

**THE "LUSITANIA" CASE,
WAS BRYAN'S
RESIGNATION JUSTIFIED?**

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ALBERT EDWARD HENSCHEL

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**Was Bryan's Resignation
Justified?**

BY

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UNIVERSITY

PREFACE

The privilege to express one's opinion is one of the most important rights inherent in our free institutions. It involves the sacred Freedom of the Press—the Palladium of Liberty. Especially precious is the exercise of this right, when ignorance, passion or prejudice has seized upon the customary organs of public opinion. But conditions are the more deeply to be deplored when the generality of our press has set itself to the practical suppression or distortion of the arguments favorable to one side of public issues and to the emphasis and glorification of the other. Thus we are driven, in a way, to the older methods of pamphleteering, if we would be heard. Thanks to the innate forces of the Americanistic principle, inherited from Britain—for many good things come from there—we still have the right of presenting facts and arguments that may appeal to judgment and reason, in channels other than the newspaper press.

It is hoped that due consideration will be given to the important matters contained in this booklet, and adopted or rejected according to the effect they may have on the thinking reader. If the views are not exactly like the matter brownd up every day for popular consumption, that is all the greater incentive why you should apply the acid test of reason, and try, if possible, to form an opinion of your own.

The immediate issue between the United States and Germany resolves itself into a dialectic discussion of what is meant by the loose term "Humanity" in its relation to maritime warfare. To the United States it means a scrupulous regard for the safety of a limited number of passengers who may have occasion to travel within the war zones of Europe, while to Germany, it means safety to herself and her allies, numbering about one hundred and forty millions of people. The United States contends that non-combatants must be safeguarded irrespective of the circumstance that the safety of a small number of non-combatants may be inextricably interwoven with the safe conduct of contraband of war. To the Teutonic Allies "Humanity" means the preservation of their lives, the quick and decisive ending of the war and an emphatic reassertion of the doctrine that all nations shall be allowed to make progress according to their merits and that "world-commerce" shall be free and untrammelled.

INTRODUCTION

The resignation of Secretary of State Bryan should be effective in clearing the political atmosphere. His dramatic self-elimination from the Cabinet will focus public thought upon the question of peace or war.

The following text of Secretary Bryan's letter of resignation and of the President's acceptance will indicate the issues before the American people:

SECRETARY BRYAN TO THE PRESIDENT

Washington, June 8, 1915.

My dear Mr. President:

It is with sincere regret that I have reached the conclusion that I should return to you the commission of Secretary of State, with which you honored me at the beginning of your Administration.

Obedient to your sense of duty and actuated by the highest motives, you have prepared for transmission to the German Government a note in which I cannot join without violating what I deem to be an obligation to my country, and the issue involved is of such moment that to remain a member of the Cabinet would be as unfair to you as it would be to the cause which is nearest my heart, namely, the prevention of war.

I, therefore, respectfully tender my resignation, to take effect when the note is sent, unless you prefer an earlier hour.

Alike desirous of reaching a peaceful solution of the problems, arising out of the use of submarines against merchantmen, we find ourselves differing irreconcilably as to the methods which should be employed.

It falls to your lot to speak officially for the nation; I consider it to be none the less my duty to endeavor as a private citizen

to promote the end which you have in view by means which you do not feel at liberty to use.

In severing the intimate and pleasant relations, which have existed between us during the past two years, permit me to acknowledge the profound satisfaction which it has given me to be associated with you in the important work which has come before the State Department, and to thank you for the courtesies extended.

With the heartiest good wishes for your personal welfare and for the success of your Administration, I am, my dear Mr. President

Very truly yours,

W. J. BRYAN.

THE PRESIDENT TO SECRETARY BRYAN

Washington, June 8, 1915.

My dear Mr. Bryan:

I accept your resignation only because you insist upon its acceptance; and I accept it with much more than deep regret, with a feeling of personal sorrow.

Our two years of close association have been very delightful to me. Our judgments have accorded in practically every matter of official duty and of public policy until now; your support of the work and purposes of the Administration has been generous and loyal beyond praise; your devotion to the duties of your great office and your eagerness to take advantage of every great opportunity for service it offered have been an example to the rest of us; you have earned our affectionate admiration and friendship. Even now we are not separated in the object we seek, but only in the method by which we seek it.

It is for these reasons my feeling about your retirement from the Secretaryship of State goes so much deeper than regret. I sincerely deplore it.

Our objects are the same and we ought to pursue them together. I yield to your desire only because I must and wish to bid you Godspeed in the parting. We shall continue to work for the same causes even when we do not work in the same way.

With affectionate regard,

Sincerely yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

No lover of America and of the ideals represented in our institutions, can sympathize with the notion that somehow there is not war enough on earth, but that America should be dragged into the cauldron of fire and desolation. We may grope darkly into war but not with our eyes open.

In these pages our national duties with respect to the "Lusitania" will be considered. I stand upon the broad platform of national and international justice as the best aid and security for peace and national welfare.

Mr. Bryan's consistent labors for peace are worthy of all praise. In our endeavor to follow Mr. Bryan's reasons for his resignation and to pass intelligent judgment thereon it will be proper to go into the "Lusitania" question fully.

The "Lusitania" Case

NATIONAL MOTIVES IN TREATING THE "LUSITANIA" QUESTION

No nation, that deems itself worthy of respect, can view with unconcern an assault upon its citizens or its sovereignty. The United States was clearly within its right in demanding an explanation of the sinking of the "Lusitania" and in its determination to forestall occasions for a similar frightful catastrophe. It is an indubitable duty of every nation to protect its subjects both at home and abroad.

Though this duty is imperative and unquestioned, it does not by any means exclude the exercise of another high duty—that of a calm and deliberate consideration of all attending facts and circumstances, and of according to a fellow sovereign nation a fair opportunity to be heard.

Our administration, in its endeavor to protect American life and property in Mexico, has shown a wise statesmanship in considering the circumstances of that country. Our government gave fair warning to American citizens to get out of the territory fraught with danger, and then pursued a policy of "watchful waiting"—a policy which has been derided by hot-headed ignorance or cool-headed selfishness—but which has so far avoided the loss of thousands of American lives which would have been sacrificed, in addition to those unhappily gone before, within the zone of Mexican turmoil and trouble.

We have never had cause to regret peaceful solutions.

When, during the Canadian Rebellion of 1838, England, *on the plea of self-preservation*, violated the territory and sovereignty of the United States, we permitted England to present her side of the case in her own way and in 1842 the dispute was finally settled.

The exercise of statesmanlike prudence, which will not precipitate the greater and more stupendous evil of war, in order to