

Peace Theories and the Balkan War eBook

Peace Theories and the Balkan War by Norman Angell

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

Peace Theories and the Balkan War eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	13
Page 7.....	15
Page 8.....	17
Page 9.....	18
Page 10.....	19
Page 11.....	20
Page 12.....	21
Page 13.....	22
Page 14.....	23
Page 15.....	24
Page 16.....	26
Page 17.....	28
Page 18.....	29
Page 19.....	30
Page 20.....	31
Page 21.....	32
Page 22.....	33



[Page 23..... 34](#)

[Page 24..... 35](#)

[Page 25..... 37](#)

[Page 26..... 38](#)

[Page 27..... 40](#)

[Page 28..... 41](#)

[Page 29..... 42](#)

[Page 30..... 43](#)

[Page 31..... 44](#)

[Page 32..... 45](#)

[Page 33..... 47](#)

[Page 34..... 48](#)

[Page 35..... 49](#)

[Page 36..... 50](#)

[Page 37..... 51](#)

[Page 38..... 52](#)

[Page 39..... 53](#)

[Page 40..... 54](#)

[Page 41..... 55](#)

[Page 42..... 56](#)

[Page 43..... 57](#)

[Page 44..... 59](#)

[Page 45..... 60](#)

[Page 46..... 61](#)

[Page 47..... 63](#)

[Page 48..... 64](#)



Page 49..... 65
Page 50..... 66
Page 51..... 67
Page 52..... 68
Page 53..... 69
Page 54..... 70
Page 55..... 71
Page 56..... 72
Page 57..... 73
Page 58..... 74
Page 59..... 75
Page 60..... 76
Page 61..... 77

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER I.		1
CHAPTER II.		2
CHAPTER III.		7
CHAPTER IV.		16
CHAPTER V.		24
CHAPTER VI.		32
CHAPTER VII.		46
CHAPTER VIII.		54
APPENDIX.		57



Page 1

CHAPTER I.

THE QUESTIONS AND THEIR ANSWER.

What has Pacifism, Old or New, to say now?

Is War impossible?

Is it unlikely?

Is it futile?

Is not force a remedy, and at times the only remedy?

Could any remedy have been devised on the whole so conclusive and complete as that used by the Balkan peoples?

Have not the Balkan peoples redeemed War from the charges too readily brought against it as simply an instrument of barbarism?

Have questions of profit and loss, economic considerations, anything whatever to do with this war?

Would the demonstration of its economic futility have kept the peace?

Are theories and logic of the slightest use, since force alone can determine the issue?

Is not war therefore inevitable, and must we not prepare diligently for it? I will answer all these questions quite simply and directly without casuistry and logic-chopping, and honestly desiring to avoid paradox and "cleverness." And these quite simple answers will not be in contradiction with anything that I have written, nor will they invalidate any of the principles I have attempted to explain.

And my answers may be summarised thus:—

(1) This war has justified both the Old Pacifism and the New. By universal admission events have proved that the Pacifists who opposed the Crimean War were right and their opponents wrong. Had public opinion given more consideration to those Pacifist principles, this country would not have "backed the wrong horse," and this war, two wars which have preceded it, and many of the abominations of which the Balkan peninsular has been the scene during the last 60 years might have been avoided, and in any case Great Britain would not now carry upon her shoulders the responsibility of having during half a century supported the Turk against the Christian and of having tried uselessly to prevent what has now taken place—the break-up of the Turk's rule in Europe.



(2) War is not impossible, and no responsible Pacifist ever said it was; it is not the likelihood of war which is the illusion, but its benefits.

(3) It is likely or unlikely according as the parties to a dispute are guided by wisdom or folly.

(4) It *is* futile; and force is no remedy.

(5) Its futility is proven by the war waged daily by the Turks as conquerors, during the last 400 years. And because the Balkan peoples have chosen the less evil of two kinds of war, and will use their victory to bring a system based on force and conquest to an end, we who do not believe in force and conquest rejoice in their action, and believe it will achieve immense benefits. But if instead of using their victory to eliminate force, they in their turn pin their faith to it, continue to use it the one against the other, exploiting by its means the populations they rule, and become not the organisers of social co-operation among the Balkan populations, but merely, like the Turks, their conquerors and "owners," then they in their turn will share the fate of the Turk.



Page 2

(6) The fundamental causes of this war are economic in the narrower, as well as in the larger sense of the term; in the first because conquest was the Turk's only trade—he desired to live out of taxes wrung from a conquered people, to exploit them as a means of livelihood, and this conception was at the bottom of most of Turkish misgovernment. And in the larger sense its cause is economic because in the Balkans, remote geographically from the main drift of European economic development, there has not grown up that interdependent social life, the innumerable contacts which in the rest of Europe have done so much to attenuate primitive religious and racial hatreds.

(7) A better understanding by the Turk of the real nature of civilised government, of the economic futility of conquest of the fact that a means of livelihood (an economic system), based upon having more force than someone else and using it ruthlessly against him, is an impossible form of human relationship bound to break down, *would* have kept the peace.

(8) If European statecraft had not been animated by false conceptions, largely economic in origin, based upon a belief in the necessary rivalry of states, the advantages of preponderant force and conquest, the Western nations could have composed their quarrels and ended the abominations of the Balkan peninsula long ago—even in the opinion of the *Times*. And it is our own false statecraft—that of Great Britain—which has a large part of the responsibility for this failure of European civilisation. It has caused us to sustain the Turk in Europe, to fight a great and popular war with that aim, and led us into treaties which had they been kept, would have obliged us to fight to-day on the side of the Turk against the Balkan States.

(9) If by “theories” and “logic” is meant the discussion of and interest in principles, the ideas that govern human relationship, they are the only things that can prevent future wars, just as they were the only things that brought religious wars to an end—a preponderant power “imposing” peace playing no role therein. Just as it was false religious theories which made the religious wars, so it is false political theories which make the political wars.

(10) War is only inevitable in the sense that other forms of error and passion—religious persecution for instance—are inevitable; they cease with better understanding, as the attempt to impose religious belief by force has ceased in Europe.

(11) We should not prepare for war; we should prepare to prevent war; and though that preparation may include battleships and conscription, those elements will quite obviously make the tension and danger greater unless there is also a better European opinion.

These summarised replies need a little expansion.

CHAPTER II.

“PEACE” AND “WAR” IN THE BALKANS.



Page 3

“Peace” in the Balkans under the Turkish System—The inadequacy of our terms—The repulsion of the Turkish invasion—The Christian effort to bring the reign of force and conquest to an end—The difference between action designed to settle relationship on force and counter action designed to prevent such settlement—The force of the policeman and the force of the brigand—The failure of conquest as exemplified by the Turk—Will the Balkan peoples prove Pacifist or Bellicist; adopt the Turkish or the Christian System?

Had we thrashed out the question of war and peace as we must finally, it would hardly be necessary to explain that the apparent paradox in Answer No. 4 (that war is futile, and that this war will have immense benefits) is due to the inadequacy of our language, which compels us to use the same word for two opposed purposes, not to any real contradiction of fact.

We called the condition of the Balkan peninsula “Peace” until the other day, merely because the respective Ambassadors still happened to be resident in the capitals to which they were accredited.

Let us see what “Peace” under Turkish rule really meant, and who is the real invader in this war. Here is a very friendly and impartial witness—Sir Charles Elliot—who paints for us the character of the Turk as an “administrator”:—

“The Turk in Europe has an overweening sense of his superiority, and remains a nation apart, mixing little with the conquered populations, whose customs and ideas he tolerates, but makes little effort to understand. The expression indeed, ‘Turkey in Europe’ means indeed no more than ‘England in Asia,’ if used as a designation for India.... The Turks have done little to assimilate the people whom they have conquered, and still less, been assimilated by them. In the larger part of the Turkish dominions, the Turks themselves are in a minority.... The Turks certainly resent the dismemberment of their Empire, but not in the sense in which the French resent the conquest of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany. They would never use the word ‘Turkey’ or even its oriental equivalent, ‘The High Country’ in ordinary conversation. They would never say that Syria and Greece are parts of Turkey which have been detached, but merely that they are tributaries which have become independent, provinces once occupied by Turks where there are no Turks now. As soon as a province passes under another Government, the Turks find it the most natural thing in the world to leave it and go somewhere else. In the same spirit the Turk talks quite pleasantly of leaving Constantinople some day, he will go over to Asia and found another capital. One can hardly imagine Englishmen speaking like that of London, but they might conceivably speak so of Calcutta.... The Turk is a conqueror and nothing else. The history of the Turk is a catalogue of battles. His contributions to art, literature, science and religion, are practically nil. Their desire has not been to instruct,



Page 4

to improve, hardly even to govern, but simply to conquer.... The Turk makes nothing at all; he takes whatever he can get, as plunder or pillage. He lives in the houses which he finds, or which he orders to be built for him. In unfavourable circumstances he is a marauder. In favourable, a *Grand Seigneur* who thinks it his right to enjoy with grace and dignity all that the world can hold, but who will not lower himself by engaging in art, literature, trade or manufacture. Why should he, when there are other people to do these things for him. Indeed, it may be said that he takes from others even his religion, clothes, language, customs; there is hardly anything which is Turkish and not borrowed. The religion is Arabic; the language half Arabic and Persian; the literature almost entirely imitative; the art Persian or Byzantine; the costumes, in the Upper Classes and Army mostly European. There is nothing characteristic in manufacture or commerce, except an aversion to such pursuits. In fact, all occupations, except agriculture and military service are distasteful to the true Osmanli. He is not much of a merchant. He may keep a stall in a bazaar, but his operations are rarely undertaken on a scale which merits the name of commerce or finance. It is strange to observe how, when trade becomes active in any seaport, or upon the railway lines, the Osmanli retires and disappears, while Greeks, Armenians and Levantines thrive in his place. Neither does he much affect law, medicine or the learned professions. Such callings are followed by Moslims but they are apt to be of non-Turkish race. But though he does none of these things ... the Turk is a soldier. The moment a sword or rifle is put into his hands, he instinctively knows how to use it with effect, and feels at home in the ranks or on a horse. The Turkish Army is not so much a profession or an institution necessitated by the fears and aims of the Government as the quite normal state of the Turkish nation.... Every Turk is a born soldier, and adopts other pursuits chiefly because times are bad. When there is a question of fighting, if only in a riot, the stolid peasant wakes up and shows surprising power of finding organisation and expedients, and alas! a surprising ferocity. The ordinary Turk is an honest and good-humoured soul, kind to children and animals, and very patient; but when the fighting spirit comes on him, he becomes like the terrible warriors of the Huns or Henghis Khan, and slays, burns and ravages without mercy or discrimination."^[1]

Such is the verdict of an instructed, travelled and observant English author and diplomatist, who lived among these people for many years, and who learned to like them, who studied them and their history. It does not differ, of course, appreciably, from what practically every student of the Turk has discovered: the Turk is the typical conqueror. As a nation, he has lived by the sword, and he is dying by the sword, because the sword, the mere exercise of force by one man or group of men upon another, conquest in other words, is an impossible form of human relationship.

Page 5

And in order to maintain this evil form of relationship—its evil and futility is the whole basis of the principles I have attempted to illustrate—he has not even observed the rough chivalry of the brigand. The brigand, though he might knock men on the head, will refrain from having his force take the form of butchering women and disembowelling children. Not so the Turk. His attempt at Government will take the form of the obscene torture of children, of a bestial ferocity which is not a matter of dispute or exaggeration, but a thing to which scores, hundreds, thousands even of credible European, witnesses have testified. “The finest gentleman, sir, that ever butchered a woman or burned a village,” is the phrase that *Punch* most justly puts into the mouth of the defender of our traditional Turcophil policy.

And this condition is “Peace,” and the act which would put a stop to it is “War.” It is the inexactitude and inadequacy of our language which creates much of the confusion of thought in this matter; we have the same term for action destined to achieve a given end and for a counter-action destined to prevent it.

Yet we manage, in other than the international field, in civil matters, to make the thing clear enough.

Once an American town was set light to by incendiaries, and was threatened with destruction. In order to save at least a part of it, the authorities deliberately burned down a block of buildings in the pathway of the fire. Would those incendiaries be entitled to say that the town authorities were incendiaries also, and “believed in setting light to towns?” Yet this is precisely the point of view of those who tax Pacifists with approving war because they approve the measure aimed at bringing it to an end.

Put it another way. You do not believe that force should determine the transfer of property or conformity to a creed, and I say to you: “Hand me your purse and conform to my creed or I kill you.” You say: “Because I do not believe that force should settle these matters, I shall try and prevent it settling them, and therefore if you attack I shall resist; if I did not I should be allowing force to settle them.” I attack; you resist and disarm me and say: “My force having neutralised yours, and the equilibrium being now established, I will hear any reasons you may have to urge for my paying you money; or any argument in favour of your creed. Reason, understanding, adjustment shall settle it.” You would be a Pacifist. Or, if you deem that that word connotes non-resistance, though to the immense bulk of Pacifists it does not, you would be an anti-Bellicist to use a dreadful word coined by M. Emile Faguet in the discussion of this matter. If, however, you said: “Having disarmed you and established the equilibrium, I shall now upset it in my favour by taking your weapon and using it against you unless you hand me *your* purse and subscribe to *my* creed. I do this because force alone can determine issues, and because it is a law of life that the strong should eat up the weak.” You would then be a Bellicist.



Page 6

In the same way, when we prevent the brigand from carrying on his trade—taking wealth by force—it is not because we believe in force as a means of livelihood, but precisely because we do not. And if, in preventing the brigand from knocking out brains, we are compelled to knock out his brains, is it because we believe in knocking out people's brains? Or would we urge that to do so is the way to carry on a trade, or a nation, or a government, or make it the basis of human relationship?

In every civilised country, the basis of the relationship on which the community rests is this: no individual is allowed to settle his differences with another by force. But does this mean that if one threatens to take my purse, I am not allowed to use force to prevent it? That if he threatens to kill me, I am not to defend myself, because “the individual citizens are not allowed to settle their differences by force?” It is *because* of that, because the act of self-defence is an attempt to prevent the settlement of a difference by force, that the law justifies it.[2]

But the law would not justify me, if having disarmed my opponent, having neutralised his force by my own, and re-established the social equilibrium, I immediately proceeded to upset it, by asking him for his purse on pain of murder. I should then be settling the matter by force—I should then have ceased to be a Pacifist, and have become a Bellicist.

For that is the difference between the two conceptions: the Bellicist says: “Force alone can settle these matters; it is the final appeal; therefore fight it out. Let the best man win. When you have preponderant strength, impose your view; force the other man to your will; not because it is right, but because you are able to do so.” It is the “excellent policy” which Lord Roberts attributes to Germany and approves.

We anti-Bellicists take an exactly contrary view. We say: “To fight it out settles nothing, since it is not a question of who is stronger, but of whose view is best, and as that is not always easy to establish, it is of the utmost importance in the interest of all parties, in the long run, to keep force out of it.”

The former is the policy of the Turks. They have been obsessed with the idea that if only they had enough of physical force, ruthlessly exercised, they could solve the whole question of government, of existence for that matter, without troubling about social adjustment, understanding, equity, law, commerce; “blood and iron” were all that was needed. The success of that policy can now be judged.

And whether good or evil comes of the present war will depend upon whether the Balkan States are on the whole guided by the Bellicist principle or the opposed one. If having now momentarily eliminated force as between themselves, they re-introduce it, if the strongest, presumably Bulgaria, adopts Lord Roberts' “excellent policy” of striking because she has the preponderant force, enters upon a career of conquest of other members of the Balkan League, and the populations of the conquered territories, using

them for exploitation by military force—why then there will be no settlement and this war will have accomplished nothing save futile waste and slaughter. For they will have taken under a new flag, the pathway of the Turk to savagery, degeneration, death.



Page 7

But if on the other hand they are guided more by the Pacifist principle, if they believe that co-operation between States is better than conflict between them, if they believe that the common interest of all in good Government is greater than the special interest of any one in conquest, that the understanding of human relationships, the capacity for the organisation of society are the means by which men progress, and not the imposition of force by one man or group upon another, why, they will have taken the pathway to better civilisation. But then they will have disregarded Lord Roberts' advice.

And this distinction between the two systems, far from being a matter of abstract theory of metaphysics or logic chopping, is just the difference which distinguishes the Briton from the Turk, which distinguishes Britain from Turkey. The Turk has just as much physical vigour as the Briton, is just as virile, manly and military. The Turk has the same raw materials of Nature, soil and water. There is no difference in the capacity for the exercise of physical force—or if there is, the difference is in favour of the Turk. The real difference is a difference of ideas, of mind and outlook on the part of the individuals composing the respective societies; the Turk has one general conception of human society and the code and principles upon which it is founded, mainly a militarist one; and the Englishman has another, mainly a Pacifist one. And whether the European society as a whole is to drift towards the Turkish ideal or towards the English ideal will depend upon whether it is animated mainly by the Pacifist or mainly by the Bellicist doctrine; if the former, it will stagger blindly like the Turk along the path to barbarism; if the latter, it will take a better road.

