

# CURRENT MAGAZINES

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## PROBLEMS AND PERSONS AT THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

**The Washington Conference and the Naval Issue:**—Mr. Archibald Hurd in the *Nov. Fortnightly*.

**What Delays Disarmament?** Mr. Walter B. Pitkin in the *Nov. Atlantic*.  
**The Far Eastern Problem:**—Mr. J. O. P. Bland in the *Nov. Atlantic*.

**Disarmament and the State of Europe:**—Colonel A. a Court Repington in the *Nov. Atlantic*.  
**England and the Washington Conference:**—Mr. Herbert Sidebotham in the *Nov. Atlantic*.

**Charles Evans Hughes:**—Mr. Herbert W. Horwill in the *Nov. Contemporary*.  
**France, her Politicians, and the Conference:**—Mr. Sisley Huddleston in the *Dec. Atlantic*.

**The Washington Conference:**—Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey in the *Oct. Nineteenth Century*

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MR. Archibald Hurd and Sir Arthur Pollen are probably the two best known writers in England on naval affairs. The former begins his article in the November *Fortnightly* with a vigorous protest against that mistaken view which he declares to prevail in the United States regarding the whole purpose of the Conference at Washington. The belief, he says, has been widely spread in America that Great Britain is engaged in a feverish movement for expanding her fleet, and that her purpose in doing so is hostile to the United States. "It is not going too far to say that most Americans now believe that the President's invitation is a despairing effort to prevail upon the British authorities to desist from a movement which is contrary to the instinct of the best elements in the United States." A further misconception which Mr. Hurd reprobates is the idea that apart from discussion of "the Pacific and Far Eastern problems" it is standards of *naval* strength alone which fall to be considered.

He points out, as against the first of these errors, that a reducing of armament had been carried out by Great Britain before President Harding's invitation was issued. Not only had the great army of the war and the aerial forces been disbanded; the fleet itself had been brought down to a mere shadow of its former strength. Mr. Hurd quotes copious and detailed figures about the various classes of ships by which this contention seems to be fully justified. He next insists upon the necessity that naval reduction should not be

considered apart from reduction in land and air forces, for in that case there could be no "parity of risk between ourselves and other countries." "Our insular state imposes upon us in the British Isles peculiar naval responsibilities . . . . Consider our position! The British Isles lie within a night's steaming of an armed Continent. *The Navy is our anti-invasion guard.*" This fact, together with the need for defending the ocean-washed frontiers of all the territory of the British Commonwealth of peoples throughout the world, is adduced to show that we are "in no position to discuss a further reduction of naval armaments, except there is also a discussion, and a fruitful discussion, upon military and aerial armaments."

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MR. Walter B. Pitkin and Mr. J. O. P. Bland have written about the Conference from quite a different point of view. Each is a widely recognized authority on Far Eastern questions, and each insists that a matter of vital significance for all Disarmament proposals is the chaos now existing in China.

Mr. Pitkin puts the issue sharply. In China and Siberia "lie barely scratched the world's vastest treasuries of raw materials, the greatest forests on earth, the hugest coal-fields, stupendous iron deposits, millions of acres that some day must yield wheat and cotton. There too swarm some four hundred million unappeased consumers of manufactured goods." The trade possibilities are thus such as one can scarcely exaggerate, and investors of capital—British, American, and Japanese—have interests there which their respective governments will be hard pressed to protect. "The Washington Conference must choose either to disarm and leave Asia to the Asiatics, or else to run Asia and maintain immense fleets. The first alternative wrecks the policy of every non-Asiatic Power. The second makes the Conference futile."

