

## The Great War by C.W. Leadbeater

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JUST now the minds of men are full of the Great War, and wherever we go they talk of little else. So it is important that we as members of the Society, should know how to look at the War as part of a great cosmic movement — that we should understand something of what is really going on; because it is only when we understand, that we can take: absolutely a sane view, falling neither into weakness on the one hand, nor into vindictiveness on the other. We must try then to comprehend — to see the greater plan. We must not let ourselves be swept aside by personal prejudice; we must not be swayed by sentimentality on the one side nor by passion on the other, but we must try to see what is really happening, and therefore what is the duty and what should be the attitude of one who wishes to help intelligently.

We know that there are forces which work against evolution as well as those which work in favour of it. We know that there is frequently a small, even a personal struggle, taking place between these, forces over individuals, and sometimes over what seem quite small things. But we know also that now and then great world crises arise, where good and evil set themselves against one another in serried array, and humanity is influenced by these powers and driven into taking part on one side or another. The last occasion on which so great a world-struggle took place was in Atlantis some twelve thousand years ago — rather longer perhaps, nearly thirteen thousand years ago. There was a great fight then, between those who were on the side of good and those who, were on the side of selfishness.

We may read something of the action of the Lords of the Dark Face in Atlantis in *The Secret Doctrine*. Madame Blavatsky devotes much time and energy to expounding their line of work. We must try to understand that there may be people who are doing what to us seems absolutely evil, and yet they may think themselves justified in their action. They may think that the line which they are taking is not evil, but in the long run, good. It is true that when they say "in the long run, good," I think they generally mean good for themselves; but these Lords of the Dark Face had their own view of evolution, and to themselves they justified it, much along the line in which many people in these days try to justify the action of Judas Iscariot, on the ground that he was more anxious than the rest that the Master's glory should be shown forth to the world, and so he put his Master in a position where he thought that He *must* show forth His glory. However incredible it may seem, that view is gravely put forward by some writers.

The Lords of the Dark Face in Atlantis were intensifying themselves as separated beings against the stream of evolution. We hold (and because our Masters hold it, we think we are right in holding it) that the Logos intends us to work with Him towards the production of greater unity. The black magician would tell us that the Logos sets up this current in order that we may strengthen ourselves by fighting against it; and although we do not believe that, we can see that it is a possible view, and that the man who takes it will not live at all as we do. We think that he is vitally in error, that he is allowing himself to be clouded by

the lower self; still, you see he tries to justify his position by a certain line of argument. It is not necessary to suppose that those Lords of the Dark Face were doing evil for evil's sake; but they held what we consider a wrong and selfish view as to the final ideas of the Logos. I have myself heard some of their successors of the present day say: " You people think you know what God means; your Masters hold these views, and of course you follow Them. But we have a different view; we are following the traditions of a very ancient school and we contrive to hold our own fairly well".

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In Atlantis this attitude led, among the ordinary and commonplace followers, to extreme selfishness and sensuality, to general unscrupulousness and irresponsibility. So it came about that there was a vast, revolution against the Ruler of the Golden Gate, and practically the good and evil forces which are always seeking to influence the world, found physical expression in that great series of battles in Atlantis. In that case the majority of the population was distinctly on the side of evil, and evil won. Because the evil won, it was necessary, more than one thousand years afterwards, to whelm that great island of Poseidonis beneath the waters of the Atlantic; and sixty-five million people died within twenty-four hours in that great cataclysm.

This time, once more the forces of good and evil have materialised themselves here on the physical plane, and the mighty contest has come down again to this level. Remember, we are the same people who were in Atlantis, and it is probable that we took our part in the struggle — with the minority, let us hope — yet perhaps some of us with the majority; it is a long time ago, and we cannot be certain.

I remember reading a terrible story (fiction only, I hope, for it could hardly have been actual fact) of the recovered memory of a past incarnation. There was once a man, an earnest and devout Christian, who through the accident of subjecting himself to mesmeric treatment, found that in a trance condition he was able to gain glimpses of what he felt to be past lives of his own. Incredulous at first, the strength and vividness of his experiences soon forced him to admit that they must be real reminiscences; and in this way he acquired much interesting information about medieval periods. Then arose in his mind a wild but fervent hope that if he could press his memory further he might discover that he had been on earth during the lifetime of Jesus; he yearned inexpressibly for a glimpse of that Divine Presence; he imagined himself following and ecstatically worshiping the Lord whom he so loved; he even dared to hope that perhaps he might have had the supreme honour of martyrdom for his faith. Further and further in successive trances he pushed back his recollection, until at last, with inexpressible thankfulness and awe, he realised that he had trodden the sacred soil of Palestine at the very same time as that majestic Figure. And then, with a shock so terrible that it left him a dying man, he knew the appalling truth that in that life of long ago he had been a rabid unit in an angry crowd, yelling wildly: " Crucify Him! Crucify Him !"

