

## BOOKS

### THE ILLUSION OF WAR.

A revealing glare is flashed on our boasted enlightenment, when we come across a thick volume, full of painstaking argumentation, written to point out, as a new thought, some perfectly self-evident fact. Also when we find such books arousing criticism and comment in "authoritative" circles. Nothing eludes the grasp of the average mind as easily as does the simplest truth, apparently.

In his book entitled "The Great Illusion," (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons) Mr. Norman Angell frankly acknowledges that what he is fighting is not facts, but a mere illusion, the power of a fallacy entrenched by tradition, lodging firmly as a fixed idea in the great mass of minds that will not take the trouble to think for themselves. This is the illusion that War, even though morally wrong, and greatly to be condemned on ethical grounds, is in practice profitable to the nation undertaking it successfully.

In successive parts of the book, differentiated as "The Economics of the Case," "The Human Nature of the Case," and "The Practical Outcome," Mr. Angell treats his subject from all sides, and ably proves his contention that a successful war is more harmful to the general health and well-being of a modern nation than anything else that could come to it. Far more harmful than even an unsuccessful war. This is a truth which cannot be denied by any thinker who can reason from the facts of history, ancient or modern. But Mr. Angell's book is most interesting in that it shows how many people there are, even People in the Public Eye, to whom his assertion comes with an iconoclastic shock.

The author himself apparently attaches most importance to what he terms "The Economics of the Case." In this section of the book he points out how the growing interdependence of the nations one upon the other in matters of banking, credit, trade and commerce has made war between the "economically civilized nations"—the phrase is his own, and it is a good one—practically an impossibility. Any upset to the delicately interwoven financial credit system would so react upon the victor nation as to make the state of that nation worse than the state of the "conquered" people.

Mr. Angell cleverly tears to pieces the fallacy that military supremacy can win commercial supremacy for any nation, or can win for it the markets of the world. He gives interesting statistics to show that the credit of the smaller, un-military nations of Europe, such as Holland, Switzerland and Scandinavia, is rated higher on the bourses of the world than that of the more

"warlike" Powers. Also, while England is feverishly building Dreadnaughts to "protect her world-trade from German aggression," German merchants are quietly winning to a favored position in the English colonies, and Norway is quietly sending out her merchant vessels to gather in the lion's share of the carrying trade of the world.

The harm done to England's credit system by the Boer war, the difficulties Germany has labored with since 1870, and the latest most notable example, Russia and Japan, are ably used by the author to prove that the vanquished can more easily recover from the evil effects of a war than can the victor. Also he scathes the absurdity of some "peace" arguments which take the stand that war is profitable, but morally wrong, therefore war should stop. "You have a much happier time playing truant, little boy, but it's morally wrong to do it; therefore, you musn't." Such an argument naturally arouses only derision.

A well-defined weakness in economic reasoning, as well as a belittling of his own work by choosing a small target—Mr. Angell seems to have written his book mainly to show why Germany will not attack England—render this first part of the book its least successful to radical readers.

The second part, "The Human Nature of the Case," is far stronger and contains some excellent paragraphs and many quotable sentences. Mr. Angell has little respect for "Patriotism in the true sense, i. e., the desire to go and kill other people." He calls attention to the absurdity of an appeal to "national pride" and "race feeling" in a day when the most marked divisions are those of class, not of race. Some things he says in that regard are worth quoting:

. . . The real psychic and moral divisions are not as between nations but between opposing conceptions of life. . . . At the bottom of any conflict between the armies or governments of Germany and England lies not the opposition of "German" interests to "English" interests, but the conflict in both States between democracy and autocracy. . . . As this conflict becomes acuter, the German individualist will see that it is more important to protect his freedom and property against the socialist and trade unionist who can and are attacking them, than against the British army who cannot. In the same way the British Tory will be more concerned with what Mr. Lloyd George's Budgets can do, than with what the Germans can do.