[Footnote 1: "Turkey in Europe," pp. 88-9 and 91-2.

It is significant, by the way, that the "born soldier" has now been crushed by a non-military race whom he has always despised as having no military tradition. Capt. F.W. von Herbert ("Bye Paths in the Balkans") wrote (some years before the present war): "The Bulgars as Christian subjects of Turkey exempt from military service, have tilled the ground under stagnant and enfeebling peace conditions, and the profession of arms is new to them."

"Stagnant and enfeebling peace conditions" is, in view of subsequent events distinctly good.]

[Footnote 2: I dislike to weary the reader with such damnable iteration, but when a Cabinet Minister is unable in this discussion to distinguish between the folly of a thing and its possibility, one *must* make the fundamental point clear.]

CHAPTER III.

ECONOMICS AND THE BALKAN WAR.



The “economic system” of the Turk—The Turkish “Trade of Conquest” as a cause of this war—Racial and Religious hatred of primitive societies—Industrialism as a solvent—Its operation in Europe—Balkans geographically remote from main drift of European economic development—The false economies of the Powers as a cause of their jealousies and quarrels—This has prevented settlement—What is the “economic motive”?—Impossible to separate moral and material—Nationality and the War System.

Page 8

In dealing with answer No. 4 I have shown how the inadequacy of our language leads us so much astray in our notions of the real role of force in human relationships. But there is a curious phenomenon of thought which explains perhaps still more how misconceptions grow up on this subject, and that is the habit of thinking of a war which, of course, must include two parties, in terms, solely of one party at a time. Thus one critic[3] is quite sure that because the Balkan peoples “recked nothing of financial disaster,” economic considerations have had nothing to do with their war—a conclusion which seems to be arrived at by the process of judgment just indicated: to find the cause of condition produced by two parties you shall rigorously ignore one. For there is a great deal of internal evidence for believing that the writer of the article in question would admit very readily that the efforts of the Turk to wring taxes out of the conquered peoples—not in return for a civilized administration but simply as the means of livelihood, of turning conquest into a trade—had a very great deal to do in explaining the Turk’s presence there at all and the Christian’s desire to get rid of him; while the same article specifically states that the mutual jealousies of the great powers, based on a desire to “grab” (an economic motive), had a great deal to do with preventing a peaceful settlement of the difficulties. Yet “economics” have nothing to do with it!

I have attempted elsewhere to make these two points—that it is on the one hand the false economics of the Turks, and on the other hand the false economics of the powers of Europe, colouring the policy and Statecraft of both, which have played an enormous, in all human probability, a determining role in the immediate provoking cause of the war; and, of course, a further and more remote cause of the whole difficulty is the fact that the Balkan peoples never having been subjected to the discipline of that complex social life which arises from trade and commerce have never grown out of (or to a less degree) those primitive racial and religious hostilities which at one time in Europe as a whole provoked conflicts like that now raging in the Balkans. The following article which appeared[4] at the outbreak of the war may summarise some of the points with which we have been dealing.

Polite and good-natured people think it rude to say “Balkans” if a Pacifist be present. Yet I never understood why, and I understand now less than ever. It carries the implication that because war has broken out that fact disposes of all objection to it. The armies are at grips, therefore peace is a mistake. Passion reigns on the Balkans, therefore passion is preferable to reason.

I suppose cannibalism and infanticide, polygamy, judicial torture, religious persecution, witchcraft, during all the years we did these “inevitable” things, were defended in the same way, and those who resented all criticism of them pointed in triumph to the cannibal feast, the dead child, the maimed witness, the slain heretic, or the burned witch. But the fact did not prove the wisdom of those habits, still less their inevitability; for we have them no more.

Page 9

We are all agreed as to the fundamental cause of the Balkan trouble: the hate born of religious, racial, national, and language differences; the attempt of an alien conqueror to live parasitically upon the conquered, and the desire of conqueror and conquered alike to satisfy in massacre and bloodshed the rancour of fanaticism and hatred.

Well, in these islands, not so very long ago, those things were causes of bloodshed; indeed, they were a common feature of European life. But if they are inevitable in human relationship, how comes it that Adana is no longer duplicated by St. Bartholomew; the Bulgarian bands by the vendetta of the Highlander and the Lowlander; the struggle of the Slav and Turk, Serb and Bulgar, by that of Scots and English, and English and Welsh? The fanaticism of the Moslem to-day is no intenser than that of Catholic and heretic in Rome, Madrid, Paris, and Geneva at a time which is only separated from us by the lives of three or four elderly men. The heretic or infidel was then in Europe also a thing unclean and horrifying, exciting in the mind of the orthodox a sincere and honest hatred and a (very largely satisfied) desire to kill. The Catholic of the 16th century was apt to tell you that he could not sit at table with a heretic because the latter carried with him a distinctive and overpoweringly repulsive odour. If you would measure the distance Europe has travelled, think what this means: all the nations of Christendom united in a war lasting 200 years for the capture of the Holy Sepulchre; and yet, when in our day the representatives, seated round a table, could have had it for the asking, they did not deem it worth the asking, so little of the ancient passion was there left. The very nature of man seemed to be transformed. For, wonderful though it be that orthodox should cease killing heretic, infinitely more wonderful still is it that he should cease wanting to kill him.

And just as most of us are certain that the underlying causes of this conflict are “inevitable” and “inherent in unchanging human nature,” so are we certain that so *unhuman* a thing as economics can have no bearing on it.

Well, I will suggest that the transformation of the heretic-hating and heretic-killing European is due mainly to economic forces; that it is because the drift of those forces has in such large part left the Balkans, where until yesterday the people lived the life not much different from that which they lived in the time of Abraham, to one side that war is now raging; that economic factors of a more immediate kind form a large part of the provoking cause of that war; and that a better understanding mainly of certain economic facts of their international relationship on the part of the great nations of Europe is essential before much progress towards solution can be made.

But then, by “economics,” of course, I mean not a merchant’s profit or a moneylender’s interest, but the method by which men earn their bread, which must also mean the kind of life they lead.

Page 10

We generally think of the primitive life of man—that of the herdsman or the tent liver—as something idyllic. The picture is as far as possible from the truth. Those into whose lives economics do not enter, or enter very little—that is to say, those who, like the Congo cannibal, or the Red Indian, or the Bedouin, do not cultivate, or divide their labour, or trade, or save, or look to the future, have shed little of the primitive passions of other animals of prey, the tigers and the wolves, who have no economics at all, and have no need to check an impulse or a hate. But industry, even of the more primitive kind, means that men must divide their labour, which means that they must put some sort of reliance upon one another; the thing of prey becomes a partner, and the attitude towards it changes. And as this life becomes more complex, as the daily needs and desires push men to trade and barter, that means building up a social organisation, rules and codes, and courts to enforce them; as the interdependence widens and deepens it necessarily means disregarding certain hostilities. If the neighbouring tribe wants to trade with you they must not kill you; if you want the services of the heretic you must not kill him, and you must keep your obligation towards him, and mutual good faith is death to long-sustained hatreds.

You cannot separate the moral from the social and economic development of a people, and the great service of a complex social and industrial organisation, which is built up by the desire of men for better material conditions, is not that it “pays” but that it makes a more interdependent human society, and that it leads men to recognise what is the best relationship between them. And the fact of recognising that some act of aggression is causing stocks to fall is not important because it may save Oppenheim’s or Solomon’s money but because it is a demonstration that we are dependent upon some community on the other side of the world, that their damage is our damage, and that we have an interest in preventing it. It teaches us, as only some such simple and mechanical means can teach, the lesson of human fellowship.

And it is by such means as this that Western Europe has in some measure, within its respective political frontiers, learnt that lesson. Each has learnt, within the confines of the nation at least, that wealth is made by work, not robbery; that, indeed, general robbery is fatal to prosperity; that government consists not merely in having the power of the sword but in organising society—in “knowing how”; which means the development of ideas; in maintaining courts; in making it possible to run railways, post offices, and all the contrivances of a complex society.



Page 11

Now rulers did not create these things; it was the daily activities of the people, born of their desires and made possible by the circumstances in which they lived, by the trading and the mining and the shipping which they carried on, that made them. But the Balkans have been geographically outside the influence of European industrial and commercial life. The Turk has hardly felt it at all. He has learnt none of the social and moral lessons which interdependence and improved communications have taught the Western European, and it is because he has not learnt these lessons, because he is a soldier and a conqueror, to an extent and completeness that other nations of Europe lost a generation or two since, that the Balkanese are fighting and that war is raging.

But not merely in this larger sense, but in the more immediate, narrower sense, are the fundamental causes of this war economic.

This war arises, as the past wars against the Turkish conqueror have arisen, by the desire of the Christian peoples on whom he lives to shake off this burden. "To live upon their subjects is the Turks' only means of livelihood," says one authority. The Turk is an economic parasite, and the economic organism must end of rejecting him.

For the management of society, simple and primitive even as that of the Balkan mountains, needs some effort and work and capacity for administration, or even rudimentary economic life cannot be carried on. And the Turkish system, founded on the sword and nothing else ("the finest soldier in Europe"), cannot give that small modicum, of energy or administrative capacity. The one thing he knows is brute force; but it is not by the strength of his muscles that an engineer runs a machine, but by knowing how. The Turk cannot build a road, or make a bridge, or administer a post office, or found a court of law. And these things are necessary. And he will not let them be done by the Christian, who, because he did not belong to the conquering class, has had to work, and has consequently become the class which possesses whatever capacity for work and administration the country can show, because to do so would be to threaten the Turk's only trade. If the Turk granted the Christians equal political rights they would inevitably "run the country," And yet the Turk himself cannot do it; and he will not let others do it, because to do so would be to threaten his supremacy.

And the more the use of force fails, the more, of course, does he resort to it, and that is why many of us who do not believe in force, and desire to see it disappear in the relationship not merely of religious but of political groups, might conceivably welcome this war of the Balkan Christians, in so far as it is an attempt to resist the use of force in those relationships. Of course, I do not try to estimate the "balance of criminality." Right is not all on one side—it never is. But the broad issue is clear and plain. And only those concerned with the name rather than the thing, with nominal and verbal consistency rather than realities, will see anything paradoxical or contradictory in Pacifist approval of Christian resistance to the use of Turkish force.

Page 12

It is the one fact which stands out incontrovertibly from the whole weary muddle. It is quite clear that the inability to act in common arises from the fact that in the international sphere the European is still dominated by illusions which he has dropped when he deals with home politics. The political faith of the Turk, which he would never think of applying at home as between the individuals of his nation, he applies pure and unalloyed when he comes to deal with foreigners as nations. The economic conception—using the term in that wider sense which I have indicated earlier in this article—which guides his individual conduct is the antithesis of that which guides his national conduct.

While the Christian does not believe in robbery inside the frontier, he does without; while within the State he realises that greater advantage lies on the side of each observing the general code, so that civilised society can exist, instead of on the side of having society go to pieces by each disregarding it; while within the State he realises that government is a matter of administration, not the seizure of property; that one town does not add to its wealth by “capturing” another, that indeed one community cannot “own” another—while, I say, he believes all these things in his daily life at home, he disregards them all when he comes to the field of international relationship, *la haute politique*. To annex some province by a cynical breach of treaty obligation (Austria in Bosnia, Italy in Tripoli) is regarded as better politics than to act loyally with the community of nations to enforce their common interest in order and good government. In fact, we do not believe that there can be a community of nations, because, in fact, we do not believe that their interests are common, but rival; like the Turk, we believe that if you do not exercise force upon your “rival” he will exercise it upon you; that nations live upon one another, not by co-operation with one another—and it is for this reason presumably that you must “own” as much of your neighbours’ as possible. It is the Turkish conception from beginning to end.

And it is because these false beliefs prevent the nations of Christendom acting loyally the one to the other, because each is playing for its own hand, that the Turk, with hint of some sordid bribe, has been able to play off each against the other.

This is the crux of the matter. When Europe can honestly act in common on behalf of common interests some solution can be found. And the capacity of Europe to act together will not be found so long as the accepted doctrines of European statecraft remain unchanged, so long as they are dominated by existing illusions.

* * * * *

In a paper read before the British Association of this year, I attempted to show in more general terms this relation between economic impulse and ideal motive. The following are relevant passages:—

Page 13

A nation, a people, we are given to understand, have higher motives than money, or “self-interest.” What do we mean when we speak of the money of a nation, or the self-interest of a community? We mean—and in such a discussion as this can mean nothing else—better conditions for the great mass of the people, the fullest possible lives, the abolition or attenuation of poverty and of narrow circumstances, that the millions shall be better housed and clothed and fed, capable of making provision for sickness and old age, with lives prolonged and cheered—and not merely this, but also that they shall be better educated, with character disciplined by steady labour and a better use of leisure, a general social atmosphere which shall make possible family affection, individual dignity and courtesy and the graces of life, not alone among the few, but among the many.

Now, do these things constitute as a national policy an inspiring aim or not? Yet they are, speaking in terms of communities, pure self-interest—all bound up with economic problems, with money. Does Admiral Mahan mean us to take him at his word when he would attach to such efforts the same discredit that one implies in talking of a mercenary individual? Would he have us believe that the typical great movements of our times—Socialism, Trades Unionism, Syndicalism, Insurance Bills, Land Laws, Old Age Pensions, Charity Organisation, Improved Education—bound up as they all are with economic problems—are not the sort of objects which more and more are absorbing the best activities of Christendom?

I have attempted to show that the activities which lie outside the range of these things—the religious wars, movements like those which promoted the Crusades, or the sort of tradition which we associate with the duel (which has, in fact, disappeared from Anglo-Saxon society)—do not and cannot any longer form part of the impulse creating the long-sustained conflicts between large groups which a European war implies, partly because such allied moral differences as now exist do not in any way coincide with the political divisions, but intersect them, and partly because in the changing character of men’s ideals there is a distinct narrowing of the gulf which is supposed to separate ideal and material aims. Early ideals, whether in the field of politics or religion, are generally dissociated from any aim of general well-being. In early politics ideals are concerned simply with personal allegiance to some dynastic chief, a feudal lord or a monarch. The well-being of a community does not enter into the matter at all: it is the personal allegiance which matters. Later the chief must embody in his person that well-being, or he does not achieve the allegiance of a community of any enlightenment; later, the well-being of the community becomes the end in itself without being embodied in the person of an hereditary chief, so that the community realise that their efforts, instead of being directed

Page 14

to the protection of the personal interests of some chief, are as a matter of fact directed to the protection of their own interests, and their altruism has become self-interest, since self-sacrifice of a community for the sake of the community is a contradiction in terms. In the religious sphere a like development has been shown. Early religious ideals have no relation to the material betterment of mankind. The early Christian thought it meritorious to live a sterile life at the top of a pillar, eaten by vermin, as the Hindoo saint to-day thinks it meritorious to live an equally sterile life upon a bed of spikes. But as the early Christian ideal progressed, sacrifices having no end connected with the betterment of mankind lost their appeal. The Christian saint who would allow the nails of his fingers to grow through the palms of his clasped hands would excite, not our admiration, but our revolt. More and more is religious effort being subjected to this test: does it make for the improvement of society? If not, it stands condemned. Political ideals will inevitably follow a like development, and will be more and more subjected to a like test.

I am aware that very often at present they are not so subjected. Dominated as our political thought is by Roman and feudal imagery—hypnotised by symbols and analogies which the necessary development of organised society has rendered obsolete—the ideals even of democracies are still often pure abstractions, divorced from any aim calculated to advance the moral or material betterment of mankind. The craze for sheer size of territory, simple extent of administrative area, is still deemed a thing deserving immense, incalculable sacrifices.

* * * * *

And yet even these ideals, firmly set as they are in our language and tradition, are rapidly yielding to the necessary force of events. A generation ago it would have been inconceivable that a people or a monarch should calmly see part of its country secede and establish itself as a separate political entity without attempting to prevent it by force of arms. Yet this is what happened but a year or two since in the Scandinavian peninsula. For forty years Germany has added to her own difficulties and those of the European situation for the purpose of including Alsace and Lorraine in its Federation, but even there, obeying the tendency which is world-wide, an attempt has been made at the creation of a constitutional and autonomous government. The history of the British Empire for fifty years has been a process of undoing the work of conquest. Colonies are now neither colonies nor possessions. They are independent States. Great Britain, which for centuries has made such sacrifices to retain Ireland, is now making great sacrifices in order to make her secession workable. To all political arrangements, to all political ideals, the final test will be applied: Does it or does it not make for the widest interests of the mass of



Page 15

the people involved?... And I would ask those who think that war must be a permanent element in the settlement of the moral differences of men to think for one moment of the factors which stood in the way of the abandonment of the use of force by governments, and by one religious group against another in the matter of religious belief. On the one hand you had authority with all the prestige of historical right and the possession of physical power in its most imposing form, the means of education still in their hands; government authority extending to all sorts of details of life to which it no longer extends; immense vested interests outside government; and finally the case for the imposition of dogma by authority a strong one, and still supported by popular passion: and on the other hand, you had as yet poor and feeble instruments of mere opinion; the printed book still a rarity; the Press non-existent, communication between men still rudimentary, worse even than it had been two thousand years previously. And yet, despite these immense handicaps upon the growth of opinion and intellectual ferment as against physical force, it was impossible for a new idea to find life in Geneva or Rome or Edinburgh or London without quickly crossing and affecting all the other centres, and not merely making headway against entrenched authority, but so quickly breaking up the religious homogeneity of states, that not only were governments obliged to abandon the use of force in religious matters as against their subjects, but religious wars between nations became impossible for the double reason that a nation no longer expressed a single religious belief (you had the anomaly of a Protestant Sweden fighting in alliance with a Catholic France), and that the power of opinion had become stronger than the power of physical force—because, in other words, the limits of military force were more and more receding.

