

# PLAIN WORDS TO OUR NEW PACIFISTS

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THERE is no sphere in which the work of the amateur has been more fatally apparent than in the theory and direction of war. Arm-chair critics loudly deride the work of those who have made war their lifelong study; writers of every class, untutored in strategical thought, force their sophistical teachings upon an equally ignorant public; and politicians, grasping reins which are not intended for their hands, drive armies to destruction—with the present day sequel of self-glorifying, high-priced *Memoirs*. Even in this age of specialists, the reading public neglects the fact that the profession of arms is as much the domain of those trained in technical intricacies as is the vocation of law, and that he who aspires to write should first learn by long and careful study.

An article on "Modern Warfare and the Laws of War", recently published in *The Dalhousie Review*, is a marked addition to the many efforts towards the spread of fallacious military thought. The illusions which the essay contains have been expounded in the confident manner justly employed in the statement of axioms, and subjects which have aroused heated controversies amongst experts have apparently been settled by the stroke of a pen. It is, then, with the sole object of refuting these erroneous ideas that the present writer has ventured to come forward, confining himself to the points mentioned by his estimable but—from a military point of view—misinformed contemporary.

There is a tendency among those who write upon war to derive their lessons from the last conflict, to the exclusion of the teachings of all other wars. Such a method of military study evinces a shortsighted retrospect through which one is incapable of correctly forecasting the requirements of the future. Any campaign is subject to circumstances peculiar to itself, and these may or may not recur in the future. Thus cavalry has been held, after certain battles, to be of little value, while again it has been applauded as the greatest arm for the attainment of victory. But in order to predict the nature of future war with some certainty, past wars must be studied

and present conditions known. "One of the surest ways", says Sir Frederick Maurice, "both to get war and to get war conducted badly is to forget about past war or to read its lessons wrongly."

A casual study of military history is, therefore, liable to lead to the idea that "Modern war is no duel between professional fighters, but a life and death struggle between contending nations." Although it cannot be denied that the next war *may* be a conflict involving the whole of the national life on both sides, it is certain that such will not necessarily be the case. The earlier a country obtains victory, the less are national industries affected, and the less is the material progress of the nation impaired. A State which wins by a rapid decision does so with little difficulty during the period of hostilities, in so far as the civilian population is concerned. Protracted warfare alone can become "a life and death struggle between contending nations." Rapid decisions, however, are accomplished only when the peacetime preparation of one side has been sufficiently thorough, and the forecast of future requirements has been sufficiently accurate to ensure a supremacy of force. A nation which listens to amateur strategists and places its trust in pacifists will make inadequate preparation during the days of peace, and being unwilling to spend money then, it must suffer excessive wartime retribution not only in gold but in blood.

It was the foresight of Bismarck which formed the basis of Prussia's success. The French had planned to assume the offensive and cross the Rhine, but the superior preparation of the enemy enabled him to assemble and move more speedily, and thus gain the initiative. War was formally declared on the 19th July, 1870. On the 6th August Woerth and Spicheren were won by the Prussians, while the issue of the war was decided as early as the 2nd September at Sedan. By the end of October Metz had fallen, and it was followed by Paris on the 1st March, 1871. As a result of adequate training and military expenditure Prussia was able to avoid "a life and death struggle". But only a few years before, through lack of military preparation, the conflict in America had needlessly wasted thousands of lives, and wrecked a multitude of homes.

In 1914 Germany lacked a Bismarck. Her violation of Belgian neutrality, and her failure to reckon Great Britain among her enemies as a result of this act, showed that she was decidedly lacking in the ability to appreciate the situation with correctness. It was this mistake which led her to follow Schlieffen's perfidious strategical plan, which promised a repetition of 1870, but was wanting alike in morality and in a perception of England's

sense of honour. The strategical advantages which this plan ensured did not compensate for the resultant political error, when combined with Germany's tactical deficiencies and her lack of a great leader.

France had the lessons of adversity before her, and had her Allies been ready, an entirely different result would probably have been obtained. Owing to Russia's lack of preparation, Germany was able to concentrate more than eight-ninths of her total force upon the western front in August, 1914. Opposed to this was a numerically greater Allied army, but—thanks to British negligence—it was not sufficiently great to prevent position warfare by obtaining a rapid decision. Although England had the best trained army of recent times, its size was totally insufficient for a European conflict—which constituted but a repetition of one of the proverbial facts of British military history—she was unprepared. "Up to the month of August, 1914", says Viscount Esher, "the Army represented to politicians and to the public little more than a glorified national constabulary, to be employed under civilian direction within or upon the confines of the Empire."

