

Patriotism, Plunder and Preparedness

Here are Some Facts Which You Might Turn Over in Your Mind Before Doing Any More Talking or Thinking About Our Needs for More Preparedness for War

[By Allen Benson in Pearsons]

There you have an interior view of the Navy league of the United States. When you read, as you will, appeals for many more dreadnaughts, many more soldiers, many more guns, mountains of shrapnel and tremendous quantities of other munitions, kindly remember that these appeals have the heartfelt approval of Colonel Thompson and his nineteen patriotic friends. As the New York Evening Sun said, you may not know what the country should have—but these gentlemen do. Every man connected with the thirteen corporations that, according to the Chicago Tribune, have profited on war munition orders to the extent of approximately \$500,000,000—every one of those gentlemen knows what the country should have.

Here is another whiff of war-profits—see into whose houses the wind blows it. Forty of the biggest men in Wall street are connected, in one way or another, with war munitions companies or with companies that are dealing with them. In addition to the twenty patriots whom I have named are: Oliver Ames, George F. Baker, Cornelius Bliss, Jr., Anthony N. Brady, W. E. Corey, H. Rieman Duval, Pliny Fisk, John W. Griggs, B. S. Guinness, A. Barton Hepburn, Gerald Hoyt, William B. Joyce, Samuel M'Roberts, C. D. Norton, William H. Porter, Charles M. Schwab, George R. Sheldon, E. T. Stotesbury, Frances Lynde Stetson and James N. Wallace.

Every man who is profiting directly or indirectly from the manufacture and sale of war munitions, may, nevertheless be purely patriotic when he urges the United States to be "prepared" and thus enter the market for great quantities of war munitions. Each of them may honestly believe the nation is in such great danger of war that it should proceed to arm itself to the teeth. Nobody on the other hand, is compelled to believe in the disinterested patriotism of those who, profiting from war-contracts with Europe, urge the United States to become a great purchaser of war supplies. We have every reason to suspect them and we should suspect them. Their financial interest is too great to justify the belief that in urging preparedness they are considering only the national welfare. If they are considering only the national welfare, let them urge congress to place the government in a position to manufacture its own munitions. If they are not willing to do that, they must stand convicted of tainted patriotism.

Who expects these beneficiaries of

war who are crying so loudly for "preparedness" to forego their prospective profits? Who expects them to urge the government to become the manufacturer of its own war munitions? Is there a single syllable of their propaganda that has the ring of honesty? What do they mean when they say they want this nation to be prepared? Do they mean that they want us to have a larger and better army than Germany had a month before the outbreak of the war. Do they mean that they want us to have a larger and better navy than Great Britain had? If "preparedness" is the way to peace, plainly Germany's army was not large enough nor was Great Britain's navy large enough. How large should Germany's army have been, and how large should have been the navy of Great Britain? Will our prosperous, patriotic countrymen kindly tell?

Will they tell what this nation should do if, having followed their advice and plunged on armaments, some other nation should plunge a little harder and exceed us? Having 100 dreadnaughts, what should we do if some other nation had 125? If so, can Colonel Thompson and the other gentlemen of our Naval league tell us how we could prevent the other nation from bringing its dreadnaught fleet up to 175? If we can not prevent other nations from playing the game of "preparedness," is it not inevitable that, once begun, it must go on until one or the other nation is financially exhausted?

The munitions patriot may remark at this point that therein lies our opportunity—that we are the richest nation on earth and can exhaust the other fellow. But suppose there are two or more other fellows? Have our munitions patriots never heard of alliances? Are we richer than all the rest of the world? Suppose the size of our armaments should so fill with fear even two of our potential adversaries that they should enter into an alliance against us? We are not richer than Great Britain and Germany. Suppose three nations should combine against us—what then? Should we be "prepared?" Even if we had built a navy twice as big as that of Great Britain, where should we be if we were at war with two or three nations that had aggregate navies greater than our own? and, in times of peace, how poor should we be if we were supporting a navy twice as great as that of Great Britain and an army of proportionate size? Do these Navy league gentlemen not know what it would mean for each family to be compelled

to set aside part of its food and part of its clothing for a soldier?

One may safely indulge the belief that the munitions patriots know more than they seem to. They know, first of all, that there are millions and, ultimately, billions to be made in the sale of munitions. As great members of the capitalist class, they also know that great markets can oftentimes be gained with a great navy. It is not alone defense in which they are interested—they want to be prepared to wage wars of aggression. They clamor for a great fleet of dreadnaughts with which to defend our coasts, though Germany's mines that can be exploded from shore and Germany's submarines have for more than a year protected a coast that Germany's dreadnaughts could not have protected for a week. Anchored mines that can be exploded from shore and submarines are so admirably suited for defense that even the British navy dare not defy them. But fields of anchored mines can be used for only defense. They can not be towed half way around the world and used to conquer markets. Dreadnaughts are not so good for defense, but they can be moved around the world and can be used to conquer markets.

