

The Genius of Raemaekers

By Theodore Roosevelt

This fine appreciation of the genius of Raemaekers was specially written for the Century Edition of Raemaekers' Cartoons, published in New York, by the distinguished ex-President of the United States. It appears in Europe for the first time to-day. Mr. Roosevelt, in the course of it, defines the attitude which he has consistently maintained towards the war since the invasion of Belgium. He has seen clearly from the first that the defeat of Germany is essential if righteousness is to prosper among the nations.

Sagamore Hill, April 16th, 1917.

THE cartoons of Louis Raemaekers constitute the most powerful of the honourable contributions made by neutrals to the cause of civilisation in the World War. Of course it is the combatants themselves who have furnished, for good or evil, the heroes who, in history, will stand out for evermore as towering figures of light or gloom against the lurid background of the war. The weak neutral nations lacked the power to do aught, and are free from blame. The one neutral sufficiently powerful to have played a great part—the United States—long failed to play that part; but, thank Heaven, before it was too late for our nation to save its soul, we awoke to our duty and entered the war. In these neutral countries certain prominent persons did mean things, either through timidity or because of greed and gain. Among those who, on the contrary, acted manfully, Louis Raemaekers stands foremost in the influence he has exerted. Peculiar credit attaches to him, and, in consequence, to his country, Holland; for Holland lay under the very shadow of Germany, and therefore for a Hollander to bear testimony against the iniquity of Germany showed a dauntless soul.

He had no national feeling against the Germans; he was himself half German by blood. Doubtless, had the wrong been done by England and France, he would have assailed them with the same flaming sincerity of truth-telling that he has shown in dealing with Germany. He decided his course of conduct as regards nations just as he would have decided in the case of individual men. He judged them on their conduct in the crisis under consideration. This is the line that we all ought to take. Exactly as we admire the Germany of Körner and Andreas Hofer in its struggle against the tyranny of Napoleon's France, so we should sternly condemn and act against the Prussianised Germany of the Hohenzollerns when it sins against humanity.

Germany enticed Austria into beginning the war by encouraging her to play the part of a bully toward little Serbia. She began her own share of the war by the Belgian infamy, and she has piled infamy on infamy ever since. She brought Turkey into the war, and looked on with approval when her ally perpetrated on the Armenian and Syrian Christians cruelty worthy of Timur. She had practised with cold calculation every species of forbidden and abhorrent brutality, from the use of poison gas against soldiers to the use of conquered civilians as State slaves and the wholesale butchery of women and children. No civilised nation in

any war for over a century has been guilty of a tithe of the barbarity which Germany has practised as a matter of cold policy in this contest. Her offences against the United States, including the repeated murder of American women and children, have been of the grossest character; and all upright far-sighted citizens of our country must rejoice that we have now declared that we shall take part in the war, both for the sake of our own honour and for the sake of the international justice and fair dealing among the nations of mankind.

One of the chief of Mr. Raemaekers' services has been his steady refusal to fog the issue by denouncing war or militarism in terms that would condemn equally a war of ruthless conquest, such as that waged by Germany against Belgium, and a war in defence of the fundamental rights of humanity, such as that waged by Belgium against Germany. Timid souls who lack the courage to stand up for the right, and utterly foolish souls who lack the vision to stand up for the right, and who yet feel ashamed not to go through the motions of doing so, find a ready and safe refuge in an empty denunciation of war. This is never objected to by the wrong-doer. On the contrary, it is in his interest; for to denounce war in terms that include those who war in defence of right is to show oneself the ally of those who do wrong. The Pacifists have been the most effective allies of the German Militarists. The whole professional Pacifist movement in the United States has been really a movement in the interest of the evil militarism of Germany.

Raemaekers possessed too virile a nature, too high a scorn of all that is base and evil, to be guilty of such short-comings. His soul flamed within him at the sight of the horrible evil wrought in Belgium by the German invasion. He was stirred to the depths by the knowledge seared into his soul that the worst manifestations of wrong-doing were due, not to the sporadic excitement of

private soldiers who cast the shackles of discipline, but to the methodical, disciplined, coldly calculated, and ruthlessly executed designs of the German military authorities. With extraordinary vigour he has portrayed phase after phase of the evil they have done, sketching with a burning intensity of sympathy the sufferings of the women and children.

He has left a record which will last for many centuries, which, mayhap, will last as long as the written record of the crime it illustrates. He draws evil with the rugged strength of Hogarth and in the same spirit of vehement protest and anger. He draws sorrow and suffering with all Hogarth's depth of sympathy. His pictures should be studied everywhere. Doubtless they would do most good in Germany; but with the exception of Germany, the country that needs them most is our own.

Germany wronged the helpless; we beheld the wrong-doing and failed to take effective action against the wrong-doers. All Americans worthy to call themselves the spiritual heirs of the men who followed Washington and upheld the hands of Lincoln, give fervent thanks that at last we also have joined the other free peoples of the world in the great war for righteousness.



Stanley and Co.

Ex-President Roosevelt