

# THE PRICE WE PAY

By IRWIN ST. JOHN TUCKER.

## I.

Conscription is upon us; the draft law is a fact!

Into your homes the recruiting officers are coming. They will take your sons of military age and impress them into the army;

Stand them up in long rows, break them into squads and platoons, teach them to deploy and wheel;

Guns will be put into their hands; they will be taught not to think, only to obey without questioning.

Then they will be shipped thru the submarine zone by the hundreds of thousands to the bloody quagmire of Europe.

Into that seething, heaving swamp of torn flesh and floating entrails they will be plunged, in regiments, divisions and armies, screaming as they go.

Agonies of torture will rend their flesh from their sinews, will crack their bones and dissolve their lungs; and every pang will be multiplied in its passage to you.

Black death will be a guest at every American fireside; mothers and fathers and sisters, wives and sweethearts will know the weight of that awful vacancy left by the bullet which finds its mark.

And still the recruiting officers will come; seizing age after age, mounting up to the elder ones and taking the younger ones as they grow to soldier size;

And still the toll of death will grow.

Let them come! Let death and

desolation make barren every home! Let the agony of war crack every parent's heart! Let the horrors and the miseries of the world-downfall swamp the happiness of every hearthstone!

Then perhaps you will believe what we have been telling you! For war is the price of your stupidity, you who have rejected Socialism!

## II.

Yesterday I saw moving pictures of the Battle of the Somme. A company of Highlanders was shown, young and handsome in their kilts and brass helmets and bright plaids.

They laughed and joked as they stood on the screen in their ranks at ease, waiting the command to advance.

The camera showed rank after rank, standing strong and erect, smoking and chaffing one with another;

Then it showed a sign: "Less than 20 per cent of these soldiers were alive at the close of the day."

Only one in five remained of all those laddies, when sunset came; the rest were crumpled masses of carrion under their torn plaids.

Many a Highland home will wail and croon for many a year, because of these crumpled masses of carrion, wrapped in their plaids, upon a far French hillside.

I saw regiments of Germans charging downhill against machine gunfire. They melted

away like snowflakes falling into hot water.

The hospital camps were shown, with hundreds and thousands of wounded men in all stages of pain and suffering, herded like animals, milling round like cattle in the slaughter pens.

All the horror and agony of war were exhibited; and at the end a flag was thrown on the screen, and a proclamation said:

"Enlist for your country!" The applause was very thin and scattering; and as we went out, most of the men shook their heads and said:

"That's a hell of a poor recruiting scheme!"

For the men of this land have been fed full with horror during the past three years; and tho the call for volunteers has become wild, frantic, desperate; tho the posters scream from every billboard, and tho parades and red fire inflame the atmosphere in every town;

The manhood of America gazes at that seething, heaving swamp of bloody carrion in Europe, and says "Must we—be that!"

You cannot avoid it; you are being dragged, whipped, lashed, hurled into it; your flesh and brains and entrails must be crushed out of you and poured into that mass of festering decay;

**It is the price you pay for your stupidity—you who have rejected Socialism!**

### III.

Food prices go up like sky-rockets; and show no sign of bursting and coming down.

Wheat, potatoes, corn, are far above the Civil War mark; eggs, butter, meat—all these things are almost beyond a poor family's reach.

The Attorney General of the United States is so busy sending to prison men who do not stand

up when the Star Spangled banner is played, that he has no time to protect the food supply from gamblers.

Starvation begins to stare us in the face—and we, people of the richest and most productive land on earth are told to starve ourselves yet further because our allies must be fed.

Submarines are steadily sending to the fishes millions of tons of food stuffs; and still we build more ships, and send more food; and more and more is sunk;

Frantically we grub in the earth and sow and tend and reap; and then as frantically load the food in ships, and then as frantically sink with them—

We, the "civilized nations" of the world!

While the children of the poor clamor for their bread, and the well to do shake their heads and wonder what on earth the poor folks are doing;

The poor folks are growling and muttering with savage side-long glances, and are rolling up their sleeves.

For the price they pay for their stupidity is getting beyond their power to pay!

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### IV.

Frightful reports are being made of the ravages of venereal diseases in the army training camps, and in the barracks where the girl munition workers live.

One of the great nations lost more men thru loathesome immoral diseases than on the firing line, during the first 18 months of the war.

Back from the Mexican border our boys come, spreading the curse of the great Black Plague among hundreds of thousands of homes; blasting the lives of innocent women and unborn babes.

