

Rallying for the Attack on War

When men rally for peace with the same intelligence and determination that they rally for war we shall begin to march towards our New World. The difficulty is to get them to realize that peace no more than war is to be achieved by eloquent talk and noble resolutions.

We all admit that war means sacrifice and effort, untiring and to the limit; that when we make war we must get down to cases - work, spend, die. We have never grasped that Peace like War has her sacrifices, that like war it is only to be won by endless labor and pain. Upon the understanding of this fact is going to depend in the main the effectiveness of the present determination of this nation to make the coming Conference for the limitation of armaments a success.

That the nation is rallying for this purpose is unquestioned. There is an impassioned and growing determination among powerful bodies of men and women to make it succeed. That is, to insist that there come out of it such mutual understandings and pledges as will convince the governments concerned that it is practical and safe for them to cut their navies and their war establishments.

What substantial reasons - reasons outside of our conviction that great armaments are madness, an offense to common sense, an intolerable burden on people - what reasons beyond these have we for believing that the coming Conference may succeed?

A first one, and an important one, is that the difficulties to be adjusted are, as at present defined, confined to one side only of the earth's surface which, if huge, is nevertheless fairly simple, being mostly water. It is the problems of the Pacific Ocean that we have to handle. These problems are comparatively definite - the kind of thing that you can get down on paper with something like precision. They have one great advantage and that is that in the main they do not involve a past running into the dim distance. England has held Hong Kong, a conquest of the opium war, for only about eighty years. We, the United States, have had port privileges in China only since 1844. France first got a stronghold in Cochin China in 1862, and her protectorate over Annam is less than forty years old. It was only twenty-five years ago that the war between Japan and China over Korea began; the complications in eastern Russia are still younger. So are those in Shantung, Yap, the Philippine Islands. That is, the chief bones of contention in the coming Conference are freshly picked. In most of the cases there are men still living who helped in the picking.

It is the same when it comes to concessions. The questions ^{around} of the ownership and administration of railroads and mines - they belong to our age. We can put our fingers on their beginnings, trace with some certainty what has happened, find the intriguers, the bribe givers and takers, the law breaker, if such there have been. In the case of most of the concessions we can get our hands upon the very men involved in securing them and in carrying on

their development.

How different from the problems of Europe, running as they do through century after century, involving as they do successions of invasions, of settlements, of conquests, of incessant infiltration of different races, and the consequent mingling of social, political, industrial and religious notions. The quarrels of Europe are as old as its civilization, their bases are lost in the past. Without minimizing at all the difficulty of the questions on the agenda of the coming Conference, they have in the main the advantage of being of recent date, ~~and are~~ comparatively simple.

There is encouragement in the relations of the conferees. These are not enemy nations, fresh from wars, that are meeting to make treaties. They are nations that for five years have been allies, and from the life-and-death necessity of coöperation have gained a certain solidarity. True, their machinery of coöperation is pretty well shot up. The frictions of peace are harder on international machinery than the shells of war. The former racks it to pieces; the latter solidifies it. That is, the nations that are coming to the Conference are on terms of fairly friendly acquaintance, an acquaintance which has stood a tremendous test.

These nations have all committed themselves solemnly to certain definite pacific ideals, laid down by the United States of America. True, their ideals are pretty badly battered, and we as a government are in the anomalous position of temporarily abandoning them after having committed our friends to them. However, they still stand on their feet, these ideals, and they are gaining fresh vigor

and confidence every day in this particular nation.

It should be counted as a decided advantage that the associations of the years of the War have made the men who will represent the different nations at the Conference fairly well acquainted with one another. Whatever disappointments there may be in the delegations we can depend upon it that the men chosen will be tried men. They are pretty sure to be men of trustworthy character, with records of respectable achievement, men like Root and Hughes and Underwood in our own delegation. They will not come unknown to each other or unknown to the nations involved. It will be a simple matter for us, the public, to become acquainted with their records. If by any unhappy chance there should be among them a political intriguer that, too, will be known; - forewarned is forearmed.

These are all good reasons for expecting that we shall get something of what we start out for. How much of it we will get and how permanent that which we get will be, will depend in no small degree upon the attitude of mind of this country, whether the backing that we give the Conference is to be one of emotionalism or intelligence. We are starting out with a will to succeed; we are going to spend our first day praying for success. It will be well if we inject into those prayers a supplication for self-control, clearness of judgment, and willingness to use our minds as well as our hearts in the struggles that are sure to come.

Certain very definite things may get in the way of the success of the Conference - things that often frustrate the best

intentions of men, and they are matters over which the public and the press have at least a certain control, things which they can certainly make infinitely worse unless they take a high and intelligent view of their own responsibility.

