Owen Wister and World War I: Appeal for Pentecost

Most people think of Owen Wister primarily as a writer about the American West, and such a primary focus is appropriate. However, as is the case with most men of intelligence and ability, his interests were varied; and even in his stories of the West, one of his primary ideological concerns is often evident. He wished to resist dilution of the quality of the freedoms which the United States had cherished, especially as he believed those freedoms were being corrupted by softness, unpreparedness, cowardice, negligence of duty, ignorance, and the general incompetence and corruptness he associated with urban industrialism and big business gone wild in the hands of unqualified nouveaux riches. Wister was willing to acclaim any man who had the virtues he cherished, regardless of that man’s background (which was one of the appeals of his most successful book, The Virginian, published in 1902, a book which was perhaps the most significant catalyst in widely establishing the Western myth of the cowboy good guy, the white knight of the plains). But Wister himself was descended from several old, established families; and though his standards were high and deep-rooted, some thought him aristocratic or a bit snobbish. However, he had a willingness to place his reputation or the line time after time in his writings, in public service, and in politics.

In politics he was conservative, but not far right (in spite of the trend suggested in some of his positions near the end of his life). He was for individual freedom, based on the premise that such would be valued, put to good use, and especially protected with honor by those really qualified to have it, no matter where those individuals might come from or what their apparent allegiance. He worked in the liberal Republican camp with his close friend since college days, Theodore Roosevelt, whom he defended and cham-
pioned and helped in every way he could throughout his entire adult life. In this essay attention is to be focused on a few of the things which Wister did to help move this country toward participation in World War I, a role in which he was quite active and effective, but which now is almost forgotten. In this matter he was right in step with Henry Cabot Lodge and the even more vocal Roosevelt in calling attention to the obligations which freedom entails. He believed that our failure to meet these obligations through the short-sightedness of President Wilson and his followers posed a drastic threat to our freedom as a country and as individuals. Therefore, he proposed to awaken his countrymen to a pentecost, a revival of spirit, in the face of calamity. This would turn calamity into great benefit because the catalyst of freedom could once more act through the hearts, minds, and wills of Americans to produce protection of freedom through the heeding of its call to duty.

At times Wister's patience grew thin in this struggle and he was far from gentle in his attacks upon Wilson (but in this also he was in large and good company). One of his more flamboyant sorties, a sonnet addressed to Wilson, appeared in various newspapers all across the country on George Washington's birthday 1916, and was reprinted in many other papers soon after. In 1969, on her eighty-fifth birthday, Roosevelt's somewhat volatile daughter, Alice Longworth, was asked a question about Woodrow Wilson. She said, "We all laughed about him, you see. We were too nasty for words and we made ballads about him." Wister's poem might have been one of the things she had in mind:

To Woodrow Wilson: Feb. 22, 1916

Not even if I possessed your twist in speech,
Could I make any (fit for use) fit you;
You've wormed yourself beyond description's reach;
Truth if she touched you would become untrue.

Satire has seared a host of evil fames,
Has withered Emperors by her fierce lampoons;
History has lashes that have flayed the names
Of public cowards, hypocrites, poltroons:

You go immune. Cased in your self-esteem,
The next world can not scathe you, nor can this;
No fact can stab through your complacent dream,
Nor present laughter, nor the future’s hiss.
But if its fathers did this land control,
Dead Washington would wake and blast your soul.²

Wister has said that the sonnet "was written the day [the battle of]
Verdun began, and directly upon Wilson’s revocation of the promises
to push preparedness which he had made to Garrison, his Secretary
of War [who resigned]. . . . The sonnet expressed what I felt then
and what I should always feel in like circumstances. . . . Times
when our attitude had brought upon us the derision of Germany
and the scorn of the Allies, while Europe rocked to its foundations."³

The poem generated a great many strong responses. Both pro and
con, there was talk, there were editorials, there were letters to
editors, and there were letters to Wister, some of the latter from
friends, but apparently mostly from strangers. A few months before,
Wister had suggested to Roosevelt the appropriateness for Wilson
of a passage from Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* (Act IV, Scene 2):

Prythee have done;
And do not play in wench-like words with that
Which is so serious.

Roosevelt had responded: “Bully for you! That is the quotation of
all others; and I will use it about Wilson the first chance I get.”⁴

Now Roosevelt wrote to praise the poem: “Let me say I entirely
approved your poem on Wilson. Do not mind at all what the mushy

² Both a holograph draft and a holograph fair copy of the poem are in the Papers of Owen
Wister in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress. There is little difference
between them. The fair copy version was published. It might be noted that Wister was the
author of a biographical study of Washington, *The Seven Ages of Washington* (New York,
1907), published nine years earlier. All manuscripts cited are in the Wister Papers.