From mobile warfare in 1914, the Great War changed to a contest of national resources. This, however, would never have happened had either side possessed the necessary force to obtain a decisive victory. Lieutenant-General Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, one of the outstanding German military writers, has emphasised this truth: "We may confidently assert that a complete German victory at the Marne in September, 1914, would have given quite another character to the whole war, and would certainly have shortened it very considerably. From this may be seen the full significance of a decisive military success, even in a war so influenced by world-economics as the present." Indeed, one of the first lessons which a military student learns is that the principles of war are constant. Both before and since Sun Tzu wrote the first book upon war, a generation before Alexander the Great was the private pupil of Aristotle, they have remained the same. No matter what inventions the ingenuity of man produces to kill his fellow-men, the principles of war do not vary. Modern weapons—including aeroplanes—however, change the methods of applying these principles, as modern firearms have revolutionized tactics, and make their application much more difficult.

Leaving for a moment the theory that the air service is to be the chief fighting force, it is well to consider the following idea:—"In the past, by land and on sea the military and naval forces of a State formed a complete screen preventing the enemy from getting

at the State's territory or its civilian population. The enemy fought to penetrate this, or to compel the surrender of the defending army or navy. If they succeeded, the 'non-combatants' were at their mercy, and must yield or be annihilated." The thought apparent here is that the great object of generals in the past was to penetrate hostile territory. If they succeeded in doing this, victory was assured, for the civilian population must yield. The other alternative was the defeat of the defending army which was forming a "complete screen". Yet Napoleon had no alternatives. "Many generals see too many things at once", he said; "I see only one thing, the enemy's forces in the field. If these can be defeated, all else will fall into my hand."

To go carefully into the history of "complete screens" is beyond the space available. In some cases, however, the fact that such a defensive attitude was adopted by one side placed the enemy in a position not of offence, but rather of defence. In 1812 and 1813 Wellington, by holding Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, had closed off Portugal from Spain. From this position he possessed the means of issuing, which gave the initiative to him, and denied any offensive power to the enemy. In this case Wellington was aided geographically, and under such circumstances an enemy is extremely unlikely to attempt a penetration of territory which could result only in ruin.

Nor were any great efforts made to prevent Napoleon from occupying Russian territory in 1812. This brings forward another fact. Occupation of territory alone does not ensure victory. Frederick II seized Silesia, yet the Silesian wars lasted for twenty years after he had occupied that country. In the past, victory was gained by defeating the opposing armies in the field, and there is no reason to believe that war will ever be won by other methods. Clausewitz has said: "Whatever may be the central point of the enemy's power against which we are to direct our operations, still the conquest and destruction of his army is the surest commencement, and in all cases the most essential."

No soldier will deny the great power and utility of an air force in future war. To prophesy that it will be the chief fighting force is quite another matter, and the soldier believes in the present application of the ideas of Napoleon and Clausewitz, aptly expressed by Vice-Admiral Mark Kerr: "The final factor of victory is the army". An air force is entirely dependent upon an army and a navy for security. Although it may require no military or naval assistance in order to gain air supremacy, still air supremacy unaided can never win a battle. There is but one arm which is able to

achieve final victory—the infantry. Alone infantry cannot win, but all arms are existent for one purpose, namely to assist the infantry in deciding the issue with the bayonet, or the immediate threat of its use.

The story of future aerial fleets dodging defending forces, and engaging in the safe pastime of annihilating technical bases and gassing politicians and plutocrats, is a common prediction which might well have come from Mr. H. G. Wells. Any type of annihilation is possible, and deserved, in a country which is unprepared. But when we prophesy, we must presuppose preparation in order to gauge the utility of a weapon. In a country which has attended to its future security we may rest assured that technical bases will have ample defences to withstand very grave injuries. In such a State the politicians will be protected, while plutocrats will be safely ensconced in the bowels of the earth, with respirators at the "Ready", and from the depths of their burrows they will not issue until the "All Clear" has been finally sounded. Moreover, it is often forgotten that a new weapon seldom leads an army far before a neutralizing agency is found. More especially is this true to-day. The latest implement of war always has its fanatical votaries, but time and experience show these adherents of novelty that the foot-soldier, in spite of all inventions, still holds the principle fighting rôle.

There has been, during the last few years, a great controversy among naval authorities upon the value of capital ships. Well-known sailors have ranged themselves on each side, and much thought has been directed by these experts towards the future of the submarine. But in spite of the many advocates of the supremacy of the underwater craft, the consensus of ruling naval opinion throughout the world is that the submarine, like the aeroplane, has altered many of the conditions under which war is fought, and yet has not lessened the value of the capital ship.