I trust devoutly that we were all on the right side in that stupendous struggle in Atlantis; but, however that may have been, at least the very same people are having their chance again now, but this time the majority, thank Heaven, is on the side of the good, and the good will win. Therefore we may hope to avoid, for some thousands of years to come, a cataclysm on the tremendous scale that sank Poseidonis. But if the evil won, the cataclysm would follow; it *must* follow, for the Deity intends that humanity shall evolve, and if part of humanity deliberately casts itself out of the line of evolution that particular set of bodies and minds must be wiped out, and must begin again under other conditions.

We must not think, if we can help it (I know how hard it is to help it) that all the people who fight on the side of the evil are necessarily wicked people. They are not so in the least; they are victims of a mighty obsession — an obsession so tremendous in its power that if you and I had been subjected to it we too might not have seen our way clear through it and come out of it unstained; who can tell,? Thousands and thousands of people, as good as we, have not come through it satisfactorily. The power behind, which is contrary to evolution, can and does seize upon a whole nation and obsess it and influence it. It is true that it cannot do that (just as is the case with individual obsession) unless there is in the obsessed something or other which responds. But if there be in any nation a majority, or even a powerful minority, which — perhaps through pride, perhaps through grossness and coarseness, through not having opened up sufficiently the love side of the nature, through having given themselves too entirely, too unscrupulously to developing intellect — is already in that condition of ready response to evil; then the rest of the nation, the weaker people, are, simply swept along with them, and they cannot see straight for the time. We must try to realise that.

It was hoped that the Fifth Root-Race would stand as a whole, or at any rate that the Fifth Sub-Race would stand as a whole. And the hope was nearly realised. The Powers that stand behind human evolution worked long through Their pupils to prevent this catastrophe. Whether those Powers knew all the time that the labour would not achieve its end, I cannot tell. We sometimes think of Them as knowing beforehand all that will happen; whether They do or not, I know not; but at least it is certain that in many cases They work most earnestly to produce certain results, and to give to men certain opportunities. Through the failure of humanity to take the chances offered, the results may not then be attained. They are always *eventually* attained, but often they are postponed for what to us seems an enormous time. The Great Deity of the solar system, the Logos Himself, knows perfectly all that will happen, and knows who will take his chances and who will not. That we must believe; whether all who work under Him also know that, we cannot tell. Certainly I know that a great conflict between good and evil forces has been long impending over us. I know also that it need not have taken precisely the form it has taken, if only some of those to whom great opportunities were offered had risen to the level of those opportunities and had taken them.

Some *have* taken them. This mighty British Empire has been formed and has been welded together by bonds of close affection in a way in which no Empire has ever been united before. There was a huge Roman Empire; but it was self-interest, the Roman peace and the power of Rome, which held that together. It was not the love for Rome of those subject races at all. There have been vast Empires in the past, but they were held together by force, not by love. But what else than love holds *this* Empire together? England, the little Mother State, has no wish to coerce it. Once she did, under utterly mistaken direction by an obstinate King and a foolish Minister, try to coerce the American Colonies. The only result of that was that nearly half of what should have been the Empire is not part of it now, though it is being bound closely to it by other ties. It should have been all within this one great Empire; that was the plan, but the stupidity of man overthrew that part of it. England has made no later effort to coerce the far mightier Dominions attached to her. She has left them perfectly free; yet they are bound to her more closely now than they ever were before.

It was hoped that the other nations which belong to our sub-race would join in a great Confederation. America and England have been drawn closely together, so that war between them is now scarcely thinkable; and the hope was that Scandinavia and Germany would have come into a similar friendship;

but Germany would not come in. There has been for many years a curious and undesirable form of national spirit arising in that country. There is plenty of literature on the subject. Read the German literature, and you will see perfectly well the direction in which for forty years and more its people have been going. Because of their intense pride, because of the teaching of brutality and of force, of blood and iron instead of the law of love, they have laid themselves open to this dreadful obsession, and some of the great Lords of the Dark Face have again taken their place among them.