Wilson’s promise for preparedness had been the focus of his speaking tour into the West
January 27-February 3. The terrible seven-month battle of Verdun began on February 21.
If Wister did write the poem on that day, as he remembered approximately thirteen years
later, it must have been wired to the various papers which carried it the next day.

⁴ Roosevelt to Wister, Dec. 29, 1915, quoted in *Roosevelt*, 352.
brotherhood say of it; it's going to last. The people will in the end be glad that the foremost American man of letters speaks of the Buchanan of our day as it is right to speak." These were frustrating times for both sides of the argument, and what to us today seem harsh and thoughtless words were all too common. There was obvious and increasing tragedy in Europe, as well as for America; dismay, indecision, uncertainty, and disillusionment were growing in this country. While big business in the Midwest distributed placards reading "Talk business, don't talk war," Roosevelt and the Progressives tried to awaken the country to what they believed to be the deceptive emptiness of what they referred to as Wilson's "weasel words," which supposedly were intended to explain our noninvolvement in the war.

However, a large part of the populace did not have such a derogatory opinion of Wilson's words; they found Wister's poem offensive, to say the least, and told him so. When the Library of Congress received that portion of Wister's papers containing most of the letters in response to the poem, they were still together and bore his labeling of them as "Bombs and Roses." The letters of the two categories were about equal in number, with perhaps a few more "bombs" than "roses." Most of the clippings included in the packet were nonpartisan and were almost all "bombs." More of his friends are represented among the "roses" letters, and as a whole

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5 Roosevelt to Wister, Apr. 11, 1916, quoted in ibid., 355. In a copy of a letter to J. B. Bishop, Mar. 25, 1920, in the Wister Papers, Wister says that Roosevelt continued to praise the poem until his death, claiming it wasn't nearly severe enough. By October, 1918, Wister had begun to wonder whether the poem had been in good taste, but Roosevelt encouraged him never to regret it, but to be proud of having come out early and forcefully against Wilson. He said that time was vindicating Wister, even in the eyes of some of his friends who had regretted the poem.

6 Roosevelt, 353.

7 These letters have now been dispersed throughout the alphabetized correspondence of his papers and the labeling apparently discarded. (During 1968-1970 I was the Specialist for American Cultural History in the Manuscript Division and unpacked the letters and made notes and copies before their dispersal.) It is in these responses that one easily realizes the widespread publication of the poem on February 22 and after, because of the references to specific newspapers for identifiable dates. In Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and The Progressive Era, 1910-1917 (New York, 1963), 176, there is also reference to the poem's having been published in the Springfield Republican of Feb. 24, 1916, although only the last eight lines of the sonnet are cited. However, Link gives all fourteen lines in his Wilson: Confusions and Crises, 1915-1916 (Princeton, 1964), 44-45.
they are not as strong in feeling as the “bombs,” which, on the other hand, often leave little doubt that Wister had touched a raw nerve.

One man wrote: “What a pity you were not a passenger on the Lusitania.”8 A message from Philadelphia, his home city, read only: “Owen Wister SKUNK By Common Consent.” Another wrote that he had no admiration for Wilson, but “it is inconceivable that any gentleman, and particularly one of your literary fame, could publicly circulate such sentiments concerning the President of the United States. . . .”9 Several wrote to say that they had admired Wister’s earlier Western stories and even his previous writing about the war, but that they thought his great character, the Virginian, would be ashamed of his poem to Wilson. Some even said they were discarding all of Wister’s books. In reference to that famous retort in The Virginian, “When you call me that, smile,” one letter began, “To a certain kind of person and without the smile,”10 and went on to call him, among other things, a coward and to wish him a thrashing. A friend thought the poem likely to spawn unfortunate bitterness and ended his letter: “You have a gift. Help the people look up, not down.”11 There were many poems printed attacking Wister’s poem, creating a veritable fusillade of versifiers in which, happily, Wister wisely did not join after his initial blast. One poem in retaliation was printed on little cards and handed out to those entering the Democratic National Convention in St. Louis in June of 1916, providing testimony to the impact and notoriety of Wister’s sonnet. This retort, entitled “To Woodrow Wilson,” praised Wilson and ended: “Washington, Lincoln, felt their day’s lampoon./The smallest cur is free to bay the moon.”12