It has been stated that the Germans failed to kill a single man among the 15,000,000 soldiers who went to and fro across the English Channel. The Americans were equally immune in crossing the Atlantic, while the number of battleships sunk by submarines was comparatively small. On the 30th May and 1st June, 1916, fifteen German submarines, specially chosen for the purpose, were stationed off the bases of the Grand Fleet, yet they were entirely unsuccessful in torpedoing a single ship. From these facts the lesson drawn is that narrow waters may be made untenable for the submarine, while on the open sea the convoy system is entirely effective.

"Submarines", says a naval writer, "while excellent commerce destroyers, are powerless against surface fighting fleets."

It is true that unprotected hospital ships were sunk, that 12,000,000 tons of merchant shipping were lost, and that 20,000 non-combatants perished through the action of German submarines. But this is no proof of the supremacy of these weapons. When depth charges were introduced and varied routes used, the number of ships lost decreased to a very great extent, while the total German submarine losses amounted to about 203, an extremely large proportion of the total strength.

Commerce-raiding is a perfectly legitimate act of war, as merchant vessels form a part of the lines of communication. Throughout naval history it is the one form of operations which has shown a continuous activity, and Great Britain has not been behind other nations in employing this means to cripple an enemy, even in the last war. That the loss of life due to commerce-raiding by Germany was so heavy was owing to Hunnish brutality and inhumanity, and to a philosophy which taught that the end justifies the means employed. But even in this phase of its utility the submarine must take second place to the surface craft, for cruisers have greater speed and a far wider radius of vision. The German ships which succeeded in gaining access to the open sea were a far greater menace to the Allied cause than the submarines, even in the early days of the war when the latter had the advantage of surprise effect. Thanks, however, to the Allied navies, German surface vessels remained in comparative inactivity while the Allies held command of the sea. History teaches that commerce-raiding has never crushed a nation which has succeeded in retaining this advantage. "He who commands the sea commands the commerce, and he who commands the commerce commands the world", said Sir Walter Raleigh. And as in the past so it is at present, and will be in the future; command of the sea can be retained only by those navies which aircraft and submarines have not scrapped.

Again, if these comparatively new inventions have so quickly become supreme, we may well ask why it is that the British Admiralty definitely stated that the construction of two new battleships by 1924-25 was essential to national security. Japan also thought differently, for she has designed and built two new capital ships since the war, as well as having placed four on the stocks, while the United States have two nearly completed, and thirteen on the stocks. The fact that the work on these ships was suspended pending the ratification of the Washington Treaty has nothing whatever to do with the fact that Great Britain, Japan and the

United States believe in the value of the capital ship. The writer of the Royal United Service Institute's second Naval Prize Essay for 1918 said, "It is moderately safe to prophesy that the line of battleship is as supreme now, and always will be, as it was in the days of Nelson." Still another writer has pointed out that the Mediterranean, the strategic key position of the Empire, can be held only by "a fleet complete in all units, from capital ships to destroyers."

In so far as aircraft is concerned, it should be remembered that not only must aircraft be fought when attacking a fleet, but anti-aircraft weapons will be encountered. Whatever anti-aircraft guns may have accomplished in the past, it is only reasonable to suppose that science will also be at work here to make them more and more efficient means of defence. "But as to the capability of one or other of these types of aircraft (dirigibles and seaplanes) to fight surface ships or submersibles", says Capitaine de Corvette Richard, "we are still in complete ignorance, for lack of actual war experience. Thus we cannot resist a certain feeling of surprise when our futurists affirm that the advent of this air fleet spells the death of everything that floats."

It is implied in the new pacifist argument that the navies of the world have been scrapped owing to the fact that a great fleet "has little offensive value, because it cannot compete with mobile artillery on land, and the real enemies of the future—the submarine and the seaplane—do not fear it." But since last October two battleships, a light cruiser squadron, and two flotillas of destroyers, together with the Mediterranean Squadron proper, have been stationed in the waters of the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmora. For the offensive value of these ships the Turks had a decided respect, and thus, as Mr. Amery has pointed out, they played a considerable part in the maintenance of peace. Naval experts are agreed that submarines and seaplanes are excellent weapons for coast defence. But a great fleet is also armed with these, while the other neutralizing agencies which the navy employs must not be neglected, such as splash barrages, speed, and rapid change of course. Indeed it has been officially stated on behalf of the Admiralty that the designs of Great Britain's two new ships are of such a nature that reasonable security will be ensured against air and underwater attack. There are also many occasions when guns of the shore defences are unable to cope with the navy, a notable example being the bombardment of the outer Dardanelles forts by Admiral Carden on the 3rd November, 1914. This is decided,

however, by relative calibres, the advantage being with the defence, and with these arguments we are not concerned.