Prince Bismarck was such an one, as Madame Blavatsky told us long ago. While he was still alive he laid his plans for the subjugation of Europe. You may be thankful he has not survived till the present, for his plans were far wiser than those of the men who have followed him. Long ago Madame Blavatsky explained to us that he had considerable occult knowledge, and that before the war with France, in 1870, he had traveled physically to certain points to the north, the south, the east and the west of France, and had there cast spells of some sort; or made magnetic centres, with the object of preventing effective resistance to the German armies. Undoubtedly the French collapse at the time was so complete and unexpected that it seemed to need some unusual explanation.

In the course of the work of the invisible helpers on the battle-field I have several times encountered and spoken to the Prince, who naturally watches with the keenest interest all that happens; and some months ago I had an interesting conversation with him. Speaking of the War, he said that if we were servants of the Hierarchy and students of Occultism, we must know that Germany was in the right. One of our party, becoming somewhat indignant, replied that all the rest of the world was willing to be at peace, that Germany had made an unprovoked attack, and had caused all this awful carnage, and was therefore entirely in the wrong. But the Prince said:

" No no; you do not understand. This is a struggle which had to come — a struggle between the forces of law, and order, science and culture, on the one hand, and on the other, those of disorder and licence, and the degrading tendencies of democracy.

We maintained that we also loved law and order, science and culture, but we wished along with them to have liberty and progress. The Prince would have none of such ideas; he declared that democracy cared nothing for culture, but wished to drag everybody down to a common level, and that the lowest; that it desired law to rob and restrain the rich, but itself would obey no law ; that it had no conception of liberty under law, (which is the only true liberty) but desired a triumph of utter lawlessness, in which selfish might should rule, and only those should be restrained who wished to live and work as free men. Further, he said that if we ourselves served the true inner Government of the world, we must know that it is the very opposite of all democratic theories, and that therefore it is Germany, and not England, who is fighting for the ideals of the hierarchical Government.

" Which," he asked, " is nearer to the true ideal of a King — our Kaiser, who holds his power from GOD alone, or your King George, who can strike out no line of his own, whose every action is limited by his ministers and his parliament, so that he can do no real good ? And the French President — what is he but the scum momentarily thrown to the top of a boiling mass of corruption ?"

We were most indignant at such an insult to our brave Allies, but we could not but admit that there was a

modicum of truth in some of his remarks. We tried to tell him that, though we shared his utter disbelief in the methods of democracy, we thought it a necessary intermediate stage through which the world had to pass on its way to a nobler freedom, because a scheme (however good) which was *forced* upon a people could never lead to its ultimate evolution; but that men must learn to choose the good for themselves with open eyes, to renounce their brutal selfishness, not because they were driven to do so at the point of the sword, but because they themselves had learnt to see the higher way and the necessity that each should control himself for the good of all.

The Prince was absolutely unconvinced; he said that our plan was Utopian, and that we could never bring the *canaille* to understand such considerations — that the only way to deal with them was the method of blood and iron, forcing them for their own ultimate good (and meantime for our convenience) into the life which we who were wiser saw to be best for them.

When some of this was later reported to the King of England, he smiled, and said quietly:

" I believe, that GOD has called me to the position which I hold, just as much as He has called my Imperial cousin the Kaiser; I rule not by force, but because my people love me, and I want no higher title than that."

I fear we must admit the Prince's claim that man as a whole is not yet fit for freedom; but he can never become fit unless he is allowed to try the experiment. Of course at first he will go wrong just as often as he will go right. We shall have an intermediate period when things are not at all as they should be, when they are not by any means as well managed as they would be under a benevolent despotism. Nevertheless we shall never get men to advance unless we leave them a certain amount of freedom. We must pass through this unlovely stage of democratic mismanagement, in order to get to a time when the government of the people will be the government of the best. At present frankly it is not that. Aristocracy means government by the best; democracy means government by the people. We hope for a time when democracy and aristocracy will be one. We expect to reach that by our system; we should never get there along the line of military despotism. That is the real fundamental point at issue; so we see that this War is essentially one of principles.