Apparently Wister did not respond to any of the counterattacks upon him. He probably felt there was no need to, for he also received a lot of support and thanks for what he had done. He was praised for his courage, for calling a spade a spade, and for saying well what many others also had been thinking. One man praised

8 John Trent, Savannah, Ga., to Wister, Mar. 7, 1916.
10 J. Hampton Brown, Columbus, Ohio, to Wister, Feb. 23, 1916.
12 From a copy of the card in the Wister Papers.
Wister’s spirit and prayed that it would continue until the November elections to help defeat Wilson and turn the country around morally. "One moment I recall Victor Hugo, and the way that big dog shook the life out of Napoleon the Little—the mouse; the next moment it is Archilochus, whose words so cut that his victims would go and hang themselves." Another made a similar comparison to Cicero’s exposing the conspirator, Catiline: "You have pitched your verse in the classic key." A minister in Newark thanked Wister: "Wilson has done more to dishonor America than any man that ever held high office among us," and compared the President to Balaam: "This language may seem strong. It is. But not too strong for the times. We are living in tremendously tragical times. Just as tragical as the times in which Lowell and Whittier and Wendell Phillips lived and spoke with such fiery earnestness. Just as tragical, indeed, as the times in which Stephen and John the Baptist . . . lived."

In a postscript he quoted Grover Cleveland as having said of Wilson as a member of the Princeton faculty: "The trouble with Wilson is fundamental. He is intellectually dishonest." The painter, George Biddle, generally a Wilson admirer and a member of a prominent Philadelphia family (and brother of Francis, the future Attorney General under Franklin Roosevelt), wrote to Wister: "I rather thought your sonnet on Wilson was perhaps the best thing you ever wrote. . . . I cared very much for the thesis of your poem that there is a sort of scholastic duplicity which is worse than a lie."

Probably the most interesting letter received by Wister in response to his poem (with the possible exception of a twelve-page one from Maxwell Struthers Burt, mostly exposing Wilson at Princeton and calling Wilson a selfish coward) was from Miss Hester E. Hosford, a large part of which I quote:

> your recent poem to Woodrow Wilson is one of the best and truest things which you have written. I have known Woodrow Wilson at close range for five years, wrote a campaign life of him, and prepared the Woodrow Wilson material for the Independent Magazine, New York. Then I was engaged to speak for the Democratic National Committee to advocate

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14 C. B. Newbold, Philadelphia, to Wister, Thursday.
16 Undated, but apparently not long after publication of the poem.
Wilson's election. I have been with the Wilsons at Sea Girt, Princeton, and The White House. Conservatively speaking I do not believe that anyone who has ever worked close to him really has admiration or affection for the man. I can not think that he can "get by" in another Election. I hope he will be discovered and exposed before that time arrives.

You have written the best character sketch of him in your poem that I have ever seen. It is his history in a nutshell. I hope you will be one to help save the country from his selfish will.17

Miss Hosford had worked in behalf of Wilson in 1912, but in 1916 she thought her faith had been misplaced. In the ferment caused by the volatile events in between, others had had a similar change of heart. Interestingly enough, one of those was Owen Wister. He reported having heard Wilson speak in 1912: "He spoke with flawless art; his dignity and upstanding presence commanded attention, while his voice made every symmetrical sentence melodious. The whole company, easily eight hundred men, sat under the spell."18 Wister, Republican and extreme admirer and friend of Theodore Roosevelt, was not for Taft in 1912 because he thought that under Taft's presidency too many of the progressive accomplishments of Roosevelt's presidency had been undermined. On the other hand, he had definite reservations about the volatile evangelism of the "lunatic fringe," as he termed it, which dominated the Progressive Party which was supporting Roosevelt in 1912. Later he said of the situation: "The political creed of Wilson was progressive like Roosevelt's. . . . The fact is, that if Roosevelt had not been running, I should have voted for Wilson, and so would many like me all over the country."19 He went on to add that because he thought Roosevelt had been led into unfulfillable promises, which situation would damage his prestige, "I almost hoped that Wilson would win." In fact, he said, "When news came of Wilson's election, it was a positive relief!"20 Even at the time England entered the war, Wister agreed with Wilson's call for continued neutrality.21 In retrospect, Wister could even praise Wilson's actions for conscrip-

