reason. We do see the definite harm done by the usurer; we do not see such definite harm done by the old lady, even if it exists.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 70. Illustrated London News, October 21, 1911.

Now, many of these pretences were hypocritical, and all may have been mistaken; but they bear witness to a fixed European morality which the greatest conquerors have at no time been able to ignore. But in the case of the Mohammedan civilisation there has been no such ethic about boundaries or just titles. A good Moslem king was one who was strict in religion, valiant in battle, just in giving judgment among his people, but not one who had the slightest objection in international matters to removing his neighbour's landmark. This is what gives a certain evident falsity to the tone of the Young Turks when they talk French rationalism about justice and truth. If Turks had ever cared a straw about justice in these matters, they would never have been in Tripoli, nor yet in Turkey. It may be said that the same would apply to many European Powers that occupy the provinces of some older race. But here comes in exactly the important difference. Whether the English are or are not the aborigines of England, they behave as if they were. Whether the Tuscans or Lombards are Italians or Goths, they settle down in Italy and serve it; they behave like an ancient people. Whether the wanderings of the Gauls began in France or not, they have ended there: the Gauls are at home. But Turkish government not only originated in a raid: it is a raid. It is a raid in its ferocity, in its military machinery, in its rigid division between friends and foes, in its refusal to tolerate or to mix. Century after century, in district after district, this ancient and extraordinary empire still breaks out again and again, behaving as only the wildest soldiers can in the sudden sacking of a town.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 72–73. Illustrated London News, October 21, 1911.

It is not wholly fanciful to suppose that this spirit of detached and empty domination has a religious root, and is connected with the Moslem horror of idolatry, with the featureless austerity of its art and the whole of that somewhat inhuman simplicity which prevents them having local images and special shrines. They are not fascinated and held by human landscapes; they do not fall under the spell of the country they conquer. Its moss does not grow on them; they are not taken hold upon by its

ivy or its vines. In their triumphs there is never that romantic reversal and revenge of which the Roman poet speaks in the instance of Hellas. Under them, conquered Greece has never led captive her conqueror. As regards courage and moral strength and stoicism, the Turks might compare themselves with the Romans. But Rome lay upon Greece like a sponge: Turkey lay upon Greece like a stone. The Turks never thought either of persuading the people or of preserving the monuments. There is no hope in a master who cannot learn from his slave.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 73. Illustrated London News, October 21, 1911.

For the mere desire to “make a protest,” which merely means to enjoy an emotion, I have no respect whatever. The only object of telling a man to do something is to get him to do it. And if you tell him to do it when you know perfectly well that it will make him do the opposite, I will not only call your enthusiasm hysterical, I will take the liberty of calling it insincere.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 74. Illustrated London News, November 18, 1911.

But there is a deeper and more disquieting reason why I, for one, will not join in these periodical ramps of righteous indignation against Frenchmen or Russians or Belgians or Italians. To put the matter quite curtly, I will not abuse my neighbours till I can trust my informants. I am quite sure that, as far as the masses are concerned, the indignation is a real indignation; and I have no doubt that in many cases the wrong is a real wrong. But I am not sure by any means that the agitation is always begun with a good motive or directed towards a good end. Unless I know this I may be assisting to build up, behind a screen of petitions, some tyranny or robbery much worse than that against which my signature is being used.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 74-75. Illustrated London News, November 18, 1911.

It must again be clearly pointed out that when I say that these excitements are artificial, I am not necessarily saying that they are without foundation. The Transvaal was badly governed; Cuba was badly governed; Leopold of Belgium was an old rascal; Dreyfus was, we all admit, a much wronged man. But these things would never have been urged on us with such utterly disproportionate iteration and extravagance, with such unscrupulous exaggeration, and yet more unscrupulous omission, unless there had been behind them some project or conspiracy or crusade over and above that just and normal intolerance with which we should regard all human evil, and especially our own. Until I know the aim of that project, until I know the morality of that crusade, I will not move. I will not join the protest of the worms against the tyranny of the birds only to find that I have been made a cat's-paw for the cat.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 74-75. Illustrated London News, November 18, 1911.

Man is not a fighting animal: otherwise he would not want flags and music and codes of honour to help him to fight. Man must be defined most subtly: he is a running-away animal—who does not run away.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 79. Illustrated London News, September 14, 1912.

The man who ties himself to the mere pacific ideal can never be certain of preserving any other. Rather than run the risk of war, he will give up slaves to the slave-driver and peoples to the tyrant.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 82. Illustrated London News, June 21, 1913.

And this is, I am sorry to say, rather conspicuously the case with the organs of that body of political opinion with which I should still, in the matter of general ideal, associate myself. It is a serious thing to say, and I say it very seriously, but I believe that if Byron fought for Greece to-day, English Liberalism would back up Turkey against Byron; that if Garibaldi defied Austria to-day, English Liberalism would back up

Austria against Garibaldi; that if Kossuth defied Austria, English Liberalism would back up Austria against Kossuth; that if Kosciuszko defied Russia, English Liberalism would support Russia against Poland; that every one of the heroes of Liberalism would be now regarded simply as an enemy of peace. In other words, this one appetite for peace (which is, if the motive be right, a holy and sacred appetite) has eaten up all the other appetites of the political idealist—the appetite for liberty, the appetite for nationality, the appetite for self-government, the hunger for justice, the thirst for religion. All these are to be sacrificed because a few prosperous people choose to invent an entirely new Christian virtue out of the natural human distaste for being spiked with long bits of steel or peppered with small bits of lead.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 82-83. Illustrated London News, June 21, 1913.

As a rule, however, the particular kind of man I mean can by no means be called stupid, and he is almost always in good faith. The great defect of his mind is, as I say, this false universalism—this perpetual repose upon a unanimity that isn't there.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 85. Illustrated London News, July 26, 1913.

For a child lives in a kind of fairyland of facts; and anything you tell him will be as simple and as vivid as the man who lights the street lamps, or the man who leaves the little milk-cans, or the horse in the stable, or the cat on the hearth-rug.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 85. Illustrated London News, July 26, 1913.

But all these questions of over-concentration or loss of balance in morals and politics are ludicrously unfitted for educational purposes. If Ferrer really did teach that militarism was a crime, Ferrer was an extremely incompetent schoolmaster. Very young people ought to be grounded in primary and necessary morality. Now it is not a part of primary and necessary morality that it is always wrong to hit a man. Nor is it a part of primary and necessary morality that it becomes wrong if the hitters all stand in a row, or if they all wear the same kind of buttons.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 86. Illustrated London News, July 26, 1913.

Similarly, there are controversies everywhere to-day touching the location of an external barbarism. I should apply the same principle. It does not matter much who is civilised or savage: both civilisation and savagery have their good points. But if there be something that behaves like savagery and boasts of civilisation, then there is the devil in it. I suppose a Red Indian could scalp a man almost unconsciously. For all I know, a South Sea Island man could eat a man unconsciously. But if the Red Indian calls scalping the last step in cerebral surgery, I suspect there is something wrong. If the South Sea Islander calls cannibalism “The New Diet: No More Beef and Mutton,” I begin to feel a faint distaste for him. And so I think most of us, with ordinary experience and charity, could easily excuse what looks like barbaric betrayal and barbaric vengeance, if it were not connected with any claim of larger culture or loftier destiny. The vices of the Superman might easily be pardoned. It is his virtues that are unpardonable.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 97. Illustrated London News, August 22, 1914.

That mistake is the habit of depending on something that does not exist. Thus, I see that many of Mr. Harnack's friends are reproaching England in the German Press for having “betrayed the cause of Teutonism.” You or I could not betray the cause of Teutonism, any more than we could murder a Snark, or elope with a Boojum. There is no such thing as the cause of Teutonism; there never has been any such thing, even in our own minds.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 101. Illustrated London News, September 5, 1914.

We have had many reasons for liking Germans and many reasons for disliking them. Many of us could hardly live in a world without their music. Many of us could not live in the same house with their metaphysics. I know more than one Englishman, Mr. Titterton for instance, who would rather live in Munich than in heaven, but who would rather live in hell than Berlin.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 101. Illustrated London News, September 5, 1914.

Most of us have read that last page of the British Ambassador's experience at Berlin, a page so vivid that it might be a page from a good historical novel, but for the fact that it is historical. The quarrel is concluded by a bitter message from the Kaiser, "which lost none of its acerbity in the mode of its transmission": that the Kaiser had hitherto been proud of his uniforms as an English General and Admiral, but that he must now discard them. It is part of the permanent disadvantage of the civilised man in quarrel with the barbarian, that the English guest did not feel so free to insult his host as the host to insult his guest. Otherwise the British Ambassador might have answered that empty British uniforms are not so difficult to fill.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 103. Illustrated London News, September 12, 1914.

Put in the most impersonal manner, there cannot really be any question about what happened during the last negotiations, any more than about checkmate or a cheque dishonoured. Simplified, without bias or the blinding trick of journalistic suppression, it certainly came to this. Germany came to England and said: "If you will break your promise, in the hope of helping me to break my promise, I will reward you with another of my celebrated promises."

Chesterton on War and Peace, 104. Illustrated London News, September 12, 1914.

Mr. Wells thinks, and I think so, too, that in the case of the Prussian we are really warring against a delusion. He is like a lunatic with plenty of pistols and a good aim, but liable to shoot a dog out of hatred of cats. Thus he sees the Russian as a yellow-skinned Oriental. He sees the Briton as a yellow-haired deserter. But "they ain't." It is one of the innumerable shallow phrases of the modern and mercantile peace, that when people are sincere they should not be attacked. Why, it is exactly because they are sincere that they should be attacked. If a man pretends to be your wife's previous and lawful husband, you can laugh at him as at any other amusing fraud. If he really believes that he is, you will take prompt action to prevent his acting on his belief. An insincere polygamist is an ornament in any modern house: we use him to carry tea-cups. But a sincere polygamist we will blow to hell, if we can, with horse, foot, and artillery. And if you ask us why, we can only answer—because he is sincere and wrong.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 106. Illustrated London News, September 12, 1914.

Touching the actual challenge shock of battle, there is nothing to be said but what I said previously in this place. There is no need to answer the German case, for there is no German case. Even if it were true that our defence of Belgium was based on our own interests, it leaves the moral advantage, at the very least, on our side rather than the German. For surely it cannot be more wicked to keep your word for selfish reasons than it is to break your word for selfish reasons.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 109. Illustrated London News, September 26, 1914.

If I may turn to lighter topics, the scholarship of Professor Harnack has, as we have already seen, left on his mind an impression that there is something called Teutonism. You and I, the English, have broken the obligations of Teutonism. In this, surely, we get a glimpse of the solemn depths of the Deutsche Kultur. A man need not keep a promise he as

made: and therefore we need not keep faith with Belgium. But a man must keep a promise he as never made—or, indeed, ever heard of. And therefore we are bound to keep faith with Teutonism, whatever it may turn out to be.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 115. Illustrated London News, October 10, 1914.

Just as that modern military progress was choked with dead men, so our modern mental progress is choked with dead words. I do not mean phrases I think false, as one thinks of a false religion or political remedy: I mean dead—in the sense that they have no life in them, even in the minds of those who use them.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 116. Illustrated London News, October 17, 1914.

The simple truth is that, somewhere in the mid-Victorian time, philosophers talked about war and tried to explain it away, hoping soon to sweep it away. It was the fashion just then to find all human history in the Zoological Gardens. They had heard something about the tiger tasting blood, so they said that such things as the Crusades and the French Revolution happened because we had not quite sufficiently "let the ape and tiger die."

Chesterton on War and Peace, 117. Illustrated London News, October 17, 1914.

On every sword that is made by man, while the workshops of the world turn out that terrible kind of cutlery, ought to be graven the two mysterious phrases which were on the fairy sword of King Arthur. On one side was written "Take me," and on the other "Cast me away." If no more than this dim fable recalled the doubtful hero of Camelot, we should know that he defended Christendom against the heathen. For the highest mark of Christian civilisation is this capacity for feeling that the sword is at once noble and unnatural; and the more unnatural it is, the more noble it is.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 121. Illustrated London News, November 21, 1914.

It is not true, of course, that all Prussians would insult prisoners or slaughter children. But it is true that all Prussians are brought up with a wrong moral attitude towards such things; and are taught to see something of magnificence in the successful tyrant rather than in the spirited slave.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 125. Illustrated London News, May 22, 1915.