China, Mr. Pitkin tells us, is at present rotting politically and socially,—an indescribable pandemonium. There is one government at Peking, another at Canton, a third struggling to be born at Hupeh. Famine, pestilence, civil wars, pillage, the last degree of corruption to which even Chinese officials can attain, have free course on every side. The President of the Peking government last summer raised an emergency loan of a million dollars, on which he was obliged to pay 18 per cent interest, and Mr. Pitkin wonders that in view of the "security" the financiers did not demand 50 per cent. Compared with the régime at Peking the Canton government is indeed "a model of neatness and strength," but it is an attempt at a democracy for which the Chinese are not ready, and its President is

“paying the price in much bloodshed and dubious progress.” “How dares any American financier invest millions in such chaos, where governments totter, intriguers plot new empires, and war lords revel in civil strife?” Meantime Japan is fishing with admirable skill in the troubled waters, obtaining one concession after another for a price from scoundrelly Chinese officials. If the battleships that ride in the harbours of Manila, Shanghai and Hong Kong were withdrawn, the course would be clear for the Japanese to annex Mongolia and Shantung. From Japan’s huge naval port, Nagasaki, to the mainland of Asia is less than 150 miles—an easy night’s run for transports and battleships. Short work would be made of the British and American investors and their concessions. Is it to be marvelled at, asks Mr. Pitkin, that some Republicans have lost interest in the Disarmament Conference, while others are losing sleep over it? He insists that until the nations of the Pacific reach some understanding about their rights and policies there, it will be vain to urge disarming. The huge stakes, the acute conflict of interests, the disparity of ethical and political codes, make the whole problem more difficult than has occurred to those good people whom Mr. Pitkin savagely describes as “the sentimentalists and ignoramuses who say that wars are caused by talking war, that the way to disarm is to disarm, and that America must lead the world in idealism—whatever that may mean.” Of the two alternative courses suggested this critic seems to favour abandoning Asia to the Asiatics, and he declares it to be obvious that no sort of control is possible by western Powers unless their fleets are kept at least up to present strength. Japan, he warns us, would rejoice at an international slashing of naval budgets, provided nothing were done to cut army expenditures and policies. But that land forces might be reduced at the same time is a plan which Mr. Pitkin apparently does not consider.

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**M**R. Bland has a different theory. Agreeing that the first essential in the Far East is the introduction of order into the chaos in China, he thinks that this may be effected through the concerted action of Great Britain, America, and Japan. This would mean that the last-named of these Powers should forego her present claims to “special interests” in any province of China proper—such claims as she formulated in the famous “twenty-one demands” of 1915—and co-operate loyally with Great Britain and America “in practical measures for the restoration of law, order, trade, and sound finance.” Mr. Bland says he has discussed this with many of the leading statesmen and publicists in Japan, and that he believes the Japanese

Government is prepared to welcome such an Anglo-American-Japanese understanding "having as its avowed object a common reconstructive policy in China." This would of course involve interference by foreigners in Chinese internal affairs, an interference which—according to Mr. Pitkin—would provoke a fierce campaign to "drive out the foreign devils", and which could not be carried out except by a huge armed force. We should be committed, says Mr. Pitkin, to a new benevolent militarism for years to come. But Mr. Bland argues that it would be well worth such an effort to substitute for the present Japanese militarism in Peking the concerted control of the Great Powers, and to make an end of that friction between Japan and the other two nations which is now being kept up by Japan's special claims in Manchuria and Mongolia. Something of the kind at least must be done if the Disarmament proposals are to have any chance at all. Mr. Bland finds grave fault with the Conference for having invited Chinese representatives to deliberate at Washington. To begin with, these men represent only the Peking government, not the country as a whole. It was "diplomatically and theoretically sound", he says, but "calculated in practice to frustrate the ends desired." China's delegates will, with the traditional cunning of the Orient, make the Conference believe that a new era has been opened for "the Chinese Republic", and that that Republic is quite able to settle its affairs without external aid. They will present a picture of "successfully progressing toward Utopia by the development of liberal ideas and democratic institutions, all regardless of the fact that these are as remote as the planet Mars from all the realities of the situation in China." One may surely suppose that the Japanese delegates would save the simple-minded Americans and British at the Conference table from being misled on such points. But it is a little depressing to hear from Mr. Pitkin that many foreign observers see in the whole Conference a step by America to force Japan's hand by making her define her Asiatic policies under the pretext of a peace move, and that Lieut.-General Sato has advised the Japanese Government to send no men of the first rank to Washington, "but only those who are fluent in foreign languages and sociable"!