18 Roosevelt, 299.
19 Ibid., 316.
20 Ibid., 318.
21 Ibid., 328.
tion in 1917 and against prohibition. In retrospect, Wister could also even say that if Hughes had been elected in 1916, he would not have been able to do some of the desirable things which Wilson accomplished in his second term. In his opinion, only Wilson could have done them.\textsuperscript{22}

What was it then that led Wister and so many others to become furious over Wilson? It was what they thought to be Wilson's blindness to the devastating progress of the war, what this meant to humanity and to freedom abroad and at home, and the dogged stubbornness which narrowed Wilson's perspective and caused him to defend his position for continuing nonintervention after it was no longer appropriate. In fact, apparently Wilson would not easily tolerate disagreement, but retaliated against those who dared deviate from his position. He seemed even to be ignoring truth and various other concerns which previously had been respected by him. He too much spouted smooth but deceptive words which did not fit his deeds, and he would not even heed those charged to advise him. Wilson was an enigmatic stumbling block to moral commitment on the part of the United States. Wister's 1916 poem attacking him and the context of the poem show well the frustration and deep feelings of that time. Much later Wister could say of Wilson: "He will be a riddle for a long while . . . the figure of Woodrow Wilson seems to me the most tragic in our history: assuredly the fragment of a great man, whose deeds too often fell below the level of his words."\textsuperscript{23}

However, in the years immediately before April 1917 (when we finally declared war), Wister was one of many who gradually came to feel strongly that the country must be awakened from lethargy to face the calamity descending upon the free world through the war. He felt that this must be done in spite of Wilson and his position of authority. A revival of spirit—a pentecost—must be created out of the terrible situation which worsened each day in Europe and threatened doom for free men everywhere, and Wister did what he could to bring about such a pentecost. The 1916 poem and its context are interesting, quite instructive, and now less

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}, 338.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}
readily available than most of the other of Wister's involvements in helping to move us into World War I. But the poem's extremity should be countered by also calling strong attention to what was probably Wister's most significant contribution in this regard, one of much more consequence than the poem and one which is also more typical of his work in form, style, and method. It tends to inspire and persuade rather than to incense. It is calmer and more positive and reasoned, but also strong and sound; and it was widely admired and influential. In fact, the small book, *The Pentecost of Calamity*, deserves much more attention than can be spared it here. It is definitely one of the important pieces of writing concerning our entry into the war. It was greatly appreciated by many who detested the later sonnet to Wilson (which apparently damaged some of the extensive good which earlier had been accomplished by the book). In fact, a number of the "bombs" Wister received in response to the poem pointedly contrasted the two works.

President William P. Few of Trinity College (now Duke University) in Durham, N. C., was an admirer of Wister's books. Like Wister, he was a Harvard alumnus (for his graduate work); and though they had not met, they were both on the Board of Overseers of Harvard College when Few in 1912 invited Wister to give the commencement address at Trinity for June 1912.\(^{24}\) Wister did not accept that or one other subsequent invitation, but did accept an invitation to make the commencement address for June 9, 1915, with an honorarium of $200. By this time the events in both his own experience and that of the world could lead to his choosing for his topic that which became *The Pentecost of Calamity*. In fact, Wister wrote Few that it was the only subject "at the present time which stirs in me any desire to write an address upon it. Last summer I returned, after an absence of thirty-two years, to Germany, where I spent about two months. I saw something in detail of various aspects of German life, and came away with some definite impressions. . . . This was all before the War broke out. The War has not effaced these impressions, which were of a most favorable kind, but has simply made them tragic."\(^{25}\) He went on to say, "The

\(^{24}\) Few to Wister, Jan. 26, 1912.

\(^{25}\) A copy of the letter, Feb. 4, 1915, is in the Wister Papers.
War seems to have absorbed my interest in other things. . . .” At that stage he had not yet hit upon the striking title which he later used. President Few found the subject “timely and in order,” and suggested forty-five to sixty minutes.26

The address was made in June, and then very soon was published in The Saturday Evening Post, generating much response, mostly favorable. George H. Lorimer, editor of the Post, wrote to Wister on July 27: “Almost every mail is bringing in requests from all over the country for The Pentecost of Calamity in pamphlet form. Why don’t you have it brought out by your publishers in the form of a little booklet?”27 The article was summarized in Life, and the resume was translated by the British Embassy in Rome especially for Italian soldiers.28 On May 9, 1916, almost a year since publication of the article, Lorimer wrote to Wister: “My mail is full of letters about the Pentecost of Calamity. The Germans all say you’re a scoundrel and the English that you’re a very great man.” However, even before Lorimer had suggested that Wister’s publisher ought to bring out Pentecost in a separate publication, George P. Brett, President of the Macmillan Company, Wister’s publisher, had set in motion plans to do so. In testimony to both the quality of the work and also to the attention it was already receiving from its Post publication, less than one month after the Trinity address, on July 7, Brett wrote Wister:

I think that every American and indeed every person living in this country should read this article, and I also believe it should find circulation abroad, perhaps not in Germany as yet, but even there it ought to find some persons sane enough to see its truth and value.