It is customary to talk about the war fever; but in those who still exhibit it, the peace fever is much more feverish. With these people peace is not as much a prejudice as a mania. There is said to be a sort of person in the lunatic asylums who thinks he is a chicken. But even he is only somewhat exaggerating his legitimate claim to know his own business best. He is too modest to commit himself to the proposition that all human beings are chickens. That, however, is very much the proposition to which the extreme Pacifist commits himself, for he really talks of man as if he were talking of some other animal; as if a naturalist were to class men with poultry merely because they have two legs. Legs can be used for other purposes than that of running away; and man's highest moral and mental powers can be used for other purposes than that of keeping the peace. Mere Pacifism has in this crisis failed fully to support anything or anybody, even its own best exponents, and that for a perfectly simple reason: that mere Pacifism is morally wrong. Mere peace does not fill the heart; it does not satisfy the conscience or even the affections. I have heard of a person having the highly unpleasant accomplishment of being able to stop his heart from beating; and men of a generous and civilised breed can only reject the case for just anger and battle by an artificial stoppage of the heart.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 128–129. Illustrated London News, May 29, 1915.

I give this one instance out of a hundred merely to show the hopeless chaos of compromise into which the minds even of the ablest peace philosophers have fallen. Because they are men, because they are Europeans, because they are inheritors of an older and more manly morality, they simply cannot at this moment enforce the full Quaker doctrine of supporting any peace against any war. But, like all men who have lost their own first principles, they cast about trying to draw the line somewhere and draw it everywhere but in the right place. They will distinguish between land wars and sea wars, between Colonial wars and Continental wars, between wars against cultured peoples and wars against uncultured peoples, between wars that are approached slowly and diplomatically, and wars that are undertaken swiftly and suddenly. But somehow they cannot bring themselves simply to distinguish between wars that are right and wars that are wrong. I should say, rather, perhaps, attacks or resistances; for the war itself is not one thing at all, but is necessarily the collision of two things. And one half of the war is right simply because the other half of the war is wrong.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 129–130. Illustrated London News, May 29, 1915.

I see that Mr. H. G. Wells, whose immense imagination and sensibility make him feel the personal agonies of war with the vividness necessary to a great novelist, is dreaming once again of his old ideal of a governmental peace for the whole planet. In an interesting article in the *Daily Chronicle*, he insists that the world must submit either to this or to a sort of endless tough-and-tumble of rude and ignorant wars. We have, he says, to choose between the World State and the War Path. He will know that I do not speak scornfully, but quite simply and quite seriously when I say that if I have so to choose, I unhesitatingly choose the War Path. Small wars between small States have gone on with the utmost fury and confusion without preventing those who waged them from doing a great many other things. They managed, somehow or other, to snatch a moment to carve the Elgin Marbles; or the Gothic stone; they took a weekend with Socrates or St. Francis; they snatched a moment to build the Tower of Giotto. But as the modern world is constituted, a Hague Convention, backed by infantry, cavalry, and artillery, would merely arm prigs with the weapons of cut-throats. It would, in practice, be almost as unrepresentative as a Parliament. It would probably be particularly subject to the very sort of Imperial wire-pulling with which we are now at war.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 130. Illustrated London News, May 29, 1915.

There is one simple little question which I should like to ask of all those who would turn the healthy and human peace we may hope for in Europe into the iron peace of an international militarism. I should like, especially, to ask it of anyone who claims, as I claim, the name of a liberal. If he denies the justice of war, does he deny the justice of revolt? Suppose the World State exists; suppose no flags or frontiers are recognised; suppose no uniform exists save that of the sacred cosmopolitan policeman. Does he deny the right of a part of the World State to rise against the rest, if it considers itself overborn by tyranny; as the French rose in the eighteenth century? If he forbids just revolt, he is forbidding the first principle of liberalism. If he permits revolt, he is permitting war; merely deprived of the songs and emblems that gave it poetry and distinction. The World State would be permitted to shoot its prisoners of war: that is almost the only difference.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 131. Illustrated London News, May 29, 1915.

If I were Grand Inquisitor, I would try to burn out of the world not so much certain beliefs as certain phrases. I would argue with people about creeds; but I would kill them for catchwords.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 132. Illustrated London News, June 5, 1915.

It is always best in emergency to rely upon habit. Custom does not make people slow; it makes them quick. There may be ninety-nine ingenious and elegant ways of putting on one's boots: but if it is necessary to put on one's boots to catch a train it is better to put them on as one usually puts them on, simply because it will take less time and will avoid any unexpected hitch.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 137. Illustrated London News, June 12, 1915.

A prominent German journalist, in discussing the future of German religion, especially with reference to German missions, said that it would be impossible to associate further with the English Protestant missionaries after the war. This was not only because the English missionaries "would certainly be filled with malice and spite," but because German Christianity (in this writer's opinion) will be "very different from English Christianity." It will be, he says, "a manly Christianity, and permeated with the new German spirit." This, he adds, will make it particularly attractive "to Mohammedans and heathens."

It might be suggested that though "manly Christianity" may be very suitable to Mohammedans, it may not be so suitable to Mohammedans as Mohammedanism. It also might be suggested that if Christianity needs to be "new," it does not need to be Christian.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 139–140. Illustrated London News, June 19, 1915.

It is a paradox, but a very practical truth, that what is indispensable is generally nearly impossible. Unless the enemy were strong enough to hurt us, it would not be necessary, or indeed justifiable, for us to hurt him.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 140. Illustrated London News, June 19, 1915.

The profound impossibility of Prussia consists ultimately in this: that she has broken an implied understanding among all Christian men by taking victory too seriously. Glory is only a good thing when it is a good joke. With all the other peoples success has been a legitimate vanity and not a lawless pride. The French were naturally proud of having ridden into the gate of almost every European city; but they were equally satisfied with having ridden out again; and they were quite as conscious of their defeats as of their victories, draping the statue of Strasburg and probing the wound of Waterloo.... But the Prussians have broken all this implied balance of battles by building on one victory a domination that is meant to last for ever. They built on the battle field of Sedan not a temporary trophy, but a tower of eternal brass. What happened after or during 1870 was not primarily the union of Germany, but rather the division of Europe: it was divided into Germans and non-Germans. It was made something more even than a racial, it was made a biological division.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 141–142. Illustrated London News, June 19, 1915.

It is the snobs, the Socialists of the Servile State, the men of intrigue and not of indignation, who are traitors to their country as they were traitors to their class. It is they who plead for the Prussian. It is they who tell us to forget and forgive; that is, to forgive the kidnapper and forget the captive.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 144. Illustrated London News, July 3, 1915.

When the time comes for a treaty and a peace there will be considerable wealth and influence to the hand of those who have never heartily shared the anger which is the hope of the world. Among these there will be some whose spirit is worse than alien; and these will say they are being generous to Germany, when they are only being mean to England.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 146. Illustrated London News, July 3, 1915.

The Pacifists are, even among modern men, the most ruled by phrases rather than ideas. It is notable that any one of their questions has to be put in a particular form of words. Translate the question into any other form of words, and it can no longer rationally be answered as they wish. Thus they will say, "Can war be the right way of settling differences?" Ask instead, "What shall prevent me from putting forth my whole strength to defend whatever makes life worth living?"—and they have no answer. If your life is made worth living by German sausages, you would certainly be unwise to interfere with the German trade in them; if it is made worth living by the honour and memories of a free people, nothing can prevent you from sacrificing everything else to save them. And decent war is not "the best way of settling differences"; it is the only way of preventing their being settled for you.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 147. Illustrated London News, July 24, 1915.

Among these fixed phrases of the Pacifists there is a maxim about "conquering evil by good." They seem to mean conquering aggression by cowardice, conquering tyranny by slavery, conquering the assertion of wrong by the abandonment of right, and conquering Germany by betraying France. But as some of us, tutored in the cryptic schools of superstition, do not happen to think that cowardice, slavery, betrayal, and the denial of right are "good" things, we answer that to use them would not be to use good against evil, but merely to add one evil to another.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 148. Illustrated London News, July 24, 1915.

It is true that all Germans are educated; but they are not only not equally educated; they are divided into two very distinct intellectual castes: the professors and middle-class intellectuals who admire and inspire the Germans, and the Prussian oligarchs who despise and who rule them. Anyone reading the biographies of men like Bismarck will notice that Prussian autocracy and reaction are defended upon two precisely opposite grounds, according to whether they are addressing the plain, patriotic bourgeoisie or the governing clique. Publicly, they justify the despotism because Germans can rule anybody. Privately, they justify the despotism because Germans cannot rule themselves. This really educated country, then, is divided into two types; those who know and those who know better. Now, at the beginning of the war both these classes were quite confident of victory, even of instant victory. But, of course, they were confident for very different reasons. Those who had the information knew that their country was armed to the teeth for the sole purpose of this war; because they had themselves armed it. Those who only had the "culture" were stuffed with rubbishy fairy-tales about the Teutonic Race being the natural conqueror of all others.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 150–151. Illustrated London News, August 7, 1915.

We have had from the beginning, and we shall keep to the end, that superiority which the Prussian is only beginning to understand: the power to imagine failure. We are fighting against something more than pigmies, and for something more than our lives. We are not only determined to be victorious, we are determined to be vanquished, and vanquished again and again, so long as the only other course is the acceptance of these pirates and their peace.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 152. Illustrated London News, August 7, 1915.

It is often a strategic mistake to silence a man, because it leaves the world under the impression that he had something to say. For this reason I would not proceed against the very small organisations which urge the conclusion of peace—or, in other words, the leaving of Prussia in possession of her spoils. Coercion, like conscription, is a legitimate expedient, but not a very native, and therefore not a very easy, one; I should, on

the whole, advise the English not to build their safety on the novel and rather unnational logic of persecution, even of justifiable persecution. I should advise them to build on the grand, firm, and enduring foundation of the Pacifist's controversial incompetence.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 153. Illustrated London News, August 14, 1915.

The level of reasoning reached by these luckless people may be inferred from the following: "If the breach of treaties were to be regarded as affording an excuse for war, international law would not diminish causes of war, but multiply them." In other words, there will be dignity in a law so long as nobody ever thinks of obeying it; but less dignity in the law if anybody even attempts to get it obeyed.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 154. Illustrated London News, August 14, 1915.

The key to the Prussian is in this extraordinary fact: that he does truly and in his heart believe that he is *admired* whenever he can manage to be dreaded. An indefensible act of public violence is to him what a poem is to a poet or a song to a bird. It at once relieves and expresses him; he feels more himself while he is doing it. His whole conception of the State is a series of *coups d'état*. In Poland, in Alsace, in Lorraine, in the Danish provinces, he has wholly failed to govern; indeed, he has never really attempted to govern. For governing means making people at home.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 159. Illustrated London News, October 30, 1915.

There is one way in which Mr. Ford and his tour will probably do good. It will queer the pitch of much more plausible and presentable individuals if they attempt to prevent the thorough purgation of Christendom. There are other Pacifists, many of them men who necessarily command respect, who may attempt to create the reconciliation without understanding the quarrel. Such men will mean nothing but good and do nothing but harm; but they will certainly do less harm if they find, wherever they go, the torn and faded posters of Mr. Ford's unsuccessful circus.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 162–163. Illustrated London News, December 11, 1915.

It is one of the paradoxes of the war that the Pacifists who insist on its enormity do not seem to realise how enormous it is. They call it a crime; and yet they want to cure it with a compromise. They dilate on the universality of the horror like men talking of the rent seals and falling stars of the Apocalypse, the portents of plagues and persecutions leading up to the Day of Judgment. And then they do not want it to lead up to a Day of Judgment, or even of logical human justice. They want it to lead up to a mere splitting of the difference, as if it were about the bill of a dressmaker or the nuisance of a dust-bin.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 169. Illustrated London News, January 1, 1916.

War, or the possibility of war, is the price we pay for the liberty of the mind. It can be rendered improbable by conversion—that is, by a common creed touching what things are sacred. It cannot be rendered impossible anyhow, except by denying our right to hold anything sacred. For it is intensely important to grasp that combatants do not commonly disagree about things, but about the value of things.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 176. Illustrated London News, January 29, 1916.

