

## **Sinking of Lusitania a Monstrous Massacre (May 11, 1915)**

“Whom the Gods would destroy they first make mad.”<sup>1</sup>

The criminal destruction of the *Lusitania* and the frenzied celebration of the great event in Berlin prove conclusively that Prussian militarism has gone stark mad. The sole regret from the kaiser's point of view is that the rescue boats were not also torpedoed and the glorious massacre made complete. Such is the genius of Prussian militarism and such the “*Kultur*”<sup>2</sup> the kaiser and his barbarian horde have insanely determined to impose upon the whole civilized world.

Another fact clearly revealed in this appalling tragedy is that the kaiser and his military autocracy hate the United States scarcely less than they hate Great Britain. What a pity they can not overrun this country and set off their asphyxiating bombs, poison the wells, rape the women, mutilate the infirm, and murder the children, as they did in Belgium and France.

Triumphant Prussian militarism would mean absolute reversion to feudal barbarism. It is the deadliest menace that confronts the modern world. The gospel of Bernhardt is the gospel of savage conquest and international assassination. “Deutschland über Alles”<sup>3</sup> simply means “Alles unter Deutschland,”<sup>4</sup> the United States of America not excepted. And yet I would not have the United States declare war on the kaiser and his imperial government. Moral self-restraint at this crucial hour requires greater courage and is more potent for righteousness and peace than a declaration of war.

Let the torpedoes of the kaiser's submarine that destroyed the *Lusitania* and sent hundreds of innocent women and babes to their watery graves echo from coast to coast and re-echo from pole to pole. Let the monstrous massacre of the innocents carry its own tragic lesson and make its mute appeal to the moral sense of the world. To paraphrase Victor Hugo:

For Kaiser Wilhelm and his Prussian military despotism to conquer in this war is not in the law of the twentieth century. Another series of facts is preparing in which they can have no place. They have been impeached before the infinite and their fall decreed.<sup>5</sup>

The torpedoes that struck the *Lusitania* shocked the conscience of Christendom and sounded the knell of the Hohenzollern-Hapsburg dynasty, the deadly foe to freedom and progress in all the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Words spoken by the character of Prometheus in “The Masque of Pandora” [1875] by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882).

<sup>2</sup> Accusations that Prussian militarism was intent upon imposing German *Kultur* (civilization and ideology) upon the world by force of arms was a primary thread of Allied propaganda during World War I.

<sup>3</sup> *Germany above everything*, a phrase from “Das Lied der Deutschen” (The Song of the Germans), a popular song with the melody borrowed from a 1797 hymn which would become the national anthem of the country in 1922.

<sup>4</sup> *Everything under Germany*.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from part 2, book 1 of *Les Misérables* (1862) by Victor Hugo (1802-1885). The original passage reads: “Bonaparte, victor at Waterloo, did not harmonize with the law of the nineteenth century. Another series of facts was preparing, in which Napoleon had no longer a place; the ill will of events had been displayed long perviously. It was time for this vast man to fall; his excessive weight in human destiny disturbed the balance.”