If any should be inclined to doubt that a whole nation could be so obsessed from behind, a nation which has a great deal that is beautiful in its past history, which has produced some very fine people — if any should be disposed to doubt that, let him take the official German statements, and read the proclamations of His Imperial Majesty the Kaiser; the proclamations in which he speaks of himself (and probably he believes it) as commissioned by God to govern the world; in which he says: " On me the spirit of God has descended. I regard my whole task as appointed by heaven. Who opposes me I shall crush to pieces. Nothing must be settled in this world without the intervention of the German Emperor." See the insane pride of this, and realise that the whole nation, so far as we know, applauds and approves. Read Mr. Owen Wister's "embodiment or composite statement of Prussianism, compiled sentence by sentence from the utterances of Prussians, the Kaiser and his generals, professors, editors and Nietzsche; part of it said in cold blood, years before this war, and all of it a declaration of faith now being ratified by action ". Read the calm statement: " Weak nations have not the same right to live as powerful nations. The world has no longer need of little nationalities." " The Belgians should not be shot *dead*; they should be so left as to make impossible all hope of recovery. The troops are to treat the

Belgian civil population with unrelenting severity and frightfulness." Remember all the horrors of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and remember how that great German nation went mad with joy over the slaughter of non-combatants, of helpless women and children. Except by that theory of obsession how can we account for it? Many of us have known people of that nation. Were they such people as would have agreed to anything of that kind? Of course they were not; no more than you or I. Unquestionably it is true that the powers from behind are working through these people now.

If this had not been, if the Fifth Sub-Race had all combined together to present a perfect front, we should still have had a conflict, but it would have been with some tremendous uprising of the much less developed races — perhaps another attempt such as Attila made to overrun Europe. The evil would have expressed itself, but it would have been among the backward nations. It is a great victory for the powers that stand for darkness that they could take a nation supposed to be in the forefront of civilisation, and twist that to their ends.

We must not think that all the members of that nation are wicked people. We must not let ourselves be brought down to their level. They have made it their special boast to set up a stream of hatred towards us, to compose hymns of hate and teach them to the innocent school children. We must not be led away into such foolishness as that. We must have no single thought of hatred. We shall hear of the most terrible things being done, of incredible brutality and horror on their part; but if we wish to take the occult point of view we must have no shadow of hatred in our hearts for all this, but only pity.

The tragedy of Belgium has horrified the world. It has been one of the most terrible things that the world has ever known; but the tragedy of the moral downfall of Germany is greater even than that — that such a great nation, with such possibilities, should sink to this. That is, in truth, a more awful thing to see than all the pain and misery of countless ruined homes. That a race which produced Goethe and Schiller should so fall as to become a byword among the nations, so that for centuries to come all decent men will be ashamed of any connection with it, and none shall speak its name without a shudder of horror — surely that is a tragedy unequalled since the world began.

Therefore not hatred, but pity should fill our minds. But on no account and under no circumstances must our pity be allowed to degenerate into weakness, or to interfere with our absolute firmness. We stand for liberty, for right, for honour, and for the keeping; of the pledged word of the nation, and that work which has come into our hands must be done, and it must be done thoroughly. But we must do it because we stand on the side of the Deity, because we are very truly the Sword of the Lord. Let us take care that we do not spoil our work and our attitude by such an unworthy passion as hatred. We do not hate the wild beast that is attacking our children, but we suppress it. We do not hate a mad dog, but for the sake of humanity we shoot it. We do not hate the scorpion we tread under foot, but we tread on it effectively. There must be no thought of hatred, but there must be no weakness. There must be no sickly sentimentality or wavering. There are those who clamour that the mad dog is our brother, and that it is unfraternal to shoot him. They forget that the men whom his bite would doom to an awful death are also our brothers, and that they have the first claim on our consideration. Germany is the mad dog of Europe, and must be suppressed at all costs. "Therefore fight, O Arjuna." Remember, we are fighting for the liberty of the world; Germany itself is a part of that world, and we are fighting to free Germany from its obsession.

Let us have that well in our minds, and we shall begin to see what is the attitude we must take with regard to this terrible war; and if we do our duty unflinchingly in maintaining that attitude we shall make the final settlement infinitely easier. When this is over, as it will be over presently, when the struggle is of the past, there will still remain the aftermath. Those among the Allies who have hated will find their hatred turning into fiendish glee in their victory; but, having allowed themselves to be turned aside from the true view of the struggle, those people will be in no condition to understand calmly and rationally what is to be done. It is only those who have kept their heads, who have shown themselves philosophers, but nevertheless puissant soldiers to stand and strike for the right — it is only they who will be able to judge what can be done, and what is best for the world.