But if the use of force was so ineffective against the spiritual possessions of man when the arms to be used in their defence were so poor and rudimentary, how could a government hope to crush out by force to-day such things as a nation's language, law, literature, morals, ideals, when it possesses such means of defence as are provided in security of tenure of material possessions, a cheap literature, a popular Press, a cheap and secret postal system, and all the other means of rapid and perfected inter-communication?

You will notice that I have spoken throughout not of the *defence* of a national ideal by arms, but of its attack; if you have to defend your ideal it is because someone attacks it, and without attack your defence would not be called for.

If you are compelled to prevent someone using force as against your nationality, it is because he believes that by the use of that force he can destroy or change it. If he thought that the use of force would be ineffective to that end he would not employ it.

I have attempted to show elsewhere that the abandonment of war for material ends depends upon a general realisation of its futility for accomplishing those ends. In like



manner does the abandonment of war for moral or ideal ends depend upon the general realisation of the growing futility of such means for those ends also—and for the growing futility of those ends if they could be accomplished.



Page 16

We are sometimes told that it is the spirit of nationality—the desire to be of your place and locality—that makes war. That is not so. It is the desire of other men that you shall not be of your place and locality, of your habits and traditions, but of theirs. Not the desire of nationality, but the desire to destroy nationality is what makes the wars of nationality. If the Germans did not think that the retention of Polish or Alsatian nationality might hamper them in the art of war, hamper them in the imposition of force on some other groups, there would be no attempt to crush out this special possession of the Poles and Alsations. It is the belief in force and a preference for settling things by force instead of by agreement that threatens or destroys nationality. And I have given an indication of the fact that it is not merely war, but the preparation for war, implying as it does great homogeneity in states and centralised bureaucratic control, which is to-day the great enemy of nationality. Before this tendency to centralisation which military necessity sets up much that gives colour and charm to European life is disappearing. And yet we are told that it is the Pacifists who are the enemy of nationality, and we are led to believe that in some way the war system in Europe stands for the preservation of nationality!

[Footnote 3: Review of Reviews, November, 1912.]

[Footnote 4: In the “Daily Mail,” to whose Editor I am indebted for permission to reprint it.]

CHAPTER IV.

TURKISH IDEALS IN OUR POLITICAL THOUGHT.

This war and “the Turks of Britain and Prussia”—The Anglo-Saxon and opposed ideals—Mr. C. Chesterton’s case for “killing and being killed” as the best method of settling differences—Its application to Civil Conflicts—As in Spanish-America—The difference between Devonshire and Venezuela—Will the Balkans adopt the Turco-Venezuelan political ideals or the British?

An English political writer remarked, on it becoming evident that the Christian States were driving back the Turks: “This is a staggering blow to *all* the Turks—those of England and Prussia as well as those of Turkey.”

But, of course, the British and Prussian Turks will never see it—like the Bourbons, they learn not. Here is a typically military system, the work of “born fighters” which has gone down in welter before the assaults of much less military States, the chief of which, indeed, has grown up in what Captain von Herbert has called, with some contempt, “stagnant and enfeebling peace conditions,” formed by the people whom the Turks regarded as quite unfit to be made into warriors; whom they regarded much as some Europeans regard the Jews. It is the Christian populations of the Balkans who were the

traders and workers—those brought most under economic influences; it was the Turks who escaped those influences. A few years since, I wrote:

Page 17

“If the conqueror profits much by his conquest, as the Romans in one sense did, it is the conqueror who is threatened by the enervating effect of the soft and luxurious life; while it is the conquered who are forced to labour for the conqueror, and who learn in consequence those qualities of steady industry which are certainly a better moral training than living upon the fruits of others, upon labour extorted at the sword’s point. It is the conqueror who becomes effete, and it is the conquered who learn discipline and the qualities making for a well-ordered State.”

Could we ask a better illustration than the history of the Turk and his Christian victims? I exemplified the matter thus: “If during long periods a nation gives itself up to war, trade languishes, the population loses the habit of steady industry, government and administration become corrupt, abuses escape punishment, and the real sources of a people’s strength and expansion dwindle. What has caused the relative failure and decline of Spanish, Portuguese, and French expansion in Asia and the New World, and the relative success of English expansion therein? Was it the mere hazards of war which gave to Great Britain the domination of India and half of the New World? That is surely a superficial reading of history. It was, rather, that the methods and processes of Spain, Portugal, and France were military, while those of the Anglo-Saxon world were commercial and peaceful. Is it not a commonplace that in India, quite as much as in the New World, the trader and the settler drove out the soldier and the conqueror? The difference between the two methods was that one was a process of conquest, and the other of colonizing, or non-military administration for commercial purposes. The one embodied the sordid Cobdenite idea, which so excites the scorn of the militarists, and the other the lofty military ideal. The one was parasitism; the other co-operation....

“How may we sum up the whole case, keeping in mind every empire that ever existed—the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Mede and Persian, the Macedonian, the Roman, the Frank, the Saxon, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Bourbon, the Napoleonic? In all and every one of them we may see the same process, which is this: If it remains military it decays; if it prospers and takes its share of the work of the world it ceases to be military. There is no other reading of history.”

But despite these very plain lessons, there are many amongst us who regard physical conflict as the ideal form of human relationship; “killing and being killed” as the best way to determine the settlement of differences, and a society which drifts from these ideals as on the high road to degeneration, and who deem those who set before themselves the ideal of abolishing or attenuating poverty for the mass of men, “low and sordid.”

Thus Mr. Cecil Chesterton[5]:

In essence Mr. Angell’s query is: “Should usurers go to war?”



Page 18

I may say, in passing, that I am not clear that even on the question thus raised Mr. Angell makes out his case. His case, broadly stated, is that the net of "Finance"—or, to put it plainer, Cosmopolitan Usury—which is at present spread over Europe would be disastrously torn by any considerable war; and that in consequence it is to the interest of the usurers to preserve peace. But here, it seems to me, we must make a clear differentiation. It may easily be to the interest of a particular usurer, or group of usurers, to provoke war; that very financial crisis which Mr. Angell anticipates may quite probably be a source of profit to them. That it would not be to the interest of a nation of usurers to fight is very probable. That such a nation would not fight, or, if it did, would be exceedingly badly beaten, is certain. But that only serves to raise the further question of whether it is to the ultimate advantage of a nation to repose upon usury; and whether the breaking of the net of usury which at present unquestionably holds Europe in captivity would not be for the advantage, as it would clearly be for the honour, of our race.... The sword is too sacred a thing to be prostituted to such dirty purposes. But whether he succeeds or fails in this attempt, it will make no difference to the mass of plain men who, when they fight and risk their lives, do not do so in the expectation of obtaining a certain interest on their capital, but for quite other reasons. Mr. Angell's latest appeal comes, I think, at an unfortunate moment. It is not merely that the Balkan States have refused to be convinced by Mr. Angell as to their chances of commercial profit from the war. It is that if Mr. Angell had succeeded to the fullest extent in convincing them that there was not a quarter per cent. to be made out of the war, nay, that—horrible thought!—they would actually be poorer at the end of the war than at the beginning, they would have gone to war all the same. Since Mr. Angell's argument clearly applies as much or more to civil as to international conflicts, I may perhaps be allowed to turn to civil conflicts to make clear my meaning. In this country during the last three centuries one solid thing has been done. The power of Parliament was pitted in battle against the power of the Crown, and won. As a result, for good or evil, Parliament really is stronger than the Crown to-day. The power of the mass of the people to control Parliament has been given as far as mere legislation could give it. We all know that it is a sham. And if you ask what it is that makes the difference of reality between the two cases, it is this: that men killed and were killed for the one thing and not for the other. I have no space to develop all that I should like to say about the indirect effects of war. All I will say is this, that men do judge, and always will judge, things by the ultimate



Page 19

test of how they fight. The German victory of forty years ago has produced not only an astonishing expansion, industrial as well as political of Germany, but has (most disastrously, as I think) infected Europe with German ideas, especially with the idea that you make a nation strong by making its people behave like cattle. God send that I may live to see the day when victorious armies from Gaul shall shatter this illusion, burn up Prussianism with all its Police Regulations, Insurance Acts, Poll Taxes, and insults to the poor, and reassert the Republic. It will never be done in any other way. If arbitration is ever to take the place of war, it must be backed by a corresponding array of physical force. Now the question immediately arises: Are we prepared to arm any International Tribunal with any such powers? Personally, I am not.... Turn back some fifty years to the great struggle for the emancipation of Italy. Suppose that a Hague Tribunal had then been in existence, armed with coercive powers. The dispute between Austria and Sardinia must have been referred to that tribunal. That tribunal must have been guided by existing treaties. The Treaty of Vienna was perhaps the most authoritative ever entered into by European Powers. By that treaty, Venice and Lombardy were unquestionably assigned to Austria. A just tribunal administering international law *must* have decided in favour of Austria, and have used the whole armed force of Europe to coerce Italy into submission. Are those Pacifists, who try at the same time to be Democrats, prepared to acquiesce in such a conclusion? Personally, I am not.

I replied as follows:

Mr. Cecil Chesterton says that the question which I have raised is this: "Should usurers go to war?"

That, of course, is not true. I have never, even by implication, put such a problem, and there is nothing in the article which he criticises, nor in any other statement of my own, that justifies it. What I have asked is whether peoples should go to war. I should have thought it was pretty obvious that, whatever happens, usurers do not go to war: the peoples go to war, and the peoples pay, and the whole question is whether they should go on making war and paying for it. Mr. Chesterton says that if they are wise they will; I say that if they are wise they will not. I have attempted to show that the prosperity of peoples—by which, of course, one means the diminution of poverty, better houses, soap and water, healthy children, lives prolonged, conditions sufficiently good to ensure leisure and family affection, fuller and completer lives generally—is not secured by fighting one another, but by co-operation and labour, by a better organisation of society, by improved human relationship, which, of course, can only come of better understanding of the conditions of that relationship, which better understanding means

Page 20

discussion, adjustment, a desire and capacity to see the point of view of the other man —of all of which war and its philosophy is the negation. To all of this Mr. Chesterton replies: “That only concerns the Jews and the moneylenders.” Again, this is not true. It concerns all of us, like all problems of our struggle with Nature. It is in part at least an economic problem, and that part of it is best stated in the more exact and precise terms that I have employed to deal with it—the term’s of the market-place. But to imply that the conditions that there obtain are the affair merely of bankers and financiers, to imply that these things do not touch the lives of the mass, is simply to talk a nonsense the meaninglessness of which only escapes some of us because in these matters we happen to be very ignorant. It is not mainly usurers who suffer from bad finance and bad economics (one may suggest that they are not quite so simple); it is mainly the people as a whole. Mr. Chesterton says that we should break this “net of usury” in which the peoples are enmeshed. I agree heartily; but that net has been woven mainly by war (and that diversion of energy and attention from social management which war involves), and is, so far as the debts of the European States are concerned (so large an element of usury), almost solely the outcome of war. And if the peoples go on piling up debt, as they must if they are to go on piling up armaments (as Mr. Chesterton wants them to), giving the best of their attention and emotion to sheer physical conflict, instead of to organisation and understanding, they will merely weave that web of debt and usury still closer; it will load us more heavily and strangle us to a still greater extent. If usury is the enemy, the remedy is to fight usury. Mr. Chesterton says the remedy is for its victims to fight one another. And you will not fight usury by hanging Rothschilds, for usury is worst where that sort of thing is resorted to. Widespread debt is the outcome of bad management and incompetence, economic or social, and only better management will remedy it. Mr. Chesterton is sure that better management is only arrived at by “killing and being killed.” He really does urge this method even in civil matters. (He tells us that the power of Parliament over the Crown is real, and that of the people over Parliament a sham, “because men killed and were killed for the one, and not for the other.”) It is the method of Spanish America where it is applied more frankly and logically, and where still, in many places, elections are a military affair, the questions at issue being settled by killing and being killed, instead of by the cowardly, pacifist methods current in Europe. The result gives us the really military civilisations of Venezuela, Colombia, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. And, although the English system may have many defects—I think it has—those defects exist in a still



Page 21

greater degree where force “settles” the matters in dispute, where the bullet replaces the ballot, and where bayonets are resorted to instead of brains. For Devonshire is better than Nicaragua. Really it is. And it would get us out of none of our troubles for one group to impose its views simply by preponderant physical force, for Mr. Asquith, for instance, in the true Castro or Zuyala manner, to announce that henceforth all critics of the Insurance Act are to be shot, and that the present Cabinet will hold office as long as it can depend upon the support of the Army. For, even if the country rose in rebellion, and fought it out and won, the successful party would (if they also believed in force) do exactly the same thing to *their* opponents; and so it would go on never-endingly (as it has gone on during weary centuries throughout the larger part of South America), until the two parties came once more to their senses, and agreed not to use force when they happened to be able to do so; which is our present condition. But it is the condition of England merely because the English, as a whole, have ceased to believe in Mr. Chesterton’s principles; it is not yet the condition of Venezuela because the Venezuelans have not yet ceased to believe those principles, though even they are beginning to. Mr. Chesterton says: “Men do judge, and always will judge, by the ultimate test of how they fight.” The pirate who gives his blood has a better right, therefore, to the ship than the merchant (who may be a usurer!) who only gives his money. Well, that is the view which was all but universal well into the period of what, for want of a better word, we call civilisation. Not only was it the basis of all such institutions as the ordeal and duel; not only did it justify (and in the opinion of some still justifies) the wars of religion and the use of force in religious matters generally; not only was it the accepted national polity of such communities as the Vikings, the Barbary States, and the Red Indians; but it is still, unfortunately, the polity of certain European states. But the idea is a survival and—and this is the important point—an admission of failure to understand where right lies: to “fight it out” is the remedy of the boy who for the life of him cannot see who is right and who is wrong. At ten years of age we are all quite sure that piracy is a finer calling than trade, and the pirate a finer fellow than the Shylock who owns the ship—which, indeed, he may well be. But as we grow up (which some of the best of us never do) we realise that piracy is not the best way to establish the ownership of cargoes, any more than the ordeal is the way to settle cases at law, or the rack of proving a dogma, or the Spanish American method the way to settle differences between Liberals and Conservatives. And just as civil adjustments are made most efficiently, as they are in England (say),

Page 22

as distinct from South America, by a general agreement not to resort to force, so it is the English method in the international field which gives better results than that based on force. The relationship of Great Britain to Canada or Australia is preferable to the relationship of Russia to Finland or Poland, or Germany to Alsace-Lorraine. The five nations of the British Empire have, by agreement, abandoned the use of force as between themselves. Australia may do us an injury—exclude our subjects, English or Indian, and expose them to insult—but we know very well that force will not be used against her. To withhold such force is the basis of the relationship of these five nations; and, given a corresponding development of ideas, might equally well be the basis of the relationship of fifteen—about all the nations of the world who could possibly fight. The difficulties Mr. Chesterton imagines—an international tribunal deciding in favour of Austria concerning the recession of Venice and Lombardy, and summoning the forces of United Europe to coerce Italy into submission—are, of course, based on the assumption that a United Europe, having arrived at such understanding as to be able to sink its differences, would be the same kind of Europe that it is now, or was a generation ago. If European statecraft advances sufficiently to surrender the use of force against neighbouring states, it will have advanced sufficiently to surrender the use of force against unwilling provinces, as in some measure British statesmanship has already done. To raise the difficulty that Mr. Chesterton does is much the same as assuming that a court of law in San Domingo or Turkey will give the same results as a court of law in Great Britain, because the form of the mechanism is the same. And does Mr. Chesterton suggest that the war system settles these matters to perfection? That it has worked satisfactorily in Ireland and Finland, or, for the matter of that, in Albania or Macedonia? For if Mr. Chesterton urges that killing and being killed is the way to determine the best means of governing a country, it is his business to defend the Turk, who has adopted that principle during four hundred years, not the Christians, who want to bring that method to an end and adopt another. And I would ask no better example of the utter failure of the principles that I combat and Mr. Chesterton defends than their failure in the Balkan Peninsula. This war is due to the vile character of Turkish rule, and the Turk's rule is vile because it is based on the sword. Like Mr. Chesterton (and our pirate), the Turk believes in the right of conquest, "the ultimate test of how they fight." "The history of the Turks," says Sir Charles Elliott, "is almost exclusively a catalogue of battles." He has lived (for the most gloriously uneconomic person has to live, to follow a trade of some sort, even if it be that of theft) on tribute exacted from the Christian populations, and extorted,



Page 23

not in return for any work of administration, but simply because he was the stronger. And that has made his rule intolerable, and is the cause of this war. Now, my whole thesis is that understanding, work, co-operation, adjustment, must be the basis of human society; that conquest as a means of achieving national advantage must fail; that to base your prosperity or means of livelihood, your economic system, in short, upon having more force than someone else, and exercising it against him, is an impossible form of human relationship that is bound to break down. And Mr. Chesterton says that the war in the Balkans demolishes this thesis. I do not agree with him. The present war in the Balkans is an attempt—and happily a successful one—to bring this reign of force and conquest to an end, and that is why those of us who do not believe in military force rejoice. The debater, more concerned with verbal consistency than realities and the establishment of sound principles, will say that this means the approval of war. It does not; it merely means the choice of the less evil of two forms of war. War has been going on in the Balkans, not for a month, but has been waged by the Turks daily against these populations for 400 years. The Balkan peoples have now brought to an end a system of rule based simply upon the accident of force—“killing and being killed.” And whether good or ill comes of this war will depend upon whether they set up a similar system or one more in consonance with pacifist principles. I believe they will choose the latter course; that is to say, they will continue to co-operate between themselves instead of fighting between themselves; they will settle differences by discussion, adjustment, not force. But if they are guided by Mr. Chesterton’s principle, if each one of the Balkan nations is determined to impose its own especial point of view, to refuse all settlement by co-operation and understanding, where it can resort to force—why, in that case, the strongest (presumably Bulgaria) will start conquering the rest, start imposing government by force, and will listen to no discussion or argument; will simply, in short, take the place of the Turk in the matter, and the old weary contest will begin afresh, and we shall have the Turkish system under a new name, until that in its turn is destroyed, and the whole process begun again *da capo*. And if Mr. Chesterton says that this is not his philosophy, and that he would recommend the Balkan nations to come to an understanding, and co-operate together, instead of fighting one another, why does he give different counsels to the nations of Christendom as a whole? If it is well for the Balkan peoples to abandon conflict as between themselves in favour of co-operation against the common enemy, why is it ill for the other Christian peoples to abandon such conflict in favour of co-operation against their common enemy, which is wild nature and human error, ignorance and passion.