First, let us set our face against scape goats. One of the serious temptations, both of conferees and of public in a great conference such as we are just entering on, is picking a scape goat. There are bound to be periods in all human undertakings when the way is obscure, when failure threatens, when it is obvious that certain things on which we have set our hearts are unobtainable. Irritation and discouragement always characterize these periods. It is then that men take refuge in heaping all the blame for the difficulties in which they find themselves on one particular individual or group - in this case a nation - a nation which everybody combines to call obstinate, unreasonable, greedy, a spoke in the wheel. We have seen this thing happen in every great peace conference of the world. Then comes a hue and cry, a union of forces - not to persuade but to overwhelm the recalcitrant nation, to disgrace it, drive it out of court. The spirit of adjustment, and of accomodation which is of the very essence of success in such an undertaking as the nations have now on hand is always imperilled and frequently ruined by fixing on a scape goat.

It is obvious even at this point that this is one of the very real dangers of the coming Conference.

This is not to say that the nation on which irritation and suspicion are concentrated may not be in the wrong - it may be.

It may be deep in evil intrigue. It may be shockingly greedy. But it is well to remember that it is part of the Conference and the problem has got to be worked out with it, and that you work nothing out with scape goats. Abraham Lincoln once laid down a principle of statesmanship which admirably applies to such a situation. "Honest statesmanship," he said, "is the employment of individual meanness for the public good." In the coming Conference, honest negotiations will be the employment of national meanness - in case such develops - for the good of the world. It takes brains, humor, self-control to put any such rule as this in force; but if, unhappily, the Conference itself does not furnish a sufficient amount of these ingredients it is for press and public to make good the deficit. They are in a strategic position where they can insist that everybody must be considered innocent until he is proved guilty, that nothing be built on suspicion but everything on facts. And something that is very important to remember is that these facts must be taken with the proper historical perspective. Certain things are obvious in the Pacific relations today that we don't like. There is a pretty general concensus of opinion that Japan has played altogether too high a hand with China. Admit it, but do not forget that it is only about sixty years ago that the very nations with whom Japan is now meeting in council, met with their fleets in one of her ports and used their guns to teach her the beauties of Christian civilization. She decided to learn their lessons. She has wonderful imitative powers. She followed them into China and if she has played a higher hand there

than any of them - and there may be a question ^{as to} of that - it should be remembered she has had only sixty years in which to learn the degree of greed that can safely be practiced in our modern civilization. That is, that possibly she has not had sufficient time to learn to temper exploitation with civilized discretion!

No scape goats. No hues and cries. And certainly no partisanship. It is within the power of the allied forces of this country that are setting themselves to making this Conference a success, to make it truly national, to see that party ambitions and antipathies have nothing to do either way with negotiations. We have had within the last three years a terrible lesson of the lengths to which men's partisanship will go if unchecked, in wrecking even the peace of the world. Let us have no repetition of that crime. It is the business of the press and the public to stamp down any partisan leanings that show their ugly heads in the Conference.

And let us remember, too, the danger there is in matters of this kind from crudeness of opinion ^{- Sharp judgments}. We love to be thought wise. There are thousands of us who at this moment are getting out our maps to find out where Yap lies or the points between which the Eastern Chinese railroad runs - who will be tempted sooner or later to become violent partisans of, we will say

Yap for America
~~The Eastern Railroad for China.~~

There is a tale told of a frivolous young woman who had had it impressed on her that she should learn to converse seriously. She read her first historical book, a life of Mary, Queen of Scots. And when a young man called in the evening, ran to meet him with

excited eye, exclaiming, "Isn't it terrible about that poor Mary, Queen of Scots!" The execution was news to her. And ^{Such judgment} a lot of us are going to come to this Conference in that state of mind. ^{An} easy but obstinate acceptance of this or that view of what ought to be done will not contribute to the solution of problems. What ought to be done in regard to Yap and the Eastern Chinese railroad and Shantung and all the rest, will be what the representatives of all the nations, honestly bent on a fair and just solution, find that they all can consent to.

Now, this will probably mean sacrifice on everybody's part. Let us get it clearly in our minds that before we get through this thing, if we are ever going to have the limitation of armament which we desire, we, the United States, may have to sacrifice some definite thing - a piece of soil, a concession, a naval base in the Pacific - and that nothing more fatal to the success of the Conference can happen than for us to set our teeth and say, We must have this - quite as fatal as setting our teeth and saying, This or that nation must do this.

Our contribution, the contribution of the press and public, to the success of this great undertaking, must be something vastly ^{expressing this or that sentiment} more important than ^{backing the} fixing boundaries. It must be preserving the spirit of adjustment, of concession, of fairness, of sacrifice if necessary, a resolute determination to have nothing to do with scape goats, with hues and cries - nothing to do with suspicions, everything with facts; and if meanness develops, to follow Lincoln and handle that meanness with such brains, humor and patience that it will help rather than defeat the ends of peace.