

Fallacy of Some of the Arguments in Behalf of Preparedness

[From the Montgomery, (Ala.) Journal.]

Recently the Journal urged calmness and reason in the discussion of the question of preparedness for war, and decried the agitators of these Roosevelt type at this time, but it did not underrate the harm Colonel Roosevelt had done, and was doing by his speeches throughout the country.

In referring to the antics of Dennis Kearney in the days of "sand lot oratory," it added, "but when an ex-president of the United States, a restless and educated politician assumes the role of agitator and gives off effusions with the university polish, many people accept that as the utterances of a statesman," and this opinion is almost daily confirmed by articles in newspapers and magazines throughout the country, and even in our own state.

The Collinsville Courier, a leading weekly newspaper with marked independence, has this to say on the subject:

"In a long editorial the Montgomery Journal lambasts Colonel Theodore Roosevelt because he advised the youth of the country to keep themselves fit morally and physically for war. According to the Journal's theory, our young men should keep themselves poor and thin in body and keep their minds on something besides war so that should something come up, some great provocation arise, we will be in no shape either morally or physically to fight. Listen here, Colonel Hood, the editor of this sheet is now trying to raise up six boys and before we would see them grow up in six cringing cowards, to be kicked and cuffed around by every Tom, Dick and Harry, or to be a part of a nation like China now is, like you seem to think we should be, we would far rather—well! Show us a mother, whether or not she ever heard Colonel Roosevelt, who would prefer to see her son a slinking, slimy, low browed coward, than to see him grow up a red-blooded, robust, manly, brave man, ready to fight at the drop of a hat and drop it himself? The great trouble about you is this: It was Colonel Roosevelt who said it, that's what hurts you."

And here comes Collier's Weekly following along the same Rooseveltian lines of thought and agitation:

"Various individuals have disparaged the motives of the men fighting in Europe against the kaisers and the Turk, and one loose thinker has called this war of nationalism against the would-be world conqueror 'the causeless war.' This same politician has cautioned his fellow countrymen against taking 'unnecessary risks.' Now, it is hard for us to be patient when we have read such rubbish in the press. Without 'unnecessary risks' history would be the record of life among the invertebrates. Without 'unnecessary risks' there would be no Leonidas in history, no Columbus, no Champlain, no Wolfe, no Nelson, no Emmet, no Washington, no LaFayette, no American republic. Without the taking of 'unnecessary risks' there would have been no Lincoln. When the men who followed Garibaldi from Rome asked him what their reward would be, they were answered: 'Hunger and thirst, forward marches, battles, and death.' Garibaldi and his thousand took unnecessary risks—and freed Italy."

This is argumentum ad invidiam, and is but an echo of the educational campaign started by Roosevelt not so much to get the country aroused on

a preparedness for war as to arouse antagonism to the known peace policies of the administration.

When Mr. Bryan said that Americans owed something to themselves and the country, and should not take unnecessary risks by going on belligerent vessels carrying munitions of war it was a fair and respectful admission, which should be heeded.

It would be stupid in us to attempt to explain to Collier's the meaning of "unnecessary," but probably there are some thoughtless readers of that magazine that might be misled. Unnecessary—according to our unabridged dictionary—is that which is "not necessary, not required by circumstances of the case."

To twist or try to pervert the meaning of Mr. Bryan is unworthy of Collier's. It is not argument and can not be discussed seriously, however considerably we may view it.

If a riot occurs in the street a man has the right, and unquestioned right, to go out and view it near or far, and yet if a stray bullet kills him or, even if he escapes unharmed, he will have taken an "unnecessary risk." He will have been foolhardy.

No one may question his constitutional right to be there, but they will question his good sense and judgment. If he had remained within doors, or at a safe distance from the scene, he could not be called a coward, but a man of discretion and sense, who had simply taken the ordinary precaution of a sane man to protect his life.

If it was a part of his business to be in the mob—to be there to uphold the law in the performance of duty, he would not have taken an "unnecessary risk."

When Columbus started on his voyage of discovery he believed he had a great mission to perform. He had a clear and definite aim in view. It was a risk, but not an "unnecessary risk."

When Champlain, and Wolfe, and Nelson, and Emmet, and Washington, and LaFayette achieved their victories, they were in the performance of patriotic services to their country, and took necessary, not "unnecessary risks."

The difference is apparent to every intelligent reader whether blinded by partisan zeal or not; and it is difficult to believe that any newspaper or magazine editor would seriously present such an argument.

As to the points raised by our esteemed Alabama confrere, Editor Smith of the Collinsville Courier, who asks the Journal to show him a mother "who would prefer to see her son a slinking, slimy, low-browed coward than to see him grow up a red-blooded, robust, manly, brave man, ready to fight at the drop of a hat and drop it himself," the Journal would suggest that in its opinion the average mother would prefer her son to be neither a "slinking, slimy, low-browed coward," nor a bully or a braggart, not "a man ready to fight at the drop of a hat and drop it himself."

The Journal is inclined to the opinion that she would prefer a boy whose dignified manner and bearing gave evidence of good breeding, who is respectful and self-respecting, and who commands the respect of others by reason of his intellect, and the other qualities referred to, and who doesn't have to be a bully and a braggart to command respect of his fellow-students or fellow-men.

