

CHAPTER XXXII

THE NIGHTMARE OF MILITARISM

THERE is a widespread feeling that the nations of the world are about to abandon the policy of maintaining armies and navies. The conscience of the enlightened people of the world is in revolt against wars. The common sense of the masses who furnish the food for powder is now directed to the question of motives. "What is there in this fight for me?" is in the minds of more and more men of military age every year.

The competition between the British Empire and the German Empire in military armament is a heart-breaking struggle, like that of two athletes breathing hard on some bitterly contested field. These great peoples are making the pace; but there is no great nation which is not enrolled in the tremendous event. Russia's army and France's army and navy

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are the right and left wing of the forces of the Triple Entente, with Japan's in reserve. Italy is grinding her people into the very dust of poverty with taxes for the support of Germany's left wing, and Austria-Hungary is straining every nerve on the kaiser's right as the forces of the Triple Alliance pass in review. The Balkan States have been armed camps for years in preparation for their assault on Turkey, and will be for years to come. Even decadent Spain, the strictly commercial Low Countries, little Portugal, and neutral Denmark, Switzerland and the Norse countries are carrying their loads of militarism.

A statement recently cabled to this country from Germany shows something of the terrible burdens of "military preparedness". Privy Councilor Schwartz, feeling called upon to repudiate the assertion that Germany is forcing other nations into this competition, shows that his empire is paying out less in proportion to her population than Great Britain and France. The casuistry in this is perfectly plain, since the weaker nation in popu-

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lation might feel obliged to make up for lack of numbers by excess of ships and guns. Certainly, military preparedness is not a game in which weakness in one respect can be urged as a reason for weakness in any other. But the fact that since 1881 France has spent \$500,000,000 more than Germany is a startling preparation for the assertion that in the last thirty years the Triple Entente—Great Britain, Russia and France—has spent more than eighteen thousand millions of dollars, while the Triple Alliance—Germany, Austria and Italy—has expended more than eleven thousand five hundred millions in militarism.

The people of Germany, according to this statement, will be called upon to pay five dollars and ninety cents per capita for militarism in the present year, while every man, woman and child in France will contribute seven dollars and fifty cents. This seems to be exclusive of the milliards of bonds which bear interest now, and at some time in the future will necessarily have to be taken care of as to principal, unless the masses bow under the

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permanent yoke of an interest-eating leisure class.

This present-day militarism is a mixed question of pseudo-patriotism, actual national necessities and high finance. There is no question that in some cases the nations are now, and for centuries have been, in the position of making choice between national extinction and preparedness for war. What would have happened, for instance, to France, two hundred years ago, had she failed to maintain military readiness against the aggressions of England? Or of Holland as against Spain? The state of the smaller nations of Europe to-day would be no less perilous, were it not for the mutual jealousies of the government trusts, and the spread of internationalism in sentiment in such ways as peace societies and socialism. Sweden and Norway are coveted by Russia in her age-long desire for a seaport free from ice. Denmark and the Low Countries seem to the Germans logically parts of their great empire. Panslavism looks in the direction of a union of all the Slavic peoples

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—probably under the czar. Alsace-Lorraine has scarcely become completely Germanized. The Poles aspire to a restoration of the kingdom of John Sobieski. In fact the whole European situation is held in *statu quo* by the force of standing armies and huge navies.

All this is the effect of perverted patriotism—that patriotism which is more vice than virtue. No inhabitant of the German Empire would be better off were the Low Countries and Denmark absorbed. The desire of Russia for an ice-free port is a legitimate one, and should be fulfilled by the opening of the narrow seas past Constantinople, and by free trade to and through the seaports of other lands. The people of Alsace-Lorraine are as well off under one flag as another, given just government, and under industrial and trade freedom would feel as contented. Poland is entitled to freedom as a matter of justice, but would soon forget her aspirations if given just institutions under the flags now floating over her. The desires of subject peoples for

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governments of their own are based upon very deep and powerful instincts, and where it is territorially possible, might be granted without loss to their present yoke-fellows; but where industrial exploitation is absent, subjection is neither profitable to the governing class of the ruling nation, nor permanently offensive to the people absorbed. And in such cases as the Greek, Bulgar, Serb and Rumanian populations of the Balkans separate governments are impossible owing to the scattering of the original stocks and their mingling with one another. It is a perverted patriotism which would arm one against the other in the name of nationality. Just governments *inter se* are the only solution. It is perverted patriotism which arms the English against the Germans or vice versa, because neither has anything which the other needs, and neither is possessed of a legitimate ambition in the way of which the other legitimately stands. It is a case of the ruling classes working on false patriotism for selfish ends. The common

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man has no interest in these objects, and the national welfare is not truly concerned therewith.