[Footnote 5: From “Everyman” to whose Editor I am indebted for permission to print my reply.]



Page 24

CHAPTER V.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR BALKAN WARS.

Mr. Winston Churchill on the “Responsibility” of Diplomacy—What does he mean?—An easy (and popular) philosophy—Can we neglect past if we would avoid future errors?—British temper and policy in the Crimean War—What are its lessons?—Why we fought a war to sustain the “integrity and independence of the Turkish dominion in Europe”—Supporting the Turk against his Christian victims—From fear of Russian growth which we are now aiding—The commentary of events—Shall we back the wrong horse again?

Here was a war which had broken out in spite of all that rulers and diplomatists could do to prevent it, a war in which the Press had had no part, a war which the whole force of the money power had been subtly and steadfastly directed to prevent, which had come upon us not through the ignorance or credulity of the people; but, on the contrary, through their knowledge of their history and their destiny.... Who is the man who is vain enough to suppose that the long antagonisms of history and of time can in all circumstances be adjusted by the smooth and superficial conventions of politicians and ambassadors?

Thus Mr. Churchill. It is a plea for the inevitability, not merely of war, but of a people’s “destiny.”

What precisely does it mean? Does it mean that the European Powers have in the past been entirely wise and honest, have never intrigued with the Turk the one against the other, have always kept good faith, have never been inspired by false political theories and tawdry and shoddy ideals, have, in short, no responsibility for the abominations that have gone on in the Balkan peninsula for a century? No one outside a lunatic asylum would urge it. But, then, that means that diplomacy has *not* done all it might to prevent this war. Why does Mr. Churchill say it has?

And does the passage I have quoted mean that we—that English diplomacy—has had no part in European diplomacy in the past? Have we not, on the contrary, by universal admission played a predominant role by backing the wrong horse?

But, then, that is not a popular thing to point out, and Mr. Churchill is very careful not to point it out in any way that could give justification to an unpopular view or discredit a popular one. He is, however, far too able a Cabinet Minister to ignore obvious facts, and it is interesting to note how he disposes of them. Observe the following passage:

For the drama or tragedy which is moving to its climax in the Balkans we all have our responsibilities, and none of us can escape our share of them by blaming others or by blaming the Turk. If there is any man here who, looking back over the last 35 years,

thinks he knows where to fix the sole responsibility for all the procrastination and provocation, for all the jealousies and rivalries,



Page 25

for all the religious and racial animosities, which have worked together for this result, I do not envy him his complacency.... Whether we blame the belligerents or criticise the Powers or sit in sackcloth and ashes ourselves is absolutely of no consequence at the present moment.

Now if for this tragedy we “all have our responsibility,” then what becomes of his first statement that the war is raging despite all that rulers and diplomats could do to prevent it? If the war was “inevitable,” and rulers and diplomats have done all they could to prevent it, neither they nor we have any responsibility for it. He knows, of course, that it is impossible to deny that responsibility, that our errors in the past *have* been due not to any lack of readiness to fight or quarrel with foreign nations, but precisely to the tendency to do those things and our *indisposition* to set aside instinctive and reasonless jealousies and rivalries in favour of a deeper sense of responsibility and a somewhat longer vision.

But, again, this quite obvious moral, that if we have our responsibility, if, in other words, we have *not* done all that we might and *have* been led away by temper and passion, we should, in order to avoid a repetition of such errors in the future, try and see where we have erred in the past, is precisely the moral that Mr. Churchill does *not* draw. Again, it is not the popular line to show with any definiteness that we have been wrong. An abstract proposition that “we all have our responsibilities,” is, while a formal admission of the obvious fact also at the same time, an excuse, almost a justification. You realise Mr. Churchill’s method: Having made the necessary admission of fact, you immediately prevent any unpleasant (or unpopular) practical conclusion concerning our duty in the matter by talking of the “complacency” of those who would fix any real and definite part of the responsibility upon you. (Because, of course, no man, knows where lies, and no one would ever attempt to fix, the “sole” responsibility). Incidentally, one might point out to Mr. Churchill that the attempt to see the errors of past conduct and to avoid them in the future is *not* complacency, but that airily to dismiss our responsibility by saying that it is of “no consequence whether we sit in sackcloth and ashes” *is* complacency.

Mr. Churchill’s idea seems to be that men should forget their errors—and commit them again. For that is what it amounts to. We cannot, indeed, undo the past, that is true; but we can prevent it being repeated. But we certainly shall not prevent such repetition if we hug the easy doctrine that we have always been right—that it is not worth while to see how our principles have worked out in practice, to take stock of our experience, and to see what results the principles we propose again to put into operation, have given.

Page 26

The practical thing for us if we would avoid like errors in the future is to see where *our* responsibility lies—a thing which we shall never do if we are governed by the net impression which disengages itself from speeches like those of Mr. Churchill. For the net result of that speech, the impression, despite a few shrewd qualifications which do not in reality affect that net result but which may be useful later wherewith to silence critics, is that war is inevitable, a matter of “destiny,” that diplomacy—the policy pursued by the respective powers—can do nothing to prevent it; that as brute force is the one and final appeal the only practical policy is to have plenty of armaments and to show a great readiness to fight; that it is futile to worry about past errors; (especially as an examination of them would go a long way to discredit the policy just indicated); that the troublesome and unpopular people who in the past happen to have kept their heads during a prevailing dementia—and whose policy happens to have been as right as that of the popular side was wrong—can be dismissed with left-handed references to “complacency,” This sort of thing is popular enough, of course, but—

Well, I will take the risks of a tactic which is the exact contrary to that adopted by Mr. Churchill and would urge upon those whose patriotism is not of the order which is ready to see their country in the wrong and who do feel some responsibility for its national policy, to ask themselves these questions:

Is it true that the Powers could have prevented in large measure the abominations which Turkey has practised in the Balkans for the last half-century or so?

Has our own policy been a large factor in determining that of the Powers?

Has our own policy directly prevented in the past the triumph of the Christian populations which, despite that policy, has finally taken place?

Was our own policy at fault when we were led into a war to ensure the “integrity and independence of the Turkish dominions in Europe”?

Is the general conception of Statecraft on which that policy has been based—the “Balance of Power” which presupposes the necessary rivalry of nations and which in the past has led to oppose Russia as it is now leading to oppose Germany—sound, and has it been justified in history?

Did we give due weight to the considerations urged by the public men of the past who opposed such features of this policy as the Crimean War; was the immense popularity of that war any test of its wisdom; were the rancour, hatred and scorn poured upon those men just or deserved?

* * * * *



Now the first four of these questions have been answered by history and are answered by every one to-day in an emphatic affirmative. This is not the opinion of a Pacifist partisan. Even the *Times* is constrained to admit that "these futile conflicts might have ended years ago, if it had not been for the quarrels of the Western nations."^[6] And as to the Crimean War, has not the greatest Conservative foreign minister of the nineteenth century admitted that "we backed the wrong horse"—and, what is far more to the point, have not events unmistakably demonstrated it?



Page 27

Do we quite realise that if foreign policy had that continuity which the political pundits pretend, we should now be fighting on the side of the Turk against the Balkan States? That we have entered into solemn treaty obligations, as part of our national policy, to guarantee for ever the “integrity and independence of the Turkish dominions in Europe,” that we fought a great and popular war to prevent that triumph of the Christian population which will arise as the result of the present war? That but for this policy which caused us to maintain the Turk in Europe the present war would certainly not be raging, and, what is much more to the point, that but for our policy the abominations which have provoked it and which it is its object to terminate, would so far as human reason can judge at all have been brought to an end generations since? Do we quite realise that we are in large part responsible, not merely for the war, but for the long agony of horror which have provoked it and made it necessary; that when we talk of the jealousies and rivalries of the Powers as playing so large a part in the responsibility for these things, we represent, perhaps, the chief among those jealousies and rivalries? That it is not mainly the Turk nor the Russian nor the Austrian which has determined the course of history in the Balkan peninsular since the middle of the 19th century, but we Englishmen—the country gentleman obsessed by vague theories of the Balance of Power and heaven knows what, reading his *Times* and barking out his preposterous politics over the dinner table? That this fatal policy was dictated simply by fear of the growth of “Russian barbarism and autocracy” and “the overshadowing of the Western nations by a country whose institutions are inimical to our own”? That while we were thus led into war by a phantom danger to our Indian possessions, we were quite blind to the real danger which threatened them, which a year or two later, in the Mutiny, nearly lost us them and which were not due to the machinations of a rival power but to our own misgovernment; that this very “barbaric growth” and expansion towards India which we fought a war to check we are now actively promoting in Persia and elsewhere by our (effective) alliance? That while as recently as fifteen years ago we would have gone to war to prevent any move of Russia towards the Indian frontier, we are to-day actually encouraging her to build a railway there? And that it is now another nation which stands as the natural barrier to Russian expansion to the West—Germany—whose power we are challenging, and that all tendencies point to our backing again the wrong horse, to our fighting *with* the “semi-Asiatic barbarian” (as our fathers used to call him) against the nation which has close racial and cultural affinity to our own, just as half a century since the same fatal obsession about the “Balance of Power” led us to fight with the Mohammedan in order to bolster up for half a century his anti-Christian rule.



Page 28

The misreading of history in this matter is, unfortunately, not possible. The point upon which in the Crimean war the negotiations with Russia finally broke was the claim, based upon her reading of the Vienna note, to stand as religious protector of the Greek Christians in the Balkan peninsular. That was the pivot of the whole negotiations, and the war was the outcome of our support of the Turkish view—or, rather, our conduct of Turkish policy, for throughout the whole period England was conducting the Turkish negotiations; indeed, as Bright said at the time, she was carrying on the Turkish Government and ruling the Turkish Empire through her ministers in Constantinople.

I will quote a speech of the period made in the House of Commons. It was as follows:

Our opponents seem actuated by a frantic and bitter hostility to Russia, and, without considering the calamities in which they might involve this country, they have sought to urge it into a great war, as they imagined, on behalf of European freedom, and in order to cripple the resources of Russia....The question is, whether the advantages both to Turkey and England of avoiding war altogether, would have been less than those which are likely to arise from the policy which the Government has pursued? Now, if the noble Lord the Member for Tiverton is right in saying that Turkey is a growing power, and that she has elements of strength which unlearned persons like myself know nothing about; surely no immediate, or sensible, or permanent mischief could have arisen to her from the acceptance of the Vienna note, which all the distinguished persons who agreed to it have declared to be perfectly consistent with her honour and independence. If she had been growing stronger and stronger of late years, surely she would have grown still stronger in the future, and there might have been a reasonable expectation that, whatever disadvantages she might have suffered for a time from that note, her growing strength would have enabled her to overcome them, while the peace of Europe might have been preserved. But suppose that Turkey is not a growing power, but that the Ottoman rule in Europe is tottering to its fall, I come to the conclusion that, whatever advantages were afforded to the Christian population of Turkey would have enabled them to grow more rapidly in numbers, in industry, in wealth, in intelligence, and in political power; and that, as they thus increased in influence, they would have become more able, in case any accident, which might not be far distant, occurred, to supplant the Mahommedan rule, and to establish themselves in Constantinople as a Christian State, which, I think, every man who hears me will admit is infinitely more to be desired than that the Mahommedan power should be permanently sustained by the bayonets of France and the fleets of England. Europe would thus have been at peace; for I do not think even the most bitter enemies of Russia believe



Page 29

that the Emperor of Russia intended last year, if the Vienna note or Prince Menchikoff's last and most moderate proposition had been accepted, to have marched on Constantinople. Indeed, he had pledged himself in the most distinct manner to withdraw his troops at once from the Principalities, if the Vienna note were accepted; and therefore in that case Turkey would have been delivered from the presence of the foe; peace would for a time have been secured for Europe; and the whole matter would have drifted on to its natural solution—which is, that the Mahommedan power in Europe should eventually succumb to the growing power of the Christian population of the Turkish territories.

Now, looking back upon what has since happened, which view shows the greater wisdom and prevision? That of the man who delivered this speech (and he was John Bright) or those against whom he spoke? To which set of principles has time given the greater justification?

Yet upon the men who resisted what we all admit, in this case at least, to have been the false theories and who supported, what we equally admit now, to have been the right principles, we poured the same sort of ferocious contempt that we are apt now spasmodically to pour upon those who, sixty years later, would prevent our drifting in the same blind fashion into a war just as futile and bound to be infinitely more disastrous—a war embodying the same “principles” supported by just the same theories and just the same arguments which led us into this other one.

I know full well the prejudice which the names I am about to cite is apt to cause. We poured out upon the men who bore them a rancour, contempt and hatred which few men in English public life have had to face. Morley, in his life of Cobden, says of these two men—Cobden and Bright:

They had, as Lord Palmerston said, the whole world against them. It was not merely the august personages of the Court, nor the illustrious veterans in Government and diplomacy, nor the most experienced politicians in Parliament, nor the powerful journalists, nor the men versed in great affairs of business. It was no light thing to confront even that solid mass of hostile judgment. But besides all this, Cobden and Mr. Bright knew that the country at large, even their trusty middle and industrial classes, had turned their faces resolutely and angrily away from them. Their own great instrument, the public meeting, was no longer theirs to wield. The army of the Nonconformists, which has so seldom been found fighting on the wrong side, was seriously divided. Public opinion was bitterly and impatiently hostile and intractable. Mr. Bright was burnt in effigy. Cobden, at a meeting in his own constituency, after an energetic vindication of his opinions, saw resolutions carried against him. Every morning they were reviled in half the newspapers in the country as enemies of the commonwealth. They were openly told that they



Page 30

were traitors, and that it was a pity they could not be punished as traitors. In the House, Lord Palmerston once began his reply by referring to Mr. Bright as “the Honourable and Reverend gentleman,” Cobden rose to call him to order for this flippant and unbecoming phrase. Lord Palmerston said he would not quarrel about words. Then went on to say that he thought it right to tell Mr. Bright that his opinion was a matter of entire difference, and that he treated his censure with the most perfect indifference and contempt. On another occasion he showed the same unmannerliness to Cobden himself. Cobden had said that under certain circumstances he would fight, or if he could not fight, he would work for the wounded in the hospitals. “Well,” said Lord Palmerston in reply, with the sarcasm of a schoolboy’s debating society, “there are many people in this country who think that the party to which he belongs should go immediately into a hospital of a different kind, and which I shall not mention.” This refined irony was a very gentle specimen of the insult and contumely which was poured upon Cobden and Mr. Bright at this time....It is impossible not to regard the attitude of the two objects of this vast unpopularity as one of the most truly honourable spectacles in our political history. The moral fortitude, like the political wisdom of these two strong men, begins to stand out with a splendour that already recalls the great historic heights of statesmanship and patriotism. Even now our heart-felt admiration and gratitude goes out to them as it goes out to Burke for his lofty and manful protests against the war with America and the oppression of Ireland, and to Charles Fox for his bold and strenuous resistance to the war with the French Republic.