That is why there is war in Europe at this moment: simply because the Germans are as certain that they are the natural masters of mankind as we are certain that they aren't.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 178. Illustrated London News, January 29, 1916.

All great wars are wars of religion; and most of them are waged to settle some point of doctrine. This war, it may be well to repeat, is fundamentally concerned with whether pride is a sin. The modern treatment of the question is typical of the cross-purposes in which we live. Stated as

I have stated it, it would strike most modern people as a piece of high and dry pietism, or what undergraduates, I believe, used to call “pi.” Yet nearly everybody feels it as a fact when they consider sin objectively—that is, as they mostly do consider it, in other people. What pride is can be practically tested in this fact—that the addition of it to any other sin makes it the unpardonable sin.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 179. Illustrated London News, February 26, 1916.

By all means let the latest generations of this earth be made aware that there never was an English wrong without an English protest. Let our own enemies tell the world that our mistakes have been corrected mistakes and our conspiracies exploded conspiracies.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 181. Illustrated London News, February 26, 1916.

It is common enough to associate gloom with dullness; but, in truth, our gloomy journalism is not dull enough to be true. War, among other things, is work; and very hard work. Now, hard work is one of the two or three things which, of their nature, cannot be conveyed in literature, far less in journalism.... But when this daily appetite for dramatic display is applied to war, the drama of which moves upon different pivots of moon and sun, of months and even of years, it becomes a weak and evil appetite; for it is falsifying something that is really important, really representative, and really popular. And if we are to appreciate wherein war is really momentous we must emphatically realise, first, that it is largely monotonous.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 183. Illustrated London News, March 18, 1916.

But this preference of news to facts has produced one effect which poisons what might well be quite legitimate criticism. I mean the confusion by which practicality is conceived as the same as activity. There is a disposition to ask for a sham “man of action” who is merely a man who is always acting; whereas the only valuable man of action is the man who knows when to act. The Government is perpetually adjured to do something; when, as a matter of fact, the something would merely have the effect of preventing other things being done.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 184. Illustrated London News, March 18, 1916.

I confess that for me personally there was never anything unexpected about the prolongation of the war. I never thought Hell an easy city to take. The only legitimate effect that prolongation can have is a ratification. As it reveals link after link of the chain of enslavement these men have wound round the world, it adds reason upon reason for unwinding it to its last coil. Her bad conduct was only a reason for fighting Prussia; but her good Organisation is a reason for destroying her. It is true that the unnatural and temporary power of Prussia is not really so much due to its Organisation of itself as to its disorganisation of the recognised system of Christendom. She would have had little pleasure or profit even out of being a tyrant to her people if she had not been an anarch among her neighbours. Nevertheless, the majority of her critics, including myself, would be content to tolerate a certain exaggeration in the praise of her discipline, if it meant a redoubling of the efforts against her power. But she herself had no such belief in the danger of underrating an enemy. She has, in fact, reduced under-rating the enemy to a philosophy. All her intellectuals were deliberately taught to regard a European war not as what it obviously is—the collision of great and incalculable powers, at a frightful risk to all of them; but as a war between one race which is always growing stronger and other races which are always growing weaker. “After the war,” says the Privy Councillor Muthesius, “there will be two worlds—the sinking Latin world and the rising Germanic world. No one is any longer in doubt as to which of these worlds the future belongs. Victory by the Germanic world was decreed long before

the war. Italy had long been eliminated; and as for France, her power for a long time had been only a matter of tradition.”

Chesterton on War and Peace, 187. Illustrated London News, April 8, 1916.

The normal attitude of the rulers of the German Empire was concisely and correctly summed up by another Professor who said, “The only privileges granted to the Poles should be to pay taxes, to serve in the army, and to shut their mouths.”

Chesterton on War and Peace, 190–191. Illustrated London News, May 20, 1916.

If there is one thing that the war has proved past the imprudence of the last pedant to deny, it is that the European is to the point of death a patriot: Any attempt to build on any basis but nationality is not only desperate but dead. Any attempt to build either on cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitan imperialism will be like building upon the quicksands which be between the solid lands.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 192–193. Illustrated London News, May 20, 1916.

The difference is this: that Prussian progress is even more oppressive than Prussian reaction. It was not the Prussia of the old black gunpowder, but the Prussia of the new asphyxiating gas that was a menace to men and nations. It was not the antiquated Lutheranism of Frederick William, but the modern atheism of Frederick the Great that was and is the military religion of Berlin. It is not in the least that Germans believe in being retrograde; it is, on the contrary, that Germans believe above all things in being “advanced”; and they advance with chemical bombs in their hands. The real case against them is to be found in the phrase which they perpetually employ; that they have a future. They believe in the future; they worship the future; and, to a person of Christian or chivalric instincts, their future is more fearful and inhuman than anybody else’s past.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 194–195. Illustrated London News, June 24, 1916.

What we are fighting is a new and false religion, much more powerful but much less noble than that against which our civilisation strove in the Crusades. But in the clearest minds it may almost be called a religion of irreligion. It trusts itself utterly to the anarchy of the unknown; and, unless civilisation can sober it with a shock of disappointment, it will be for ever inexhaustible in novelties of perversion and pride. Only one principle will inspire all its changes—and that is that in two senses it is always a religion of blood, for its idol is race and its sacrifice is slaughter.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 196. Illustrated London News, June 24, 1916.

Long before war or rumours of war, I can remember the sort of atmospheric change produced on my own mind by passing from Besançon through the Gap of Belfort to Frankfort. It was the change of passing from a country in which a considerable (though diminishing) number of people were trying to kill Christianity to a country where everybody of any intellectual pretensions assumed that Christianity had been killed long ago. And it was killed long ago so far as Prussia could kill it. It has been absent from Prussian policy and philosophy in a sense utterly distinct from that in which any ordinary wrong-doing is inconsistent with the Christian ideal. Spanish torture or Muscovite terrorism have been appeals to precedent, the belated citation of some sanctity needing defence. Prussian torture and terrorism do not quote precedents; they create precedents. They are based fundamentally on the idea that the past falls into a bottomless pit of forgetfulness. They believe neither in angel nor spirit; but least of all in the Recording Angel.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 199. Illustrated London News, August 19, 1916.

So precisely in the phrase about “our German God” the word “God” is a flourish. But the word “German” is a God.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 200. Illustrated London News, August 19, 1916.

When I say that the militarism of Prussia is founded on the atheism of Frederick the Great, it is not a cant of polemics or an appeal to prejudice. It is a historical fact without which a historical phenomenon cannot be understood. Russia has a religion—one may say that Russia is a religion—and has done wrong for its sake. England has neglected her religion for other things, and has done wrong for those other things. France has a standing quarrel about religion; and has done wrong both for religion and against it. But the unique point and power of Prussia have been rooted in her scepticism. Every step in her success has been due to what Frederick would have called her superiority to superstitions. It was always upon her atheism that she acted; and she is only in this stupendous hour beginning to be proved wrong.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 200. Illustrated London News, August 19, 1916.

If there is one modern fact for which I must confess an undiluted contempt, it is the fact that the infliction of pain or death is called punishment as long as it is inflicted on the poor and ignorant, and is only blamed as revenge when anyone wishes to inflict it on the wealthy and the strong. It is legal to strangle some miserable creature who has consented to a murder; but it is “vindictive” to shoot a great captain who has commanded a massacre. Pity I can understand, and punishment I can understand; but what are we to say of the servile topsy-turvydom which will punish the most pitiable object and pity a person on the ground that he has hitherto only been envied?

Chesterton on War and Peace, 201. Illustrated London News, September 2, 1916.

Mrs. Swanwick, the Suffragist who has reappeared as a Pacifist, has recently declared that there must be no punishment for the responsible Prussian. She puts it specifically on the ground that they were promised, or promised themselves, the conquest of the whole world; and they have not got it. This, she says, will be punishment enough. If I were to propose, to the group which is supposed to inspire the Pacifist propaganda, that a man who burgled their strong boxes or pilfered their petty cash should suffer no punishment beyond failing to get the money, they would very logically ask me if I was an Anarchist. If I proposed that anybody trying to knife or pistol another person should walk away and resume his daily amusements if the knife broke or the pistol missed fire, they would certainly ask me if I had contemplated the possibility of encouraging the employment of knives and pistols. Crime can be only insufficiently restrained when the alternative is between success and punishment. It could hardly be restrained at all if the alternative were only between success and failure; that is, between success and freedom—including freedom to try again. On these grounds I rather reluctantly accept the necessity of punishing the smaller sort of criminal; though I wish it were done in a less callous and insolent style. But if I am asked to punish every kind of robber except the robber baron, and every kind of cannibal except the King of the Cannibal Islands, I should immeasurably prefer, for my own spiritual good, to be an Anarchist altogether.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 201–202. Illustrated London News, September 2, 1916.

This is not Pacifism, nor even idealism of the crankiest kind; it is a particularly crude and cowardly kind of snobbishness; and there would be infinitely more of the sense of human brotherhood in the most brutal human revenge.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 202. Illustrated London News, September 2, 1916.

A little clear thinking is very much needed in this matter, in which both sides go by association rather than ideas. On the one side, the Pacifist congratulates himself on avoiding “militarism” when he turns the whole world over to be trampled on by the Prussian Guard. On the other side, the Jingo congratulates himself on avoiding “sentimentalism” so long as he is allowed to butcher and blunder out of pure sentiment. Neither really asks himself what object he is trying to achieve, and what means are the most practical for achieving it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 205. Illustrated London News, September 16, 1916.

The social order of the past differed in some details from our own; but there was the same sense, or an even greater sense, of the distance between the ordinary and extraordinary. Because a mediaeval knight rode on a horse he would not have been the less surprised to meet a Centaur; and when our fathers came across a monster they recorded it as a monster. And the Prussian monarchy was regarded as a monster. That it had brought a new and naked anarchy into international relations was a commonplace of Christendom like the statement that England specialised in sea-power or that the Grand Turk was pressing upon the frontiers of Eastern Europe. It was indeed known that Prussia systematically relapsed into long periods of peace; but it was also known that the name of that peace was preparation for war. The period of rest—or rather, of militant immobility—between the forgery of Ems and the violation of Belgium was neither more nor less significant than the period of rest between the Partition of Poland and the treacheries of the Napoleonic Wars, or the period of rest between the Napoleonic Wars and the forgery of Ems—to say nothing of the pillage of Denmark or the swindling of Austria. If we had peace to-morrow, and the peace lasted for another fifty years, we should be no more safe than in the cavern of a dragon asleep. The truth that wants telling, the truth upon which our practical future hangs, is that the dragon is a dragon—that the word is not, as his friends would suggest, a misprint for dragoon. In other words, what is the matter with him is not “militarism,” but tyranny and treachery and a thirst for the things of death.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 206–207. Illustrated London News, September 16, 1916.

We have admittedly reached a state in the campaign in which the peace may be more menacing than the war. The enemy of Christendom cannot now escape by merely piling up his tyrannies, and if he piles them up it is rather because ruin is his consolation as well as his prize—because unkindness is a sort of comfort to him, as kindness is to happier men. But he may escape by some treaty that shall be a treason, and a parent of future treasons. Our chances of averting that peril do not depend on petty reprisals for his brutalities, or on playing the monkey to any of his monkey tricks. They depend on the contrast between the brute and monkey and the dignity of man which he has insulted. They depend upon keeping open the gulf that separates common good and evil from this sinister and even insane exception in the chronicles of Christian men. And if we do not do it, our danger is that we shall waste the wealth of our wrath in breaking tools and toys, and the evil itself will escape us.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 207. Illustrated London News, September 16, 1916.

What is the matter with the Germans is not that they think German culture is German culture—a platitude after their own hearts which they might have peacefully enjoyed to the end of the world. It is that they think German culture is culture—that it is the highest product of evolution, and is on a higher platform above an ignorant world. In other words, they think something culture which is only custom.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 211. Illustrated London News, October 7, 1916.

Christendom, with whatever corruptions, was a community of nations recognised as nations, as a city of citizens recognised as citizens. It was because North Germany was outside this national idea, not because she was inside it, that all barriers have been broken and all crimes eclipsed. It was because beyond the sacred frontiers lay chaos—which some call cosmopolitanism.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 211. Illustrated London News, October 7, 1916.