But we are very deeply concerned with the theory that great fleets are scrapped because aeroplanes, submarines and land defences have taken from them their offensive value. Those who hold such opinions have lost sight of the *primary* objects for which a navy is maintained, namely, to protect its country's lines of communication and prevent the enemy from using his. Therefore it is a contradiction to state that the navies of the world have been scrapped, while a great fleet is "essential to a State that fondly hopes to maintain its sea-borne commerce during hostilities." Offensive action on the part of the fleet against an enemy's coast can have little justification except in the case of combined operations, and we have yet to be shown that, where there is command of the sea, a landing of troops has become an impossibility owing to new inventions. In fact the lessons derived from past wars show this assumption to be absurd. In the *Dalhousie Review* article to which I allude, Germany's fatal naval mistake is explained in the following words:

In the Great War the British navy was able to control the sea-borne commerce only because of Germany's blunder in concentrating her energy upon Dreadnoughts instead of submarines. Her vacillating policy in regard to the submarine was indeed the greatest mistake she made. If the Kaiser had in this matter listened to the counsel of von Tirpitz, and carried out that Admiral's scheme, it is probable that the war might have been won in 1915 or 1916.

This explanation, however, is not satisfactory when we consider that policy rules the nature and strength of the defensive forces of a State. As Great Britain maintains a navy and an army for defence, and not for aggression, these forces are regulated by the estimated requirements for the next war which the Government should be able to foresee looming before the country. In order that this may be thoroughly understood, the naval situation prior to the Great War is cited.

The seeds of hatred for England which Treitschke and Nietzsche had sown in German minds took root. The Empire, formed in 1871, cast its eyes towards the outer world in a desire for increased trade and colonial expansion, only to find that it was too late. The territorial prizes were already held by Great Britain, and the sons of Germany were emigrating and being lost to the Fatherland. Prussian arms had moulded the Federation which had been the dream of both Heinrich von Treitschke and Bismarck, but Prussian arms were powerless against this new-found commercial and coloniz-



ing adversary. To the resultant envy and jealousy may be attributed, in a large measure, Germany's sudden prominence as a naval Power.

In 1908 a new Naval Act enormously increased the German fleet, while the British naval programme for that year had shown an alarming decline. The British Government also learned that German building was being hastened, and factories were being equipped to equal those of Great Britain in rapidity of naval construction. War was inevitable.

In 1909, on account of the danger to British naval power, Mr. McKenna asked for six Dreadnoughts, which would have given a total of eighteen against a combined seventeen German and Austrian ships, thirteen of these belonging to Germany. The building of more than four was bitterly opposed by Mr. Lloyd George and others. As a compromise, the Cabinet decided that although four should be built, provision would be made for four supplementary ships if required. Fortunately the latter were also constructed, giving eight instead of the six originally requested, this being the last large programme completed before the war. Thus it is seen that Great Britain was building to neutralize the naval strength of Germany.

Germany was building as many Dreadnoughts as she could afford to produce. If then she had adopted the policy of Tirpitz, and had built, let us suppose, two hundred submarines, the cost of these would have equalled that of about seven 20,000-ton battleships. She would therefore have been compelled to curtail her Dreadnought construction to an extent equalling her submarine expenditure. It is only giving the Admiralty the credit which its efficiency so justly deserves, to suppose that such a change in German naval policy would have been immediately met by a counter-stroke on the part of Great Britain, and the Kaiser would still have been as far from victory in 1916 as he actually was.

Nor can the soldier agree with the statement that "Six months are required to train a combatant officer." Unfortunately there is a gross ignorance—in spite of the Great War, or because of it—of the professional requirements of the man who aspires to lead in battle. The training required for position warfare alone is much less than that necessitated for competent leadership under all circumstances; and as the war on the western front became one of masses and resources, both officers and men were rushed into the line before their military training was in any sense complete. Although this was due to conditions unavoidable at the time, it in no way limited the requirements of an officer's training for war. Even the Canadian private soldier was not considered fit to take his place in the line,

in this stagnant type of battle, until he had received at least six months training. How much more then, even in the limited sphere of position warfare, did the officer require to be trained? Under the exceptional circumstances prevailing in the last war, the officer and soldier received an amount of instruction behind the lines which in a war of movement would be impossible. Mobile war requires far greater professional capabilities and knowledge, and not only has been in the past, but will be in the future the predominant type. We are told by our *Field Service Regulations* that "Any tendency to regard position warfare as the normal form of warfare must be repressed." Mobility is essential to a rapid decision.