I should like to publish at once. . . .

If, as I imagine, they have somewhat curtailed your thoughts in the article itself, I wish you might replace in the book all these, if such there be, as there can hardly be too much of this, the picture is so good and so impressive.

I am planning for a little book in board covers, about 80 to 90 pages, and to sell at 50¢, with the possibility of a cheap edition at a very low price, if copies should happen to be required in quantities for free distribution.

26 Few to Wister, Feb. 6, 1915.
27 Wister Papers.
28 Copy of a letter from E. Capel Cure to Life, Apr. 12, 1916, sent to Wister by Edward S. Martin of Life, Wister Papers.
I wish I knew of someone who would give me authority to distribute about 10,000 copies of this at cost price, to the better known and more thinking people throughout the country.\(^{29}\)

We should note that between the time Wister agreed to the address in February and its delivery in June, the *Lusitania* was sunk on May 7 and Wilson's response was deemed equivocal, giving even more impetus to the great amount of reading and thought Wister was putting into his preparation. The address was well done, as Roosevelt hastened to write to him after its publication in the *Post*; but his long letter also found some slight fault.\(^{30}\) He liked the understanding given of how Germany had gone awry and why it must be stopped. He also agreed with the contention that how a man stood on this matter revealed much about him as a man; however, the admirable article had not come down hard enough on the idea that this aspect of character could as easily be seen in a man's attitude toward Wilson and his failure to act but instead always to use smooth but irresponsible talk, thus making true neutrality really impossible. Though we claimed political neutrality, we clearly were not morally neutral, but did nothing to back up our words in that direction. This had confused and weakened our country. Roosevelt's letter had been written the same day as Brett's letter arranging for publication, so Wister had a little (but only a little) time to consider Roosevelt's points before returning the proofs. As a consequence of careful consideration, he added a few paragraphs to the proofs,\(^{31}\) and the book was published in 148 pages in August 1915. Wister said of it: "It was an appeal to all Americans to wake up to the significance of the Great War."\(^{32}\)

The book had as an epigraph a quotation from Emerson: "Ever the Fiery Pentecost / Girds with one flame the countless host." It contrasts the peaceful, appealing, culturally rich Germany which Wister had seen during his 1914 visit with the monster nation which had so soon emerged to the extent of losing its own soul, as well as causing terrible havoc elsewhere. Wister was of German descent, and he greatly respected what Germany had shown over

\(^{29}\) Wister Papers.

\(^{30}\) July 7, 1915, quoted in *Roosevelt*, 349-351.

\(^{31}\) *Ibid.*, 351; and the preface to the uniform edition volume which contains *Pentecost* (New York, 1928), v.

\(^{32}\) Uniform edition volume containing *Pentecost*, v.
and over again for centuries to be its best efforts and inclinations. He could also contrast those with an America which for several decades had been going too far awry from its best, as he and many others saw it. The self-degradation of Germany and the resulting deception, distorted thinking, and brutal chaos and disaster must be met with force. The United States had a moral obligation to participate in this, for the sake of its own freedom and that of all of Europe, including Germany itself. This was vital to the souls and self-respect of all Americans. From the jaws of growing calamity, we must snatch a pentecost to bring us back to our best. The basic German character had been led astray and had been betrayed because it had become too politically docile and gullible at home. We must not make the same type of mistake here. Germany had quickly and easily become corrupt in every fiber, and we could become so too if we did not change from the path we were on, a path of appeasement and weasel words, without either military preparedness or firm moral commitment. When the mighty wind of calamity had rushed across Europe, it had brought forth a much needed pentecost in those nations which had felt Germany’s force. It had caused them to find themselves and quickly to act magnificently. It must cause a similar response here too, before that force be turned upon our friends any further or upon us fully. Material generosity was not enough; the individual must be spiritually awakened. In this our government had failed. It was morally blind. We were a nation of the world community. There was no more Old World and New World, only one world. Political independence did not and could not produce independence of fortune. Europe and America were in trouble together. The rousing message ended with the following: “Perhaps nothing save calamity will teach us what Europe is thankful to have learned again—that some things are worse than war, and that you can pay too high a price for peace; but that you cannot pay too high a price for the finding and keeping of your own soul.”

