

A SUGGESTIVE RETROSPECT

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SOME time ago an American magazine offered a prize for the best essay on *What is Making for War with England?* Without assuming that any cause seriously makes for so disastrous a result, one may be roused by the question to a retrospect that is not without interest, and may possibly have value. I take it as the text for a few historical reflections.

Among the "emotional and traditional" causes of a warlike feeling, few will any longer refer to the great conflict that severed the thirteen colonies from the mother land. That event is now too remote to be thought of, especially in view of the frank statements on the British side by Sir George Otto Trevelyan and John Richard Green, and by the able American historians who have in an equally frank and generous spirit presented the American side of the case. It is known to every historical student at the present day that the unenfranchised democracy of the mother country was in full sympathy with the claims of the colonies, that if it had been enfranchised the separation would have been indefinitely deferred, and that if it was destined eventually to take place it would have been effected with as little friction as there was when the British Commonwealth of Nations was established in 1926.

The incidents that led to and characterized the war of 1812, which was terminated by the Treaty of Ghent signed on Christmas Eve, 1814, and followed by more than a hundred years of peace between England and America, seem also too far away to furnish fuel for a conflagration. During all the years of that century the United States and the most important outpost of the British Empire have lived side by side, with no frowning forts to mark the division line between them, nor any armed squadron of either power on the great lakes through which the invisible boundary has been established for more than a thousand miles of its length.

The Monroe Doctrine, in the form in which it was originally brought forward, might have presented grounds for irritation to Great Britain, if we assume the account given of its origin by Professor Roland G. Usher in his volume on Pan-Americanism to be correct. President Munroe's statement, which constitutes that Doctrine in its original form, arose, according to Professor

Usher, out of a suggestion from George Canning, then the real leader in the foreign policy of Great Britain. The Spanish power had been practically extinguished in America by revolutions, and the despotisms constituting the so-called Holy Alliance were conspiring to restore and strengthen their system in Europe. United States leaders were naturally apprehensive of trouble from this evil quarter, but not more so than Canning and his liberty-loving Englishmen. The proposal of Canning, therefore, was that England and the United States should unite in warning the despotisms of Europe against any attempt to establish their system on this side of the Atlantic, and should jointly take charge of the affairs of the revolutionary governments at least in Central America. John Quincy Adams, as Secretary of State, cheerfully acceded to the first half of the proposition, and deftly ignored the proposal of a joint note or anything like a quasi-condominium. Professor Albert Bushnell Hart, in his book on the Monroe Doctrine, says that Canning was annoyed at the fact that he was not asked to join in the warning to the despots of the Holy Alliance. But there is no evidence of which I am aware that the English people were not in full accord with the presidential message in so far as what came to be known as the Monroe Doctrine was concerned. Later extensions of the Doctrine, such as that of Mr. Olney under the presidency of Mr. Cleveland, gave great surprise to Lord Salisbury, and might well have caused irritation to British statesmen. But the Olney Doctrine and President Roosevelt's threat of the "big stick" seem to have so operated on the minds of many persons, if not upon public feeling generally throughout the Central and South American republics, as to estrange them more or less from the United States, and incline them to extend a welcome all the more cordial to the traders from Germany, France and England. British statesmen and traders have naturally been quite content that these conditions should continue. If, however, President Hoover's recent effort to change the current of feeling should prove successful, these European competitors for the good-will and the valuable trade of those regions will only have to bear up as best they can against the consequences which Mr. Simonds, a well known authority, seems to think may take a long time to develop.

