

THE UNIVERSAL PEACEMAKER

THE restoration of peace to any nation or nations afflicted by war, is always a story of generals and statesmen. When powder and sword have done their work, then nations listen to the pleading of diplomats.

Whenever the world has produced great generals in the art of war, God has brought forth a statesman to represent His cause. There were times when the successor of Saint Peter by a word brought about the cessation of hostilities, for the Pope was then universally recognized as the legate of peace. Men believed in God and hearkened to the voice of His Vicar. The Holy See has always opposed anarchy and license, and has endeavored to maintain civil and religious liberty for all men.

Since the days of Emperor Constantine the Great, the world has recognized the Pope's sovereign power over all nations. When the fierce barbarians of the north swept down in hordes upon the south of Europe it was Christianity, personified in her Popes that, entering their hearts, tamed the savage passions which no material force could crush. Under the influence of Christianity the crude barbarians learned the law of God and the duty of one nation toward another according to that law.

In the middle of the fifth century Attila, King of the Huns, swept like a plague across the south of Europe. Constantinople was spared only by its strong fortifications and Attila's weakness in besieging a city. He wrought havoc in Greece, Macedonia and Thrace, and swooped down upon the terrified Romans. All the inhabitants of Italy fled; some to the Alps and Apennines, others to the lagoons of the Adriatic Sea, where they founded Ven-

ice. All material force was useless; the Emperor was helpless, but, as usual, God brought forth a statesman to meet the fierce Huns. Pope Leo I visited the barbarian king and overcame him. Attila was conquered by the forceful majesty of the legate of the Prince of Peace.

Later, in the sixth and again in the eighth century the Lombards submitted to the authority of Popes Gregory I and II respectively, in favor of the Romans. Pope Gregory the Great brought about the conversion of the Arian Lombards to the Orthodox faith. Agilulf, the Lombard King, restored property and dignities to the Pope and finally the Lombards were fully united to the true Church. Peace and culture supplanted their former recklessness and barbarity.

The influence of the Popes extended itself into the Middle Ages. At that time when the governments of Europe laid greater stress upon the duties of civil life, and taught men to destroy life rather than foster the development of natural resources, and when times of peace were merely so many days in which to prepare for war, the Popes snatched Europe from destruction by establishing and maintaining the great universities. The voice from the Vatican has ever been raised against the infringements upon individual rights, the sacredness of the family and the harmony of the state.

Pope Honorius III acted as mediator between Louis VIII of France and Henry III of England in the difficulties in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Pope John XXII, in the middle of the fourteenth century brought about peace between Edward Plantagenet of England and Philip of Valois, King of France.

In almost every century since the fourth, when Constantine recognized the power of Melchisedech, the world has been forced to refer to the Pope to bring about peaceful relations between the warring nations. In view of these facts the reader will ask, and justly, too, why has not our present Pope long since brought about a peaceful settlement of the present war. Has the power of the Pope diminished? By no means! Although Popes have differed in quality and temperament as men must differ, the power which they have received from heaven, and which they have exercised for nineteen hundred years has always remained the same.

But men have changed. The men of to-day are governed by a new philosophy. The times above mentioned were when man did not defend himself with the godless theories of to-day. Man in those days heeded the Word of God as it was proclaimed by the Pope of Rome. The Pope was recognized as sovereign even in temporal affairs. The princes of those times feared more the anathema of the Church than whole armies of warriors. The Pope succeeded in bringing about conditions which mitigated the sufferings produced by war. Belligerents were induced to observe a truce which demanded that they lay aside their arms on Sunday. In some cases the Pope averted terrible wars by his diplomatic proceedings.

But "non-dogmatic" Christianity has revived pagan standards of living. The Pope is considered an imposter; the Gospel is a fable and the Supreme Being a mere myth.

The terrible condition of affairs in Europe to-day is attributed to the decline of religion among its people; but in spite of great handicaps, our beloved Chief Pastor, Pope Benedict XV, has labored indefatigably since his accession to the Chair of Peter to bring the people back to Christ and Christ back to the people.

Soon after his installation, September 8, 1914, he exhorted the world to prayers for peace. Then he published an encyclical in which he conjured rulers to settle their rival claims in a peaceful manner. He uttered words of consolation to afflicted dioceses, provided for the sick and even sent financial aid to the suffering people.

Pope Benedict's efforts proved successful when he arranged for the exchange of disabled prisoners between Germany and Austria on the one side, and England, France and Russia on the other.

All Christendom at his request is praying for peace. And surely it is the duty of every Christian to pray for peace and for the Pope as statesman of the eternal kingdom, in his efforts to check the conflagration spread by the war generals of afflicted Europe.

—Innocent Smith, O. P.

