

INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Address at the National Theatre in Oslo, Norway

May 5, 1910

It is with peculiar pleasure that I stand here today to express the deep appreciation I feel of the high honor conferred upon me by the presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize. The gold medal which formed part of the prize I shall always keep, and I shall hand it on to my children as a precious heirloom. The sum of money provided as part of the prize by the wise generosity of the illustrious founder of this world-famous prize system, I did not, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, feel at liberty to keep. I think it eminently just and proper that in most cases the recipient of the prize should keep for his own use the prize in its entirety. But in this case, while I did not act officially as President of the United States, it was nevertheless only because I was President that I was enabled to act at all; and I felt that the money must be considered as having been given me in trust for the United States. I therefore used it as a nucleus for a foundation to forward the cause of industrial peace, as being well within the general purpose of your Committee; for in our complex industrial civilization of today the peace of righteousness and justice, the only kind of peace worth having, is at least as necessary in the industrial world as it is among nations. There is at least as much need to curb the cruel greed and arrogance of part of the world of capital, to curb the cruel greed and violence of part of the world of labor, as to check a cruel and unhealthy militarism in international relationships.

We must ever bear in mind that the great end in view is righteousness, justice as between man and man, nation and nation, the chance to lead our lives on a somewhat higher level, with a broader spirit of brotherly goodwill one for another. Peace is generally good in itself, but it is never the highest good unless it comes as the handmaid of righteousness; and it becomes a very evil thing if it serves merely as a mask for cowardice and sloth, or as an instrument to further the ends of despotism or anarchy. We despise and abhor the bully, the brawler, the oppressor, whether in private or public life, but we despise no less the coward and the voluptuary. No man is worth calling a man who will not fight rather than submit to infamy or see those that are dear to him suffer wrong. No nation deserves to exist if it permits itself to lose the stern and virile virtues; and this without regard to whether the loss is due to the growth of a heartless and all-absorbing commercialism, to prolonged indulgence in luxury and soft, effortless ease, or to the deification of a warped and twisted sentimentality.

Moreover, and above all, let us remember that words count only when they give expression to deeds, or are to be translated into them. The leaders of the Red Terror prattled of peace while they steeped their hands in the blood of the innocent; and many a tyrant has called it peace when he has scourged honest protest into silence. Our words must be judged by our deeds; and in striving for a lofty ideal we must use practical methods; and if we cannot attain all at

one leap, we must advance towards it step by step, reasonably content so long as we do actually make some progress in the right direction.

Now, having freely admitted the limitations of our work and the qualifications to be borne in mind, I feel that I have the right to have my words taken seriously when I point out where, in my judgment, great advance can be made in the cause of international peace. I speak as a practical man, and whatever I now advocate I actually tried to do when I was for the time being the head of a great nation and keenly jealous of its honor and interest. I ask other nations to do only what I should be glad to see my own nation do.

The advance can be made along several lines. First of all there can be treaties of arbitration. There are, of course, states so backward that a civilized community ought not to enter into an arbitration treaty with them, at least until we have gone much further than at present in securing some kind of international police action. But all really civilized communities should have effective arbitration treaties among themselves. I believe that these treaties can cover almost all questions liable to arise between such nations, if they are drawn with the explicit agreement that each contracting party will respect the others territory and its absolute sovereignty within that territory, and the equally explicit agreement that (aside from the very rare cases where the nation's honor is vitally concerned) all other possible subjects of controversy will be submitted to arbitration. Such a treaty would insure peace unless one party deliberately violated it. Of course, as yet there is no adequate safeguard against such deliberate violation, but the establishment of a sufficient number of these treaties would go a long way towards creating a world opinion which would finally find expression in the provision of methods to forbid or punish any such violation.

Secondly, there is the further development of the Hague Tribunal, of the work of the conferences and courts at The Hague. It has been well said that the first Hague Conference framed a Magna Charta for the nations; it set before us an ideal which has already to some extent been realized, and towards the full realization of which we can all steadily strive. The second Conference made further progress; the third should do yet more. Meanwhile the American government has more than once tentatively suggested methods for completing the Court of Arbitral Justice constituted at the second Hague Conference and for rendering it effective. It is earnestly to be hoped that the various governments of Europe, working with those of America and of Asia, shall set themselves seriously to the task of devising some method which shall accomplish this result. If I may venture the suggestion, it would be well for the statesmen of the world, in planning for the erection of this world court, to study what has been done in the United States by the Supreme Court. I cannot help thinking that the Constitution of the United States, notably in the establishment of the Supreme Court and in the methods adopted for securing peace and good relations among and between the different states, offers certain valuable analogies to what should be striven for in order to secure, through the Hague courts and conferences, a species of world federation for international peace and justice. There are, of course, fundamental differences between what the United

States Constitution does and what we should even attempt at this time to secure at The Hague; but the methods adopted in the American Constitution to prevent hostilities between the states, and to secure the supremacy of the Federal Court in certain classes of cases, are well worth the study of those who seek at The Hague to obtain the same results on a world scale.

Finally, it would be a masterstroke if those great powers honestly bent on peace would form a League of Peace, not only to keep the peace among themselves, but to prevent, by force if necessary, its being broken by others. The supreme difficulty in connection with developing the peace work of The Hague arises from the lack of any executive power, of any police power to enforce the decrees of the court. In any community of any size the authority of the courts rests upon actual or potential force: on the existence of a police, or on the knowledge that the able-bodied men of the country are both ready and willing to see that the decrees of judicial and legislative bodies are put into effect. In new and wild communities where there is violence, an honest man must protect himself; and until other means of securing his safety are devised, it is both foolish and wicked to persuade him to surrender his arms while the men who are dangerous to the community retain theirs. He should not renounce the right to protect himself by his own efforts until the community is so organized that it can effectively relieve the individual of the duty of putting down violence. So it is with nations. Each nation must keep well prepared to defend itself until the establishment of some form of international police power, competent and willing to prevent violence as between nations. As things are now, such power to command peace throughout the world could best be assured by some combination between those great nations which sincerely desire peace and have no thought themselves of committing aggressions. The combination might at first be only to secure peace within certain definite limits and on certain definite conditions; but the ruler or statesman who should bring about such a combination would have earned his place in history for all time and his title to the gratitude of all mankind.