The attitude of the English people, and the proceedings of their government throughout the war of the Rebellion, were no doubt disappointing in the extreme to the people of the northern states. They expected, and had good reasons for expecting, an enthusiastic support of their cause from the public opinion of the country whose boast was that the moment the slave set his feet

on British soil he became *ipso facto* a freeman. But Englishmen at large could hardly be expected to sympathize very cordially with a struggle the prosecution of which seemed to involve the closing of their mills and the starvation of many of their working people, especially when the issues at stake were obscured by the contentions put forward by the southern leaders. There were men like John Bright and a "goodlie company" of Englishmen who saw through those contentions, and discerned the issue that was actually at stake. They understood it to be the cause of Humanity against the barbarism of slavery. But their fellow-subjects cannot be adjudged as wholly without excuse when we remember that it was possible for the great and good President of the American Republic to declare his policy in such words as these:

My paramount object is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.

It was not amazing, in view of all the circumstances, that Gladstone should have been received as a King when he went to Newcastle to tell them that Jefferson Davis and the other leaders of the South had made an army, that they were making, it appeared, a navy, and that they had made what was more than either,—a nation. This was not the language of a neutral statesman; but may it not be forgiven when we read the elaborate and humiliating apology by which it was followed when the speaker was made aware of the serious and really unintended import of the last three words?

Viewing this period of history as a whole, Americans may well apply to it the homely philosophy of Burns:

What's done ye partly may compute,
Ye know not what's resisted.

Years after the great struggle was happily ended, and when North and South became reunited not merely in a legal bond but in a union of hearts and minds, the English people were told by General Bernhardt that they had missed the day of their merciful visitation. Why had they failed to embrace the opportunity to divide their enemy by supporting the southern states? In Bernhardt's system of philosophy, the nation whose manufacturers, tradesmen and laboring population refused to succumb to the blandishments of Napoleon III, and join him in establishing on sure foundation the slave-holding confederacy of the South, were probably showing signs of febleness. The febleness which he elsewhere describes

in his remarkable volume as the political "sin against the Holy Ghost!" Needless to say, Bernhardt was mistaken. He misread the motives and failed to do justice to the self-sacrificing conduct of the British people. When they came to understand the issues really at stake, they chose to let their mills lie idle and their workers find other employment or starve, rather than weaken the arm that was raised to preserve the unity of a power whose triumph must result in the abolition of slavery. Years before they had themselves driven it from every land that was under British rule.

One of the grievances against the mother country on the part of the United States was what they regarded as the unduly precipitate recognition of the southern Confederacy as a belligerent. There can be little doubt that, however this recognition may have presented itself to a proud and sensitive people, suddenly called upon to cope with what must have appeared to them as high treason on a national scale, no substantial harm was ever done to the cause of the North by this action of the British government. The United States had from the first refused to regard the leaders of the South and their followers as criminals, and they were about to establish a blockade of the southern ports which was distinctly an operation of belligerency. It was necessary that the shipping of the Empire should be apprized of the new conditions which must in the near future present themselves. A recognition of belligerency, accompanied or soon followed by a declaration of neutrality, established a firm basis for the relations of the great Anglo-Celtic nations on the two sides of the Atlantic. If there should be a lingering feeling that the British government was precipitate in its action, the American public opinion of the present day will not fail to place on the other side of the account, as an overwhelming credit, the firmness with which Great Britain opposed the efforts of Napoleon to bring the power of France and England to the aid of the Confederacy. They might thus have created a force with which the North would at the time have been utterly powerless to cope.

The writer is old enough to remember the sensations of disappointment and disgust that filled the hearts and minds of Northerners when the *Alabama* was allowed to slip from her dock on the Mersey and head for the Azores, there to take on board the machinery that would enable her to prey upon the commerce of the United States. He can recall the fear that this outrage might prove too rank to be atoned for except by the blood of British soldiers, or perhaps by the destruction and desolation of Canadian homes. The event was one that could not be satisfactorily ex-

plained to the people that suffered from it. Sir Roundell Palmer could not justify the escape, and Lord John Russell, towards the close of his life, described it as a scandal. Lord Cockburn, a higher legal authority than either of these, has recorded his conviction that the Commissioners of Customs ought to have ordered the vessel's detention. If ever a desolating and destructive war between the nations now so happily dwelling in peace and amity should be caused by the memory of a bygone grievance, it would be to such a wholly inexcusable lapse as this that the tragedy would be in large measure attributable. But the events have long since been forgiven and forgotten. They were atoned for by the payment of damages in excess of any amount that could be actually proved.