Those in an extreme revolt against war seem to have a war in their own minds; a war between two quite contrary ideas. One is the urgent necessity of international justice; and the other is the complete impossibility of it. Pacifists and Semi-Pacifists are perpetually telling us that Europe must have an international tribunal, which, if it be a tribunal at all, must be able to judge and presumably able to punish. Yet the same people are perpetually telling us that it is impossible to punish Germany, and apparently impossible to judge anybody or anything. They say it is in the power of negotiation to trace the tangles of the most elaborate knot. But when the Prussian in broad daylight cuts the Gordian knot with his sabre, they can only treat the incident as a new, delicate, and more or less hopeless entanglement.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 212. Illustrated London News, October 28, 1916.

But not all who specialise in the sentiment of peace are so silly as this. There are a number of genuine idealists who escape this contradiction by concentrating consistently on the ideal of an international tribunal. The other and more muddle-headed Pacifists are now eagerly and openly at work, calling for that premature and patchwork peace which is a flat contradiction to their own theory of the future. We are more and more loudly assured that the malefactor cannot be punished for what he has done; by the very same people who tell us, equally loudly, that he will never do it again for fear of punishment.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 213. Illustrated London News, October 28, 1916.

Some members of this school, of which Mr. H. G. Wells may be considered the most brilliant doctor, seem to hold this international ideal in a more absolute sense than I can. Some of them accept literally the definition of “The War That Will End War,” or, as Mr. Britling expressed it, “And Now War Ends.” I cannot see how we can literally end War unless we can end Will. Vegetables are very commonly Pacifists; but becoming a vegetable is not a price that I am ready—or, indeed, able—to pay.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 213. Illustrated London News, October 28, 1916.

I cannot think that war will ever be utterly impossible; and I say so not because I am what these people call a militarist, but rather because I am a revolutionist. Absolutely to forbid fighting is to forbid what our fathers called “the sacred right of insurrection.”

Chesterton on War and Peace, 213. Illustrated London News, October 28, 1916.

To come to the core of the matter, it is possible for something to grow strong in human society which is sufficiently widely hated to be called a crime, and yet is sufficiently widely obeyed to be called a tyranny. What is lawless can really become law.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 214. Illustrated London News, October 28, 1916.

We have dropped into the despicable habit of thinking of the foe of society as a fugitive. We have forgotten that the criminal class can sometimes be as powerful as the police. When this happens, we too often discover the simple solution of never calling it the criminal class.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 214. Illustrated London News, October 28, 1916.

In an interesting article in the *Nation* called “On Chivalry in War,” I find the following sentences: “In the eighteenth century Swift and

Voltaire were singular in thinking that war is fundamentally criminal. To-day we all think so.” In that case, it would be truer to say that to-day we all flatly refuse to think. War, like weather, cannot in itself be either criminal or saintly; and war as an action undertaken by certain persons may be either one or the other. Only in a state of fallen intelligence akin to fetish-worship could people ever have dropped into the habit of talking about the wickedness of war. It is, indeed, precisely like the action alleged of the savage, who tries a tomahawk for murder and burns it to teach it better manners. One can never praise or blame a quarrel, as if it were one thing—simply because it takes two to make a quarrel. A war is in its nature a thing with two wills, as a bird is a thing with two legs. We cannot talk of the thing as something with a good or a bad purpose, for the thing we are talking of would not exist at all if it did not consist of two quite opposite purposes. It is like pointing at a railway collision and asking if it is the right train to Brighton.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 215–216. Illustrated London News, November 11, 1916.

That all war is physically frightful is obvious; but if that were a moral verdict there would be no difference between a torturer and a surgeon.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 216. Illustrated London News, November 11, 1916.

In this matter, as in many others, I am on the side of the vulgar majority. But I realise that there is an aristocracy of intellectuals who are quite spontaneous and sincere in the disgust which I describe; and who, while they are too intelligent to be content with merely praising peace, are infuriated by anybody praising war. I remember talking about the matter to one of the two or three most brilliant men of our time—a man whose attitude on the war has been somewhat misunderstood, for it is not so much opposed to our policy as simply opposed to its popularity.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 217. Illustrated London News, November 11, 1916.

We have reached a particular point in the present war at which it is supremely necessary to stretch our minds, so as to take in the large things and not merely the small. For it is not too much to say that the large things are going right and the small things are going wrong. Pessimism or even panic can be created by a simple trick of mental contraction.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 221. Illustrated London News, December 16, 1916.

It has long been self-evident that the stormy petrels of Pessimism have come home to roost and to feather the nests of Pacifism. Every bit of bad news which the “ginger” school professed to produce in order to arouse us to fighting has now been annexed by the milk-and-water school as a reason for fighting no longer. Perhaps the strangest fact in this strange war has been the fact that the extreme jingo journalist and the extreme Quaker journalist have told much the same tale—a tale in both cases equally false in fact, and equally contrary to the common spirit and resolution of the English people.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 227. Illustrated London News, January 27, 1917.

It is an insult to the abstract dignity of virtue that its enemy should be left to develop all the virtues in defence of his vices. It is a sin against the very soul of things that he should be left to love what is hateful more than better men can love what is lovable.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 229. Illustrated London News, January 27, 1917.

I have taken this one instance of a current observation, almost certainly harmless enough in intention, but unconsciously corrupted by a bad tradition of unreality and rumour. Such passages have no purpose except to insinuate a chill of doubt—a chill which the writer himself has caught he knows not where. They will generally be found to end with a note of interrogation. It does not say “We cannot win,” but “Can we win?” The note of interrogation is more dangerous than any dogmatic

Pacifism or decisive treason, because it is closer to humanity, and yet none the less close to hell.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 229. Illustrated London News, January 27, 1917.

For instance, what can be said of his idea, generally considered as an idea, of peace without victory? Peace without victory is war without excuse.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 230. Illustrated London News, February 3, 1917.

If he can see no difference between the attacker and the attacked in the present case, why should he see any difference in any possible future case? To say that a peace league must be founded on an equal treatment is simply to say that a court of arbitration must be founded on its own incapacity to arbitrate. It is very simple; and there is no answer to it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 232. Illustrated London News, February 3, 1917.

Anybody who ever supposed that Americans as such were “too proud to fight,” in the ironical sense of being too timid to fight, was a fool whose impudence was simply ignorance, and especially ignorance of history.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 233. Illustrated London News, April 14, 1917.

Now the really dangerous part of the Teutonic trick is the latter part—the habit of cutting oneself off from all cure or correction by a reserve of superiority.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 237. Illustrated London News, April 21, 1917.

If we had simply looked at Prussians, instead of reading about Teutons, we should never have thought the North German our nearest and dearest friend. And if we simply look at Irishmen, instead of reading about Celts, we shall no longer think they are necessarily our darkest and most hopeless foes.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 238. Illustrated London News, April 21, 1917.

It is the whole upshot of Teutonic militarism to consider more who commands you to kill than what you are killing; and it is the whole upshot of Teutonic evolutionism to suggest that a Teuton is to a man pretty much what a man is to a pheasant.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 238. Illustrated London News, April 21, 1917.

First of all, it is by no means certainly true; for many of us there is not much difference between the Thug who murders a child and the man who allows the child to be murdered, when he could prevent it with a blow.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 240. Illustrated London News, April 21, 1917.

If a particular man’s opinion is not the voice of God, is not common-sense, is not what men call morality, then his conscience is no more necessarily sacred than his nightmares.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 240. Illustrated London News, April 21, 1917.

The arguments of the small but increasingly active Pacifist party, at the present moment, all really resolve themselves into one—that the world is weary of the war. And, like most of their arguments, it is really an argument against themselves. For, whatever spirit ought to settle the war of the world, plainly such a problem ought not to be settled by the spirit of weariness. Weariness is not a principle of action at all. It is merely the inaction of one who fails to act as he would otherwise like to act.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 244–245. Illustrated London News, August 25, 1917.

This is precisely the most prominent feature of this war; that there have been no moral changes in the matter in dispute, as compared with the colossal material changes in the condition of many of the disputants. Nobody expected England to have a conscript army or America to wage a European war. But the moral ground on which America came

in at the end was of exactly the same sort as the moral ground on which England came in at the beginning. It was that Germany does intolerably treacherous and cruel things; and the things have become more treacherous and more cruel. If England was right to defend neutral territory, America was right to defend neutral shipping; Germany has done nothing, except become even more anti-neutral. For anyone who can see a plain moral question in black and white, the question of the war is quite unchanged—except that the black is a little blacker.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 248. Illustrated London News, September 1, 1917.

This war did not begin because international arrangements were not made, but because they were not kept. If there ever was a thing about which the Great Powers were solemnly and publicly *agreed*, the name of it was Belgium. It was the agreement which produced the disagreement. I cannot for the life of me see why partners should not quarrel at least as much about a country they are all supposed to share as about a country they are all supposed to protect. The experience of human nature suggests that they would probably quarrel more. But a queer and almost mad notion seems to have got into the modern head that, if you mix up everybody and everything more or less anyhow, the mixture may be called unity, and the unity may be called peace. It is supposed that, if you break down all doors and walls so that there is no domesticity, there will then be nothing but friendship. Surely somebody must have noticed by this time that the men living in a hotel quarrel at least as often as the men living in a street. This is a digression, but a relevant one, for the whole discussion is haunted with this hazy idea that mere international intercourse can prevent international irritation. These foolish people trace all the chances of war to the very thing which will always be the best chance of peace—men’s habit of dwelling in their own boundaries and minding their own business. The only hope of attaining amity lies, not in ignoring boundaries, but, on the contrary, in respecting them. And the only chance of attaining that is to punish the Power that does not respect them. When every sophist has twisted and tangled the matter to the utmost, we always come back to that simple truth. It is not a question of what arrangements we make or do not make. It is a question of what example we make, in the case of those who are ready to disarrange any arrangement.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 251–252. Illustrated London News, September 8, 1917.

The special point here is, however, that we are not only asked to abandon our ideals, but specially asked to abandon our peaceful ideals. What is offered to us now is not the war that will end war, but the peace that will end all our previous hopes of peace. Those who fancy that the matter can be met by founding a League of Nations, or anything of that kind, are men who fancy that a failure can be covered by naming it as if it were a novelty. They assume that a man who will not respect a treaty will be certain to respect a title.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 252. Illustrated London News, September 8, 1917.

Man is not a fighting animal; he is fighting because he is not an animal; he is fighting long after any animal would have fled.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 254. Illustrated London News, September 29, 1917.

We hear this conflict called, not unreasonably, the most horrible war of history. But the most horrible part of it is that it would not be the most horrible war. Wars more and more horrible would follow the failure to vindicate and restore Christian equity and chivalry in this one.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 254. Illustrated London News, September 29, 1917.

The distinction in question may be defined as the habit of manufacturing self-satisfaction out of any materials whatever. The deadly danger of this

process consists in the very fact that it is facile, and therefore infinite; whatever I happen to be doing, I can always praise myself for doing it. If I walk, it shows my energy; if I sit down, it shows my composure; if I fall down, it shows my fearless acceptance of the risk.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 255. Illustrated London News, September 29, 1917.

The reason why there must be an unmistakable victory over the German Empire is that anything short of it will be instantly turned, by the Germans, into an unmistakable victory for the German Empire.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 255. Illustrated London News, September 29, 1917.

But this modern school, and till lately this modern world, is not sincere enough to be rhetorical. It is too frightened of tyrants to denounce them as tyrants, and too slavish to say much about slavery.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 259. Illustrated London News, September 29, 1917.

Personally, I should say that the modern monstrosity among Germans was not a result of race, but a result of culture—like Nero.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 262. Illustrated London News, October 20, 1917.

That negroes have inflicted cruelties on Germans is very possible, though they must be very black to be blacker than the cruelties which Germans have inflicted on negroes.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 263. Illustrated London News, October 20, 1917.

