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## War—What For?

Laurance Labadie

c. 1912

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From a carbon copy of the typed original, signed but undated.

From internal evidence it seems to have been produced at about the start of World War I. Reprinted in *Laurance LaBadie:*

*Selected Essays* (Libertarian Broad­sides), James J. Martin, ed.,

Ralph Myles Publisher, Inc., 1978.

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During the last century the theory of evolution was coupled with that of meliorism. Man and the social order were considered as growing and developing, changing for the better. Thus, modern man tends to depreciate the mentality of his forebears and to have a conceited estimate of his own intellectuality. But there is evidence of an alarming decline in his mental powers even during recorded history.

As far as purely mental processes are concerned, the fellow who discovered that scrambling could be better done by ganging up was a genius comparable to the discoverer of the wheel. Likewise, the fellow who first realized that another's labor products could be obtained by other than killing him—that, indeed, a continual despoilment might be inaugurated by his enslavement, was another genius, possibly even a humanitarian, of no mean powers. To the extent that these means for obtaining goods seemed necessary for the persistence of human life, their conception was highly rational and showed growing powers of observation and thought far above that possible for the amoeba. It is the contention of some, agreeing with Christian theology, that the original sin of man consisted of thinking and reasoning. It may be that they are right.

It is significant, however, that notwithstanding the enormously increased productivity since earlier times, these very same gentry operate and are admired and lauded to this very day. This may be observed by our attitudes toward the military and the so called business enterprise fellows who are bent on "getting theirs." None of the moderns seem to have the wit to understand that plundering the other fellow isn't economical any more. But one of these days some genius may stumble on the idea. if we aren't blown to bits beforehand.

The discoverer of the possible justice to be obtained by the inauguration of the principle of property certainly had more sense than the subsequent promoters of that principle who spread it to ideas and privileges the very nature of which denies the application of the principle if its original and rational intent were to be maintained. The beneficial and valid effects of property have therefore not merely been nullified but have been directly contradicted. This, moreover, has occurred at a time when no excuse for predatoriness seems justified. One may understand birds squabbling over a few grains of wheat, but if beside those few grains there stood a heap of wheat, more than they all could eat and of better quality, the squabble would to most of us appear to be downright lunacy. Yet the analogy with mankind's present behavior is nearly perfect.

The final criterion for judging intelligence is in the ability to make accurate distinctions. But modern man has become so gullible and mentally inert that he cannot distinguish between the practices by which he is destroying himself from those which may be used for his benefit, There is hardly any professional practice, from the preaching of religion to the practice of medicine, which is not today hell-bent in promoting an inferior type of human.

Considering its comparatively auspicious beginning, the American social order has degenerated probably faster than any other in history. That over one-hundred and twenty million people should willingly acquiesce in three reigns of

Rooseveltism indicates to what a calamitous condition it has fallen.

Possibly one good thing would result from a first class war during our present techniques of destruction—it might end the sorry farce and turn the earth over to the bugs and beasts.