

Christian Preparedness

The Missionary Voice is to be congratulated and commended for its courage in giving expression to the Christian conscience on the subject of preparedness. Its strong and clear note is especially gratifying at this time, when some of our ministers are looking for passages in the Old Testament to support war and preparedness for war. The present discussion raises a fundamental question, namely; whether a Christian is in duty bound to speak and act according to the Christian doctrine ALL THE TIME or whether he is at liberty to postpone the application of Christianity UNTIL EVERYBODY ACCEPTS THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. The argument offered by sanguinary Christians in support of sanguinary methods is that they can not afford to apply Christianity at this time, because other nations do not do so. They are not willing to let their light shine in the darkness because they are afraid the darkness will not comprehend it. But would not this philosophy postpone indefinitely, if not put off entirely, the day of triumph for the teachings of Christ? When Christ said "Let your light so shine," He did not qualify the advice by saying "Provided, you have reason to believe that others will be influenced by your example." I am sure I am not mistaken in my interpretations of the teachings of Christ and the spirit in which He taught, when I say that the Christian must give forth his light constantly.

The light in the light-house may not be seen for hours at a time, or even for nights, but it is there for the help of any who come within its radius. And so the Christian must proclaim the doctrine of peace and endeavor to cultivate the spirit of peace, even though he has no positive assurance that his example will be helpful, or even seen. He never knows what he can do until he tries, but he knows he can not help unless he does try.

The effort that is being made today to lash this country into a frenzied preparedness, or rather scaredness, as one eminent divine terms it, can not succeed unless the Christian faith of the country is at a low ebb. The advocates of scaredness are considering possibilities instead of probabilities; they say that because we can not know definitely what a day may bring forth, we must therefore prepare for every conceivable contingency. This is the doctrine of the militarist. He gives the benefit of the doubt to the danger and because we are never absolutely free from danger he would have us spend our whole time getting ready for imaginary wars. If I understand the teachings of the Master, we are to have faith in the power of love to overcome ill-will. If we, by preparing for war, announce that we expect to rely, as the European nations do, upon threats and force, we shall cultivate the spirit that leads to wars, for hatred begets hatred. It must be remembered that if we swing a club, or as it is expressed more politely, "shake the birch" at other nations they will be just as quick to discount our protestations of friendship as we are now to discount theirs. Actions speak louder than words, and our words of friendship will have little weight if we conform our actions to the example of nations that have the lust for conquest.

At this time when the air is full of prophecies of evil and when the nation is being urged to arm itself and get ready for war, it might be well to call attention to Christian preparedness as set forth in the words of Paul in his letter to the Ephesians wherein he appeals for a preparedness quite different from that about which our belligerent Christians are now talking.

"Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day and having done all, to stand.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness;

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

"And taking the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

W. J. BRYAN.



"YOU WERE SELECTED"

Did you ever receive a communication beginning "You were selected"? If not, you are fortunate, for that is the stock phrase of the bunco-steerer and the confidence man. It is always employed by those who sell "green goods," or otherwise seek to deceive the public.

Reference is made to the phrase because I have been receiving communications from different parts of the country, showing that the scheme is being worked on the public in behalf of the scaredness program. Here is one of the telegrams:

"You were selected at today's meeting as a member of the national committee * * * to aid aggressive propaganda in various states creating yearly instruction camps, rudimentary military training in schools and an adequate citizen soldiery for defensive purposes only. Organization absolutely unbiased politically. If you can not accept national committee, may society enroll you as life member? Dues in full for life one hundred dollars, or as much more as you care to contribute. Please telegraph acceptance for immediate publication in matter now in press. * * * Sec'y Board of Trustees."

It is no reflection on you to have been "selected," because they have probably found your name in "Who's Who?" or some published list of prominent personages, but it will be a reflection on you if you allow them to dupe you into contributing to the active support of their efforts to Europeanize our national ideals and policies.

"WORSHIPPING THE SCIMITAR"

John Bright, the great English democrat and peace advocate, used the following words in one of the most celebrated of his speeches to his Birmingham constituents:

"The most ancient of profane historians has told us that the Scythians of his time were a very warlike people, and that they elevated an old scimitar upon a platform as a symbol of Mars, for to Mars alone, I believe, they built altars and offered sacrifices.

"To this scimitar they offered sacrifices of horses and cattle, the main wealth of the country, and more costly sacrifices than to all the rest of their gods. I often ask myself whether we are at all advanced in one respect beyond

those Scythians. What are our contributions to charity, to education, to morality, to religion, to justice and to civil government, when compared to the wealth we expend in sacrifices to the old scimitar?"

How aptly does Bright's language describe the attitude of the militarists of today! They enthrone the scimitar and are willing to sacrifice to it all the country's wealth and treasure. If they do not demand the actual offering up of horses and cattle, they are clamoring for the expenditure of money which REPRESENTS THE VALUE of horses and cattle and which, in numbers, would put the ancient worshippers of the scimitar to shame.

The cost of this idolatry passes belief! The Army board asks for a PERMANENT EXPENDITURE OF MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED MILLIONS per year and the Navy board wants MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED MILLIONS SPENT ANNUALLY on the navy—more than FIVE HUNDRED MILLIONS on the army and navy each year!

Calculating the farmers net income, as shown in a former issue, at eight per cent of the total amount received from his crops, we find that the net income of ALL THE FARMERS of the United States is considerably LESS THAN FIVE HUNDRED MILLIONS per year!

What answer will the taxpayers make when they have an opportunity to sit in judgment upon the insolent extravagance of these worshippers of the scimitar who would absorb in preparations for imaginary wars more than the net income of all the farmers of the United States?

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A PARALLEL CASE

In 1858, John Bright, in addressing his Birmingham constituents, described war as fatal to domestic liberty and democracy, and to the well-being of the poor. War and great armaments, he said, gave to the upper class the monopoly of power and supplied their sons with a multitude of well paid posts. He even went so far as to say that: "This excessive love for the balance of power is neither more nor less than a gigantic system of out-door relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain." We have in this country a parallel case. Preparedness is merely a gigantic system of out-door relief for our aristocracy, "big business."