So we who are Theosophists should hold a firm and steady attitude, and not allow ourselves to be misled. The path of wisdom is, as usual, a razor edge. We must not fall over on one side or the other; we must have neither weakness nor vindictiveness, but a grasp of the real reasons for it all, and of what it is that is really happening.

The egos that have been swept into this vortex of hate on the wrong side of the fight will come back again; they will recover. It is indeed a terrible thing to throw oneself open to such an obsession. They will have a long way to climb, just as had those who went wrong in Atlantis; but thousands of those who were on the wrong side in Atlantis are on the right side now, and surely that is an omen of great hope for us. The world has advanced, otherwise the evil would win again; and this time it will not win.

So our attitude must be one of unselfishness and of firm attention to duty. But we must do our duty *because* it is our duty, and not because of any personal feeling of hatred, or even of horror. We cannot but feel horror at the awful things that have been done, at the deliberate way they have been justified, at the terrible things that have been said. We cannot help feeling horror, but nevertheless we must try to hold ourselves steady, with iron determination as to what is to be done, but yet with readiness when all this is over to take once more the philosophical point of view.

The Lord who is to come — although when He came last time He said to His people: "I come not to bring peace but a sword" — is nevertheless the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Love and, the Lord of Life; and when love and life and peace *can* be for the people, He will lead them into love and life and peace. But when the people have made that impossible for themselves for this incarnation, when these things cannot be for them, then will the other side of the prophecy come true, that those who draw the sword will perish by the sword.

In the midst of raging selfishness let us try to live in utter unselfishness, let us be full of trust, because we know ; however dark and difficult things may be, we cling to the certainty that evolution is working. We went down in that great conflict in Atlantis, and yet we never lost our faith in the final triumph of good. This time good will triumph even in the outer world; but remember, victory will be achieved only by the greatest effort, by the most utter determination, and the most thorough federation and trust among the people who are chosen to rule the world and to do the work. To Germany also a great opportunity was offered. To the egos incarnated there an opportunity is offered even now of protest and of martyrdom, They have not taken it so far but there may yet be those among them who will take it. I trust and hope that it may be so; that there will be those who will shake off the nightmare of obsession, who will say: " Kill us if you will, but we will not share in these horrors; we will denounce them." Those people will earn a

better fate than their fellow-countrymen.

Let us take it all as part of the development of the great world. That war is an awful thing, wrong and wicked in itself, none can doubt; also that it is an utterly irrational way of deciding a disputed point. The karma of the man who provokes a war is more appalling than the human mind can conceive. But for those upon whom it is forced, as it has in this case been forced upon us, it may be the lesser of two evils. Since it had to be, Those who stand behind and direct the evolution of the world are unquestionably utilising it for great and high purposes, and thus wringing good out of the very heart of ill. Horrific as it is, it has yet lifted thousands upon thousands of people clear out of themselves, out of their petty parochialism into a world-wide sympathy, out of selfishness into the loftiest altruism — lifted them into the region of the ideal. It has raised them at one stroke more than many lives under ordinary conditions would raise a man.

Remember that unselfish and awakened egos are needed at this very moment for the Sixth Sub-Race, which is beginning in America and Australasia. Perhaps there was no other way to get them in sufficient numbers and in a sufficiently short time, except through some great world-conflict. Be thankful that we, at least, are on the right side in this. Be thankful, you who send to this great War those whom you love, that the opportunity has come to them thus to advance themselves in one incarnation more than otherwise they could have done in a score of lives. You have sorrow and suffering and pain as your share; but you, are offering that suffering for the freedom of the world; and remember that you who send the soldier are thereby also taking your part in the fight, and that the very sorrow and pain through which you pass is lifting you, just as his devotion to duty has lifted him. Many of those who die will be worthy of birth in the new Sub-Race, but so also will be many of the women who have bravely sent forth their nearest and dearest to answer to this country's call.

We are all trying, so far as may be, to prepare for the coming of the Great Teacher. Realise that this great War is part of the world-preparation, and that, however terrible it may be, there is yet the other side — the enormous good that is being done to individuals. Perhaps in the distant future when we come to look back upon it all with greater knowledge and with wider purview, we shall see that the good has outweighed all the frightful evil, and that though the old order changeth, giving place to new, it is only that God may fulfil Himself in many ways.