To explain to the poor Germanised gentleman the nature of the very dangerous thing called France would open vistas of difficulty. He seems much distressed because the French call glory, “*gloire*”; and, indeed, in a sense, this is the whole point. The French call glory glory; they recognise realistically that such an ambition exists in men, and they call it by its name. In calling it by its name they put it in its place; which is higher than greed and lower than religion. The French call glory glory; and the Germans call it “the real miracle of German resistance to the whole world,” “the simply marvellous nature of their achievements,” “German superiority and all its superhuman ascendancy,” the higher culture, the coming race, the new religion, and all the rest of the rubbish. It is the whole point that they brag without even knowing they are bragging, because they cannot think that the tallest talk can come up to the height of their merits.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 267. Illustrated London News, October 27, 1917.

But when a blast of bestial things broke on the world the instant after the Belgian line was crossed, we knew the presence of something which is not in the same world with the most wicked revenge. It was an insanity of success, a mere intoxication of triumph over the weak, a horrible holiday like the sins committed in a dream.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 267. Illustrated London News, October 27, 1917.

But the point at present is still more emphatically this—that if the war now leaves Prussia in any posture of success, she will now, most of all, be the mortal enemy of any sort of democracy whatever.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 269. Illustrated London News, November 10, 1917.

What altered the whole mind of England in the time of our fathers and grandfathers was a certain historical idea; it was a change in our whole view of the Barbarians and the Roman Empire. The consistent tradition of all culture, for much more than a thousand years, was the view which we still express when we use the word “vandalism.” It is the view that the barbaric invasion was a destruction, which fortunately did not succeed. It was hardly before the time of our more elderly uncles that we began to hear everywhere the new view—that the barbaric invasion was a renovation, which fortunately did succeed.... But the point is that the

whole heritage of scholarship and civilisation, descending to Macaulay from Milton, and to Milton from the Arthurian romances, still steadily assumes that the barbarians were the enemies of Christendom, that we are the inheritors of Christendom, and that the Germans are the inheritors of the barbarians.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 272–273. Illustrated London News, December 15, 1917.

Men did wicked things in all parts of the world, including the most Christian parts of the world. But they seldom thought they were behaving like Christians. A man broke treaties, trampled on enemies, or betrayed friends, because he was ready to be contemned; he did not expect to be respected. The notion of his being actually admired as a strong man, merely because he behaved like a selfish man, is a notion so new that I can myself remember it rising steadily, like a new religion, in the late Victorian time. I can myself recall the transition in literary fashions from the dull but decent morality of Macaulay to the picturesque but barbarous mysticism of Carlyle. The school of Macaulay would balance the virtues and vices of William Rufus or Warren Hastings; but for the school of Carlyle his vices were his virtues. These great men of letters had long been dead when the process began to penetrate everywhere; but the forms it took everywhere were the more clearly the fashion because they were both variegated and vulgar. We had the praise of the colonial and commercial expansionist, of the imaginative imperial financier—a kind of pawnbroker who not only received stolen goods, but bribed the policeman to steal them. We had plays and novels about the strong-minded employer of labour, who seemed to think himself astonishingly virile because he could manage to starve a man in a siege, when he would never venture to hit him in a fight.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 273–274. Illustrated London News, December 15, 1917.

In point of time, and in point of fact, all this whitewashing of the bully was the result of the whitewashing of the barbarian. It was the result of the new notion that some anarchic strength from the North was the force that had renewed the world. Before that time history had been full of strong men; but nobody had ever heard of the Strong Man. The evils in question were realities, but they were not ideals. In that sense there were always empires, but without imperialism; just as there must be capital, but without capitalism. The “ism” comes from the land of “isms,” from the land of the metaphysics of immorality. Therefore any man who allows his anger against the evident evils of England to make him more tolerant to Germany is actually appealing to barbarism itself to cure the thing that it has barbarised.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 274. Illustrated London News, December 15, 1917.

We are still confronted with the crucial question, which can be stated simply enough. It is whether Prussia, if she fails to conquer by a service of brave men, will be able to conquer by a service of cowards? Having always preached terrorism, she is now simply preaching terror; and the title given to it is that of an early peace. Some are so waggish as to add the description of a just and lasting peace. But they appear to be perfectly indifferent, when their views are analysed, to the equity of the peace; and not particularly concerned even about its permanence. Their feeling, being a mere effect of fatigue, is necessarily irrational. They do not really care who imposes the peace, so long as they can accept it; nor even how long it lasts, so long as it lasts their time.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 276. Illustrated London News, January 12, 1918.

Yet even in this melancholy deliquescence of certain Liberal groups, it is interesting to note the fragments that float here and there, as a witness to what was once a solid concern for international justice and liberty. There is a singular instance in a very recent issue of the paper, which is

worthy of some study by those who would understand the chief fallacy and peril of these days. The first part of the passage concerns itself with the incompetent concept of a war of stalemate—one that will be prolonged indefinitely and indecisively. “We can go on bloodily assailing and weakening the foe, and he us”; but there is “no special likelihood” that a victory like Waterloo or Jena will ever be attained. The *Nation* propounds this curious idea of the inconclusiveness of war; and then takes a mysterious pleasure in calling people “Never-Endians” because they wish to win the war and not lose it. The epithet is to me a complete enigma. I should have thought that if anybody deserves to be called a Never-Endian, it is the man who holds this singular doctrine that wars never end. I cannot see how it can be Never-Endian to say, as we say, that the war can end, and shall end, and shall end in the right way. Only the true Never-Endian theory, the theory of the *Nation*, happens to be nonsense. It is not true that any war tends of its nature to go on for ever; if it were, all the wars of history would be going on still. The French in Flanders would find the Nervii still in arms against Julius Caesar; our naval manoeuvres in the Mediterranean would be embarrassed by the ships of Carthage operating in the first Punic War; and our advance on Jerusalem would be through a country torn by the struggles between the Amalekites and the Children of Israel. This, however, is not the fact. What is the fact is that all these wars, and all other wars, came to an end, and came to a decision by defeat and victory; though it is also a fact (and not an unimportant one) that most of these wars went on very much longer than the length of the war of which we complain. But the most important fact of all—the fact by which everything stands or falls—emerges yet more plainly. It is the simple and terrible fact that this war will certainly end in victory, if it is only a Prussian victory.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 276–277. Illustrated London News, January 12, 1918.

I should very much like to ask the editor of the *Nation*, who is still at least a man of the most striking intelligence, what on earth he means by saying that Germany’s punishment will be sure. Why does he say this, having just that moment exhausted himself with proving that no such punishment can possibly be sure?

Chesterton on War and Peace, 277. Illustrated London News, January 12, 1918.

What is it exactly that somebody will do to a recalcitrant Germany—something which France, Italy, the Slavs, the British Empire, and the American continent cannot do to her? How could there be a larger League of Nations to punish any “guilt” that was “immeasurable” enough to be worth punishing? What other forces are needed to prove to the *Nation* the presence of the moral unity of civilised mankind? Is Iceland to turn the scale? Is Spitzbergen to dictate peace to the world? Is the Island of Rumti Foo roused at last?

Chesterton on War and Peace, 277. Illustrated London News, January 12, 1918.

No; what the *Nation*’s whole argument does is simply to proclaim moral anarchy for the whole world, and a licence to tyrants for all time. What it really means, if it means anything, is that collective humanity cannot grapple with any aggression organised on a moderately large scale.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 279. Illustrated London News, January 12, 1918.

For the Pacifist tries to prove that the German example is too bad for us to follow, at the very time when he is also trying to prove that the German ethics are not so bad after all. He thinks it a piece of international reconciliation to say that the enemy’s action is a military necessity that may be excused in him. And the next moment he is saying that the same action is a moral degradation that is forbidden to us.... If an act is so extraordinarily brutal that we must not do it, even in self-defence, they must certainly be very extraordinary brutes if they do it in brute

aggression. It cannot at once be too vile to be imitated and too venial to be punished.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 281. Illustrated London News, January 19, 1918.

But it is precisely in that one word “punished” that we find the whole point, and the motive of this immoral and muddle-headed inconsistency. Consciously or unconsciously, the Pacifist is a Pro-German. Consciously or unconsciously, he wishes to save the Germans from being either fought with their own weapons or judged for their own crimes. But one or other of the two anti-German acts must be right. If these military acts are lawless, why should we not punish them? If they are lawful, why should we not do them? It is quite true that if a criminal has made patterns on his wife with a red-hot poker, the magistrate does not immediately proceed to make patterns on him with a red-hot poker. But the magistrate does immediately proceed to do something; and something which is based on the theory that magistrates have the right to act as magistrates, and criminals have not the right to act as criminals. And the Prussian is in the same position; if he and his methods cannot be accepted by civilisation as methods, they can be punished by civilisation as misdeeds. So that we come back to the point of punishing the oppressor of Europe—which is exactly the point that these people wish to avoid. And they are all the more in anxiety, not to say agony, to avoid it because it can be deduced with more deadly certainty from their own doctrines than from anybody else’s.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 281–282. Illustrated London News, January 19, 1918.

Can they, above all, pretend for a moment that Prussian cruelties are ceasing, when they are quite vividly and violently increasing and multiplying by land and sea? This abnormal thing we set out to slay is still abnormal and still alive; it has eaten yet more living things and believes itself yet more alive. There is no escape from the dilemma of either crushing the abnormal or letting it become the normal. We must either make a model of it or make an example of it; and the example must be an execution.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 282. Illustrated London News, January 19, 1918.

There is one particular attitude to which most human beings, including myself, have a very strong objection. It has created all the popular tales about traitors, though it is sometimes more subtle than treason; but it has all the effects, if not the motives, of treason. It is the attitude of the man who chooses the very time at which he ought to stiffen as the time at which to weaken. He only fails at the last moment; and it is always the most important moment. Especially he always remembers the reasons that ought to have prevented him from beginning a thing when they only serve to prevent him from finishing it. Sometimes those reasons are rather thin modern theories, which instantly gave way when he found an action desirable, and which now only return to him because he finds it difficult.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 283. Illustrated London News, January 26, 1918.

It is the peculiarity of the Prussian in history that he has always been allowed to do things which everybody, almost instantly afterwards, saw ought never to have been allowed. He was suffered to split up Poland with his sword on the supposition that the Pole would soon forget his flag. The Pole has never forgotten it; but the Prussian had been suffered to steal it. He was allowed to attack the Danish crown and take away the Danish provinces, on the assumption that he was the mere representative of the German States and the Austrian Empire. He trampled on the German States and attacked the Austrian Empire; but he had been allowed to take the Danish provinces, and he was allowed to keep them. He was permitted to take the French provinces on a pedantic plea that

they were German provinces, that they would be at rest under German rule, and that it was natural that he should rule them. He has shown himself conspicuously unable to rule them, or to rule anything like them; but he had been allowed to take them. It only became plain that he had not the power to govern when he had finally gained the power to misgovern. In all these cases, and many others, the same tragic farce was enacted; the truth was always discovered too late.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 288–289. Illustrated London News, April 6, 1918.

And I think that even the internationalist will have to begin to admit that Europe exists. It is a severe strain for the cosmopolitan to concede the existence of other countries, or for the humanitarian to embrace the interests of humanity. But, perhaps, with an effort of imagination, it might be done.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 290. Illustrated London News, April 6, 1918.

There still lingers—or rather, lounges—about the world a special type of Conscientious Objector who is luckily in a minority, even in the small minority of Conscientious Objectors. He might more properly be described as an Unconscientious Objector—for he does not so much believe in his own conscience as disbelieve in the common conscience which is the soul of any possible society. His hatred of patriotism is very much plainer than his love for peace. But, just as the instantaneous touch of ice has been mistaken for hot iron, so the unnatural chilliness of his personality is sometimes mistaken for fanaticism. The most horribly unholy and unhappy thing about him is his youth. Most of the more representative Pacifists are old men and indeed, saving their presence, old noodles. But they are kindly old noodles, and their pacifism is mostly a prejudice left by the last sectarian eccentricities of people who could not wholly cease to be Christians even by being Puritans. These people had always disapproved of what they rather vaguely called militarism, regarding it in some mysterious manner as a form of dissipation. As they had been taught not to look on the wine when it was red, so they were taught not to look on the uniform when it was red. They disapproved of bullets rather as they did of billiards, from a hazy association of ideas that connected it with having a high old time. Whether the experience of war is really a giddy round of gaieties, there are probably many to-day who could testify. The point here is that this sort of conscientiousness was a most comical perversion of the Christian tradition; but was still Christian, in the sense that it was a perversion of that and of nothing else. Some sincerity, some simplicity, some sorrow for others, dignified the dying sect.

