Valedictory

It is nearly forty-six and one-half years since my first contribution appeared in The Nation—January 11, 1894. In it I reported my observations of the Spanish army deep in mud in Melilla, North Africa, during an armistice in one of the periodic wars between the Moors and the Spaniards. It is a coincidence that my last articles have dealt with the greatest and most calamitous of all wars. At any rate, it is the differences of opinion which have arisen between myself and the present editorial board as to the relation of the United States to the catastrophe in Europe which has led me to ask for the acceptance of my resignation. Since January, 1933, Issues and Men has been a weekly feature of this journal, and during that time I have had the luck never, in sickness or in health, whether I was here or in Europe, to miss a single issue.

That in the nature of things this series of articles was nearing its end is obvious. I regret all the more, therefore, that my retirement has been precipitated at this time by the editors’ abandonment of The Nation’s steadfast opposition to all preparations for war, to universal military service, to a great navy, and to all war, for this in my judgment has been the chief glory of its great and honorable past. As I said in my address at the recent Seventy-fifth Anniversary dinner, I have realized that times change and also the views of owners, and that with new editors come new policies. My own making over of The Nation when I became editor in 1918 pained many of its devoted readers. Yet I can truthfully claim that under my guidance it held to the fundamental principles of the founders and was conducted in their spirit, in fullest support of their correct conception of what the liberal world should be.

They knew war, many of them at first hand, and their detestation of it was beyond any yielding to such a pitiful, craven fear of the modern Napoleon as is now sweeping over the United States. They founded this journal within three months after Appomattox for the purpose of championing the freed slaves and helping to steer the country back to the ways of peace, to the Bill of Rights, after four years of bloodshed. To them and to me war was never anything else than “the sum of all villainies,” out of which at best only an occasional modicum of good could come; in modern times it only engenders worse evils than those sought to be ended by mass murder. To permit The Nation, for which some of us labored and sacrificed so heavily for so many years, now to become recreant to those ideals and beliefs, embracing for the purpose of saving our democracy the very evils certain to destroy it either in peace or in war, is the privilege of the present ownership. But it has made impossible the continuance of a relationship which would be as unfair to the editors as to myself and the public.

That I end my regular contributions with deep regret everyone will understand. For better or for worse I put into The Nation, especially during the years when I was solely responsible for it, 1918-1933, the best that I had to offer for our country’s welfare and advancement. Whether that contribution was worth while others have judged and will judge in the future—perhaps when the history of these times is written by men marveling that a Hitler beyond seas could so have swept the greatest republic from its moorings. I can only ask that there may be recorded then the causes that were successfully championed by my predecessors, by me, and by my many associates. I hope, too, that there will be just recognition of the efforts of the many men and women who have written in these pages with complete honesty and sincerity, just as their consciences dictated. At least the record is there, for as long as there are critics to examine it, of a free and untrammeled journal.

I have no doubt that the present hysteria will pass and with it the fear which has already gravely endangered the liberties of America and led to steps which will as inevitably wind up the New Deal as our entering into the first World War finished Wilson’s New Freedom, now totally forgotten, and made inevitable the coming of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover—reaction at its worst. I believe, too, that the present editors will some day awake to a realization that the course they are now proposing will inevitably end all social and political progress, lower still further the standard of living, enslave labor, and, if persisted in, impose a dictatorship and turn us into a totalitarian state. America is to be safeguarded, not by guns and warships that may be rendered valueless overnight by new inventions and new tactics, but only by greater economic and industrial wisdom, by social justice, by making our democracy work. That the United States has the genius, the power, the resources, and the vision to accomplish this I cannot question, if only it is not again betrayed in the White House and by the politicians.

With this statement of a veteran journalist’s faith in his country this long record closes.