

THE THINKING BAYONET.

Editor of the New York Times:

I am much gratified to see that the New York Times may presently share with myself in the abuse which has been poured upon me since the postmaster general violated the United States mail and took therefrom eight pamphlets of mine which have been falsely held to be seditious and treasonable. The main part of these pamphlets consists in statistical reviews and forecasts of the past and future of the finances of this country, coupled with other tabulations of the disease and death rates in armies serving in the tropics. These tables were carefully prepared in the hope that about a thousand copies might be used with advantage by students of economic science and by such members of congress as really give due regard to the money and the blood tax of war. Although your own and other papers have paid me many hundred dollars, even thousands if magazines are counted, for statistical compilations of a very similar character, I did not believe that in the existing excited state of the public mind there would be any general demand for such data. But the violation of the mail and the charges of sedition which have been poured upon me have carried the circulation of these documents with many addenda up to 60,000. The demand is still active, and I expect to print and circulate at least 100,000 copies, being well assured of such continued voluntary contribution of money as may enable me to supply the largest demand. It is a very hopeful sign when great numbers of people are being led to study the trial balance of the Nation and to compute for themselves the cost of the hell of war both in taxes and in death and disease.

An article in your paper of June 8, entitled, "The Thinking Bayonet," gives me an opportunity to take some notice of the facts on which false charges of sedition and treason have been put upon me. Referring to a debate in the British parliament on the proposed tribute to Lord Kitchener, in an editorial you say: "Mr. Balfour made one remark which has a clear and sharp application on this side of the Atlantic." He said: "Those who wished to withhold from a successful general a merited reward because he has carried out a policy of which they disapprove were virtually telling him and his soldiers who had faced death that they would have not only to obey orders, but to know whose orders they were obeying." He added that the country whose army concerned itself with politics was on the verge of a military despotism.

To this view of the matter you rightly take exception. You hold that "these remarks are the obvious utterances of mere common sense. Among other things they constitute a condemnation of the policy of congress in determining

to fight a foreign war with volunteers. The citizen soldier does not lose his rights as a citizen by becoming a soldier. Neither should he do so when he is engaged in the only military service for which a citizen soldiery is fitted. That is, the defense of his own home against an invader."

Is not this seditious? Are you not making a dangerous distinction? Are you not giving a full warrant to the volunteers now being immolated in Manila to think for themselves, and, if they choose, to claim the discharge to which they are entitled, so as to get away from the ghastly conditions in the Philippine islands as quickly as they can? The "thinking bayonet" of the volunteer is, in your judgment, a different bayonet from the unthinking one of the regular army. I am glad to see from these remarks that on this point we are at such an absolute agreement.

You go on to say, "Every foreign war, however, is sure to create divisions of sentiment." Surely, when that war is one of criminal aggression. You add, "The notion that these divisions of sentiment should extend to the troops actually engaged in carrying on the war, and that they should be invited to vote upon the question whether the work they are engaged in is righteous or unrighteous, and to inform themselves by reading and by attending public meetings, so as to cast an intelligent ballot, is one that evidently commends itself to the intelligence of Mr. Atkinson."

An Intelligent Ballot.

Can you find an intelligent man in this country to whom that idea does not commend itself? If volunteers cannot pass upon the questions upon which they are to vote, how can they vote intelligently? If they are to vote intelligently, are they not entitled to statements, even ex parte, on either side, in order to enable them to comprehend the questions? If that is admitted, by what right does the cabinet of the United States violate the United States mail? The right of the volunteer soldier to think did commend itself to my intelligence when I learned that volunteers were held in Manila against their will and that the telegraphic dispatches of their relatives begging them not to enlist had been refused transmission by the military authorities. I hold that these volunteers were entitled to be informed of all the facts. There were among them a large number of college students, professors, and other high school and college bred men, especially in the ranks of the soldiers from the Northwest, who had volunteered in the cause of liberty to relieve Cuba from the oppression of Spanish rule, and who had been forced against their will to fight for the subjugation of the people of the Philippine islands. I thought that such men might comprehend even the dry statistics and the statements of

the government accounts which were included in my pamphlets. It is the right of every citizen in the United States to give such information to all volunteer troops, and it will be very dangerous to any one, official or otherwise, who contests this right and who attempts to deprive any citizen of it.

You, however, go on to remark that such an act, even with respect to volunteer troops, "is one which any professional soldier, of any army in the world, would have no hesitation in saying is utterly destructive of 'good order and military discipline.' One of the things that a soldier must not discuss is his orders. If he is encouraged to discuss these, from those of his immediate superiors to those of the war office at home, then, as Mr. Balfour well says, the road to a military despotism is open."

Military Discipline.

In this view of the matter we part company. If the intelligent volunteer may not think lest military discipline should be impaired, then the profession of a soldier and the military system are condemned, and rightly condemned. If good order and military discipline rest upon unthinking ignorance, it follows that common education and the common school will condemn regular armies and the employment of ignorant men who must not think for themselves. We may then trust to the volunteer system, which (as you rightly say) may be trusted for defensive warfare. The volunteer in Manila, held against his will to fight in the war for the subjugation of the people of the Philippine islands, has the right to discuss the orders and acts of the commander in chief of the army, even if he be the president of the United States, and to resist such orders by vote or by any rightful method except that of mutiny. I do not suppose that you would impute to me or to any man of common sense the folly of attempting to induce soldiers to disobey orders in the field. I should not even send documents to the privates in the regular army, whatever right in law may warrant information being given, even to them. I should refrain, not because the regular soldier may not be taught to think, but because in his ignorance he may have placed himself under such conditions as may exist in the nations of Europe, who are compelled to maintain great standing armies, resting upon the ignorance of the masses. It may be necessary for the military classes who dominate them to question the right of the masses to think. When Mr. Balfour holds that to encourage them in thinking opens the road to military despotism we are brought to a clear comprehension of the difference between a government of right by consent of the governed and a government by privilege without the consent of the people. It is a very sig-