

**THE RECKONING: A DISCUSSION  
OF THE MORAL ASPECTS OF THE  
PEACE PROBLEM, AND OF  
RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AS AN  
INDISPENSABLE ELEMENT**

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The reckoning: a discussion of the moral aspects of the peace problem, and of retributive justice as an indispensable element by James M. Beck

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**JAMES M. BECK**

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# The Reckoning



A Discussion of the Moral Aspects of  
The Peace Problem, and of Retributive  
Justice as an Indispensable Element

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By

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"The Evidence in the Case," "The War and Humanity"  
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"ÉCRASEZ L'INFÂME"  
—Voltaire

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To

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

A CONSISTENT CHAMPION OF THE HIGHER LAW,  
AN UNTIRING FIGHTER FOR THE SQUARE DEAL,  
WHOSE WHITE PLUME, LIKE THAT OF HENRY OF NAVARRE,  
HAS BEEN IN THIS DAY AND GENERATION  
IN THE FOREFRONT OF EVERY STRUGGLE  
FOR THE COMMON WELFARE,  
AND WHO, HIMSELF WILLING TO DIE FOR THE GREAT CAUSE,  
MADE THE GREATER SACRIFICE OF A NOBLE SON,  
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED BY ONE  
PROUD TO BE HIS CO-WORKER.





## FOREWORD

THE year 1759 witnessed the birth of an historic phrase. Such births are even rarer than those of great men. Countless millions of civilized human beings talk and write from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, and it was said of old that "of the making of many books there is no end"; and yet the never-ending currents of thought and expression, the innumerable pages of print, thick as "the leaves of Vallambrosa," rarely yield a single expression that passes into history, as voicing some great movement of a given period.

Even the present world upheaval, with the extraordinary fermentation to which it has given rise, has brought forth few phrases that will resound in the ears of men to the last syllable of recorded time.

The few that we can readily recall are more famous for their folly than for their wisdom. But the words which, as Carlyle said of Luther's "were in themselves battles" have rarely been uttered during this crisis by any responsible statesman of the world. This is as strange as it is true.

There has been a tendency to decry phrases and phrase-making and yet it has repeatedly happened in history that a whole situation has been illumined as in a flash with a phrase and that such phrases have often been more potent in carrying a nation to victory than an army corps.

The rallying cry of the French Revolution, "Liberty, equality, and fraternity," stimulated France for generations and has much to do with the democracy of the French army, which *in hoc signo* preserved its morale on the great retreat from the frontier to the Marne. Jefferson's potent words at the beginning of the American Republic and those of Tom Paine were great factors in the struggle for independence, while the phrase of an American envoy, "Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute," epitomized in a few words a great situation and will never be forgotten.

Lincoln, that master of potent phrases, again and again gave eloquent expression to the irrepressible conflict over slavery and to the passion and sense of union which carried us through the Civil War. "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people," will never be forgotten, even as his philosophic summary of the whole slavery problem, that "This government cannot en-

ture permanently half slave and half free" defined in a phrase the reason why the Civil War was inevitable.

Lloyd George, in his many admirable speeches, has shown a like genius for phrase-making and his words have been of inestimable value in meeting immediate crises in the present war.

The nobility and justice of France's position was epitomized in a single phrase by Viviani, when at the outbreak of the war, he said, "We have been without reproach, we shall be without fear." Time has given that noble statement full proof.

President Wilson's phrase that America should fight "to make the world safe for democracy" had also potent force and reconciled more than one discordant element in America to the inevitability of its participation in the world quarrel.

The phrase, which the author has written on the title-page of this book as its dominant note, "*Écrasez l'Infâme*" is one that lingers in the minds of men, irrespective of the occasions and reasons that called it forth. It can be likened to the more famous phrase of Cato, when he summed up the whole destiny of Rome in the famous words: *Carthago delenda est.*

Voltaire's famous phrase, with which for many years he ended books, pamphlets, addresses, letters, and even conversations, had far more than a