The Journal happens to know quite a number of men who have achieved success in life, men of the highest

type and character, beloved and respected throughout their lives by their fellow-men, some of them achieving the highest honors at their hands, who never had occasion to use physical force in their dealings with their neighbors—men who did not look for slights and insults, and received none. They did not have to "tote" a pistol or carry a dirk, or brag or bluster to get along in the world with their neighbors.

And they died, as they had lived, at peace with the world, beloved and respected by all who knew them.

As with individuals so it is with nations.

It is the nation that is going about looking for trouble, that is looking for slights, that is trying to play the bully, and which generally gets what it is looking for that needs to be prepared for war.

AN APPRECIATED COMPLIMENT

As an offset to republican attacks, the readers of The Commoner may enjoy the introductory address delivered by Mr. Robert H. Mangum at Selma, Ala:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Saint Paul sounded the note of his kingship among the sons of men when he described the vision that came to him on the road to Damascus, and said:

"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

Thirty years or more ago, a young American caught a splendid vision of service to his fellow men and devotion to his native land.

It kindled a flame of love upon the altar of his heart; it animated his brain with dynamic force; it lighted his eyes with inspiration; it tipped his tongue with persuasive power.

Today that man, no longer young, but with the spring of youth still in his heart, that splendid vision still guiding his feet, can stand before any American audience and say:

"Whereupon, O people, only king in this God blessed country, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

The Young Men's Christian Association of Selma, takes pride in presenting to you this man—

"Whose strength is as the strength of ten, because his heart is pure."
Honorable William J. Bryan of Nebraska.

One may be painfully conscious that he is not worthy of so generous a eulogy and yet cordially appreciate the spirit and friendship that prompted it.

A BETTER USE FOR OUR MONEY

Girard, Kansas, Sept. 17, 1915.
Editor The Commoner:

I have read the September number of The Commoner. Would to God every mother in the land had opportunity to read same paper. Preparedness would get a severe jolt. I think that Mr. Ford is the one man of large wealth that sees the situation from a humanitarian standpoint, and if the men that are figuring on spending large sums of money on a larger army and navy, many of whom have been favored by special tax laws to accumulate their wealth, would spend part of the time to assist a democratic president to pass a rural farm loan law, to encourage the young men of the country to procure farms and homes, instead of endeavoring to loan their hoarded wealth to warring nations for the purpose of protracting the present awful condition in the old world, they would be serving their country better.

Yours truly,
W. H. RYAN,
Ex-Chairman Kansas Democratic State Committee.

MILLIONS FOR GOOD ROADS

Judge J. M. Lowe, president of the National Old Trails association, received a letter recently from a Kansas Citian now in California telling how he had become converted to the real good roads idea and the way roads were being built around Los Angeles. The Kansas Citian, J. R. Cunningham, 4052 Warwick Boulevard, wrote as follows:

"Many Missouri counties can learn a great lesson from the enclosed newspaper clippings. When one considers the large amount of mountain and desert land not subject to cultivation in these California counties and one county of thirty thousand people, Ventura county, voting one million dollars in bonds for good roads, I, being a Missourian, can not help but feel that we are terribly slow and backward.

Roads Paid for Themselves

"I have been in Los Angeles county six weeks, and find their hundreds of miles of country boulevards (not rock roads in name only) have more than paid for themselves in a few years. Where it was impossible to haul a ton over the sandy and dusty roads before rocking, they now haul ten and twenty tons. It is a common sight to see a truck loaded and two to six trailers behind bringing the farm products in to market.

It has been a liberal education to me. I shall return to Kansas City October 1, and I want to enlist at once in your campaign for better roads in Missouri.

The inclosed clippings tell of the money that has been spent and is being spent in the counties around Los Angeles for rock roads. Besides Ventura county, which has less than 30,000 population, with its million dollar bond issue, other counties have spent as follows:

Los Angeles County\$3,500,000
Kern County 2,500,000
San Bernardino County	.. 1,750,000
Riverside County 1,125,000
San Diego County 1,500,000
Imperial County 500,000

All these recent bond issues for county rock road systems are additional to the 18 million dollar state bond issue and another 10 million dollar issue which will be voted on next year.—Kansas City Star.

HOW ABOUT IT, MR. TAFT?

Kirkville, Mo., Sept. 25, 1915.
To the Editor The Commoner: The following clipping is an editorial in the Des Moines Daily News of the 24th:

"Cousin Bill Taft advises the University of California college men thusly:

"I would begin at the bottom. I would attend every primary caucus or meeting of the party to which I allied myself. I would try to get out the vote at election time. I would study political questions; would read the congressional records and subscribe for some good newspaper. Then I would seek an opportunity to speak on current issues."

"But Mr. Taft overlooks one important thing. He fails to commend a paper to the political novitiates. Would The Commoner do, Brer Taft?"

As I have been reading The Commoner for a number of years, I can cordially recommend The Commoner to the junior ex-president as suggested by The News. Mr. Taft will find much needed information in its columns that will be of service to him if he shall ever aspire to the task of helping the common people, of whom he knows too little.

S. S. STILL.

People who pay grudges rarely worry about paying grocery bills.—Deseret News.