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COLONEL Repington tells us in the November *Atlantic* that he has spent the greater part of this year travelling from the Baltic to Aegean and from the Channel to the Black Sea, and that these journeys have brought him "in contact with most of the directing minds which exercise authority in the Old Continent." Dividing

Europe into the victors, the vanquished, and the neutrals, he finds that the first are suffering from indigestion, the second from exhaustion, and the third from those discomforts that are "inherent in propinquity to sick neighbours." He has reached the rather gloomy conclusion that no European people is happy, that no nation loves another, and that years must pass before they get over the hates and jealousies that have arisen first from the war and next from the peace. But Colonel Repington, as we might expect, puts these disturbing facts with that easy *nonchalance* for which a piquant phrase or a sparkling antithesis can take all the edge off tragedy! We have to forget for the moment his flippant way of expressing himself, if we are to learn from his undoubted competence in observing facts.

The main barrier that Colonel Repington sees in the way of Disarmament is just the fact that the victors must remain armed if the reparations are to be enforced, and since it is essential to give a long time for payment—if payment is to be made at all—the armaments must be long maintained. But how can they be maintained at such a cost by states each of which is "at its wits' end for money"? To pay their military expenses they have to impose on their own people almost unendurable burdens of taxation. So far only the vanquished have been disarmed. But, although no longer provided with weapons and munitions, the conquered Central Powers have a huge supply of thoroughly trained soldiers, and no one knows just how much arming is being carried out surreptitiously. "A certain amount of war-material is still concealed and undelivered, especially rifles and machine-guns." Colonel Repington wonders, not that this should be the case, but rather that so much has been given up, and he expresses the curious conviction that "it would not have been, had the vanquished been certain allied and associated Powers that one could name"! Since training in the conquered countries has been stopped, he thinks that the situation may be remedied in fifteen or twenty years, by which time all the veterans will be too old, or too stout, or too much immersed in their new occupations to desire or to be able to march and fight. But it will take fifteen or twenty years to ensure such safety. And even this is not the whole of Colonel Repington's dark estimate. For "it is the decided and well-weighed opinion of the best men in control of the military commissions that, after they withdraw from the territories of the vanquished states, it will not take more than two years for the war-material to be replaced, at all events in the case of Germany."

The critic goes on to point out that nowhere except in France—and perhaps in Japan—is there now a really great army in the world. Speaking of England he says: "We are in a worse state of military

destitution than we were in 1914—which is saying a great deal.” France, on the other hand, has such a trained and equipped force as Colonel Repington believes capable of conquering the Continent of Europe. In a very striking passage he maintains that the reason why the French may fairly insist on keeping such a force, despite all the clamour for Disarmament, is just America’s refusal to enter the League of Nations. If this be true, the Republican Party has created the main obstacle with which the Washington Conference has now to contend. Colonel Repington’s point is that, if the United States had joined with England in guaranteeing France against German aggression for the future, it would not have been necessary for the French to make such elaborate provision to protect themselves. And they were ready to trust to this assurance. “France reluctantly consented to abandon her defensive plans on the Rhine because America, and England if America ratified the agreement, were to give France a guaranty against German aggression in the future . . . . The public in England and France certainly never had the glimmer of a suspicion that a guaranty signed by a President of the United States and counter-signed by a Secretary of State, in a vital matter affecting the safety of France and the future peace of Europe, would not be honoured in America.” Colonel Repington is careful to say that he is not blaming America in the least. His own country too has had a long established practice of keeping out of continental entanglements. But the result has been unfortunate. This observer sums up his view of the whole case by saying that the state of Europe forbids much hope of reducing land forces, but that a reduction of navies is possible, for there are now only three navies that count, and none of these belongs to a Power that is specially concerned in the enforcement of the reparations. Mr. Hurd would have a word of protest about this. The real diseases of the world, as Colonel Repington sees them, are such as cause armaments rather than such as a reducing of armaments can cure. The Conference at Washington is in danger of mistaking what are only symptoms for the actual diseases themselves. The things chiefly wrong are; unstable exchanges, unsound currencies, hampered trade, and the false nationalism which shuns obligatory arbitration.