In the order of historical sequence, one should have made an earlier reference to the exploit of Captain Wilkes in sending an armed force on board the mail steamer *Trent* and arresting Messrs. Mason and Slidell, the Commissioners from the Confederacy to England and France, accompanied by their two secretaries. It must have been a humiliating blow to the multitudes who had been rejoicing over the success of Captain Wilkes whose exploit, as the historian, Sir Spencer Walpole, says, was received with a thrill of pleasure, to find that, by the admission of their own legal authorities, the action was wholly without lawful justification. "Fortunately while the passions of the multitude were excited, the judgment of two men of high station remained cool, for on the one side of the Atlantic Mr. Lincoln had from the first the wisdom to see that the action of Captain Wilkes could not be justified, and on the other side the Prince Consort had the discretion to recommend that the despatch which the British government had drawn up should be modified by the expression of a hope that Captain Wilkes's action was neither directed nor approved by the United States." It should be added, says Sir Spencer Walpole, that Lord Lyons (British Ambassador at Washington) "on his own responsibility extended by twelve hours the time allowed the government of the United States to give their reply."

Among the minor and almost negligible causes that can be drawn from the past history as fuel to feed the flame of warlike passion one need not reckon the Venezuela boundary controversy. That was in its day a dispute that plainly menaced the peace of the nations concerned. Its value to-day is that of a "horrible example." Who is there now that justifies the conduct of President Cleveland in bringing two great nations to the verge of war on account of a disputed boundary that was of no vital consequence

to either of the powers thus in grave danger of shedding the blood of thousands upon thousands of their best and bravest citizens? It was the calm and wise statesmanship of Lord Salisbury that prevented that rash proclamation of Cleveland from accomplishing the mischief which he seemed ready to welcome with as light a heart as that with which Emile Ollivier welcomed the war of France with Prussia in 1870. There will be no need for statesmanship on any similar occasion in the future; for Cleveland's example stands as a solemn warning to all succeeding statesmen how dangerous it is to seek to accomplish the ends of national policy by the threat of war. The whole world, moreover, has solemnly agreed to abandon the resort to war for the accomplishment of such purposes.

Dean Inge is a publicist who does not really belong to that school

Where blind and naked ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments unashamed
On all things all day long.

When he addresses himself to questions which come within the somewhat wide range of his knowledge and serious reflection, we listen to him with profit, although his vaticinations are frequently tinged with an unnecessary gloom. But when he seeks to instruct us as to the relative merits of Democracy and Dictatorships, for instance, or to interpret the national wishes of the millions that constitute the varied nations and races of Europe, we have to say, as Father Taylor said of Emerson in theology, that he knows no more of his subject than Balaam's ass knew of Hebrew grammar. His recent pronouncement as to the feeling of Europe, inclusive of that of Great Britain, respecting the United States has been so overwhelmingly condemned by his ecclesiastical associates, and is in itself so intrinsically absurd and raw, that it is unnecessary to deal seriously with the incident as among the contributing causes of possible friction between England and America.

It is much to be regretted that it has been found impossible for the government of Canada to accede to the request for greater co-operation in the enforcement of the prohibitory laws of the United States. The immense revenue derived from the trade in intoxicating liquors, as stated by Mr. Drury, a former premier of Ontario, is one of the obstacles in the way of improving conditions at home, and it is certainly one of the obstacles that have stood in the way of our co-operating with the temperance forces of the United States. Opinions must necessarily differ as to the advisability of our adopting the policy of Prohibition, but there

should be no possible difference of opinion as to the evil consequences of relying on such a traffic as a source of public revenue.