But no such lingering grace clings to the remarkable young man I have in my mind. He is cold, he is caddish, he is an intellectual bully, and his intellect is itself vapid and thin. He is marked by an imaginative insufficiency which can be compared to nothing except to finding a Commander, in the thick of battle, looking into a pocket-mirror instead of a field-glass. I remember a debate nearly four years ago in which some followers of Mr. Norman Angell tried to persuade me that, by our moral progress, we had outgrown the very notion of war. When I pointed out that even to abandon war, merely to make money, indicated no moral progress at all, a young Cambridge man put his head on one side and said, “My ethics are not at all ascetic.” I can see him still, with his eye cocked up at a corner of the ceiling, and the white light from a high window falling on his funny little head. It happened to be the very day when the Austrian ultimatum went to Serbia.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 294–295. Illustrated London News, May 11, 1918.

But even in its grosser and more aggressive form the thing remains. I remember reading a novel, which appeared some little while ago, which precisely conveyed the particular spirit I mean. It was called *The Fortune*,

and it was by Douglas Goldring. In its sub-title and substance it professed to be a sort of romance of intellectual friendship; but it was really rather a romance of intellectual slavery. It described the influence on a young man's life of a friend whose unconventionality ultimately took the form of Pacifism—and whose Pacifism ultimately took, as it always does take, the form of Pro-Germanism. But in this story the relations of the two are in no sense those of friend and friend, or even merely of master and pupil, but rather those of master and servant. The master exhibits in his anti-militarism the only thing that can ever be really evil in militarism—the beatification of the bully. In parts it suggests the writing of a rather morbid woman, for such worship of superiority is almost worthy of “Ouida.” It makes very little difference to the moral atmosphere, to my mind, that it is not idolatry of a supercilious soldier, but only idolatry of a man too supercilious to consent to be a soldier. And a certain interest lies in the fact that the author, like “Ouida,” really writes rather well, so far as the moral atmosphere does not weaken his work. The Pacifist intellectual is effectively and truly described; only he is meant to be magnificent and attractive, and he is made repulsive and even pitiable.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 296. Illustrated London News, May 11, 1918.

I only refer to the remark, or to the book in which it occurs, because it happens to strike exactly the note of the nonsense I have been describing. It indicates the survival of a certain sort of young man who is a Pacifist not because he is a Quaker, or because he is a Tolstoyan, or even because he is an Anarchist—but because he is a prig, and nothing else. Nor is he even a prig through too much conscientiousness, or a pedant through too much learning. He has nothing but ideas which are not only second-rate, but second-hand. He has borrowed from articles on Tolstoy the impossibilism without the idealism; and from articles on Nietzsche the way to be a Superman who will not fight.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 297. Illustrated London News, May 11, 1918.

A League of Nations really stands or falls with the truth of its title. If it is really a League of Nations it may really be a noble thing; but, as presented by some people, it is rather a League for the Abolition of Nations. It is not a scheme to guarantee the independence of States, but at best to guarantee their safety if they will sacrifice their independence.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 298–299. Illustrated London News, July 13, 1918.

That is the real hope in the ideal of a League of Nations. If it is genuine, it will be a league of all the men who love their own lands to respect each other. If it is anything else, it will merely be a clique of the very few who forget their own lands to interfere with each other's. Between these two opposites the modern world must choose; and it is typical of modern lucidity that the two opposites are known by the same name.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 300. Illustrated London News, July 13, 1918.

I have never pretended to reverence for the ideal modern peacemaker, wearing the white feather of a blameless life—or rather, of a bloodless life. For there are two ways of being bloodless—by the avoidance of blood without, and by the absence of blood within. Nor do I conceal a doubt of whether we can ever, with literal certainty, make mankind bloodless in the first sense except by making it bloodless in the second. Our chief reason for wishing the Allies to secure the prize, for which they have already paid in blood, is the certainty that far more blood would be shed after losing it than after winning it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 300–301. Illustrated London News, August 3, 1918.

To drop the metaphor, the real point against the cause of Pacifism is that it is not a cause at all, but only a weakening of all causes. It does not

announce any aim; it only announces that it will never use certain means in pursuing any aim. It does not define its goal; it only defines a stopping-place, beyond which nobody must go in the search for any goal.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 301. Illustrated London News, August 3, 1918.

For a World State would have to be guarded with swords and staves like any other State; and a universal settlement would want fighting for as much as any other—or rather, more than any other.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 301. Illustrated London News, August 3, 1918.

The fact is that all this peace business is not the fulfilment, but the frustration, of the old revolutionary plan. It must in its very nature be the frustration of any plan. When the tyrant is in possession of power, and the tribune is striving for freedom, the appearance of a third philosopher who is striving primarily for peace must of necessity be in favour of the man in possession. Pacifism and Prussianism are always in alliance, by a fatal logic far beyond any conscious conspiracy.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 302–303. Illustrated London News, August 3, 1918.

What is really dreamy and dangerous and anarchic is precisely that sham “practicality” of beginning to do something, without clearly knowing what we are really doing or why we are really doing it. And the real case against a League of Nations, as preached by some of its prophets, is precisely that the name does not represent their real ideal—but, at the best, a step towards their real ideal; and, at the worst, a mere disguise for their real ideal. It is that what they really mean is not what Mr. Wilson calls a League of Nations, but what Mr. Wells calls a World State.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 304. Illustrated London News, August 10, 1918.

A League of Nations, I repeat, will be an admirable idea if it means a league to defend the nationality of nations. Such a thing might well exist—an agreement for the special punishment of a disregard of national frontiers, as in Belgium; or for the recovery of national provinces, as in Alsace. But a League of Nations, in the sense of something to internationalize nations, is not an ideal at all. It is a mere stop-gap. In short, I am in favour of an alliance of States to fight for the independence of each; I am not at all in favour of a new State expressing merely the interdependence of all. And I think this explanation sufficient to distinguish my own view from much that is to-day trumpeted under the name of a League of Nations.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 305–306. Illustrated London News, August 10, 1918.

The Germans have left out this little detail altogether in the detailed catalogue of all the characteristics of Americans which their professors have doubtless compiled. They were not wrong in supposing that a thin theoretic pacifism was one of the layers of the spiritual soil in America. But they ought to have suspected it instead of trusting it, because it was the top layer. Anyhow, the rest of the stratification contains much more volcanic rock.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 307. Illustrated London News, September 7, 1918.

It seems a pity, when so much is talked about democracy, that so little is thought about democracy. As a fact, one of the virtues of this type of government is that very fierceness and fighting spirit which these critics take for a vice. If we like to put it in a paradox, the case for a democracy is that it consists entirely of aristocrats. When reactionaries praise an oligarchy for its dignity, its spirit, and its sense of honour, they fall into a simple fallacy. They forget that oligarchy does not mean the extension of these things: on the contrary, it means the restriction of them. It is like admiring the uprightness of a tribe in which only two or three men are allowed to walk upright. All the other men, walking on all fours, might be happy, but would hardly be dignified. America has its own faults;

democracy has its own faults; but it means a state where every man is on his hind legs. And it is a posture which leaves the hands free to strike.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 307–308. Illustrated London News, September 7, 1918.

Germans believe in Germans rather than in Germany, as Frenchmen believe in France rather than in Frenchmen. The creed really common to the whole country is the belief that the Teuton is a type having a natural superiority—or, as he would probably put it, an evolutionary superiority. All education is organised to impose it; all history is chopped and expurgated to fit it. It is believed by all good Germans—even when, by a divine mystery and mercy, they manage to combine being good Germans with being good men.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 309. Illustrated London News, September 21, 1918.

It is their whole case that the ancient world, or the Dark Ages, were periodically refreshed and reformed solely by such barbaric invasions. Such tribal aggressions are to a Teutonist what Crusades were to a mediaeval Christian, or proletarian revolutions to a modern Bolshevik; they are aggressions to the advantage of the world.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 310. Illustrated London News, September 21, 1918.

So long as we go on cursing War, we shall go on encouraging War. It is a perfectly simple and even self-evident truth, though some would still treat it as a paradox. The only possible way of discouraging war is to curse the man who makes it. The fact would be quite obvious even where the case is less clear—as in calamities that can sometimes be accidents. It would be obvious if men confined themselves to denouncing fire, when they ought to be denouncing arson. If one man burned down another man’s house in broad daylight, it would be a plain and positive advantage to the incendiary that we should confine ourselves to abusing the conflagration. He would be delighted if the neighbours would only stand in a ring round the burning house, and bellow and wail in a sort of chorus, “O Fire, atrocious Fire, cruel and devouring element, what graceful architecture and valuable furniture are you not ruthlessly consuming; how many harmless human lives have you not destroyed; how many women have been burnt in you as witches; how many saints and philosophers have been slain by you as heretics; how ruinous you are when you race over a prairie, and how fatal and indiscriminate when you attack the crowds in a theatre! Diabolical and abominable Fire, we curse the name of Prometheus, who brought thee not from heaven but rather from hell! Let us pass a unanimous resolution abolishing Fire.” That is precisely the way in which some people think about War; but it is obvious that if they talked like that about fire, there would be more fires and not fewer. While the chorus was being chanted and the resolution passed, the practical professor of arson would make his escape and begin to set fire to another house. There would be nothing to stop him from reducing all civilisation to a field of ashes.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 311–312. Illustrated London News, September 28, 1918.

The modern suggestion, which takes many forms, to the effect that the great war was vaguely begun by everybody, and should vaguely be ended by everybody, fits this parallel precisely. It is a proposal that we should think about the inhuman fire and not think about the human firebrand. And the rest of the comparison is correct; it not only does not restrain him, but it does definitely encourage him. If we say that this war was everyone’s fault, everybody will know that any war he makes will be called everybody’s fault—that is nobody’s fault. Every man will know that he can at any moment commit a crime which will be called an accident. Every ruler will know that he can, whenever he pleases, perform an act of aggression which will be called an act of God. Or rather, it will not even be called anything so mystical and disputable as the act of God—it

will actually be called the act of humanity. We shall be solemnly told that "all nations are equally to blame" for something which one nation does, whenever that nation may choose to do it. These, stated with strict fairness, are the philosophical and political principles on which we are now again being asked to base what is called a permanent peace. The wilder of these wags also describe it as a reasonable peace.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 312. Illustrated London News, September 28, 1918.

There is nothing to be said about such people, except that the mere word international seems to mesmerise and stun them; and if somebody were to propose an international pair of trousers to be circulated in rotation among the Presidents of all the Republics, they would not have the moral courage to laugh.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 313. Illustrated London News, September 28, 1918.

But, of course, Belgium is only the working model, and by no means even the main example. The ruin of Serbia has been even more complete; and the aggression against Serbia was quite equally unquestionable. If Austria did not wantonly force war on Serbia, no State in all history ever did or ever will force war on another. These cases are far clearer and simpler than the majority of common criminal cases in which men are jailed and flogged and hanged. But they will serve very well as a simple example of the absurdity of relieving our feelings by raving against the abstract idea of War. War is not an institution, like a post-office, which we are proposing to erect or preserve. War is a consequence of some men being tyrants.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 313. Illustrated London News, September 28, 1918.

Those who lamented our selfishness are now lamenting our unselfishness. They reproach us with idealism, they accuse us of altruism, they positively taunt us with a tenderness for abstract principles and remote peoples.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 314. Illustrated London News, October 5, 1918.

It is the gross inconsistency—or rather, the gross injustice—of first saying that England had only selfish aims arranged by secret diplomacy, and then forbidding England to pursue great and generous aims, with no reward but honour and the applause of men set free.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 315. Illustrated London News, October 5, 1918.

The internationalist and the imperialist are not only similar men, but even the same men. There is no country which the Imperialist may not claim to conquer in order to convert. There is no country which the Internationalist may not claim to convert in order to conquer. Whether it is called international law or imperial law, it is the very soul and essence of all lawlessness. Against all such amorphous anarchy stands that great and positive creation of Christendom, the nation, with its standards of liberty and loyalty, with its limits of reason and proportion. More than a hundred years ago, a great crime was committed against this sacred substance and identity by the imperial anarchy of Prussia. It was done to Poland; but it might as justly or reasonably have been done to England.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 315–316. Illustrated London News, October 5, 1918.