This pseudo-patriotism is dear to the hearts of millions who merely know no better. Moneyed interests of the most enormous extent are built up on militarism and the objects of military aggression. There is no good to the German people in African or Asiatic expansion; but there is money in it for German capitalists. There was no benefit to the people of Belgium in the Kongo, but King Leopold became a millionaire out of it. There are rubber and ivory, and sugar lands, and inoffensive and feeble peoples to be enslaved for the ruling classes of the aggressive nations, and loss for the nation at large: loss of life, loss of honor, loss of humanity, loss of every sort. When these things are thoroughly worked out by the masses, the average man will ask himself, "What is there in this for me?" and this phase of false patriotism will be ended.

The moneyed classes are interested to an enormous extent in the loans of funds for the

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up-keep of militarism. The names of Rothschild and Morgan are synonymous with government loans. These gentry verily do not burn incense on the altars of patriotism for naught. And while lending money for armaments, they are making money out of the building of armament. The money the house of Morgan loans to a government for war-ships is paid back, less commissions, interests and profits, for the ships built by the steel companies owned by the house of Morgan. Krupp is the typical German millionaire, and the Krupp millions come from cannon and war-ships. These are the merest hints as to the manifold moneyed interests that feed and fatten on the policy of militarism. When the masses acquire the habit of asking themselves, "What is there in this for us?" the incitements of this class and their fuglemen to war and preparedness for war will no longer thrill our young men into khaki.

And yet, I do not see the end of militarism. I believe that the militarism of the present day is ninety per cent. without logical excuse;

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but I see also a possibility for a readjustment of militarism to conditions under which it will be justified in the minds of the masses who ask themselves, "What is there in it for me?" I wish I could see the way to universal disarmament in the near future, but even should internationalism obtain control of the military nations of the world, I am unable to see more than a lull in the storm and a readjustment of factors.

The Balkan States were justified in maintaining a state of preparedness against the Turks, unless we adopt the theory of non-resistance. There may have been high finance and false patriotism commingled with the real justification; but the presence of the Turk encamped in military tyranny over the Balkan peoples constituted an intolerable status. It was a case of forcible commingling of irreconcilable human elements.)

The world as a whole is in an unstable condition as to the distribution of the races over it. Some European nations are said to be overpopulated. Probably in most if not all of

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these cases the disease is land-monopoly, rather than over-population. But land-monopoly and social maladjustments produce prematurely all the phenomena of pressure of population, and make the peoples equally restive for new lands. It matters little whether the pressure on the people of Russia, Poland, Hungary and Italy is factitious or natural, as long as it drives them to foreign lands. If factitious, it could be cured by reforms at home, as the tendency to emigrate from Germany, Scandinavia and the British Isles has largely been cured; but as long as it lasts, it sets up immigration problems in such nations as Argentina and the United States, to which the emigrants are flocking.

Such commingling of populations, without any racial affinity, and bringing into conflict possible racial antipathies, are of less consequence under autocratic governments than in democracies. In view of the fact that democracy seems to be not only the natural form of government, but the form which is conquering the world, racial admixtures are sure to be-

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come more and more fruitful of governmental problems. The fact that the countries now most clearly over-populated are peopled by races possessed of weak affinities, or none, for the democracies occupying the largest areas of sparsely-settled land and offering the most attractive industrial prospects, and moreover, feel certain strong antipathies for them, is ominous. The democracies of the New World and of Australasia will be forced by the law of national self-preservation to keep out the millions of folk of other colors and alien ideals who are ready to be shot into their respective bodies politic by the force of economic stress, like a drug into a vein by a hypodermic needle. They must do this. Their precious experiment in democracy requires it. They have good reason to believe that in fighting against national dilution and contamination they are battling for a principle as important to the colored races as to the white—a world principle.

Can universal disarmament be brought about while this condition persists? It seems

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to me very doubtful. It seems to me that the time is rather far off when the masses of the people will be able to disclaim interest in a certain sort of military preparedness.

I should not be willing to disband our armies and stigmatize military training as the silly thing it would be if there were no better excuse for it than the European balance of power, or the extension of trade. I should be afraid. Until this enormous matter of the distribution of the races is settled, we shall keep up a certain sort of militarism, be sure of that.

The question is likely to be: What sort of militarism? All institutions must sooner or later be transformed so as to accord with the principles of democracy—or they must be abolished. The great objection to standing armies is their conflict with democracy. They are essentially aristocratic in their traditions. The officers must always be “gentlemen” and the privates merely men. The social superiority of officer over man is something enormous. Every day’s service tends to make the man in the ranks a servile creature, and the

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man with epaulettes a snob and a tyrant. Moreover, armies are used by the capitalistic governments of the world for the purpose of overawing the masses of the people—the voters. The republics of the world are founded on what has been called the sacred right of rebellion; but they have set up in their midst standing armies to take away that right from the present generation. When one considers that rebellion is always a demand for rights, this situation is anomalous.

