

Teachers in War Time

WAR TOUCHES EVERYBODY. It loots pockets, burns souls, warps intellects, destroys lives. Not infrequently, individuals suffer the complete catalog of hurt. If there is anything of real worth in war, it is the lesson Herbert Spencer revealed in "The Data of Ethics." Spencer compares the moral code which asserts society's claim on the individual to the code which asserts the claims of individuals versus society thus:

"But gradually as war declines—gradually as the compulsory cooperation needful in dealing with external enemies becomes unnecessary, and leaves behind the voluntary cooperation which effectually achieves internal sustenance, there grows increasingly clear the code of conduct which voluntary cooperation implies. And this final permanent code alone admits of being definitely formulated, and so constituting ethics as a science in contrast with empirical ethics.

"The leading traits of a code, under which complete living through voluntary cooperation is secured, may be simply stated. The fundamental requirement is that the life sustaining actions of each shall severally bring him the amounts and kinds of advantages naturally achieved by them . . ."

This reasoning is not automatic to the mass of men, nor are all of us Spencers. But all of us can learn, and if the lesson taught by indulgence in war is to have any weight at all, the advantages of a free economy must be generally apprehended. Those who subscribe to what Spencer terms "this final permanent code," voluntary cooperation, which is nothing less than a chunk of the base of Freedom, must educate along those lines. Nor should this teaching be suspended for the "duration." Rather should it grow in scope—for from the squeezing of the first trigger, from the release of the first stick of bombs, this war began to die. The peace table was from the moment war belched its natal breath. However faintly discernible, or out of sight at present, that table comes nearer and with each minute the time to teach the lesson becomes shorter.

If that lesson is not well taught or generally learned before the peace table is set and victor and vanquished take their respective places above and below the salt, then we who have perceived it are to blame in part—we gifted ones, the superior intellects, the charter members of mutual admiration clubs who, once having attained high station in the realm of ethics, sit as hermits on high rocks and hug intellectual egos to spiritual bosoms, like the mon-

key holding the one banana in a cage full of his envious hungry fellows.

Verily, the socially uninformed will not deserve blame for failure to learn: most of it will rest justly in the laps of our educated ignorants who in mere negativeness cast a huge shadow in the way of social light—our own fuming, intellectually foppish, smart Aleck fiddling Neros who garner all the wisdom they can but will not sow an ounce of it.

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