And indeed, as I have often pointed out, the pivot of the whole question is in acts which must be admitted—which, even when they are defended, cannot be denied. The German authorities propose that certain committees of neutrals should investigate our case against Germany; but this involves a certain oblivion of what really is our case against Germany. The case stands as it always did—that our objection is to the plain and public part, even more than the sly and secretive part, of the Prussian policy. It is not that we denounce what they deny; but that we denounce

what they defend. What is clear at present is that the new German Government defends it as the old German Government defended it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 317. Illustrated London News, November 2, 1918.

The only hope for Germany, as well as for Europe, lies in exploding this illusion of the ultimate superiority of the Prussian for the practical purposes of war.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 318. Illustrated London News, November 2, 1918.

Since I last wrote in this place the end of the war has come as suddenly as an explosion. One of the chief remaining perils is that it should be regarded as an explosion, that is, as something that has simply happened. It is the curse of all our culture that it abounds in mechanical and materialistic terms, so that things do not seem to have been done by men, because so many men have done them. We talk of wars breaking out, like fires; of alliances breaking up, like ice; of negotiations breaking down, like bridges.... But war did not "break out" in 1914. We might as well say a man had "broken down," when we found him stabbed and bleeding to death on our door-step. This war has been one of the most human of all human events. Men began it; men ended it; but, fortunately, those who ended it were not those who began it. The whole has been as singly and clearly conducted by the human will as any single combat in an old drama or any duel in private life.... The war did not begin; it was begun, because there is in the heart of man the anarchic art that can begin such things. The war did not end; it was ended, because there is in the heart of man that cleaner creative hope that can endure and can end them.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 320. Illustrated London News, November 23, 1918.

There is another form of the same materialist fallacy which fools have sown broadcast for the last four years. Its most fashionable form may be summed up in the phrase, "It will be all the same a hundred years hence." I have read pacifist poems and essays in which the old rhetorical flourish to the effect that the corn will grow on the battlefield or the ivy on the ruined fortress, is seriously used to suggest that it makes no difference whether the battle was fought or whether the fortress fell. We should not be here at all to moralise about the ivy on castles and the corn on battlefields, if some of the great conflicts of history had gone the other way. If certain barbarian invasions had finally swept certain civilised districts, men would very probably have forgotten how to grow corn, and would have certainly have forgotten how to write poems about ivy.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 321. Illustrated London News, November 23, 1918.

I have my own opinions about those internal political quarrels, but I have deliberately kept them out of the notes it has been my business to jot down on this page for the last four years. Though the form of them has been in the crudest sense journalistic, I have tried to keep the philosophy of them in some sense historic. I have tried to think of the great war as it would have appeared to our remote ancestors if they had known it was coming, as it will appear to our remote descendants when they consider how it came.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 322. Illustrated London News, November 23, 1918.

It was the whole claim of the Teutonic tribal empires that the last success would efface everything. This is the profound sense in which it was always true to say that Prussia was atheistic; it held that the cosmos has no conscience because it has no memory.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 323. Illustrated London News, November 23, 1918.

The question about reparation is therefore perfectly simple. It is not whether these things shall be remembered or forgotten; it is whether they shall be remembered only by the innocent and forgotten only by the guilty. It is not a question of reparation or no reparation; it is a ques-

tion of imposing the labour of it on those who sinned or on those who suffered.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 327. Illustrated London News, December 21, 1918.

There is a very simple question to ask about how far most Germans had any responsibility for fighting. It is to ask how many Germans had any delicacy about winning. Many doubtless had an increasing dislike of losing, and have now a very full and final dislike of having lost. But all would agree that, whether or no the game was worth playing, it was certainly not worth losing. No German would have favoured the war if they had known that Germany would lose the war in the fourth year. The question is, how many Germans would have repudiated the war if Germany had won the war in the first week.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 327. Illustrated London News, December 21, 1918.

It is here that it is so vital to emphasise, as I have always tried to emphasise, the more fundamental nature of the Teutonic claim. It is not, and it never was, mere despotism or mere militarism. It is a much more deep, and in a sense a much more defensible sophistry. It is, indeed, a denial of democratic equality; but what it denies is rather the equality of races than the equality of men.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 328. Illustrated London News, December 21, 1918.

The Prussian Socialism is a strict State Socialism: in other words, the Prussians still believe in the divine right or diabolic right, of the State. The theory remains that the State is the only absolute in morals, that is, that there is no appeal from it to God or man, to Christendom or conscience, to the individual or the family or the fellowship of all mankind. The very theory that was the ethical excuse of all their crimes in the past is the first principle of their political philosophy for the future. The fact is surely very relevant to the problem of any remaining menace from the Germans. In practice they cannot at present equip themselves with the power to attack Europe. But they have at least equipped themselves with a theory which is suitable for any such purpose. With their intellectual theories we are still at intellectual war, though we can all hope that it will remain an intellectual war. The conversion of Germany would doubtless be a greater thing than the conquest of Germany; but Germany must be converted to something more common to mankind than to one of the cold fancies of one of her own fantastic professors.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 329. Illustrated London News, December 21, 1918.

But if we turn to the more modern reformers of Yule, we shall find that what they wish to dispense with is not so much human sacrifice as human nature. The prigs of the progressive schools would sweep away not so much the unkind as the kind elements of a festivity, not the fighting but the feasting.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 331–332. Illustrated London News, December 28, 1918.

It matters little, in the living matter of the mood, whether they profess a Prussian State militarism or a Prussian State Socialism; both of which involve putting the State upon the throne of God.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 331–332. Illustrated London News, December 28, 1918.

It matters little, in the living matter of the mood, whether they profess a Prussian State militarism or a Prussian State Socialism; both of which involve putting the State upon the throne of God.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 332. Illustrated London News, December 28, 1918.

Wherever something is found which the instinct of Christendom recognises as the national soul, there the conscience of Christendom concedes to that State the right to a certain self-government and self-defence. But it cannot possibly govern itself except by its own peculiar laws;

and similarly it cannot possibly defend itself except by its own peculiar weapons.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 336. Illustrated London News, January 4, 1919.

It is counted a sort of madness to say that black is white; but it is considered nowadays a natural scepticism to say that black is grey—and still more to say that white is grey.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 342. Illustrated London News, January 11, 1919.

There is a very simple reason, if there were not even better reasons—its life is necessary to our life. A free Poland is not only necessary to a free Europe, but is rather specially necessary to a free England.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 342. Illustrated London News, January 11, 1919.

The Poles have never enjoyed that perfect social adjustment that made all the Prussian Professors write down the same sentence, as all the Prussian soldiers would make the same salute. The Poles are incapable of that clear organisation that makes it possible for a massacre of babies to begin at a certain signal, stop at another signal, and begin again at a third signal.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 348. Illustrated London News, January 18, 1919.

But in truth the League of Nations, as some of its prophets are already preaching it, does really involve the abandonment of old loves as well as of old hates. It does mean that an Englishman is to think less of England than of Europe, that a Frenchman is to think less of France than of the League of Nations, that we are to behold so staggering a prodigy as an international Irishman, and are to employ all our science (if I may be allowed such levity) to depolarise the Pole.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 350. Illustrated London News, February 15, 1919.

The principle of “the self-determination of all peoples” must obviously mean permitting every people to settle its own affairs—and not settling every people’s affairs for it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 350. Illustrated London News, February 15, 1919.

For, though the suggestion will now seem strange and distant, there was once a sort of idea that the Peace Conference intended to confer about Peace. Its meeting was not, perhaps, a coincidence wholly unconnected with the fact that there has just been a war. And, having one of those simple and laborious minds which prefer to think of one thing at a time, I suggest that we decide to do something with the present war even before we prevent all possible future wars, especially by a cosmopolitan conspiracy which I should myself like to prevent.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 351. Illustrated London News, February 15, 1919.

While the war was waged, I resisted many revolutions with which I was in considerable sympathy; and until the war is properly settled I certainly will not throw myself into a revolution with which I have practically no sympathy at all. I am disposed to urge, therefore, that we decide on some policy touching obscure and forgotten peoples called the Germans, to say nothing of the French, the Serbs, and the Poles, before we begin to prophesy the future feelings of the Patagonians towards the Eskimos, or speculate on how soon the Hottentots will learn to love the Laps. In short, I suggest that we consider how to restrain our enemies and reinstate our friends before we consider how to make friends of men who have never been near enough to be enemies.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 351. Illustrated London News, February 15, 1919.

Schemes of this colossal and almost cosmic scope are being waved in front of us to-day, in a sort of wild effort to find something larger and greater than the great war. But the great war, in its end as in its beginning,

is to be judged by things inside it and not by things outside. It was only a great war, as distinct from a big butchery, by the greatness of the moral issues involved. And the moral issues within the war are still the same. The spiritual deliverance of Europe, so far from depending on larger and vaguer things, turns more than ever on small and special things—on little nations and on lost provinces. Posen is more important than all Siberia, for without Posen there is no Poland, and without Poland there is no dawn in the East. Any Prussia that is demanding Posen is the same Prussia that divided Poland more than a hundred years ago, the same Prussia that invaded Belgium less than five years ago. And why, indeed, should it not be so, since the group of “moderate” Socialists now ruling Prussia is the very same which then warmly applauded the invasion of Belgium? The malady that made the war was a moral malady, and must still find a moral cure. And every great moral story turns on what are called small things. There are always particular things to be purified, particular men to be punished, particular goods to be restored. If the makers of the peace do not right the wrongs of the war, it matters nothing what other world-wide and wonderful things they do. The conscience of Christendom will not be purged. They will be like physicians curing a corpse, from which the soul is already gone.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 351–352. Illustrated London News, February 15, 1919.

What the pacifists call “war” is a certain game between crowned heads with little national flags stuck all over a map; or it is a dark agreement to differ between wicked diplomatists who sit round a table and say “Let us have a war,” like men proposing a game of bridge.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 352. Illustrated London News, April 5, 1919.

Moreover, the comments of the Press are curiously loose in argument. I was sorry to see that an able journalist whose work I have admired touching other matters, Mr. Sidney Dark, of the Daily Express, referred to the project of a strong buffer State in Poland as an experiment in sentimental politics. Certainly I have a sentimental objection to Prussia in Posen or Danzig, as I have an equally sentimental objection to Prussia in Antwerp, to say nothing of a maudlin melodramatic objection to Prussia in Kent.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 354. Illustrated London News, April 5, 1919.

Poland is the only possible representative of the more mellow, more humane, and more humorous ideals of the West, in a world where the ideals—and even the good ideals—will be crude and cruel. For it is not necessary even to be without sympathy with the wilder ideals of the East. Some of the Bolsheviks may have hold of a great truth in the equality of men, just as the Moslems had hold of a great truth in the unity of God. But the narrow simplicity that will sacrifice everything else—chivalry, charity, laughter, the family, and the flag—this remains an ideal which is in its nature an idolatry. It is the worship of the sacred beetle—or, at the best, of the sacred bee; the vision of the mere swarm, clouding the clear horizons; the pitting of the soul of the hive against the soul of the home.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 355. Illustrated London News, April 5, 1919.

Any amount of nonsense has been talked in the name of Christianity, but I cannot recall any Christian theologian, orthodox or otherwise, who maintained the muddle-headed modern idea that the lapse of so many centuries would cure everybody of being angry—or, in Mr. Carnegie’s phrase, that war was a thing of the past.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 356. Illustrated London News, April 12, 1919.

In plain words, we are acting as if there was no such thing as a barbarian peril in Europe. It was an ignorant and provincial assumption even in

1914; there are no words for what it is in 1919. But one thing is certain—Nemesis will not abandon our education, and in some wild fashion or other we shall again discover the soul through its sins.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 358. Illustrated London News, April 12, 1919.

It is not only a sin, but a self-contradiction, to create equality without equity. Equality without equity is not merely iniquity, it is also inequality. For the man who is in the wrong has already had more than his rights; and to credit and not debit the amount to him is not to balance the books, but to cook the accounts. Equality and equity involve everywhere the restoration of rights. These are exceedingly simple truths, the alphabet of all law and morality. But they seem to be entirely forgotten in the discussion about our attitude to Germany; and forgotten not only among the Germans, but among ourselves. People talk of the scales of justice hanging even; but they forget that it is exactly when scales hang uneven that they are doing the work of scales. Scales have to measure the different weights and values of things; and that is exactly what we have to do, if we would redress the balance, after the barbarian king has again thrown his sword into the scale.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 359. Illustrated London News, May 10, 1919.