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**M**R. Herbert Sidebotham in the *Atlantic* for November sums up the economic reasons which have made the limitation of armaments imperative. He finds these in some respects less strong, but in other respects still stronger, for America than for England. The former nation has not to the same extent as the latter “passed the

limit of her taxable capacity." On the other hand, a settlement which should remove the risk of war with Japan is specially urgent for the United States. Again, in excessive taxation there is for every country a peril which reaches far beyond the mere financial pressure. "America fears that, if expenditure remains at its present height, not only will the expansion of commercial enterprise be checked, but an irresistible popular movement will arise for the repudiation of debts. There are people in England who fear it too, and on that account Lord Birkenhead is believed to be anxious to democratize the House of Lords and to give it some control over finance, in order to prevent a chance Labour majority in the House of Commons from measures of confiscation." Mr. Sidebotham conjectures too that America has come to realize the need for entering into partnership with the rest of the world, if not through the League of Nations, then through some other but equally international arrangement. For "the world is, in the economic sense, all one", nations live on each other's prosperity, and the first condition of healthy exchange of commodities is a healthy state of the exchange in money. Nor can the unity of the economic world be effected without unifying in some sense the political world. The critic here offers a comment which, whether it be right or wrong, is worth reflecting about. The Paris Conference, he says, was far from realizing this ideal of unity. It rather exhibited in sharp conflict two opposing conceptions of foreign policy; "the French conception which holds that one state is strong by another's weakness, prosperous by its depression, secure by strategic combinations and alliances, and the Anglo-American conception which believes in the family of nations and in a concert of Powers based on law and justice." Whether this way of putting it is quite fair to the French may be disputed, but this does not affect the value and suggestiveness of the contrast in theory. Mr. Sidebotham remarks, in complete agreement with the argument of Mr. F. W. Hirst in last issue of this *Review*, that "apart from economy in armaments the Anti-Waste campaign is only a succession of cat-calls."

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THE great part which Mr. Charles Evans Hughes has taken at the Conference lends special interest to the appreciation of his personality which Mr. Herbert W. Horwill has published in the November *Contemporary Review*. It is a vivid and striking picture. The American Secretary of State is presented as a man who in successive highly responsible positions has fought a fierce battle against public corruption. He is in his fiftieth year, the son of a

Baptist minister in a small country town of New York State, chiefly marked—so far as this article tells us—by an almost superhuman capacity for hard work and grasp of details combined with a Puritan resoluteness for honest administration. One is amused to hear that as a child he objected to the school to which he was sent on the ground that his teacher wasted so much time in “going over the same things again and again”! When he began the practice of law he showed unusual scrupulosity about the kind of cases he would undertake, and “always refused retainers that would have committed him to any and every kind of service required.” It was in 1905 that he became really famous through the effective investigation which he conducted into the gas and lighting business of the City of New York, and as chairman of a committee appointed to enquire into the matter introduced reforms which saved great sums of money to the public. This was followed by a still more striking success in exposing business scandals connected with the working of some huge insurance companies in the State, and according to Mr. Horwill a point of special note in Mr. Hughes’s action was his refusal to hide or disguise the truth even where “the revelations would seriously damage the reputation of his own political party and its leaders.” One is not surprised that such a record of achievement and of civic patriotism should have marked him for high office in wider fields. Mr. Hughes refused to be nominated for the Mayoralty of New York, “on the ground that the insurance enquiry had laid upon him ‘a paramount public duty’ which required all his energies.” But before long he was selected as Republican candidate for the Governorship of New York State, and after a heated contest against his rival—the notorious Mr. William Randolph Hearst—he was elected. In this great office his work was such as to elicit from President Schurman of Cornell—that Prince Edward Islander whom Nova Scotia used to know as Professor of Philosophy in Dalhousie University—the compliment that in Mr. Hughes was admirably illustrated Burke’s famous definition: “A disposition to preserve and ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman.” To the reproach that he was a mere lawyer in politics he made the noteworthy retort that he did indeed regard himself as “attorney for the people.” Mr. Hughes’s candidature for the Presidency of the United States is within the recollection of us all, but it is of interest to have these details of his previous work. The article in the *Contemporary* is, clearly enough, by a whole-hearted admirer, and it would be worth while to have another by the more critical pen of an opponent. But it certainly looks as if Mr. Hughes’s career had been a steady progress “from strength to strength”,