The chapter entitled "Do the Warlike Nations Inherit the Earth?" is the best in the book in its trenchant sallies of wit, in its delightful thrusts of argument. Mr. Angell takes the written words of several military authorities, our own Mr. Roosevelt among them, on the subject of "fighting nations," and proves clearly that by such dictum, Turkey, the Herzegovina, and other such little countries in Europe,—and in America the revolutionary little Central America republics,—ought to be the great Powers of the earth. For they alone have a constant practical experience of the

"noble art of war"; they do not waste away in "slothful ease," nor spend themselves in sordid commercial money-grubbing. They are exercising to the full what Mr. Roosevelt calls the "manly and adventurous qualities," and by our ex-President's reasoning, other nations which are not so adventurous or so trained to arms—one might mention the United States and Canada, just to stay on our own side of the globe—should in the end go down before the warlike spirit and battle-trained strength of Nicaragua, Colombia, San Domingo and Venezuela. For, as Mr. Angell goes on to say: "The presidents of these strenuous republics are not poltroons of politicians, but soldiers—men of blood and iron—men after Mr. Roosevelt's own heart. They fight it out like men; they talk with gatling guns and mausers; they are a fine, manly, military lot! If fighting makes for survival they should surely oust from the field Canada and the United States, one of which has never had a real battle for the best part of its hundred years of sordid, craven, peaceful life, and the other of which Gen. Homer Lee (another militant writer) assures us is slowly dying, because of its tendency to avoid fighting."

This chapter, elaborating on the "pessimistic and impossible philosophy that men will decay and die unless they go on killing each other," is so thoroughly good that it makes up for shortcomings of insight and reasoning, for waverings and contradictions in other parts of the book. The absurdity of the "military ideal" for nations has never been more cleverly, more amusingly scourged.

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

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## BOOKS RECEIVED

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—The War Maker. By Horace Smith. Published by A. C. McClurg & Co., Chicago. 1911. Price, \$1.50 net.

—The Common Sense of Socialism. A Series of Letters Addressed to Jonathan Edwards of Pittsburgh. By John Spargo, author of "The Bitter Cry of the Children," etc., Chicago: Charles H. Kerr.

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## PERIODICALS

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### Atlantic (March).

The March Atlantic contains an article which many of the readers of the magazine doubtless turned to first, not because of their wealth, but because so many of us are interested in wealth. The article referred to is by Major Henry L. Higginson and is entitled A Word to the Rich. It is one of those pleasantly sane articles, saying that "mere material prosperity cannot make a great nation," that "surely our forefathers did not come to this country to win material success alone", that we should make a "wise use of our powers for the

good of our fellow men," etc., in a continuation of novel and dazzling statements, such as another Colonel has made fashionable.

J. H. D.

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### Twentieth Century.

Bolton Hall on Tolstoy's teachings, Herbert S. Bigelow on farmers and land values taxation, ex-Gov. Garvin on city government and Jesse F. Orton on the income tax amendment, give to the Twentieth Century for April a special interest to many readers of The Public. Incidentally, Henry Frank's estimate of "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," will help to a better understanding of that remarkable play.

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### Pearson's.

Joseph Fels, who knows, for he has proved it himself, tells in Pearson's for April, how men get rich without working. Not by selling soap, let the reader observe, for selling soap requires work; but by monopolizing common rights of a kind that increase in value with social growth. The explanation is simple, well illustrated with instances, witty in spots, and so characteristic in style that one may think the words are spoken in Mr. Fels's own voice.

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### Everybody's.

Whoever doubts the continued vigor of Lincoln Steffens, exposes his own beast-of-prey conception of what vigor is. While it is true that the eagerness of the man-hunt no longer throbs in what Steffens writes, another and much more vital eagerness has taken its place. He has risen above caring for individual criminals, high or low, to the level of exposing the System that makes them so. His story in the April Everybody's of "A Ring-Robbed Railroad"—the Illinois Central—is alive with his spirit of charity for sinners but undying hatred of the sin-webbed system which they profit by and in which they are caught, and is as dramatic as anything Steffens ever wrote.—With this number of Everybody's the aristocratic Frederick Townsend Martin concludes his series on "The Passing of the Idle Rich"—a lame, class-conscious ending to a startling class-conscious confession.

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### The Mexican Situation.

The best article that has appeared on the present situation in Mexico will be found in the Outlook of April 1. The writer's name is not given, but every line of the article shows that he lives in Mexico and understands the conditions. He makes it clear that the Diaz government, however good it may have been at one stage of Mexican development, has outlived its time. "It would be," says the writer, "one of the greatest mistakes that the United States has ever made to try to step in and bolster up the Diaz Government. No amount of force will help matters. A larger measure of popular government must be given; there must be a chance for popular opinion to express itself, and there must be laws framed that will help the small man to become a landowner. It will be found, when the time comes, that the revolutionists have some good men to put at the head of things. It is claimed against them that they have