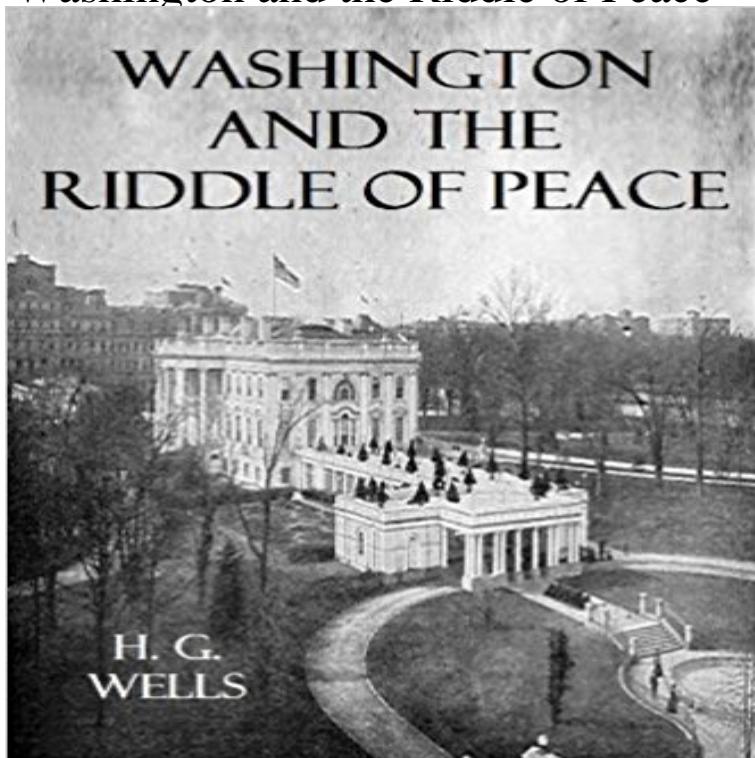


Washington and the Riddle of Peace



INTRODUCTION THESE twenty-nine papers do not profess to be a record or description of the Washington Conference. They give merely the impressions and fluctuating ideas of one visitor to that conference. They show the reaction of that gathering upon a mind keenly set upon the idea of an organized world peace; they record phases of enthusiasm, hope, doubt, depression and irritation. They have scarcely been touched, except to correct a word or a phrase here or there; they are dated; in all essentials they are the articles just as they appeared in the New York World, the Chicago Tribune, and the other American and European papers which first gave them publicity. It is due to the enterprise and driving energy of the New York World, be it noted, that they were ever written at all. But in spite of the daily change and renewal of mood and attitude, inevitable under the circumstances, they do tell a consecutive story; they tell of the growth and elaboration of a conviction of how things can be done, and of how they need to be done, if our civilization is indeed to be rescued from the dangers that encompass it and set again upon the path of progress. They record and in a very friendly and appreciative spirit the birth and unfolding of the Association of Nations idea, the Harding idea, of world pacification, they note some of the peculiar circumstances of that birth, and they study the chief difficulties on its way to realization. It is, the writer believes, the most practical and hopeful method of attacking this riddle of the Sphinx that has hitherto been proposed.--H. G. WELLS.

***An excerpt from the beginning of: I. THE IMMENSITY OF THE ISSUE AND THE TRIVIALITY OF MEN Washington, Nov. 7. THE conference nominally for the limitation of armaments that now gathers at Washington may become a cardinal event in the history of mankind. It may mark a turning point in human affairs or it may go

on record as one of the last failures to stave off the disasters and destruction that gather about our race. In August, 1914, an age of insecure progress and accumulation came to an end. When at last, on the most momentous summer night in history, the long preparations of militarism burst their bounds and the little Belgian village Visé went up in flames, men said: This is a catastrophe. But they found it hard to anticipate the nature of the catastrophe. They thought for the most part of the wounds and killing and burning of war and imagined that when at last the war was over we should count our losses and go on again much as we did before 1914. As well might a little shopkeeper murder his wife in the night and expect to carry on business as usual in the morning. Business as usual that was the catchword in Britain in 1914; of all the catchwords of the world it carries now the heaviest charge of irony. The catastrophe of 1914 is still going on. It does not end; it increases and spreads. This winter more people will suffer dreadful things and more people will die untimely through the clash of 1914 than suffered and died in the first year of the war. It is true that the social collapse of Russia in 1917 and the exhaustion of food and munitions in Central Europe in 1918 produced a sort of degradation and enfeeblement of the combatant efforts of our race and that a futile conference at Versailles settled nothing, with an air of settling everything, but that was no more an end to disaster than it would be if a man who was standing up and receiving horrible wounds were to fall down and writhe and bleed in the dust. It would be merely a new phase of disaster. Since 1919 this world has not so much healed its wounds as realized its injuries. Chief among these injuries is the progressive economic breakdown, the magnitude of which we are only beginning to apprehend. The breakdown is a real decay that spreads and spreads. In a time of universal shortage there is an increasing paralysis in production; and there is a paralysis of production...

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