Before indulging in the dementia which those names usually produce, will the reader please note that it is not my business now to defend either the general principles of Cobden and Bright or the political spirit which they are supposed to represent. Let them be as sordid, mean, unworthy, pusillanimous as you like—and as the best of us then said they were (“a mean, vain, mischievous clique” even so good a man as Tom Hughes could call them). We called them cowards—because practically alone they faced a country which had become a howling mob; we called their opponents “courageous” because with the whole country behind them they habitually poured contempt upon the under dog.

And we thus hated these men because they did their best to dissuade us from undertaking a certain war. Very good; we have had our war; we carried our point, we prevented the break-up of the Turkish Empire; those men were completely beaten. And they are dead. Cannot we afford to set aside those old passions and see how far in one particular at least they may have been right?

We admit, of course, if we are honest—happily everyone admits—that these despised men were right and those who abused them were wrong. The verdict of fact is there. Says Lord Morley:—



Page 31

When we look back upon the affairs of that time, we see that there were two policies open. Lord Palmerston's was one, Cobden and Bright's the other. If we are to compare Lord Palmerston's statesmanship and insight in the Eastern Question with that of his two great adversaries, it is hard, in the light of all that has happened since, to resist the conclusion that Cobden and Mr. Bright were right, and Lord Palmerston was disastrously wrong. It is easy to plead extenuating circumstances for the egregious mistakes in Lord Palmerston's policy about the Eastern Question, the Suez Canal, and some other important subjects; but the plea can only be allowed after it has been frankly recognized that they really were mistakes, and that these abused men exposed and avoided them. Lord Palmerston, for instance, asked why the Czar could not be "satisfied, as we all are, with the progressively liberal system of Turkey." Cobden, in his pamphlet twenty years before, insisted that this progressively liberal system of Turkey had no existence. Which of these two propositions was true may be left to the decision of those who lent to the Turk many millions of money on the strength of Lord Palmerston's ignorant and delusive assurances. It was mainly owing to Lord Palmerston, again, that the efforts of the war were concentrated at Sebastopol. Sixty thousand English and French troops, he said, with the co-operation of the fleets, would take Sebastopol in six weeks. Cobden gave reasons for thinking very differently, and urged that the destruction of Sebastopol, even when it was achieved, would neither inflict a crushing blow to Russia, nor prevent future attacks upon Turkey. Lord Palmerston's error may have been intelligible and venial; nevertheless, as a fact, he was in error and Cobden was not, and the error cost the nation one of the most unfortunate, mortifying, and absolutely useless campaigns in English history. Cobden held that if we were to defend Turkey against Russia, the true policy was to use our navy, and not to send a land force to the Crimea. Would any serious politician now be found to deny it? We might prolong the list of propositions, general and particular, which Lord Palmerston maintained and Cobden traversed, from the beginning to the end of the Russian War. There is not one of these propositions in which later events have not shown that Cobden's knowledge was greater, his judgment cooler, his insight more penetrating and comprehensive. The bankruptcy of the Turkish Government, the further dismemberment of its Empire by the Treaty of Berlin, the abrogation of the Black Sea Treaty, have already done something to convince people that the two leaders saw much further ahead in 1854 and 1855 than men who had passed all their lives in foreign chanceries and the purlieus of Downing Street. It is startling to look back upon the bullying contempt which the man who was blind permitted himself to show to the men who could see.



Page 32

The truth is, that to Lord Palmerston it was still incomprehensible and intolerable that a couple of manufacturers from Lancashire should presume to teach him foreign policy. Still more offensive to him was their introduction of morality into the mysteries of the Foreign Office.[7]

What have peace theories to do with this war? asks the practical man, who is the greatest mystic of all, contemptuously. Well, they have everything to do with it. For if we had understood some peace theories a little better a generation or two ago, if we had not allowed passion and error and prejudice instead of reason to dominate our policy, the sum of misery which these Balkan populations have known would have been immeasurably less. It is quite true that we could not have prevented this war by sending peace pamphlets to the Turk, or to the Balkanese, for that matter, but we could have prevented it if we ourselves had read them a generation or two since, just as our only means of preventing future wars is by showing a little less prejudice and a little less blindness.

And the practical question, despite Mr. Churchill, is whether we shall allow a like passion and a like prejudice again to blind us; whether we shall again back the wrong horse in the name of the same hollow theories drifting to a similar but greater futility and catastrophe, or whether we shall profit by our past to assure a better future.

[Footnote 6: 14/11/12]

[Footnote 7: *The Life of Richard Cobden*.—UNWIN.]

CHAPTER VI.

PACIFISM, DEFENCE, AND “THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF WAR.”

Did the Crimean War prove Bright and Cobden wrong?—Our curious reasoning—Mr. Churchill on “illusions”—The danger of war is not the illusion but its benefits—We are all Pacifists now since we all desire Peace—Will more armaments alone secure it?—The experience of mankind—War “the failure of human wisdom”—Therefore more wisdom is the remedy—But the Militarists only want more arms—The German Lord Roberts—The military campaign against political Rationalism—How to make war certain.

The question surely, which for practical men stands out from the mighty historical episode touched on in the last chapter, is this: Was the fact that these despised men were so entirely right and their triumphant adversaries so entirely wrong a mere fluke, or was it due to the soundness of one set of principles and the hollowness of the other; and were the principles special to that case, or general to international conflict as a whole?



To have an opinion of worth on that question we must get away from certain confusions and misrepresentations.

It is a very common habit for the Bellicist to quote the list of wars which have taken place since the Crimean War as proof of the error of Bright and Cobden. But what are the facts?

Here were two men who strenuously and ruthlessly opposed a certain policy; they urged, not only that it would inevitably lead to war, but that the war would be futile—but not sterile, for they saw that others would grow from it. Their counsel was disregarded and the war came, and events have proved that they were right and the war-makers wrong, and the very fact that the wars took place is cited as disapproving their “theories.”[8]



Page 33

It is a like confusion of thought which prompts Mr. Churchill to refer to Pacifists as people who deem the *danger* of war an illusion.

This persistent misconception is worth a little examination.

* * * * *

The smoke from the first railway engines in England killed the cattle and the poultry of the country gentlemen near whose property the railroad passed—at least, that is what the country gentleman wrote to the *Times*.

Now if in the domain of quite simple material things the dislike of having fixed habits of thought disturbed, leads gentlemen to resent innovations in that way, it is not astonishing that innovations of a more intangible and elusive kind should be subject to a like unconscious misrepresentation, especially by newspapers and public men pushed by commercial or political necessity to say the popular thing rather than the true thing: that contained in the speech of Mr. Churchill, which, together with a newspaper comment thereon, I have made the “text” of this little book, is a typical case in point.

It is possible, of course, that Mr. Churchill in talking about “persons who profess to know that the danger of war has become an illusion,” had not the slightest intention of referring to those who share the views embodied in “The Great Illusion,” which are, *not* that the danger of war is an illusion, but that the benefit is. All that happened was that his hearers and readers interpreted his words as referring thereto; and that, of course, he could not possibly prevent.

In any case, to misrepresent an author (and I mean always, of course, quite sincere and unconscious misrepresentations, like that which led the country gentlemen to write that railway smoke killed poultry) is a trifling matter, but to misrepresent an idea, is not, for it makes that better understanding of facts, the creation of a more informed public opinion, by which alone we can avoid a possibly colossal folly, an understanding difficult enough as it is, still more difficult.

And that is why the current misrepresentation (again unconscious) of most efforts at the better understanding of the facts of international relationship needs very badly to be corrected. I will therefore be very definite.

The implication that Pacifists of any kind have ever urged that war is impossible is due either to that confusion of thought just touched upon, or is merely a silly gibe of those who deride arguments to which they have not listened, and consequently do not understand, or which they desire to misrepresent; and such misrepresentation is, when not unconscious, always stupid and unfair.



Page 34

So far as I am concerned, I have never written a line, nor, so far as I know, has anyone else, to plead that war is impossible. I have, on the contrary, always urged, with the utmost emphasis that war is not only possible but extremely likely, so long as we remain as ignorant as we are concerning what it can accomplish, and unless we use our energies and efforts to prevent it, instead of directing those efforts to create it. What anti-Bellicists as a whole urge, is not that war is impossible or improbable, but that it is impossible to benefit by it; that conquest must, in the long run, fail to achieve advantage; that the general recognition of this can only add to our security. And incidentally most of us have declared our complete readiness to take any demonstrably necessary measure for the maintenance of armament, but urge that the effort must not stop there.

One is justified in wondering whether the public men—statesmen, soldiers, bishops, preachers, journalists—who indulge in this gibe, are really unable to distinguish between the plea that a thing is unwise, foolish, and the plea that it is impossible; whether they really suppose that anyone in our time could argue that human folly is impossible, or an “illusion.” It is quite evidently a tragic reality. Undoubtedly the readiness with which these critics thus fall back upon confusion of thought indicates that they themselves have illimitable confidence in it. But the confusion of thought does not stop here.

I have spoken of Pacifists and Bellicists, but, of course, we are all Pacifists now. Lord Roberts, Lord Charles Beresford, Lord Fisher, Mr. Winston Churchill, The Navy League, the Navier League, the Universal Military Service League, the German Emperor, the Editor of *The Spectator*, all the Chancelleries of Europe, alike declare that their one object is the maintenance of peace. Never were such Pacifists. The German Emperor, speaking to his army, invariably points out that they stand for the peace of Europe. Does a First Lord want new ships? It is because a strong British Navy is the best guarantee of peace. Lord Roberts wants conscription because that is the one way to preserve peace, and the Editor of *The Spectator* tells us that Turkey's great crime is that she has not paid enough attention to soldiering and armament, that if only she had been stronger all would have been well. All alike are quite persuaded indeed that the one way to peace is to get more armament.

Well, that is the method that mankind has pursued during the whole of its history; it has never shown the least disposition not to take this advice and not to try this method to the full. And written history, to say nothing of unwritten history, is there to tell us how well it has succeeded.



Page 35

Unhappily, one has to ask whether some of these military Pacifists really want it to succeed? Again I do not tax any with conscious insincerity. But it does result not merely from what some imply, but from what they say. For certain of these doughty Pacifists having told you how much their one object is to secure peace, then proceed to tell you that this thing which they hope to secure is a very evil thing, that under its blighting influence nations wane in luxury and sloth. And of course they imply that our own nation, about a third of whom have not enough to eat and about another third of whom have a heart-breaking struggle with small means and precariousness of livelihood, is in danger of this degeneration which comes from too much wealth and luxury and sloth and ease. I could fill a dozen books the size of this with the solemn warning of such Pacifists as these against the danger of peace (which they tell you they are struggling to maintain), and how splendid and glorious a thing, how fine a discipline is war (which they tell you they are trying so hard to avoid). Thus the Editor of *The Spectator* tells us that mankind cannot yet dispense with the discipline of war; and Lord Roberts, that to make war when you are really ready for it (or that in any case for Germany to do it) is “an excellent policy and one to be pursued by every nation prepared to play a great part in history.”

The truth is, of course, that we are not likely to get peace from those who believe it to be an evil thing and war and aggression a good thing, or, at least, are very mixed in their views as to this. Before men can secure peace they must at least make up their minds whether it is peace or war they want. If you do not know what you want, you are not likely to get it—or you are likely to get it, whichever way you prefer to put it.

And that is another thing which divides us from the military Pacifists: we really do want peace. As between war and peace we have made our choice, and having made it, stick to it. There may be something to be said for war—for settling a thing by fighting about it instead of by understanding it,—just as there may be something to be said for the ordeal, or the duel, as against trial by evidence, for the rack as a corrective of religious error, for judicial torture as a substitute for cross-examination, for religious wars, for all these things—but the balance of advantage is against them and we have discarded them.

But there is a still further difference which divides us: We have realised that we discarded those things only when we really understood their imperfections and that we arrived at that understanding by studying them, by discussing them,—because one man in London or another in Paris raised plainly and boldly the whole question of their wisdom and because the intellectual ferment created by those interrogations, either in the juridical or religious field, re-acted on the minds of men in Geneva or Wurtenburg or Rome or Madrid. It was by this means, not by improving the rapiers or improving the instruments of the inquisition, that we got rid of the duel and that Catholics ceased to torture Protestants or *vice versa*. We gave these things up because we realised the futility of physical force in these conflicts. We shall give up war for the same reason.

Page 36

But the Bellicist says that discussions of this sort, these attempts to find out the truth, are but the encouragement of pernicious theories: there is, according to him, but one way—better rapiers, more and better racks, more and better inquisitions.

Mr. Bonar Law, in one of the very wisest phrases ever pronounced by a statesman, has declared that “war is the failure of human wisdom.”

That is the whole case of Pacifism: we shall not improve except at the price of using our reason in these matters; of understanding them better. Surely it is a truism that that is the price of all progress; saner conceptions—man’s recognition of his mistakes, whether those mistakes take the form of cannibalism, slavery, torture, superstition, tyranny, false laws, or what you will. The veriest savage, or for that matter the ape, can blindly fight, but whether the animal develops into a man, or the savage into civilized man, depends upon whether the element of reason enters in an increasing degree into the solution of his problems.

The Militarist argues otherwise. He admits the difficulty comes from man’s small disposition to think; therefore don’t think—fight. We fight, he says, because we have insufficient wisdom in these matters; therefore do not let us trouble to get more wisdom or understanding; all we need do is to get better weapons. I am not misrepresenting him; that is quite fairly the popular line: it is no use talking about these things or trying to explain them, all that is logic and theories; what you want to do is to get a bigger army or more battleships. And, of course, the Bellicist on the other side of the frontier says exactly the same thing, and I am still waiting to have explained to me how, therefore, if this matter depends upon understanding, we can ever solve it by neglecting understanding, which the Militarist urges us to do. Not only does he admit, but pleads, that these things are complex, and supposes that that is an argument why they should not be studied.

And a third distinction will, I think, make the difference between us still clearer. Like the Bellicist, I am in favour of defence. If in a duelling society a duellist attacked me, or, as a Huguenot in the Paris of the sixteenth century a Catholic had attacked me, I should certainly have defended myself, and if needs be have killed my aggressor. But that attitude would not have prevented my doing my small part in the creation of a public opinion which should make duelling or such things as the massacre of St. Bartholomew impossible by showing how unsatisfactory and futile they were; and I should know perfectly well that neither would stop until public opinion had, as the result of education of one kind or another, realised their futility. But it is as certain as anything can be that the Churchills of that society or of that day would have been vociferous in declaring (as in the case of the duel they still to-day declare in Prussia) that this attempt to prove the futility of duelling was not only a bad and pernicious campaign, but was in reality a subtle attempt to get people killed in the street by bullies, and that those who valued their security would do their best to discredit all anti-duelling propaganda—by misrepresentation, if needs be.

Page 37

Let this matter be quite clear. No one who need be considered in this discussion would think of criticising Lord Roberts for wanting the army, and Mr. Churchill for wanting the navy, to be as good and efficient as possible and as large as necessary. Personally—and I speak, I know, for many of my colleagues in the anti-war movement—I would be prepared to support British conscription if it be demonstrably wise or necessary. But what we criticise is the persistent effort to discredit honest attempts at a better understanding of the facts of international relationship, the everlasting gibe which it is thought necessary to fling at any constructive effort, apart from armament, to make peace secure. These men profess to be friends of peace, they profess to regret the growth of armament, to deplore the unwisdom, ignorance, prejudice and misunderstanding out of which the whole thing grows, but immediately there is any definite effort to correct this unwisdom, to examine the grounds of the prejudice and misunderstanding, there is a volte face and such efforts are sneered at as “sentimental” or “sordid,” according as the plea for peace is put upon moral or material grounds. It is not that they disagree in detail with any given proposition looking towards a basis of international co-operation, but that in reality they deprecate raising the matter at all.[9] It must be armaments and nothing but armaments with them. If there had been any possibility of success in that we should not now be entering upon the 8,000th or 9,000th war of written history. Armaments may be necessary, but they are not enough. Our plan is armaments plus education; theirs is armament versus education. And by education, of course, we do not mean school books, or an extension of the School Board curriculum, but a recognition of the fact that the character of human society is determined by the extent to which its units attempt to arrive at an *understanding* of their relationship, instead of merely subduing one another by force, which does not lead to understanding at all: in Turkey, or Venezuela, or San Domingo, there is no particular effort made to adjust differences by understanding; in societies of that type they only believe in settling differences by armaments. That is why there are very few books, very little thought or discussion, very little intellectual ferment but a great many guns and soldiers and battles. And throughout the world the conflict is going on between these rival schools. On the whole the Western world, inside the respective frontiers, almost entirely now tends to the Pacifist type. But not so in the international field, for where the Powers are concerned, where it is a question of the attitude of one nation in relation to another, you get a degree of understanding rather less than more than that which obtains in the internal politics of Venezuela, or Turkey, or Morocco, or any other “warlike” state.