We have been continually warned, of late, that "Another great war would certainly destroy civilization", a slogan which has a distinctly Wilsonian air. It has been eagerly seized upon by all those who see in this a means of evading the expense involved in peacetime preparation, but is a prognostication made without historical evidence. Upon such food are pacifists and conscientious objectors reared. It forms and is used as an advertisement for that mythical world-peace which we are promised by an adherence to, and support of, the latest utopian dream. History alone will be able to state the good wrought by that which the Duke of Northumberland terms "a very expensive but singularly uninteresting debating society at Geneva." History will never be able to state, however, that the great object of the League of Nations was achieved, for neither leagues nor conferences, conventions nor politicians have the divine power of altering human nature by law, and thus preventing war.

Lord Sydenham, writing in *The Spectator* last year, said: "The greatest danger to civilization at the present time does not arise from the menace of local wars in Europe, but from the powerful organized forces which are everywhere working for revolution of Communist type to be combined with the destruction of Christianity." Civilization's foundations may indeed tremble and fall if the international Jew and the German criminal, through their Bolshevik alliance, succeed in their peace-time penetration and demoralization of States. Their instigation of mob violence, their aim of world revolution, and their doctrine of atheism are diabolical attempts to sound the death-knell of civilized life. They are the preludes of ghastly wars and civil strife.

"You won't stop war by denouncing it as terrible and proving its horrors", says H. Fielding Hall: "You won't stop war by arbitration treaties, because no nation will arbitrate in a matter that it considers affects its honour or its vital interests. It would tear up

any treaty and disregard any award that affected it vitally." "The public must face facts," and these facts are that future war is inevitable, and that the Empire can stand only by the necessary amount of preparation. While there are Turks who have tasted success, while there are Communist leaders drunk in their orgy of human blood, while there are Germans who have felt the humiliation of defeat, and while human nature actuates the deeds of men, there will be war, cost what it may.

He who dares to preach preparation is at once branded as a militarist by those who wish to live in a fool's paradise. But militarism is the product of the national philosophy, and not of the soldier. Newspaper letter-writers and soap-box orators see in every shining button the gleam of militarism. Alas, ignorance must assert itself to the future detriment of the nation, and the soldier must continue to prepare, unaided, for the day of battle, when visionaries awaken from their dreams, and the folly of their ways becomes known.

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#### NOTE BY PROFESSOR READ.

I am in complete agreement with the main theme of Captain Logan's "Plain Words." Unpreparedness is a policy that cannot safely be followed in this dispensation, and it would ill become one who practises preparedness in the Active Militia to preach pacifism in *The Dalhousie Review*. The whole basis of the League of Nations is the co-operation of States adequately prepared to defend their national security.

Assuming, however, that we ought to prepare for the possibility of another war, why should we not get ready for the type of war that is likely to be fought? Should we not consider whether the enemy is likely to use gas or aerial bombardment or submarine attack, and devise methods of dealing with such unpleasant but real menaces? Should we disregard the lessons that we learned with so much labour during the late struggle? I am prepared to admit that my statements as to the effect of the aeroplane and submarine were too sweeping. But these inventions have certainly made very far-reaching changes in warfare that we cannot safely neglect.

Lack of space forbids the debating of most of the technical points raised by Captain Logan. No soldier could be expected to agree that a combatant officer could be trained in six months or thereabouts. The hard fact remains that we did train combatant officers who proved their worth not only in the position warfare of 1916 and 1917, but also in the open fighting of the last three months. They might have seemed inferior on a ceremonial parade, but they stood up to the test of real fighting under difficult circumstances.

I must plead guilty to a serious military offence, and submit to the castigation of the expert. No mere civilian should venture to discuss military matters. An "arm-chair critic," muddled in mind by learning the rudiments of the profession of arms, with intellect distorted by the actual practice of the military art, and warped in vision by teaching military science, should abstain from utterance. We should agree with Captain Logan that none should hold opinions on military matters who have not accepted in their youth the dogma of the immutability of the principles of war. The admission of the literal and equal inspiration of *Field Service Regulations, Infantry Training* and "F. A. T." is conceded as the only basis of military orthodoxy. Then there will be no rash suggestions that some of the principles of warfare may have changed since the time of Sun Tzu. None will contravene the spirit of "F. S. R." by trying to learn from military history that is not ancient.

J. E. R.