The weakness of the argument, as of many modern arguments, is, of course, that it omits the universal moral idea of punishment. But, as the moderns still go on punishing the poor and ignorant, I have no sympathy for their fine feelings against punishing the rich and responsible.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 359–360. Illustrated London News, May 10, 1919.

It is just as easy to massacre men in the name of Man as to burn churches in the name of God. It is as feasible to decree inhumanity in humanitarian language as to decree sacrilege in sacred language.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 361. Illustrated London News, May 10, 1919.

Now not only do I deny that it is wicked to win and use a victory; I strongly affirm that it is wicked to win and then not use a victory. If you fight and do not desire victory, I can only say that you must desire butchery. If people do not deserve to be suspected in policy and restrained in power, they certainly do not deserve to be ripped in pieces with shrapnel or impaled on steel spikes. I should accept the whole of the pacifist vision of war, if I had to take it along with the pacifist version of peace. War would really be as vile as they paint it, if it were as valueless as they would make it.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 361. Illustrated London News, May 10, 1919.

There is a danger that the spirit discovered in the great war may die away on both sides in a sort of grumbling. Grumbling is anger in solution, as sentimentalism is love in solution; and they are both much safer when they are solid—when they are vivid and not vague. Human anger is a higher thing than what is called divine discontent. For you must be angry with something; but you can be discontented with everything.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 362. Illustrated London News, May 24, 1919.

It is, in the real sense, a matter of conscience to show generosity to the defeated, so long as it is consistent with justice to the oppressed.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 362. Illustrated London News, May 24, 1919.

I am convinced that the pacifist and semi-pacifist apologies for Germany are not only anti-national, but anti-normal. I do not even think that a cosmopolitan contempt for patriotism is merely a matter of opinion, any more than I think that a Nietzscheite contempt for compassion is merely a matter of opinion. I think they are both heresies so horrible

that their treatment must not be so much mental as moral, when it is not simply medical.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 365. Illustrated London News, May 31, 1919.

Count Rantzau recently made a remark which exactly measures the real abyss—not yet bridged—between the barbarians and the city of civilization which they lately besieged. It sums up the whole cross-purposes of the Peace Conference. And it has that invariable mark of a man in the middle of such a misunderstanding—that precisely what he thinks hard is easy, and precisely what he thinks easy is hard. What he said was this—“At the moment when the moral cloak of penal justice is removed from the peace document it becomes bearable for Germany to a certain extent. That we, as the vanquished, must make sacrifices in power and goods we realise. We decline, however, to agree like criminals to our removal into a second-class position amongst nations.”

In short, he says in substance that he expects to suffer because he is beaten, but he does not see why he should suffer because he deserves to be beaten. That is Prussian philosophy and Prussian history and Prussian peace and war in one sentence.... We should be quite content, after a fair fight between free nations, with securing one or two definite points in dispute; and we might well do without heavy indemnities or large rectifications of frontier. We are forcing the Prussian power to pay not for having lost the war, but for having waged the war. Or rather, to put it more correctly still, they are to pay not so much for having waged war, as for having waged Prussian war. That is our defence for our demands; and without it we should make infinitely milder demands—or, perhaps, no demands. In short, we are asked to treat the Germans as the conquered, but not as the criminals. But, in fact, it is only because we do regard them as the criminals that we would even consent to treat them as the conquered.... If the Germans will not see it as what they would call subjective, they shall see it as something which even they will be bound to call objective. Or, to talk a more human tongue, if they will not feel it in their consciences, they shall see it with their eyes, and glare at it through their goggles as if at a comet. If they will not confess that they are criminals, they shall at least confess that we regard them as criminals. They shall realise that by the end of the war, especially the submarine war, the great mass of mankind had come to regard them as criminals. If they do not know that the things they have done are horrible, they shall know that they are horrifying.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 367–369. Illustrated London News, May 31, 1919.

It happened that, in the eighteenth century, the ambition of Prussia and the adventurous policy of the English aristocracy combined against the dominance of France, and so gave a lead by which all the Germans benefited. Germany increased in power and wealth; and in a train of more or less servile fashions, from spiked helmets to kindergartens, there came a fashion of false history which exaggerated the pirate settlements of the Dark Ages into the total Teutonising of Britain. None of the generations nearer the event remembered that we owed all to the pirates—least of all those who knew the pirates, and quite as little even the pirates themselves.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 374–375. Illustrated London News, June 28, 1919.

So small a thing was the Teutonic theory, limited both in time and space. Germanism never really spread beyond Germany, and England, and such colonies as copy England. Germanism is not really old even in Germany, and we may doubt if it will live to be old even in Germany. In all the other places named it is very recent, and it is already dead.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 376. Illustrated London News, June 28, 1919.

National tradition is tested, not even by what the village school-master can learn, but by what the village idiot cannot help learning.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 376. Illustrated London News, June 28, 1919.

Whether a whole people can really get rid of its past by sending one egotistical old gentleman to live in Holland may be another question. That he is responsible for some wicked things is most probable; that he is responsible for many silly things is certain.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 378. Illustrated London News, July 19, 1919.

I suspect that the financial, scientific, and educational elements in Germany had all the bellicose vices of the Junker, and perhaps less of his bellicose virtues. I have always insisted that the moral disease was something highly modern—was not (as innocent people say) merely militaristic; and most certainly was not (as idiotic people say) merely mediaeval. What were called the new ideas were by far the most dangerous; and for me, therefore, the difficulty is not finally met when the new ideas have themselves produced a new Government.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 379. Illustrated London News, July 19, 1919.

Prussianism was full of that typically modern combination of moral anarchy with mechanical order.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 379. Illustrated London News, July 19, 1919.

Prussia was not, like the Christian States, tempted to do this or that injustice, and cover it with this or that sophistry. Prussia proclaimed a theory of continuous growth, by which a State was decaying if it was not expanding at the expense of others; in other words, that a State must always live upon other States.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 382. Illustrated London News, July 26, 1919.

The root of this, as of all other realities involved, is in one fundamental fact: that Prussia really came from outside Europe, just as Turkey really came from outside Europe. She has not been inside our civilisation from the first; she was a thing of ancient barbarism modernised in a hurry. As the North Germans were never enough within the Roman system to absorb the true idea of citizenship, so they were never enough within the mediaeval system to absorb the true idea of knighthood.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 386. Illustrated London News, September 13, 1919.

The mind is not free till it is free from fashion as well as from tradition; and therefore free from the future as well as the past.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 388. Illustrated London News, July 10, 1920.

All this talk about optimism and pessimism is itself a dismal fall from the old talk about right and wrong. Our fathers said that a nation had sinned and suffered like a man. We say it has decayed, like a cheese.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 388. Illustrated London News, July 10, 1920.

The progressive always uses the fatalistic argument, even against the reactionary: he always says it is vain to regret the good old times and vain to resist the way the world is going. The reactionary always uses the fatalistic argument even against the progressive: he says it is vain to think of curing the modern disease of degeneration, and especially vain to think of curing it with the quack remedy of a Utopia. Thus the optimist and the pessimist do indeed differ from each other, but they agree on the fundamental matter of fatalism. They agree on what we may call the shape of the world, which they conceive as a wheel; or on the nature of the world, which they conceive as a fatalistic system. In short, they may really believe very different things, but they disbelieve

in the same thing. They disbelieve in the great dogma that “man is man and master of his fate.”

Chesterton on War and Peace, 389. Illustrated London News, July 10, 1920.

When these men say the world is dying, they mean the world is dead. And they mean it is only dead because it has never been alive. The pessimists believe that the cosmos is a clock that is running down; the progressives believe it is a clock that they themselves are winding up. But I happen to believe that the world is what we choose to make it, and that we are what we choose to make ourselves; and that our renaissance or our ruin will alike, ultimately and equally, testify with a trumpet to our liberty.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 390. Illustrated London News, July 10, 1920.

The point in each is that the power can be insular or it can be international: but it cannot be both. In other words, it can remain at peace or it can work for peace: but the two peaceful attitudes are antagonistic to each other. If it remains at peace it must tolerate war: and if it works for peace it must risk war.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 391. Illustrated London News, July 31, 1920.

The Barbarian is very little affected by the flag under which he marches to slay and spoil. For practical purposes the Barbarian is the man who does not believe in chivalry in war or charity in peace; and, above all, who does not believe in modesty in anything.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 392. Illustrated London News, July 31, 1920.

Now, all this international idealism tends inevitably to the depreciation of nations. To avert national quarrels, men minimise national memories. It almost amounts to insulting a man in order to make him feel more friendly.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 394. Illustrated London News, June 4, 1921.

We can only turn hate to love by understanding what are the things that men have loved; nor is it necessary to ask men to hate their loves in order to love one another.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 394. Illustrated London News, June 4, 1921.

On the contrary, I believe we must see the intrinsic value of the nation before we see its international value to other nations.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 395. Illustrated London News, June 4, 1921.

That this narrow national bragging is dangerous I do not deny; but I do not think that the cure is to read the internationalist literature. I think it is to read the nationalist literature—of other people.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 396. Illustrated London News, June 4, 1921.

The present problem of war is that men do not deal with the difficulty because they do not see it. When they talk about war, and especially when they talk against war, they still talk of it as if it were an institution, and even a co-operative institution. They talk as if it were the product of agreement, instead of being the product of disagreement. They talk as if several nations agreed to have war. The truth is that, if they could agree to have war, they could probably agree to have peace. The trouble is that they do not always agree about either.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 400. Illustrated London News, December 3, 1921.

We can lump the theft and the thief and the thief-taker and the cry of “Stop Thief!” all together, if we choose, and cover the whole tangle of contradictions with the one word, “War.” But calling it by a single word does not make it a simple thing. It is in its nature a complexity, because it is in its nature a contradiction.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 401. Illustrated London News, December 3, 1921.

If people object to the mere model of a cannon, they must equally object to the picture of a cannon, and so to every picture in the world that depicts a sword or a spear. There would be a splendid clearance of all the great art-galleries of the world. But it would be nothing to the destruction of all the great libraries of the world, if we logically extended the principle to all the literary masterpieces that admit the glory of arms.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 405. Illustrated London News, December 3, 1921.

Men would be monsters either of heartlessness or heroism, if they felt at the end of those five infernal years exactly what they felt when the first volunteers were roused by the outrage upon Belgium. But though the feelings of men naturally change, they will still suffer if they imagine that facts change with feelings.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 407. Illustrated London News, May 6, 1922.

The English are a very moody people; which is one reason why they have produced so many great poets. They are at present in a very comprehensible mood of being tired of war and disgusted with politics. It is very defensible; because war is very tiring, and politics are very disgusting. But this is a moment when it is very dangerous to trust to the mood instead of the mind.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 408. Illustrated London News, May 6, 1922.

I recently received a pamphlet from an honest Indian gentleman who has a new religion that will establish universal peace. I confess that the impression produced on my mind by the excellent Hindu humanitarian was that he might very well unite all human beings, if only all human beings were Hindus. But I hasten to add that this humanitarian illusion is very far from being confined to Hindus. It seems to me that exactly the same error is made by the most energetic and scientific humanitarians of the West—as by Mr. Wells and the upholders of a World State. What is the matter with internationalism is that it is imperialism. It is the imposition of one ideal of one sect on the vital varieties of men.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 410. Illustrated London News, June 17, 1922.

But there is another historical truth that is here forgotten. Many doubts about the Court of Camelot are founded on the notion that anything so far back in time must itself have been barbaric. The truth is that, if it was far enough back, it would almost certainly have been civilised. It would have been in the last phase of the old Roman civilization. The fallacy is like that of a man who should say at daybreak that if it was darker four hours before, it must have been darker still fourteen hours before. He would forget that fourteen hours might bring him back into the previous day.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 413. Illustrated London News, June 17, 1922.

Much of the dulness of modern history came from the idea of progress. For history must be progress reversed. If things have always automatically grown brighter and better, then to trace things backwards is to go further and further not only into darkness but into dulness.

Chesterton on War and Peace, 413–414. Illustrated London News, June 17, 1922.

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