And the difficulty of creating a better European opinion and temper is due largely to just this idea that obsesses the Militarist, that unless they misrepresent facts in a sensational direction the nations will be too apathetic to arm; that education will abolish funk, and that presumably funk is a necessary element in self-defence.



Page 38

For the most creditable explanation that we can give of the Militarist's objection to having this matter discussed at all, is the evident impression that such discussion will discourage measures for self-defence; the Militarist does not believe that a people desiring to understand these things and interested in the development of a better European society, can at the same time be determined to resist the use of force. They believe that unless the people are kept in a blue funk, they will not arm, and that is why it is that the Militarist of the respective countries are for ever talking about our degeneration and the rest. And the German Militarist is just as angry with the unwarlike qualities of his people as the English Militarist is with ours.

Just note this parallel:

BRITISH OPINION ON BRITISH APATHY AND GERMAN VIGOUR.

"There is a way in which Britain is certain to have war and its horrors and calamities; it is this—by persisting in her present course of unpreparedness, her apathy, unintelligence, and blindness, and in her disregard of the warnings of the most ordinary political insight, as well as of the example of history." "Now in the year 1912, just as in 1866, and just as in 1870, war will take place the instant the German forces by land and sea are, by their superiority at every point, as certain of victory as anything in human calculation can be made certain. 'Germany strikes when Germany's hour has struck.' That is the time-honoured policy of her Foreign Office. It is her policy at the present hour, and it is an excellent policy. It is, or should be, the policy of every nation prepared to play a great part in history."—LORD ROBERTS, at Manchester. "Britain is disunited; Germany is homogeneous. We are quarrelling about the Lords' Veto, Home Rule, and a dozen other questions of domestic politics. We have a Little Navy Party, an Anti-Militarist Party; Germany is unanimous upon the question of naval expansion."—MR. BLATCHFORD.

GERMAN OPINION ON GERMAN APATHY AND BRITISH VIGOUR.

"Whole strata of our nation seem to have lost that ideal enthusiasm which constituted the greatness of its history. With the increase of wealth they live for the moment, they are incapable of sacrificing the enjoyment of the hour to the service of great conceptions, and close their eyes complacently to the duties of our future and to the pressing problems of international life which await a solution at the present time."—GENERAL VON BERNHARDI in "Germany and the Next War."

"There is no one German people, no single Germany.... There are more abrupt contrasts between Germans and Germans than between Germans and Indians."



Page 39

“One must admire the consistent fidelity and patriotism of the English race, as compared with the uncertain and erratic methods of the German people, their mistrust, and suspicion.... In spite of numerous wars, bloodshed, and disaster, England always emerges smoothly and easily from her military crises and settles down to new conditions and surroundings in her usual cool and deliberate manner, so different from the German.”—*Berliner Tageblatt*, March 14, 1911.

Presumably each doughty warrior knows his own country better than that of the other, which would carry a conclusion directly contrary to that which he draws.

But note also where this idea that it is necessary artificially to stimulate the defensive zeal of each country by resisting any tendency to agreement and understanding leads. It leads even so good a man as Lord Roberts into the trap of dogmatic prophesy concerning the intentions of a very complex heterogeneous nation of 65 million people. Lord Roberts could not possibly tell you what his own country will do five, ten, or fifteen years hence in such matters as Home Rule or the Suffragists, or even the payment of doctors, but he knows exactly what a foreign country will do in a much more serious matter. The simple truth is, of course, that no man knows what “Germany” will do ten years hence, any more than we can know what “England” will do. We don’t even know what England will *be*, whether Unionist or Liberal or Labour, Socialist, Free Trade or Protectionist. All these things, like the question of Peace and War depends upon all sorts of tendencies, drifts and developments. At bottom, of course, since war, in Mr. Bonar Law’s fine phrase, is “never inevitable—only the failure of human wisdom,” it depends upon whether we become a little less or a little more wise. If the former, we shall have it; if the latter, we shall not. But this dogmatism concerning the other man’s evil intentions is the very thing that leads away from wisdom.[10] The sort of temper and ideas which it provokes on both sides of the frontier may be gathered from just such average gems as these plucked recently from the English press:—

Yes, we may as well face it. *War with Germany is inevitable*, and the only question is— Shall we consult her convenience as to its date? Shall we wait till Germany’s present naval programme, which is every year reducing our advantage, is complete? Shall we wait till the smouldering industrial revolution, of which all these strikes are warnings, has broken into flame? Shall we wait till Consols are 65 and our national credit is gone? Shall we wait till the Income Tax is 1s. 6d. in the pound? OR SHALL WE STRIKE NOW—*finding every out-of-work a job in connection with the guardianship of our shores*, and, with our mighty fleet, either sinking every German ship or towing it in triumph into a British port? *Why should we do it? Because the command of the seas is ever*



Page 40

ours; because our island position, our international trade and our world-wide dominions demand that no other nation shall dare to challenge our supremacy. That is why. Oh, yes, the cost would be great, but we could raise it to-day all right, and we should get it back.

If the struggle comes to-day, we shall win—and after it is over, there will be abounding prosperity in the land, and no more labour unrest.

Yes, we have no fear of Germany to-day. The only enemy we fear is the crack-brained fanatics who prate about peace and goodwill whilst foreign *Dreadnoughts* are gradually closing in upon us. As Mr. Balfour said at the Eugenic Conference the other day, man is a wild animal; and there is no room, in present circumstances, for any tame ones.—
John Bull, Aug. 24, 1912.

The italics and large type are those of the original, not mine. This paper explains, by the way, in this connection that “In the Chancelleries of Europe *John Bull* is regarded as a negligible journalistic quantity. But *John Bull* is read by a million people every week, and that million not the least thoughtful and intelligent section of the community, they think about what they read.”

One of the million seems to have thought to some purpose, for the next week there was the following letter from him. It was given the place of honour in a series and runs as follows:—

I would have extended your “Down with the German Fleet!” to “Down with Germany and the Germans!” For, unless the whole ——— lot are swept off the surface of the earth, there will be no peace. If the people in England could only realise the quarrelsome, deceitful, underhanded, egotistic any tyrannical character of the Germans, there would not be so much balderdash about a friendly understanding, *etc.*, between England and Germany. The German is a born tyrant. The desire to remain with Britain on good terms will only last so long until Germany feels herself strong enough to beat England both on sea and on land: afterwards it’ll simply be “*la bourse ou la vie*,” as the French proverb goes. Provided they do not know that there are any English listeners about, phrases like the following can be heard every day in German restaurants and other public places: “I hate England and the English!” “Never mind, they won’t be standing in our way much longer. We shall soon be ready.”

And *John Bull*, with its million readers, is not alone. This is how the *Daily Express*, in a double-leaded leader, teaches history to its readers:—



Page 41

When, one day, Englishmen are not allowed to walk the pavements of their cities, and their women are for the pleasure of the invaders, and the offices of the Tiny England newspapers are incinerated by a furious mob; when foreign military officers proclaim martial law from the Royal Exchange steps, and when some billions of pounds have to be raised by taxation—by taxation of the “toiling millions” as well as others—to pay the invaders out, and the British Empire consists of England—less Dover, required for a foreign strategic tunnel—and the Channel Islands—then the ghosts of certain politicians and publicists will probably call a meeting for the discussion of the Fourth Dimension.—Leading Article, *Daily Express*, 8/7/12.

And not merely shall our women fill the harems of the German pashas, and Englishmen not be allowed to walk upon the pavement (it would be the German way of solving the traffic problem—near the Bank), but a “well-known Diplomat” in another paper tells us what else will happen.

If England be vanquished it means the end of all things as far as she is concerned, and will ring in a new and somewhat terrible era. Bankrupt, shorn of all power, deserted, as must clearly follow, as a commercial state, and groaning under a huge indemnity that she cannot pay and is not intended to be able to pay, what will be the melancholy end of this great country and her teeming population of forty-five millions?... Her shipping trade will be transferred as far as possible from the English to the German flag. Her banking will be lost, as London will no longer be the centre of commerce, and efforts will be made to enable Berlin to take London’s place. Her manufactures will gradually desert her. Failing to obtain payments in due time, estates will be sequestered and become the property of wealthy Germans. The indemnity to be demanded is said to be one thousand millions sterling. The immediate result of defeat would mean, of course, that insolvency would take place in a very large number of commercial businesses, and others would speedily follow. Those who cannot get away will starve unless large relief funds are forthcoming from, say, Canada and the United States, for this country, bereft of its manufactures, will not be able to sustain a population of more than a very few millions.—From an Article by “A Well-known Diplomatist” in *The Throne*, June 12, 1912.

These are but samples; and this sort of thing is going on in England and Germany alike. And when one protests that it is wicked rubbish born of funk and ignorance, that whatever happens in war this does not happen, and that it is based on false economics and grows into utterly false conceptions of international relationship, one is shouted down as an anti-armament man and an enemy of his country.

Page 42

Well, if that view is persisted in, if in reality it is necessary for a people to have lies and nonsense told to them in order to induce them to defend themselves, some will be apt to decide that they are not worth defending. Or rather will they decide that this phase of the pro-armament campaign—which is not so much a campaign in favour of armament as one against education and understanding—will end in turning us into a nation either of poltroons or of bullies and aggressors, and that since life is a matter of the choice of risks it is wiser and more courageous to choose the less evil. A nation may be defeated and still live in the esteem of men—and in its own. No civilized man esteems a nation of Bashi-Bazouks or Prussian Junkers. Of the two risks involved—the risk of attack arising from a possible superiority of armament on the part of a rival, and the risk of drifting into conflict because, concentrating all our energies on the mere instrument of combat, we have taken no adequate trouble to understand the facts of this case—it is at least an arguable proposition that the second risk is the greater. And I am prompted to this expression of opinion without surrendering one iota of a lifelong and passionate belief that a nation attacked should defend itself to the last penny and to the last man.

And you think that this idea that the nations—ours amongst them—may drift into futile war from sheer panic and funk arising out of the terror inspired by phantoms born of ignorance, is merely the idea of Pacifist cranks?

The following, referring to the “precautionary measures” (*i.e.*, mobilization of armies) taken by the various Powers, is from a leading article of the *Times*:—

“Precautions” are understandable, but the remark of our Berlin Correspondent that they may produce an untenable position from which retreat must be humiliating is applicable in more than one direction. Our Vienna Correspondent truly says that “there is no valid reason to believe war between Austria-Hungary and Russia to be inevitable, or even immediately probable.” We entirely agree, but wish we could add that the absence of any valid reason was placing strict limitations upon the scope of “precautions.” The same correspondent says he is constantly being asked:—“Is there no means of avoiding war?” The same question is now being asked, with some bewilderment, by millions of men in this country, who want to know what difficulties there are in the present situation which should threaten Europe with a general war, or even a collision larger than that already witnessed.... There is no great nation in Europe which to-day has the least desire that millions of men should be torn from their homes and flung headlong to destruction at the bidding of vain ambitions. The Balkan peoples fought for a cause which was peculiarly their own. They were inspired by the memories of centuries of wrong which they were burning to avenge.

Page 43

The larger nations have no such quarrel, unless it is wilfully manufactured for them. The common sense of the peoples of Europe is well aware that no issue has been presented which could not be settled by amicable discussion. In England men will learn with amazement and incredulity that war is possible over the question of a Servian port, or even over the larger issues which are said to lie behind it. Yet that is whither the nations are blindly drifting. Who, then, makes war? The answer is to be found in the Chancelleries of Europe, among the men who have too long played with human lives as pawns in a game of chess, who have become so enmeshed in formulas and the jargon of diplomacy that they have ceased to be conscious of the poignant realities with which they trifle. And thus will war continue to be made, until the great masses who are the sport of professional schemers and dreamers say the word which, shall bring, not eternal peace, for that is impossible, but a determination that wars shall be fought only in a just and righteous and vital cause. If that word is ever to be spoken, there never was a more appropriate occasion than the present; and we trust it will be spoken while there is yet time.

And the very next day there appeared in the *Daily Mail* an article by Mr. Lovat Fraser ending thus:—

The real answer rests, or ought to rest, with the man in the train. Does he want to join in Armageddon? It is time that he began to think about it, for his answer may soon be sought.

Now we have here, stated in the first case by the most authoritative of English newspapers, and in the second by an habitual contributor of the most popular, the whole case of Pacifism as I have attempted to expound it, namely: (1) That our current statecraft—its fundamental conceptions, its “axioms,” its terminology—has become obsolete by virtue of the changed conditions of European society; that the causes of conflict which it creates are half the time based on illusions, upon meaningless and empty formulas; (2) that its survival is at bottom due to popular ignorance and indifference—the survival on the part of the great mass of just those conceptions born of the old and now obsolete conditions—since diplomacy, like all functions of government, is a reflection of average opinion; (3) that this public opinion is not something which descends upon us from the skies but is the sum of the opinions of each one of us and is the outcome of our daily contacts, our writing and talking and discussion, and that the road to safety lies in having that general public opinion better informed not in directly discouraging such better information; (4) that the mere multiplication of “precautions” in the shape of increased armaments and a readiness for war, in the absence of a corresponding and parallel improvement of opinion, will merely increase and not exorcise the danger, and, finally, (5) that the problem of war is necessarily a problem of at least two parties, and that if we are to solve it, to understand it even, we must consider it in terms of two parties, not one; it is not a question of what shall be the policy

of each without reference to the other, but what the final upshot of the two policies taken in conjunction will be.



Page 44

Now in all this the *Times*, especially in one outstanding central idea, is embodying a conception which is the antithesis of that expressed by Militarists of the type of Mr. Churchill, and, I am sorry to say, of Lord Roberts. To these latter war is not something that we, the peoples of Europe, create by our ignorance and temper, by the nursing of old and vicious theories, by the poorness and defects of the ideas our intellectual activities have developed during the last generation or two, but something that “comes upon us” like the rain or the earthquake, and against which we can only protect ourselves by one thing: more arms, a greater readiness to fight.

In effect the anti-Educationalists say this: “What, as practical men, we have to do, is to be stronger than our enemy; the rest is theory and does not matter.”

Well the inevitable outcome of such an attitude is catastrophe.

I have said elsewhere that in this matter it seems fatally easy to secure either one of two kinds of action: that of the “practical man” who limits his energies to securing a policy which will perfect the machinery of war and disregard anything else; or that of the idealist, who, persuaded of the brutality or immorality of war, is apt to show a certain indifference concerning self-defence. What is needed is the type of activity which will include both halves of the problem: provision for education, for a Political Reformation in this matter, *as well as* such means of defence as will meantime counterbalance the existing impulse to aggression. To concentrate on either half to the exclusion of the other half is to render the whole problem insoluble.

What must inevitably happen if the nations take the line of the “practical man,” and limit their energies simply and purely to piling up armaments?

A critic once put to me what he evidently deemed a poser: “Do you urge that we shall be stronger than our enemy, or weaker?”

To which I replied: “The last time that question was asked me was in Berlin, by Germans. What would you have had me reply to those Germans?”—a reply which, of course, meant this: In attempting to find the solution of this question in terms of one party, you are attempting the impossible. The outcome will be war, and war would not settle it. It would all have to be begun over again.

The Navy League catechism says: “Defence consists in being so strong that it will be dangerous for your enemy to attack you.”^[11] Mr. Churchill, however, goes farther than the Navy League, and says: “The way to make war impossible is to make victory certain.”



Page 45

The Navy League definition is at least possible of application to practical politics, because rough equality of the two parties would make attack by either dangerous. Mr. Churchill's principle is impossible of application to practical politics, because it could only be applied by one party, and would, in the terms of the Navy League principle, deprive the other party of the right of defence. As a matter of simple fact, both the Navy League, by its demand for two ships to one, and Mr. Churchill, by his demand for certain victory, deny in this matter Germany's right to defend herself; and such denial is bound, on the part of a people animated by like motives to ourselves, to provoke a challenge. When the Navy League says, as it does, that a self-respecting nation should not depend upon the goodwill of foreigners for its safety, but upon its own strength, it recommends Germany to maintain her efforts to arrive at some sort of equality with ourselves. When Mr. Churchill goes further and says that a nation should be so strong as to make victory over its rivals certain, he knows that if Germany were to adopt his own doctrine its inevitable outcome would be war.

The issue is plain: We get a better understanding of certain political facts in Europe, or we have war. And the Bellicist at present is resolutely opposed to such political education. And it is for that reason, not because he is asking for adequate armament, that some of the best of this country look with the deepest misgiving upon his work, and will continue to do so in increasing degree unless his policy be changed.

Now a word as to the peace Pacifist—the Pacifist sans phrases—as distinct from the military Pacifist. It is not because I am in favour of defence that I have at times with some emphasis disassociated myself from certain features and methods of the peace movement, for non-resistance is no necessary part of that movement, and, indeed, so far as I know, it is no appreciable part. It is the methods not the object or the ideals of the peace movement which I have ventured to criticize, without, I hope, offence to men whom I respect in the very highest and sincerest degree. The methods of Pacifism have in the past, to some extent at least, implied a disposition to allow easy emotion to take the place of hard thinking, good intention to stand for intellectual justification; and it is as plain as anything well can be that some of the best emotion of the world has been expended upon some of the very worst objects, and that in no field of human effort—medicine, commerce, engineering, legislation—has good intention ever been able to dispense with the necessity of knowing the how and the why.