Over in Europe ten millions of women are deprived of their husbands, and fifty millions of babies can never be;

Of those women who will have their mates given back to them, there are twenty millions who will have ruined wrecks of men; mentally deranged, physically broken, morally rotten;

Future generations of families are made impossible; blackness and desolation instead of happiness and love will reign where the homes of the future should be;

And all because you believed the silly lie, that "Socialism would destroy the home!"

Pound on, guns of the embattled hosts; wreck yet more homes, kill yet more husbands and fathers, rob yet more maidens of their sweethearts, yet more babies of their fathers;

That is the price the world pays for believing the monstrous, damnable, outrageous lie that Socialism would destroy the home!

Now the homes of the world are being destroyed; every one of them would have been saved by Socialism. But you would not believe. Now pay the price!

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#### V.

This War, you say, is all caused by the Kaiser; and we are fighting for democracy against autocracy. Once dethrone the Kaiser and there will be permanent peace.

That is what they said about Napoleon. And in the century since Napoleon was overthrown there have been more and greater wars than the world ever saw before.

There were wars before Germany existed; before Rome ruled; before Egypt dominated the ages.

War has been universal; and the cause of war is always the same. Somebody wanted something somebody else possessed, and they fought over the ownership of it.

This war began over commercial routes and ports and rights;

and underneath all the talk about democracy versus autocracy, you hear a continual note, an undercurrent, a subdued refrain; "Get ready for the commercial war that will follow this war."

Commercial war preceded this war; it gave rise to this war; it now gives point and meaning to this war;

And as soon as the guns are stilled and the dead are buried, commercial forces will prepare for the next bloody struggle over routes and ports and rights, coal mines and railroads;

For these are the essence of this, as of all other wars!

This, you say, is a war for the rights of small nations;—and the first land sighted when you sail across the Atlantic is the nation of Ireland, which has suffered from England for three centuries more than what Germany has inflicted upon Belgium for three years.

But go to it! Believe everything you are told—you always have, and doubtless always will, believe them.

Only do retain this much reason; when you have paid the price, the last and uttermost price; and have not received what you were told you were fighting for—namely Democracy

— Then remember that the price you paid was not the purchase price for justice, but the penalty price for your stupidity!

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#### VI.

We are beholding the spectacle of whole nations working as one person for the accomplishment of a single end—namely, killing.

Every man, every woman, every child, must "do his bit" in the service of destruction.

We have been telling you all for, lo, these many years that the whole nation could be mobilized and every man, woman and child induced to do his bit for the service of humanity; but you laughed at us.

Now you call every person traitor, slacker, pro-enemy, who will not go crazy on the subject of killing; and

you have turned the whole energy of all the nations of the world into the service of their kings for the purpose of killing—killing—killing.

Why would you not believe us when we told you that it was possible to cooperate for the saving of life?

Why were you not interested when we begged you to work all together to build, instead to destroy? To preserve, instead of to murder?

Why did you ridicule us and call us impractical dreamers when we prophesied a world-state of fellow-workers, each man creating for the benefit of all the world, and the whole world creating for the benefit of each man?

Those idle taunts, those thoughtless jeers, that refusal to listen, to be fair-minded—you are paying for them now.

—Lo, the price you pay! Lo, the price your children will pay. Lo, the agony, the death, the blood, the unforgettable sorrow,—

The price of your stupidity!

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#### VII.

For this war—as every one who thinks or knows anything will say, whenever truth telling becomes safe and possible again.—This war is to determine the question, whether the chambers of commerce of the allied nations or of the Central Empires have the superior right to exploit undeveloped countries.

It is to determine whether interest, dividends and profits, shall be

paid to investors speaking German or to those speaking English and French.

Our entry into it was determined by the certainty that if the allies do not win, J. P. Morgan's loans to the allies will be repudiated, and those American investors who bit on his promises would be hooked.

Socialism would have settled that question; it would determine that to every producer shall be given all the value of what he produces; so that nothing would be left over for exploiters or investors.

With that great question settled there would be no cause for war.

Until the question of surplus profits is settled that way, wars will continue; each war being the prelude to a still vaster and greater outburst of hell;

Until the world becomes weary of paying the stupendous price for its own folly;

Until those who are sent out to maim and murder one another for the profit of bankers and investors determine to have and to hold what they have fought for;

Until money is no more sacred than human blood;

Until human life refuses to sacrifice itself for private gain;

Until by the explosion of millions of tons of dynamite, the stupidity of the human race is blown away, and Socialism is known for what it is, the salvation of the human race;

Until then—You will keep on paying the price!

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