

THE ATTITUDE OF AMERICA TO THE WAR

By Aleister Crowley.

(This article, written primarily for the information of the British public, is intensely interesting on this side as giving the considered opinion of a shrewd and unprejudiced observer—Ed.)

THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC.

WHEN the sun-beetle first began to roll up this ball, he never guessed that one day there would be on its surface a political unity so disunited, at least to the superficial observer, as the United States of America. Russia and England possess territories of superior size, but the power is concentrated in the same place as the wealth and intellect. The Englishman in India after fifty years still speaks of home, meaning firstly a certain ancient hall surrounded by a park, with a village whose church has a lych-gate, and, secondly, the parish of St. James. The Russian of Tobolsk or Ekaterinoslaw concentrates loyalty and affection on the Czar. But in America there is no center. New York is not even the capital of its own State. Washington is a city apart, utterly out of touch with the feeling in any one district. It is difficult to give the English mind any idea of the feeling involved, but it is rather as if the king resided, and Parliament met at Bishopstoke. Independent and historical as are England's greatest institutions, they all tend toward London. The metropolis has a string on them. Eton and Harrow must play cricket at Lord's; Cambridge and Oxford must row the Putney-Mortlake course, and no other. The detachment of the archbishoprics of Canterbury and York from the capital has been the essential weakness of the Church of England. With these exceptions of the clerical and medical, which has a very vital center at Edinburgh, all other professions must go to London, and the successful man manages to stay there. The others radiate thence. Even such centers as Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh draw life from London. It is the financial center of the world. Washington is aloof, a colony in just the same way as Reno, Nevada. The inhabitants are on short lease, like consuls. Nobody really lives there in the same sense as he might live almost anywhere else, and this detachment from the real life of the country has insulated it. This circumstance, more than any other, heaps the responsibility for the utter indifference of the average American citizen to politics, and for the corruption of the latter.

France is a democracy, but the same centralization as in

England is apparent on all the more important sides of life. The railway systems all converge on Paris. The Bourse, the university, the government, the art center, the social center, all are in Paris. Consequently when Paris speaks, France acquiesces. Probably France does not care very much what Paris says, but at least there is no independent and opposing current of thought.

It follows that in America the observer is placed at a great disadvantage. In London the expenditure of six pence would make him acquainted with the whole thought of the country. In America the press does not represent the people, or even any section of the people. It represents the pull of clique in most cases. It exercises no influence at all upon thought. People buy newspapers for amusement; but yellow journalism has achieved its great and glorious task of discrediting itself.

To take a recent example. The efforts of the New York daily press, with one definitely German paper as an exception, have been directed to secure sympathy for the allies. They have earned for them the sobriquet all-lies. They have stopped at nothing in the campaign of mendacity. They have given prominence to the most ridiculous inventions; they have suppressed the most potent facts. They have falsified truth with shamelessness unequalled in history, and they have even discredited their own war correspondents. And the result has been a steady flow of the tide of public opinion towards Germany.

I must single out the New York *Times* as having published the most infamous leader ever written. It advocates the complete suppression of the right of free speech; any one who disagrees with the *Times* should be in jail. And this is neutrality! This is the land of the free! "My country, 'tis of thee!"

The editor is so blinded by rage that he does not even see that he is sawing off the branch he is sitting on. A newspaper against free speech! It is treason to its own first principle. If the government suppressed the *Fatherland* as suggested, why should not some other government suppress the *Times*?

I was on the platform at the meeting of the "Friends of