*La farina del diavolo va tutta in crusca.*¹

The best people on both sides of the international boundary would have rejoiced, and may yet be able to rejoice, in the initiation of efforts to assist in reducing the immense exportations of liquor from Canada to the United States, in violation of their customs laws, even though the operation may not be against the laws of the country from which they are exported.

There was a time in the history of the world when nations could easily be drawn into war for the accomplishment of objects esteemed worthy of the sacrifice involved. That time is gone by. The methods pursued in modern war are so frightfully cruel and destructive, involving as they may the wholesale destruction of great cities filled with men, women and children by poisonous and asphyxiating gases sent down from the sky, the sinking of great ships with their whole ship's company by bombs from the air or torpedoes from undersea assassins without the possibility of escape, the huge expenditures called for in the prosecution of a war under modern conditions, absorbing the funds that should be devoted to the humanitarian objects so loudly calling for consideration, that in view of all these facts, no conceivable object of national desire can ever render it otherwise than a criminally insane proceeding on the part of any nation to resort to war for its accomplishment.

There is yet one possible case in which war between England and the United States might come about by accident. The question of naval parity, which was dealt with by Sir Austen Chamberlain with a degree of stupidity that could be accounted for only by his incapacitating illness, is really too simple to raise any insuperable difficulties. But the claim of the United States to freedom of the seas raises a question that should be settled at the earliest possible moment. The policy that suits a neutral state, desirous of continuing its peaceful and prosperous trade in the markets of the world, is utterly opposed to that of the belligerent that may desire to establish a blockade and prevent supplies from being furnished to its enemies. The United States has in its day been a belligerent, and, as such, has had no scruple in resorting to the belligerent device of a blockade. If I am not mistaken, this great power improved the law of blockade as set forth in its own great authorities on international law, by extensions that made it a more effective weapon. It also insisted upon changes in the rules governing the subject of contraband which brought them down to date in accordance with the developing needs of the nation

1. Goldoni: *Labottega del caffè*, Atto primo. Scena I.

that happened to be engaged in the prosecution of a justifiable war.

I find it set forth in the last edition of Hall's International Law that "in the American Civil War the courts of the United States gave a violent extension to the notion of contraband destination, borrowing for the purpose the name of a doctrine of the English courts, of wholly different nature from that by which they were themselves guided. . . . Vessels were captured while on their voyage from one neutral port to another, and were then condemned as carriers of contraband or for intent to break blockade. They were thus condemned not for an act. . . . but on mere suspicion of intention to do an act." (*Hall on International Law*, 8th Ed., p. 798.)

It is for this great power, and I shall not say its *possible* but its *conceivable* enemy beyond the Atlantic, to make up their minds whether their policy shall be based upon the certainty that they must for evermore enjoy the happy fortune to be neutrals, or whether on the contrary they should not contemplate the possibility that some inevitable accident may make either of them so unfortunate as to be a belligerent. The policy of the neutral is in direct opposition to that which suits the belligerent, and these two great powers should now in a season of calm, while there are no war clouds gathering on the horizon, sit down and carefully consider the momentous issues at stake. They should discuss and decide these questions on principles of justice and fair-play now, while it is impossible for either of them to know whether in any future contest in arms arising out of the breach of the Kellogg treaties it will be a neutral or a belligerent. Should this dangerous question be left open till one of them is involved in war, leaving the other a neutral,—the United States for example at war with Japan, Great Britain continuing neutral, or Great Britain at war with Germany, leaving the United States neutral,—the almost inevitable consequence will in either case be war between these two great powers. The case is so plain, the danger so obvious and so terrible, that one is amazed at the apparent indifference of the statesmen in both countries to the issues that may one day be presented. It is not by competition in the building of cruisers that this danger can be averted. It can and must be averted by a fair and full discussion of all the conditions that may in the future be presented, and a clear and definite agreement upon the principle of international law that shall be applied in the event of a war being thrust upon one or the other of the two great powers whose strongest desire at the present moment is the perpetuation of the peace now happily existing between them.