and his work so far as we have seen it at the Conference is worthy of so great a past.

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ANOTHER outstanding figure of the Conference—M. Aristide Briand—is sketched in an article of extraordinary interest by Mr. Sisley Huddleston in the December *Atlantic*. There are startling things in his article. It begins with a sharp contrast between the French politicians and the French people. In no country known to Mr. Huddleston is this divergence more marked. When in search of the views held by the mass of the people on any subject he does not look in the newspapers, but makes a tour, with his ears open, of the *cabarets* of Paris. Socialist orators in the Chamber, and those other orators who specialise in “flamboyant and fire-eating patriotism” are mercilessly mocked at the vaudeville show, to the intense delight of the audience. The daily press which English and American onlookers naturally assume to be representative of general feeling, is often just an organ of the Government. Papers that are read by everybody are also understood by everybody on the spot to take their cue from the Quai d’Orsay, and what they contain is received with the proverbial grain of salt. “Public opinion, in the sense in which the term is now employed, is merely the passing opinion of a passing Minister, transmitted through ‘inspired’ journalists.” The foreign pressmen are operated upon by the hypnotic agency of the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour, and Mr. Huddleston knows some who, when they think they have rendered the requisite service, submit “their claims to be decorated” at due intervals. One wonders how this remarkable account of what he calls “doping the journals” is to be reconciled with Mr. Huddleston’s later statement in his article that most of the French politicians, when they are not responsible for the government, become the most powerful critics of the administration in the press. He quotes M. Poincaré and M. Viviani as examples, and of M. Clemenceau he says that when in Opposition he has thundered against the premier, not from the tribune, but from the newspaper that he directed. No doubt Mr. Huddleston would call these men journalists of very exceptional independence, but in view of their activity his general statement about the press as subservient to power seems a little exaggerated.

M. Briand, we gather from the article, is rather like Mr. Lloyd George, with an immense reputation for being shrewd and successful in emergencies, admitted by his critics to have a wonderful power of escaping from tight corners though they say that the corners are such

as he might have avoided getting into at all. Mr. Huddleston quotes the common view that parliamentary speeches never change votes, but he thinks M. Briand does often change votes by his appeal in the Chamber of Deputies. There is a better chance for such oratorical strategy there than in the House of Commons at London, for the two-party system, with its party whips and predetermined voting on both sides in a solid block, is not the structure of the French legislative assembly. There are many groups, the possibilities of combination are as numerous as the combinations of a pack of cards, and M. Briand has a rare knowledge of the game—how to shuffle, how to lead this card and then that. One of his speeches is thus often, when read in the printed report, seen to be full of repetitions and even of contradictions. That, we are told, is because he addresses himself, now to this side, then to that side. "One has to be able to distinguish between what is meant for one party, what for another party; what is meant for France and what is meant for Germany; what is meant for England and what is meant for other countries." Mr. Huddleston tells us that these speeches are exceedingly effective, but one cannot help suggesting that their effect should be greatest upon an audience composed of men with very short memories, and the French are not of this class. It seems a pity, too, that such an artist in undetected inconsistency should be forced to have his speeches printed in a parliamentary Hansard, where even the weakest of memories has artificial aid. If M. Briand's power is as great as his critic admits, it must surely have some further source than he has indicated. But he has given us in his article one most admirable comparison. Speaking of Mr. Lloyd George, whose course has been often devious even when he was keeping his goal most steadfastly in sight, he says "When he has seen rocks in the way, he has gone round them." And in this respect M. Briand resembles the British premier. He is not, says Mr. Huddleston, a native of Brittany for nothing. It is from Brittany that France recruits most of her sailors, and M. Briand is an expert sailor.

