

**Humanity's Rights**

(Continued from page 2)  
**At the Hague.**  
 Finally, at the call of the Czar, the nations assembled for the first time at The Hague in 1899. They met there again in 1907 at the suggestion of President Roosevelt, and that latest meeting was followed by the Declaration of London, in 1909.  
 It is true The Hague has become a nest in the midst of a war whose red tide flows almost to the walls of the Palace of Peace. But it is by no means certain that the nations will not yet be glad to seek sanctuary there.

Many of the statutes enacted are void in this war because they have not been ratified by all the parties to the conflict. But ratification of even so innocent a convention as the Geneva Red Cross were slow. Although it was presented to the nations in 1864, many withheld their formal approval for several years. The United States, for example, did not sign the agreement until 1882.

In any case, the various declarations and conventions do not make the law; they only define it. And international law gains no added force by being put on paper. A nation's bond is not better than its word. It is equally free to break both.

In time of war the obligation rests on neutral nations to uphold the principles of international law. But for them it would be torn to shreds in every way. Their task is not hard in a combat between only two parties, as in the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian and the Russo-Japanese Wars. In such instances the combatants are surrounded by vigilant noncombatants, zealous to defend the rights of neutrality and insist upon a close observance of the rules of the game.

**The Don'ts of War.**  
 The fundamental principles of international law are as simple as the Ten Commandments. But the code of warfare as a whole is a most elaborate development, with distinctions so fine as to be fantastic.

If Gen. Sherman never said that "war is hell," he did say to the mayor of Atlanta that "war is cruelty and you cannot refine it." But men ever have tried to refine it in the spirit of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, who held in duelling that you should "kill your man decently and like a Christian." This persistent effort to sugarcoat the bullet runs

parallel to the restless quest for some nice and proper way of inflicting capital punishment on the condemned criminal.

For instance, there has long been a most earnest purpose to shoot the enemy with the most agreeable bullet on the market. The soldier is supposed, of course, to shoot to kill; but he must inflict the smallest possible wound in order that, if his aim misses the vital spot, there shall be no lingering death, no crippling, and his foeman may speedily return to the firing line. Washington apologized to Gen. Howe because some of the Americans had fired balls at the British, a practice which he abhorred as wicked and infamous.

In this, as in other recent wars, the cry has risen that dum-dums were used. But there is no limit, of course, or larger missiles. A single shrapnel tube, for instance, may scatter when it bursts as many as 1,500 fragments, inflicting wounds of the worst type. While it is permissible to rain that leaden torrent upon the foe, no projectile that discharges asphyxiating gases is permitted, and the allies have arraigned the Germans for violating a rule which the powers have twice affirmed at The Hague.

There is a fine distinction made between poisoning water and filling the water sources with dead animals. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston did this in Mississippi to retard Sherman's pursuit of him, and a textbook of the American army holds it to be a justifiable measure. This is because the infection is not concealed and the enemy is warned by the presence of the carcasses in the stream or pond. It is only equivalent, therefore, to cutting off a water supply entirely, which is a recognized measure of warfare.

**Points of Honor.**  
 Rules of this kind are dictated rather more by a sense of honor than by a sentiment of humanity. While deception and surprise are among the essential elements of warfare, there must be no betrayal of confidence or downright treachery. Although it is the business of war to kill, assassination is reprobated.

If civilization has been unable to soften warfare generally, it has worked a great and salutary change in the treatment of captives. Until three or four centuries ago, they were put to death or condemned to slavery. With the progress of the world, Caucasian slavery disappeared, and the vanquished foe now com-

**AT THE NICKEL**

mands, far more chivalrous consideration that he received in the misnamed age of chivalry.

Many of the Spanish soldiers and sailors in the war of 1898 were convinced that the Yankees killed their captives. Gen. Shafter thought it well to assure the defenders of Santiago by paroling twenty-eight prisoners and sending them back to their comrades as proof that surrender did not mean death.

While in nearly every war there are exceptional instances when no quarter is given, the white flag and the upthrown hands are almost universally held to be inviolable, and the surrendered become the wards, rather than the prey, of the victor. Even their personal belongings are guaranteed to them.

Another great gain that civilization has won in the struggle to shackle warfare is in the respect that has been established for private property. In the beginning, pillage was the soldier's only reward. Even a century ago, Napoleon went into some of his campaigns virtually without a commissary, and left his troops to steal their food as they marched.

As the world grew in wealth, however, commanders and governments insisted upon taking the plunder for themselves, but they have been shamed out of their rapacity. Besides, it was demoralizing. The machinery of scientific warfare could not be operated by robbers. Wherefore it is safe to say that in the present war, private property is relatively more sacred in the eye of an invading enemy than woman's honor or human life itself.

**Piracy of the Seas.**  
 I speak only of private property on land. Piracy continues as rampant on the sea as in the days of Kidd.

A hungry soldier holds up a peddler's cart on the highway; that is robbery. But when a sailor holds up a vessel on the high seas and seizes both ship and cargo, that is commerce destroying.

The declaration of Paris in 1856 paid a tribute to virtue by forbidding privateering. But the United States refused its signature, though its dissent left it no other companion than Spain. Secretary Marcy, on behalf of the American Government, insisted upon the abolition of commerce raiding by navies as well as by privateers and announced that on no other condition would the Republic sign the declaration of Paris.