Unfortunately, it is not possible here to go into much detail about the large and widespread impact of this book. It was generally very well received by most facets of our country and of our allies. It was in great demand and was influential. It was welcomed and

praised by a quite diverse audience as just what was needed at the moment. Of course, not everyone found its merit; but the failure of such a message as this to move Woodrow Wilson is the type of thing which had helped to create great frustration on the part of Wister and many others by the time of Wister’s later poem to Wilson in 1916. As might be expected, Roosevelt wrote that “it represents the loftiest expression of true American feeling that there is. . . .” President Few wrote Wister concerning the book: “It’s the best thing I have seen about the war, or expect to see. If Trinity College was the occasion of giving that to the world it has something to be perpetually grateful for.” Lodge commented: “It is a very brilliant book and delighted me from beginning to end. The picture you draw of Germany, although I never felt as enthusiastic about German life as you were, makes a very effective contrast. All you say is so true, so good and so well said, I wish it could be in everybody’s hands at this time. . . .” Two men as opposite as George Washington Cable and Thomas Dixon could both praise Wister’s work. Cable wished he had written the book himself, providing he had been capable of doing so. “Thank you, fellow-citizen! and thank you, fellow-penman.” Herman Hagedorn wrote, “I owed you a debt of gratitude for crystallizing in my mind my own confused, cloudy feelings.” William Dean Howells found it “most extraordinarily good, very calm, fine, just, and illuminating beyond all candle powers of it.” He added that “it made me a little less ashamed [of the United States] than I had been.”

The Pentecost of Calamity was translated into French, Dutch, Italian and Japanese and was reprinted in this country twenty-seven times. Not only was there a 1915 British edition by Macmillan, but also the British government caused Nelson and Sons to publish the Dutch and French translations in 1915 and caused large numbers of them to be distributed in the respective countries.

34 Roosevelt to Wister, Sept. 1, 1915, quoted in Roosevelt, 351–352.
35 Undated letter in the Wister Papers (apparently written soon after the book’s publication) in response to a copy of the book which had been sent to Few.
36 Lodge to Wister, Oct. 27, 1915.
37 Dixon to Wister, Sept. 10, 1915.
38 Cable to Wister, Sept. 29, 1920.
39 Hagedorn to Wister, Feb. 8, 1917.
40 Howells to Wister, Aug. 13, 1915.
41 Preface to the uniform edition volume containing Pentecost, v.
42 George P. Brett of Macmillan to Wister, Jan. 4, 1916.
There was also a Swiss edition by Payot in German in 1916, and the English language version was put into Braille. In the months immediately after its first publication in August 1915, the book was reprinted twice in September, twice in October, three times in November, and twice in December, allowing Macmillan to meet the demand at the Christmas season, with approximately 46,000 copies of the American edition alone distributed by January. Reviews and letters acclaimed it at home and abroad. However, in January Wister felt inclined to add citations of the authorities he had consulted for the book, which Brett advised against in regards to fair publishing practices and there being no need for citations in this type of book written as well as this one was. Its message had been accepted, continued Brett, who knew of one copy of the book which had had thirty readers. He had no doubt of the success of Wister’s work from a publishing standpoint or from one of effective persuasion.

The Wilson sonnet and The Pentecost of Calamity are but two examples and are but two types of the many things which reflect Wister’s concern over our involvement in World War I, before, during, and after that involvement. For example, there were two more books, to form a trilogy with The Pentecost of Calamity: A Straight Deal, or The Ancient Grudge (1920) advocating the appropriateness of close Anglo-American ties; and Neighbors Henceforth (1922) about his travels in France right after the war. There were numerous other poems, and there were also speeches, articles, and even songs. His was a voice heard often and significantly, and he was never afraid to reveal where he stood. As was always his custom, he devoted his considerable talents fully to what he believed, even at the risk of stirring controversy. Always his concern was for truth, fairness, and freedom for both body and soul—some remarkably worthy ideals. It is easy to see why most people of his day respected him, even at those occasional times when his patience grew thin and his writing became heavy-handed.

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43 Ibid.
44 Brett to Wister, Jan. 11, 1916.