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THE reader has perhaps missed, in the highly complicated discussions on Disarmament, that note which one expects to hear sounded above all others on such a subject. One welcomes the fullest sifting, by the cold clear light of criticism, of those circumstances and problems with which the Conference has to deal, for to forget human nature in the thrill of idealistic Utopias is to invite defeat. But neither should we forget, especially at this great season of the

Christian year, the inspiring purpose which makes all sifting of facts and all criticism of methods other than wasted work. In the preceding summary there has been much about conflicting national interests and racial jealousies and the possibilities of an ingenious mutual accommodation to which economic pressure is the driving motive. But if "Peace on Earth" has been throughout emphasised or at least implied, there has been little allusion to that "Good-will toward men" which is the one guarantee by which peace can be assured, the guarantee whose presence makes all else mere detail of method, and in whose absence the most elaborate machinery will be for ever in vain. Reference may thus fitly be made to one remaining article, that by Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey, which though it appeared in the October issue of the *Nineteenth Century* breathes the very spirit of Christmas.

Mr. Strachey reminds us how the Romans believed that every nation, every community, and every city had its "Genius"—a quickening and enlightening spirit which at once represented and inspired. He suggests that if the Genius of the British people and Empire were to appear to Mr. Lloyd George on the eve of his departure for America it would lay upon him a solemn charge, consonant with that historical disposition which his countrymen amid many failures and errors have striven to display. It would bid him cultivate imagination, a vision that should embrace the whole world, look into the future and there read the signs which ban and bless human endeavour, determining what seeds planted now will prove fit for futurity and what will wither and die. It would bid him show the sympathy which is not merely the sympathy of approval but the sympathy of understanding, undeterred when it finds the way blocked again and again by ignorance or by mental sloth. It would bid him make clear to the American nation that the British people have not come into the Conference in order to serve any ulterior motive, or to gain any selfish and private ends; that they believe the people of the United States to be actuated by a purpose as high as their own; that, equally with their kinsmen across the Atlantic, they realize how there can be no permanent and no real peace if the nations are to be stretched upon the rack of military and naval preparation.

For his own part, Mr. Strachey is very willing to confess that oftentimes our statesmen, even where they have in the past meant well, have erred because they took decisions when they were tired and languid and lacking in imagination. He thinks there is very little to choose between American and British representatives in days gone by "in their clumsy but painstaking endeavours to sur-

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pass each other in gimlet-eyed suspiciousness." He would have the delegates at this tremendous moment meet as men who are there not to watch each other but rather to trust and to help each other in healing the wounds of a stricken world, united in the belief that the English-speaking race are best fitted to be the healers. He regards Americans as at once the most idealistic and the most practical of men. "They vibrate between Emerson and Edison." His own countrymen, he believes, need not fear that such an alliance will commit them to too much, for of the two dangers it is more likely that American leadership will be found too cautious than that it will be found too bold. "If they lead, we will follow." And he appeals to the men of his own craft, the journalists, to help as the press alone can help towards this Anglo-American amity. Let them treat the Conference "not with a weary politeness, or a dogged and painstaking sympathy, but with zeal and enthusiasm and with that appreciation with which a great cause should be handled."

The present critic has in general no love for Mr. Strachey's opinions, but a word of gratitude is due to the journalist who has lifted this momentous discussion to the high level to which it belongs.

H. L. S.