It is not that the somewhat question-begging and emotional terminology of some Pacifists—the appeal to brotherly love and humanity—connotes things which are in themselves poor or mean (as the average Militarist would imply), but because so much of Pacifism in the past has failed to reconcile intellectually the claims of these things with what are the fundamental needs of men and to show their relation and practical application to actual problems and conditions.

Page 46

[Footnote 8: As a matter of fact, of course, the work of these two men has not been fruitless. As Lord Morley truly says: “They were routed on the question of the Crimean War, but it was the rapid spread of their principles which within the next twenty years made intervention impossible in the Franco-Austrian War, in the American War, in the Danish War, in the Franco-German War, and above all, in the war between Russia and Turkey, which broke out only the other day.”]

[Footnote 9: Thus the Editor of the *Spectator*:—

“For ourselves, as far as the main economic proposition goes, he preaches to the converted.... If nations were perfectly wise and held perfectly sound economic theories, they would recognize that exchange is the union of forces, and that it is very foolish to hate or be jealous of your co-operators.... Men are savage, bloodthirsty creatures ... and when their blood is up will fight for a word or a sign, or, as Mr. Angell would put it, for an illusion.”

Therefore, argues the *Spectator*, let the illusion continue—for there is no other conclusion to be drawn from the argument.]

[Footnote 10: Need it be said that this criticism does not imply the faintest want of respect for Lord Roberts, his qualities and his services. He has ventured into the field of foreign politics and prophecy. A public man of great eminence, he has expressed an English view of German “intentions.” For the man in the street (I write in that capacity) to receive that expression in silence is to endorse it, to make it national. And I have stated here the reasons which make such an attitude disastrous. We all greatly respect Lord Roberts, but, even before that, must come respect for our country, the determination that it shall be in the right and not in the wrong, which it certainly will be if this easy dogmatism concerning the evil intentions of other nations becomes national.]

[Footnote 11: The German Navy Law in its preamble might have filched this from the British Navy League catechism.]

CHAPTER VII.

“THEORIES” FALSE AND TRUE: THEIR ROLE IN EUROPEAN PROGRESS.

The improvement of ideas the foundation of all improvement—Shooting straight and thinking straight; the one as important as the other—Pacifism and the Millennium—How we got rid of wars of religion—A few ideas have changed the face of the world—The simple ideas the most important—The “theories” which have led to war—The work of the reformer to destroy old and false theories—The intellectual interdependence of nations—Europe at unity in this matter—New ideas cannot be confined to one people—No fear of ourselves or any nation being ahead of the rest.



But what, it will be said, is the practical outcome? Admitting that we are, or that our fathers were, in part responsible for this war, that it is their false theories which have made it necessary, that like false theories on our part may make future wars inevitable—what shall we do to prevent that catastrophe?



Page 47

Now while as an “abstract proposition” everyone will admit that the one thing which distinguishes the civilized man from the savage is a difference of ideas, no one apparently believes that it is a dangerous and evil thing for the political ideas of savages to dominate most of our countrymen or that so intangible a thing as “ideas” have any practical importance at all. While we believe this, of course—to the extent to which we believe it—improvement is out of the question. We have to realize that civic faith, like religious faith, is of importance; that if English influence is to stand for the right and not the wrong in human affairs, it is impossible for each one of us individuals to be wrong; that if the great mass is animated by temper, blindness, ignorance, passion, small and mean prejudices, it is not possible for “England” to stand for something quite different and for its influence to be ought but evil. To say that we are “for our country right or wrong” does not get over the matter at all; rather is it equivalent to saying that we would as readily have it stand for evil as for good. And we do not in the least seem to realize that for an Englishman to go on talking wicked nonsense across the dinner table and making one of the little rivulets of bad temper and prejudice which forms the mighty river drowning sane judgment is to do the England of our dreams a service as ill (in reality far more mischievous) as though the plans of fortresses were sold to Germany. We must all learn to shoot straight; apparently we need not learn to think straight. And yet if Europe could do the second it could dispense with the first. “Good faith” has a score of connotations, and we believe apparently that good politics can dispense with all of them and that “Patriotism” has naught to do with any.

Of course, to shoot straight is so much easier than to think straight, and I suppose at bottom the bellicist believes that the latter is a hopeless object since “man is not a thinking animal.” He deems, apparently, we must just leave it at that. Of course, if he does leave it at that—if we persist in believing that it is no good discussing these matters, trying to find out the truth about them, writing books and building churches—our civilization is going to drift just precisely as those other civilizations which have been guided by the same dreadful fatalism have drifted—towards the Turkish goal. “Kismet. Man is a fool to babble of these things; what he may do is of no avail; all things will happen as they were pre-ordained.” And the English Turk—the man who prefers to fight things out instead of thinking things out—takes the same line.

If he adopts the Turkish philosophy he must be content with the Turkish result. But the Western world as a whole has refused to be content with the Turkish result, and however tiresome it may be to know about things, to bother with “theories” and principles, we have come to realise that we have to choose between one of two courses: either to accept things as they are, not to worry about improvement or betterment at all, fatalistically to let things slide or—to find out bit by bit where our errors have been and to correct those errors. This is a hard road, but it is the road the Western world has chosen; and it is better than the other.



Page 48

And it has not accepted this road because it expects the millenium to-morrow week. There is no millenium, and Pacifists do not expect it or talk about it; the word is just one of those three-shies-a-penny brickbats thrown at them by ignorance. You do not dismiss attempts to correct errors in medicine or surgery, or education, or tramcars, or cookery, by talking about the millenium; why should you throw that word at attempts to correct the errors of international relationship?

Nothing has astonished me more than the fact that the “practical” man who despises “theories” nearly always criticises Pacifism because it is not an absolute dogma with all its thirty-nine articles water-tight. “You are a Pacifist, then suppose...,” and then follows generally some very remote hypothesis of what would happen if all the Orient composed its differences and were to descend suddenly upon the Western world; or some dogmatic (and very theoretical) proposition about the unchangeability of human nature, and the foolishness of expecting the millenium—an argument which would equally well have told against the union of Scotland and England or would equally justify the political parties in a South American republic in continuing to settle their differences by militarist methods instead of the Pacifist methods of England.

Human nature may be unchanging: it is no reason why we should fight a futile war with Germany over nothing at all; the yellow peril may threaten; that is a very good reason why we should compose our differences in Europe. Men always will quarrel, perhaps, over religious questions, bigotry and fanaticism always will exist—it did not prevent our getting rid of the wars of religion, still less is it a reason for re-starting them.

The men who made that immense advance—the achievement of religious toleration—possible, were not completely right and had not a water-tight theory amongst them; they did not bring the millenium, but they achieved an immense step. They *were* pioneers of religious freedom, yet were themselves tyrants and oppressors; those who abolished slavery *did* a good work, though much of the world was left in industrial servitude; it was a good thing to abolish judicial torture, though much of our penal system did yet remain barbaric; it was a real advance to recognise the errors upon which these things rested, although that recognition did not immediately achieve a complete, logical, symmetrical and perfect change, because mankind does not advance that way. And so with war. Pacifism does not even pretend to be a dogma: it is an attempt to correct in men’s minds some of the errors and false theories out of which war grows.

The reply to this is generally that the inaptitude of men for clear thinking and the difficulties of the issues involved will render any decision save the sheer clash of physical force impossible; that the field of foreign politics is such a tangle that the popular mind will always fall back upon decision by force.

Page 49

As a matter of fact the outstanding principles which serve to improve human conduct, are quite simple and understandable, as soon as they have been shorn of the sophistries and illusions with which the pundits clothe them. The real work of the reformers is to hack away these encumbering theories. The average European has not followed, and could not follow, the amazing and never-ending disputation on obscure theological points round which raged the Reformation; but the one solid fact which did emerge from the whole was the general realization that whatever the truth might be in all this confusion, it was quite evidently wicked and futile to attempt to compel conformity to any one section of it by force; that in the interests of all force should be withheld; because if such queries were settled by the accident of predominant force, it would prove, not which was right, but which was stronger. So in such things as witchcraft. The learned and astute judges of the 18th century, who sent so many thousands to their death for impossible crimes, knew far more of the details of witchcraft than do we, and would beat us hopelessly in an argument on the subject; but all their learning was of no avail, because they had a few simple facts, the premises, crooked, and we have them straight; and all that we need to know in this amazing tangle of learned nonsense, is that the probabilities are against an old woman having caused a storm at sea and drowned a Scottish King. And so with the French Revolution. What the Encyclopaedists and other pioneers of that movement really did for the European peoples in that matter, was not to elaborate fantastic schemes of constitution making, but by their argumentation to achieve the destruction of old political sophistries—Divine Rights of Kings and what not—and to enable one or two simple facts to emerge clearly and unmistakably, as that the object of government is the good of the governed, and can find its justification in nothing else whatsoever. It was these simple truths which, spreading over the world—with many checks and set-backs—have so profoundly modified the structure of Christendom.

Somewhere it is related of Montaigne that talking with academic colleagues, he expressed a contemptuous disbelief in the whole elaborate theory of witchcraft as it existed at that time. Scandalised, his colleagues took him into the University library, and showed him hundreds, thousands, of parchment volumes written in Latin by the learned men of the subject. Had he read these volumes, that he talked so disrespectfully of their contents? No, replied Montaigne, he had not read them, and he was not going to, because they were all wrong, and he was right. And Montaigne spoke with this dogmatism because he realised that he saw clearly that which they did not—the crookedness and unsoundness of just those simple fundamental assumptions on which the whole fantastic structure was based.

Page 50

And so with all the sophistries and illusions by which the war system is still defended. If the public as a whole had to follow all the intricacies of those marvellous diplomatic combinations, the maze of our foreign politics, to understand abstruse points of finance and economics, in order to have just and sound ideas as to the real character of international relationship, why then public opinion would go on being as ignorant and mistaken as it had been hitherto. But sound opinion and instincts in that field depend upon nothing of the sort, but upon the emergence of a few quite simple facts, which are indisputable and self-evident, which stare us in the face, and which absolutely disprove all the elaborate theories of the Bellicist statesmen.

For instance, if conquest and extension of territory is the main road of moral and material progress, the fundamental need which sets up all these rivalries and collisions, then it is the populations of the Great States which should be the most enviable; the position of the Russian should be more desirable than that of the Hollander; it is not. The Austrian should be better off than the Switzer; he is not. If a nation's wealth is really subject to military confiscation, and needs the defence of military power, then the wealth of those small states should be insecure indeed—and Belgian national stocks stand 20 points higher than the German. If nations are rival units, then we should benefit by the disappearance of our rivals—and if they disappeared, something like a third of our population would starve to death. If the growth and prosperity of rival nations threatens us, then we should be in far greater danger of America to-day than we were some 50 years ago, when the growth of that power disturbed the sleep of our statesmen (and when, incidentally, we were just as much afraid of the growth of that power as we are now afraid of the growth of Germany). If the growing power of Russia compelled us to fight a great war in alliance with the Turk to check her “advance on India,” why are we now co-operating with Russia to build railroads to India?

It is such quite simple questions as these, and the quite plain facts which underlie them which will lead to sounder conceptions in this matter on the part of the peoples.

It is not we who are the “theorists,” if by “theorists” is meant the constructors of elaborate and deceptive theorems in this matter. It is our opponents, the military mystics, who persistently shut their eyes to the great outstanding facts of history and of our time. And these fantastic theories are generally justified by most esoteric doctrine, not by the appeal to the facts which stare you in the face. I once replied to a critic thus:



Page 51

In examining my critic's balance sheet I remarked that were his figures as complete as they were absurdly incomplete and misleading, I should still have been unimpressed. We all know that very marvellous results are possible with figures; but one can generally find some simple fact which puts them to the supreme test without undue mathematics. I do not know whether it has ever happened to my critic, as it has happened to me, while watching the gambling in the casino of a Continental watering resort, to have a financial genius present weird columns of figures, which demonstrate conclusively, irrefragably, that by this system which they embody one can break the bank and win a million. I have never examined these figures, and never shall, for this reason: the genius in question is prepared to sell his wonderful secret for twenty francs. Now, in the face of that fact I am not interested in his figures. If they were worth examination they would not be for sale. And so in this matter there are certain test facts which upset the adroitest statistical legerdemain. Though, really, the fallacy which regards an addition of territory as an addition of wealth to the "owning" nation is a very much simpler matter than the fallacies lying behind gambling systems, which are bound up with the laws of chance and the law of averages and much else that philosophers will quarrel about till the end of time. It requires an exceptional mathematical brain really to refute those fallacies, whereas the one we are dealing with is due simply to the difficulty experienced by most of us in carrying in our heads two facts at the same time. It is so much easier to seize on one fact and forget the other. Thus we realize that when Germany has conquered Alsace-Lorraine she has "captured" a province worth, "cash value," in my critic's phrase, sixty-six millions sterling. What we overlook is that Germany has also captured the people who own the property and who continue to own it. We have multiplied by x , it is true, but we have overlooked the fact that we have had to divide by x , and that the resultant is consequently, so far as the individual is concerned, exactly what it was before. My critic remembered the multiplication all right, but he forgot the division.

Just think of all the theories, the impossible theories for which the "practical" man has dragged the nations into war: the Balance of Power, for instance. Fifteen or twenty years ago it was the ineradicable belief of fifty or sixty million Americans, good, honest, sincere, and astute folk, that it was their bounden duty, their manifest interest, to fight—and in the words of one of their Senators, annihilate—Great Britain, in the interests of the Monroe Doctrine (which is a form of the "Balance of Power"). I do not think any one knew what the Monroe Doctrine meant, or could coherently defend it. An American Ambassador had an after-dinner story at the time.



Page 52

“What is this I hear, Jones, that you do not believe in the Monroe Doctrine?”

“It is a wicked lie. I have said no such thing. I do believe in the Monroe Doctrine. I would lay down my life for it; I would die for it. What I did say was that I didn’t know what it meant.”

And it was this vague theory which very nearly drove America into a war that would have been disastrous to the progress of Anglo-Saxon civilization.

This was at the time of the Venezuelan crisis: the United States, which for nearly one hundred years had lived in perfect peace with a British power touching her frontier along three thousand miles, laid it down as a doctrine that her existence was imperilled if Great Britain should extend by so much as a mile a vague frontier running through a South American swamp thousands of miles away. And for that cause these decent and honourable people were prepared to take all the risks that would be involved to Anglo-Saxon civilisation by a war between England and America. The present writer happened at that time to be living in America, and concerned with certain political work. Night after night he heard these fulminations against Great Britain; politicians, Congressmen, Senators, Governors, Ministers, Preachers, clamouring for war, for a theory as vague and as little practical as one could wish.

And we, of course, have had our like obsessions without number: “the independence integrity of the Turkish dominion in Europe” is one. Just think of it! Take in the full sound of the phrase: “the independence integrity of the Turkish dominion in Europe!”

What, of course, makes these fantastic political doctrines possible, what leads men to subscribe to them, are a few false general conceptions to which they hold tenaciously—as all fundamental conceptions are held, and ought to be. The general conceptions in question are precisely the ones I have indicated: that nations are rival and struggling units, that military force is consequently the determining factor of their relative advantage; that enlargement of political frontiers is the supreme need, and so on.

And the revision of these fundamental conceptions will, of course, be the general work of Christendom, and given the conditions which now obtain, the development will go on *pari passu* in all nations or not all. It will not be the work of “nations” at all; it will be the work of individual men.

States do not think. It is the men who form the states who think, and the number of those men who will act as pioneers in a better policy must, of course, at first be small: a group here and a group there, the best men of all countries—England, France, Germany, America—influencing by their ideas finally the great mass. To say, as so many do in this matter: “Let other nations do it first” is, of course, to condemn us all to impotence—for the other nations use the same language. To ask that one group of forty



Page 53

or seventy or ninety million people shall by some sort of magic all find their way to a saner doctrine before such doctrine has affected other groups is to talk the language of childishness. Things do not happen in that in human affairs. It is not in that way that opinion grows. It did not grow in that way in any one of the steps that I have mentioned—in the abolition of religious persecution, or slavery, or judicial torture. Unless the individual man sees his responsibility for determining what is right and knowing how and why it is right, there will be no progress; there cannot even be a beginning.

We are to an even greater degree an integral part of European Society, and a factor of European Policy, than we were at the time of the Crimean War, when we mainly determined it; and our theories and discussions will act and re-act upon that policy just as did any considerable body of thought, whether French political thought of the eighteenth century, or German religious thought of the sixteenth century, even at a time when the means of producing that reaction, the book, literature, the newspaper, rapid communication, were so immeasurably more primitive and rudimentary than ours. What we think and say and do affects not merely ourselves, but that whole body politic of Christendom of which we are an integral part.