But the army need not be undemocratic, nor out of touch with the sentiments of the masses. It may well be the masses. Some of the most efficient armies the world ever saw have been democratic armies—Cromwell's, for instance. Obedience on the part of the rank and file to the officers need not imply any social chasm between the two.

Democracy requires that the army be democratized. This implies no slackening of discipline, but calls for a revolution in ideals. The army of a democracy should offer a serv-

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ice in which the best young men should be glad to enter. There are certain military organizations membership in which, owing to certain flubdubbery, is a social honor. Membership in the army of a democracy should be made so useful to the soldier, and so beneficial to society as a whole, as to be looked upon as a thing to be desired by all young men. Rank should separate men only while on duty. The whole organization should be based on the idea of educating the soldier in citizenship and developing him as a producer and a man.

This change might easily be effectuated. The life of the soldier under most military rules is of all lives the most dreary and deadening. The time which he can profitably use in the practise of soldiership is only a small portion of the day. The regulations have therefore imposed upon him a great many arbitrary duties which have no real relation to mastery of the soldier's trade, but are meant to keep them busy and out of mischief. They are about as useful as the old task of pounding

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the rust off the anchor chains which strict sea-captains imposed on their sailors during fine weather.

The armies of democracies should be the greatest educational institutions of the nations. Instead of wasting their youthful years in time-killing, soul-killing routine, the soldiers should be also students. Every course of study now given by universities might be mastered by the citizen soldiery. There is no branch of learning that should not be successfully taught in the army posts of the future. The culture thus given might be evidenced by degrees as honorable and valuable to their possessors as those conferred by any educational institution in the world.

In the main, the training in the armies will be vocational and technical, however. There is no reason why armies should not grow their own subsistence, and manufacture their own equipment as a part of the vocational training of the citizens of the republic. There is no reason why scientific agriculture should not be taught to every farmer's son fortunate

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enough to get into the army—and to every city boy desirous of getting back to the land. There is no reason why every handicraft, every profession, every art, should not be taught to men earning their educations by service as soldiers. There is no reason why graduation from the army should not be proof of fitness for productive citizenship, and the best possible recommendation to prospective employers.

Such an army would be only a little more military than are some of our corps of college cadets. Such soldiers would not require pay. They would be willing to pay for the training, rather than be deprived of it.

England might keep a million men in camp all the time by such a system. And they would melt back into the industrial system of the land at the rate of a quarter of a million a year, and repay to the last penny the expense of their education in their greater industrial efficiency. The United States could keep two million young men under arms all the time, and the burden would really be only a part of

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the universal duty of education. Gradually in both these nations, and in all others adopting the system, the thing which Frederick the Great accomplished in Prussia would be manifest—the citizenship of the nation, as a whole, would be transformed into a body of trained soldiers. Thus, and in some such way only can democracy and military preparedness be reconciled.

The problem is one, not of offense, but of defense. This sort of militarism is merely a matter of preparedness against the aggressions of other peoples. Those aggressions are likely to take the form at first of protests against the exclusion of emigrants. Such exclusions must be reasonable, but when determined upon, they must be firmly adhered to. Adhesion to them requires no aggression, no expeditions to foreign shores, nothing except the ability to defend ourselves.

Such militarism will be a matter of fortifications and artillery, with a mighty army backing them. Naval disarmament seems quite out of the question for some nations, but

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is not irreconcilable with the principles here laid down, save for widely disseminated peoples like the English. For them the matter is exceedingly difficult. Under present conditions pseudo-patriotism, high finance and a scattered Englishry render naval disarmament impossible.

But at bottom navies are instruments of aggression, and will not be needed on any such scale as that on which they are now maintained, when military power is used for the one purpose of self-defense.

The kings of finance may not always care to furnish funds for great navies. They now prefer a situation in which there shall be constant preparation for war—for they make profits on that—but no actual war. For in actual war the money power, furnishing funds for both sides, is in the position of placing bets on two contestants and taking a commission for the work, with the possibility of becoming so deeply involved that if one side becomes bankrupt the money power will lose enormously. The whole matter of moral obligations as to

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the payment of bonds issued under the circumstances now prevailing must sooner or later be reexamined. One of these days public credit will not be so high. Navies are shockingly costly things. The development of aerial navigation is about to revolutionize war, and seems to promise a permanent transfer of headship in war from the nation leading in sea power to the one with the most powerful air navy. When the air-ship renders the man-of-war obsolete, military operations will shift from sea to land, and navies will sink in importance.