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ARE YOU AN APATHIST?

BY THOMAS ADDISON

An Old "Ism" In New Times

Are You An Apathist?

**If So, Backslide!
It's Not the Right
Road to Salvation**

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ARE YOU AN APATHIST?

By THOMAS ADDISON.

Apathy! I'm beginning to think that your apathist (to coin a word) is pretty nearly as bad as your pacifist. You can at least pillory the pacifist, plant the red flag over him and warn straight Americans to give him a wide berth. But your apathist! What in heaven's name are you going to do with this chap! He isn't a traitor, he isn't a false propagandist, he isn't even a willful obstructionist. He is simply a human invertebrate—a dead weight in a war-working community that has got to be lugged along because there's nothing else to do with him.

Often this chap is what we used to call in pre-war day a "good citizen." He pays his bills, provides for his family, goes to church, gives a bit to charity, and—if it doesn't interfere with his intimate pursuits—registers and votes in the municipal elections. A good husband, a good neighbor, a good fellow—but not a good American in these days we have entered on.

I know Mr. Apathist, and you know him. As a rule, he hasn't anyone of his immediate blood in the army—he and his are all safe, sound and snug. You seldom see him at a patriotic rally, or on a committee to boost the Red Cross, or in a Y. M. C. A. "over there" drive, or buying smokes for Sammies. But he buys Liberty bonds—you bet! And War Saving stamps, and Thrift stamps. Good business, that; you can't lose. But these other things they are begging for—there's plenty of time to come across for them when we really begin to fight. And, you know, it's not so sure that we will have to fight. Something is likely

to happen before we get to the firing line—peace, or a revolution in Germany, or something. And anyway, the government is running this show, and taxing the life out of us to do it. The government doesn't need my help. I'm just one in a hundred million. Let the fellows who have the money and time to spare do the shouting. I've got all I can attend to keeping up with my growing business.

You've heard Mr. Apathist talk just like that. I have, anyway. He has ten tons of coal in his cellar when the state fuel administrator says the limit is two; there are a hundred pounds of sugar in his pantry when the grocer is allowing but three pounds a week to a family of four; he burns up gasoline joy riding on Sundays when the government begs the people to help conserve the supply on hand. In short, he's the carefree fellow citizen who runs right along on a pre-war living schedule when a patriotic man has put the brakes on his personal expenditures wherever retrenchment will foster the country's needs.

What's the matter with this chap? I'll tell you. He is afflicted with mental myopia. He is devoid of imagination. He is a materialist, a hedonist, an unspiritual clod of clay—self-centered as a turtle buried in the mud. He believes only in what is jammed up to his nose—what he can taste, smell and hear. He can't visualize this war; he couldn't do it if he was furnished with a telescope that would give him a close-up of the bloody trenches in Flanders, or an audiphone that would let him hear the roar of the great guns. The moment he put the instrument aside he would lapse into his former sense of aloofness from the scene. Three thousand miles away! What interest could he have in a thing so remote? If the Germans were fighting on the next block—why, yes! He'd grab his gun and go out with the neighbors to head 'em off. He'd fight for his home with any man. But across



the seas! Pshaw, what's the use of getting all stewed up over something that doesn't actually touch you—your own comfortable, well-clothed hide?

That's your apathist! Dear Lord, how I would like to put a pin in every chair he sits in—in every bed he lies in—in every shoe he walks in—in every hat he sticks his head in. If I could only prod him, body and soul, until he was all awake and alive, and would pitch in and do all a he-man's work for the holiest cause humanity's sun ever flamed on! If I only could!

Friend, have you an apathist in your town? If you haven't, come down here to my town and I'll show you not one but one hundred of him. And if he reads this he'll wonder who the dickens I'm hitting at. He'll take it to himself just about as soon as a hog will take fleas from an alligator. Isn't it so, Mr. Apathist—you—the chap whose eye is on this line?

DO YOU KNOW AN APATHIST?

IF SO, MAIL THIS TO HIM.

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