It is a curious fact that the moral and intellectual interdependence of States preceded by a long period, that material and economic independence which I have tried recently to make clear. Nothing is more contrary to fact than to suppose that any considerable movement of opinion in Europe can be limited to the frontiers of one nation. Even at a time when it took half a generation for a thought to travel from one capital to another, a student or thinker in some obscure Italian, Swiss or German village was able to modify policy, to change the face of Europe and of mankind. Coming nearer to our time, it was the work of the encyclopaedists and earlier political questioners which made the French Revolution; and the effect of that Revolution was not confined to France. The ideas which animated it re-acted directly upon our Empire, upon the American Colonies, upon the Spanish Colonies, upon Italy, and the formation of United Italy, upon Germany—the world over. These miracles, almost too vast and great to conceive, were the outcome of that intangible thing, an idea, an aspiration, an ideal. And if they could accomplish so much in that day when the popular press and cheap literature and improved communication did not exist, how is it possible to suppose that any great ferment of opinion can be limited to one group in our day, when we have a condition of things in which the declaration of an English Cabinet Minister to-night is read to-morrow morning by every reading German?



Page 54

It should be to our everlasting glory that our political thought in the past, some of our political institutions, parliamentary government, and what not, have had an enormous influence in the world. We have some ground for hoping that another form of political institution which we have initiated, a relationship of distinct political groups into which force does not enter, will lead the way to a better condition of things in Christendom. We have demonstrated that five independent nations, the nations of the British Empire, can settle their differences as between one another without the use of force. We have definitely decided that whatever the attitude Australia, Canada, and South Africa may adopt to us we shall not use force to change it. What is possible with five is possible with fifteen nations. Just as we have given to the world roughly our conception of Parliamentary Government, so it is to be hoped may we give to the world our conception of the true relationship of nations.

The great steps of the past—religious freedom, the abolition of torture and of slavery, the rights of the mass, self-government—every real step which man has made has been made because men “theorised,” because a Galileo, or a Luther, or a Calvin, or a Voltaire, Rousseau, Bentham, Spencer, Darwin, wrote and put notes of interrogation. Had they not done so none of those things could have been accomplished. The greatest work of the renaissance was the elimination of physical force in the struggle of religious groups, in religious struggles generally; the greatest work of our generation will be elimination of physical force from the struggle of the political groups and from political struggles generally. But it will be done in exactly the same way: by a common improvement of opinion. And because we possess immeasurably better instruments for the dissemination of ideas, we should be able to achieve the Political Reformation of Europe much more rapidly and effectively than our predecessors achieved the great intellectual Reformation of their time.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT MUST WE *DO*?

We must have the right political faith—Then we must give effect to it—Good intention not enough—The organization of the great forces of modern life—Our indifference as to the foundations of the evil—The only hope.

What then must we *do*? Well the first and obvious thing is for each to do his civic duty, for each to determine that he at least shall not reject, with that silly temper which nearly always meets most new points of view, principles which do at least seek to explain things, and do point to the possibility of a better way.

The first thing is to make our own policy right—and that is the work of each one of us; to correct the temper which made us, for instance, to our shame, the partners of the Turk in his work of oppression.

Page 55

And we must realise that mere good intent does not suffice; that understanding, by which alone we can make headway, is not arrived at by a pleasant emotion like that produced by a Beethoven Sonata; that we pay for our progress in a little harder money than that, the money of hard work, in which must be included hard thinking. And having got that far, we must realise that sound ideas do not spread themselves. They are spread by men. It is one of the astonishing things in the whole problem of the breaking of war, that while men realise that if women are to have votes, or men to be made temperate, or the White Slave Traffic to be stopped, or for that matter, if battleships are to be built, or conscription to be introduced, or soap or pills to be sold, effort, organisation, time, money, must be put into these things. But the greatest revolution that the world has known since mankind acquired the right to freedom of opinion, will apparently get itself accomplished without any of these things; or that at least the Government can quite easily attend to it by asking other Governments to attend a Conference. We must realise that a change of opinion, the recognition of a new fact, or of facts heretofore not realised, is a slow and laborious work, even in the relatively simple things which I have mentioned, and that you cannot make savages into civilised men by collecting them round a table. For the Powers of Europe, so far as their national policies are concerned, are still uncivilised individuals. And their Conferences are bound to fail, when each unit has the falsest conception concerning the matters under discussion. Governments are the embodied expression of general public opinion—and not the best public opinion at that; and until opinion is modified, the embodiment of it will no more be capable of the necessary common action, than would Red Indians be capable of forming an efficient Court of Law, while knowing nothing of law or jurisprudence, or worse still, having utterly false notions of the principles upon which human society is based.

And the occasional conferences of private men still hazy as to these principles are bound to be as ineffective. If the mere meeting and contact of people cleared up misunderstandings, we should not have Suffragettes and Anti-Suffragettes, or Mr. Lloyd George at grips with the doctors.

These occasional conferences, whether official, like those of the Hague, or non-official like those which occasionally meet in London or in Berlin, will not be of great avail in this matter unless a better public opinion renders them effective. They are of some use and no one would desire to see them dropped, but they will not of themselves stem or turn the drift of opinion. What is needed is a permanent organisation of propaganda, framed, not for the purpose of putting some cut and dried scheme into immediate operation, but with the purpose of clarifying European public opinion, making the great mass see a few simple facts straight, instead of crooked, and founded in the hope that ten or fifteen years of hard, steady, persistent work, will create in that time (by virtue of the superiority of the instruments, the Press and the rest of it which we possess) a revolution of opinion as great as that produced at the time of the Reformation, in a period which probably was not more than the lifetime of an ordinary man.

Page 56

The organization for such permanent work has hardly begun. The Peace Societies have done, and are doing, a real service, but it is evident, for the reasons already indicated, that if the great mass are to be affected, instruments of far wider sweep must be used. Our great commercial and financial interests, our educational and academic institutions, our industrial organizations, the political bodies, must all be reached. An effort along the right lines has been made thanks to the generosity of a more than ordinarily enlightened Conservative capitalist. But the work should be taken up at a hundred points. Some able financier should do for the organization of Banking—which has really become the Industry of Finance and Credit—the same sort of service that Sir Charles Macara has done for the cotton industry of the world. The international action and co-ordination of Trades Unions the world over should be made practical and not, in this matter, be allowed to remain a merely platonic aspiration.

The greater European Universities should possess endowed Chairs of the Science of International Statecraft. While we have Chairs to investigate the nature of the relationship of insects, we have none to investigate the nature of the relationship of man in his political grouping. And the occupants of these Chairs might change places—that of Berlin coming to London or Oxford, and that of Oxford going to Berlin.

The English Navy League and the German Navy League alike tell us that the object of their endeavours is to create an instrument of peace. In that case their efforts should not be confined to increasing the size of the respective arms, but should also be directed to determining how and why and when, and under what conditions, and for what purpose that arm should be used. And that can only be done effectually if the two bodies learn something of the aims and objects of the other. The need for a Navy, and the size of the Navy, depends upon policy, either our own policy, or the policy of the prospective aggressor; and to know something of that, and its adjustment, is surely an integral part of national defence. If both these Navy Leagues, in the fifteen or sixteen years during which they have been in existence, had possessed an intelligence committee, each conferring with the other, and spending even a fraction of the money and energy upon disentangling policy that has been spent upon the sheer bull-dog piling up of armaments, in all human possibility, the situation which now confronts us would not exist.

Then each political party of the respective Parliaments might have its accredited delegates in the Lobbies of the other: the Social Democrats might have their permanent delegates in London, in the Lobbies of the House of Commons; the Labour Party might have their Permanent Delegates in the Lobbies of the Reichstag; and when any Anglo-German question arose, those delegates could speak through the mouth of the Members of the Party to which they were accredited, to the Parliament of the other nation. The Capitalistic parties could have a like bi-national organisation.

Page 57

“These are wild and foolish suggestions”—that is possible. They have never, however, been discussed with a view to the objects in question. All efforts in this direction have been concentrated upon an attempt to realize mechanically, by some short and royal road, a result far too great and beneficent to be achieved so cheaply.

Before our Conferences, official or unofficial, can have much success, the parties to them must divest their minds of certain illusions which at present dominate them. Until that is done, you might as reasonably expect two cannibals to arrive at a workable scheme for consuming one another. The elementary conceptions, the foundations of the thing are unworkable. Our statecraft is still founded on a sort of political cannibalism, upon the idea that nations progress by conquering, or dominating one another. So long as that is our conception of the relationship of human groups we shall always stand in danger of collision, and our schemes of association and co-operation will always break down.

APPENDIX.

Many of the points touched upon in the last two chapters are brought out clearly in a recent letter addressed to the Press by my friend and colleague Mr. A.W. Haycock. In this letter to the Press he says:—

If you will examine systematically, as I have done, the comments which have appeared in the Liberal Press, either in the form of leading articles, or in letters from readers, concerning Lord Roberts' speech, you will find that though it is variously described as “diabolical,” “pernicious,” “wicked,” “inflammatory” and “criminal,” the real fundamental assumptions on which the whole speech is based, and which, if correct, justify it, are by implication admitted; at any rate, in not one single case that I can discover are they seriously challenged. Now, when you consider this, it is the most serious fact of the whole incident—far more disquieting in reality than the fact of the speech itself, especially when we remember that Lord Roberts did but adopt and adapt the arguments already used with more sensationalism and less courtesy by Mr. Winston Churchill himself. The protests against Lord Roberts' speech take the form of denying the intention of Germany to attack this country. But how can his critics be any more aware of the intentions of Germany—65 millions of people acted upon by all sorts of complex political and social forces—than is Lord Roberts? Do we know the intention of England with reference to Woman's Suffrage or Home Rule or Tariff Reform? How, therefore, can we know the intentions of “Germany”? Lord Roberts, with courtesy, in form at least and with the warmest tribute to the “noble and imaginative patriotism” of German policy, assumed that that policy would follow the same general impulse that our own has done in the past, and would necessarily follow it since



Page 58

the relation between military power and national greatness and prosperity was to-day what it always has been. In effect, Lord Roberts' case amounts to this:—"We have built up our Empire and our trade by virtue of the military power of our state; we exist as a nation, sail the seas, and carry on our trade, by virtue of our predominant strength; as that strength fails we shall do all these things merely on the sufferance of stronger nations, who, when pushed by the needs of an expanding population to do so, will deprive us of the capacity for carrying on those vital functions of life, and transfer the means of so doing to themselves to their very great advantage; we have achieved such transfer to ourselves in the past by force and must expect other nations to try and do the same thing unless we are able to prevent them. It is the inevitable struggles of life to be fought out either by war or armaments." These are not Lord Roberts' words, but the proposition is the clear underlying assumption of his speech. And his critics do not seriously challenge it. Mr. Churchill by implication warmly supports it. At Glasgow he said: "The whole fortune of our race and Empire, the whole treasure accumulated during so many centuries of sacrifice and achievement would perish and be swept utterly away, if our naval supremacy were to be impaired." Now why should there be any danger of Germany bringing about this catastrophe unless she could profit enormously by so doing? But that implies that a nation does expand by military force, does achieve the best for its people by that means; it does mean that if you are not stronger than your rival, you carry on your trade "on sufferance" and at the appointed hour will have it taken from you by him. And if that assumption—plainly indicated as it is by a Liberal Minister—is right, who can say that Lord Roberts' conclusion is not justified?

Now as to the means of preventing the war. Lord Roberts' formula is:—

"Such a battle front by sea and land that no power or probable combination of powers shall dare to attack us without the certainty of disaster."

This, of course, is taken straight from Mr. Churchill, who, at Dundee, told us that "the way to make war impossible is to be so strong as to make victory certain."

We have all apparently, Liberals and Conservatives alike, accepted this "axiom" as self-evident.

Well, since it is so obvious as all that we may expect the Germans to adopt it. At present they are guided by a much more modest principle (enunciated in the preamble of the German Navy Law); namely, to be sufficiently strong to make it *dangerous* for your enemy to attack. They must now, according to our "axiom," be so strong as to make our defeat certain. I am quite sure that the big armament



Page 59

people in Germany are very grateful for the advice which Mr. Churchill and Lord Roberts thus give to the nations of the world, and we may expect to see German armaments so increased as to accord with the new principle. And Lord Roberts is courageous enough to abide by the conclusion which flows from the fundamental assumption of Liberals and Conservatives alike, *i.e.*, that trade and the means of livelihood can be transferred by force. We have transferred it in the past. "It is excellent policy; it is, or should be, the policy of every nation prepared to play a great part in history." Such are Lord Roberts' actual words. At least, they don't burke the issue. The Germans will doubtless note the combination: be so strong as to make victory certain, and strike when you have made it certain, and they will then, in the light of this advice, be able to put the right interpretation upon our endeavours to create a great conscript force and our arrangements, which have been going on for some years, to throw an expeditionary force on to the continent. The outlook is not very pleasant, is it? And yet if you accept the "axiom" that our Empire and our trade is dependent upon force and can be advantageously attacked by a stronger power there is no escape from the inevitable struggle—for the other "axiom" that safety can be secured merely by being enormously stronger than your rival is, as soon as it is tested by applying it to the two parties to the conflict—and, of course, one has as much right to apply it as the other—seen to be simply dangerous and muddle-headed rubbish. Include the two parties in your "axiom" (as you must) and it becomes impossible of application. Now the whole problem sifts finally down to this one question: Is the assumption made by Lord Roberts and implied by Mr. Churchill concerning the relation of military force to trade and national life well founded? If it is, conflict is inevitable. It is no good crying "panic." If there is this enormous temptation pushing to our national ruin, we ought to be in a panic. And if it is not true? Even in that case conflict will equally be inevitable unless we realise its falseness, for a universal false opinion concerning a fact will have the same result in conduct as though the false belief were true. And my point is that those concerned to prevent this conflict seem but mildly interested in examining the foundations of the false beliefs that make conflict inevitable. Part of the reluctance to study the subject seems to arise from the fear that if we deny the nonsensical idea that the British Empire would instantaneously fall to pieces were the Germans to dominate the North Sea for 24 hours we should weaken the impulse to defence. That is probably an utterly false idea, but suppose it is true, is the risk of less ardour in defence as great as the risk which comes of having a nation of Roberts and Churchills on both sides of the frontier?

If that happens war becomes not a risk but a certainty.



Page 60

And it is danger of happening. I speak from the standpoint of a somewhat special experience. During the last 18 months I have addressed not scores but many hundreds of meetings on the subject of the very proposition on which Lord Roberts' speech is based and which I have indicated at the beginning of this letter; I have answered not hundreds but thousands of questions arising out of it. And I think that gives me a somewhat special understanding of the mind of the man in the street. The reason he is subject to panic, and "sees red" and will often accept blindly counsels like those of Lord Roberts, is that he holds as axioms these primary assumptions to which I have referred, namely, that he carries on his daily life by virtue of military force, and that the means of carrying it on will be taken from him by the first stronger power that rises in the world, and that that power will be pushed to do it by the advantage of such seizure. And these axioms he never finds challenged even by his Liberal guides. The issue for those who really desire a better condition is clear. So long as by their silence, or by their indifference to the discussion of the fundamental facts of this problem they create the impression that Mr. Churchill's axioms are unchallengeable, the panic-mongers will have it all their own way, and our action will be a stimulus to similar action in Germany, and that action will again re-act on ours, and so on *ad infinitum*. Why is not some concerted effort made to create in both countries the necessary public opinion, by encouraging the study and discussion of the elements of the case, in some such way, for instance, as that adopted by Mr. Norman Angell in his book? One organization due to private munificence has been formed and is doing, within limits, an extraordinarily useful work, but we can only hope to affect policy by a much more general interest—the interest of those of leisure and influence. And that does not seem to be forthcoming. My own work, which has been based quite frankly on Mr. Angell's book, has convinced me that it embodies just the formula most readily understood of the people. It constitutes a constructive doctrine of International Policy—the only statement I know so definitely applicable to modern conditions. But the old illusions are so entrenched that if any impression is to be made on public opinion generally, effort must be persistent, permanent, and widespread. Mere isolated conferences, disconnected from work of a permanent character, are altogether inadequate for the forces that have to be met. What is needed is a permanent and widespread organization embracing Trades Unions, Churches and affiliated bodies, Schools and Universities, basing its work on some definite doctrine of International Policy which can supplant the present conceptions of

Page 61

struggle and chaos. I speak, at least, from the standpoint of experience; in the last resort the hostility, fear and suspicion which from time to time gains currency among the great mass of the people, is due to those elementary misconceptions as to the relation of prosperity, the opportunities of life, to military power. So long as these misconceptions are dominant, nothing is easier than to precipitate panic and bad feeling, and unless we can modify them, we shall in all human probability drift into conflict; and this incident of Lord Roberts' speech and the comment which it has provoked, show that for some not very well defined reason, Liberals, quite as much as Conservatives, by implication, accept the axioms upon which it is based, and give but little evidence that they are seriously bestirring themselves to improve that political education upon which according to their creed, progress can alone be made.

Yours very faithfully,

A.W. HAYCOCK.