Why is it that the Navy league gentlemen, who are so solicitous lest we shall be successfully attacked, subordinate the best means of defense to the best means of offense? Why do they demand dreadnaughts that are useless if outnumbered, when the banking of all Europe with mines would not be a menace to us or render us vulnerable if we already had enough mines and submarines to guard the coasts of America?

In the September number of this magazine, I ventured to express the opinion that the coasts of America could be protected with mines and submarines against the greatest fleets that could be brought against us, and that if our apostles of "preparedness" were honest they would advocate mines and submarines instead of dreadnaughts and battle cruisers. After the article appeared, I received a commendatory letter from Hon. Finly H. Gray, member of congress from Indiana and also a member of the house committee on naval affairs. Mr. Gray also sent me a speech that he made on the subject of defense in the house February 5, 1915, together with some most important expert testimony before the house committee on naval affairs with regard to the defensive power of mines and submarines. I quote from the testimony before this committee, Mr. Gray being the questioner and Admiral Fletcher the witness:

"Mr. Gray. Suppose that a harbor is protected by the ordinary land forts and also by a sufficient number of torpedoes, mines, and submarines, how large a hostile fleet would be required to enter that harbor if it was protected by those instruments?"

"Admiral Fletcher. It would be a very difficult matter. They probably would not attempt to enter the harbor. As a matter of fact, under modern conditions of war it is doubtful if it ever becomes necessary for the fleet to enter a harbor.

"Mr. Gray. Suppose a hostile fleet desired to enter the harbor, and the harbor was protected with ordinary land forts and with a certain number of mines, torpedoes and submarines, how large a hostile fleet would be required to enter that harbor under those conditions?"

"Admiral Fletcher. Of course it

depends on the size of the forts, the area, and so many conditions that it would be difficult to specify the exact size of the attacking force, but, as I say, in general they would not attempt to enter such a fortified harbor by means of a fleet alone; it would not pay.

"Mr. Gray. Then those instrumentalities would be sufficient to protect the harbor without any warship in the harbor, or would you require a warship in the harbor in order to co-operate with those instrumentalities?"

"Admiral Fletcher. You would

GRAY HAIR AND GOLDEN

The girl's eyes flashed and she gave her small head, with its fluffy mass of bright curls, a defiant little toss. "But, grandmother, I won't have Robert talking to those agents when he might be spending his time with me! Just the very idea of his taking out a life insurance policy—and that even before we are married—gives me the blues! I wish he wouldn't think about such things."

The white-haired lady, thus addressed, smiled an understanding, slow, sweet smile. "Dear," she said, "how little you know of life and its struggles!" And then the room was still for a moment save for the ticking of the gay little clock upon the mantel.

"I wonder," it was the same gentle voice again very soft and low, "if I might help you to understand Robert's viewpoint if I told you a story—a true one that happened over forty years ago."

"It was just two weeks before my wedding day and your grandfather had come in from the city for a last fleeting visit. We had a wonderful time, of course, just as you and Robert are now having. I remember it was on the drive to the station that he suddenly turned to me and, in his characteristically abrupt manner, asked my advice. He had practically made up his mind that he needed some insurance but, as I was the one directly concerned, he felt that he could not decide definitely without consulting me. Well, dear, it just broke my heart to hear him talking of the possibility of his not always being with me, and I positively forbade him to give the matter another thought. I grew almost hysterical and before we parted he had promised not to take out a penny of insurance."

"We had two years of happiness and then after a brief illness he left me—alone with our tiny twin boys. Heartbroken, inexperienced, and far from strong, the next five years dragged along as one continuous nightmare. Our very meager bank account was soon exhausted. None of my people were in a position to help me, so I kept them in ignorance of my serious plight. How I managed to pull through, I don't know! I very seldom speak of those days even yet. Worry over financial troubles made the loss of your grandfather doubly hard to bear. When night came, I was always so tired that I could not make much of an effort to throw off the ever present feeling of hopeless loneliness and gloom. Money coming in at that time would have seemed a God-send."

"Don't make the mistake that I did, little girl. Go, tell Robert —."

But the girl had already gone.

Note—Robert now has a \$10,000 policy in

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