Of course, the Americans and all agree that belligerents should still be permitted to seize contraband of war. But if the American contention had prevailed, the great German merchant ships now lying idle in the harbors of New York and Boston would today sail the seas as freely as in times of peace. Commerce destroying is one of the oldest institutions of warfare. Even in Plutarch capturing a cargo of wheat destined to that city, and by cutting off the food supply bringing upon the Athenians a terrible famine.

To starve out an enemy nation by a maritime blockade has not, however, been a common practice, although Britain attempted it for a time in the early stages of the French revolution. The federal fleets maintained a close blockade of the southern ports in the American Civil War.

The measure is new because until our own time nations have not been dependent upon imported foodstuffs. The Scotch could raise enough to eat and so could each of the countries of Europe in the era of the general war 100 years ago. Only since mills and railways and steamship came in have nations specialized and grown really dependent upon one another for subsistence.

**The Foul Blow.**  
 The Germans declare that since the British are threatening to starve a whole people, they are justified in torpedoing British merchant ships. But naturally the world views the mere threat in one instance very differently from the horrible actuality in the other instance. No one has yet been starved to death. Moreover the British campaign of starvation against Germany differs from the German submarine campaign against Britain in one very vital particular. In the last extremity, the Germans would at least have a chance to surrender and thereby save themselves. But that chance was denied the helpless people aboard the Lusitania. There was no quarter for them, and not even an opportunity to fight for their lives.

For did Baron von Schwarzenstein of the German Foreign Office meet the issue in his statement that "the newness of an instrument of warfare is no argument against using it." The world has not condemned Germany's submarines because they are a new weapon in warfare, but because they have been turned upon peaceable persons on a peaceable errand, subjects of neutral and enemy nations alike. It would have been no more and no less heinous if a German dreadnought suddenly had opened a broadside out of a fog and with her 15-inch guns swept the decks of the Lusitania. Mankind is aghast not because the deadly blow was delivered beneath the water, but because it was dealt beneath the belt.

International law is only fair play, tempered with such mercy as humanity has been able to wring from the flinty heart of war. It has no super-dreadnoughts and no 42-centimeter guns with which to enforce its provisions. Its surest and swiftest penalty has been inflicted when, as now, the whole neutral world cries "foul!"

**SELECTION OF OFFICERS.**

The Militia department is deluged with applications for commissions as officers. General Hughes made it clear that the preference will be given to those would be officers who show their mettle by effective work in recruiting. The more recruits a man brings in, the greater will be his chance of securing a commission. Those qualified in musketry shooting will also have a better chance of becoming officers, but in no case will "pull" count.

READ THE MAIL AND ADVOCATE.

**FORBES LAW DUGUID**

Sings (a) Prologue from Paggiacci, in English; (b) By the Strand, from Elilande.

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**ANOTHER STRONG LETTER**

**Respecting the Rotten Condition Of the Railway**

(Editor Mail and Advocate)

Dear Sir,—A few years ago rumor had it that the Reids were going to defy the Creator's laws by building a "hero" plow that would keep the road clear in the fiercest storms of winter.

The plow was built and put on the road, and its first great encounter with the forces of Nature was met on Mount Moriah, near Bay of Islands, where the "hero" was defeated and buried under the cliff where it remained until the Supreme Hand of Nature lifted her star-strewn mantle of white to give frail man a chance to remove it.

As the Reids was with their plow, so they are with the railroad, apparently thinking that wood can calmly defy the gnawing tooth of time. If the Reids would fully realize that with age, the first beginning a decay, and the Government Act, accordingly the Bonavista Branch might be saved from a lamentable rotten condition as the main line is today. Quite recently I took a trip by rail to Bonavista and found that one does not need to be a strict observer or keep a steadfast watch to learn the condition of the Bonavista Branch. A few more years shall roll and then the Branch referred to will be a heap of rubbish.

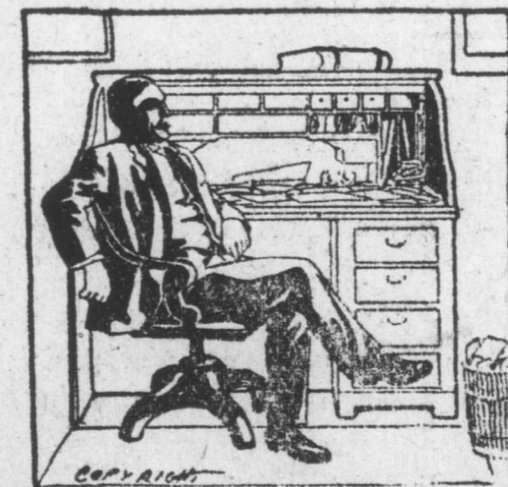
Roadmaster Rowsell has striven and is striving to keep the Bonavista Branch in repair, over which he has charge, but while the Reid Company will allow him only the regular engine for ballasting purposes, the Branch will certainly go down in the last stages of dilapidation.

Railroads cannot be kept in a perfectly safe condition unless men employed thereon are given the material to do their work with. Regular engines should not be used for ballasting purposes. This is not allowed in Canada or the United States and I consider that our safety is so important to us as the railroad safety is to our brothers on the Continent.

There is only one engine employed on the Bonavista Branch at present, and, while the engine has to do the work for two regular trains, there is very little time left for it to be used for the time, i.e., ballasting. If this state of affairs continue, will the public agree that the Bonavista Branch will be safe to ride over in a few years time? Is the main line perfectly safe to ride over with its rotten ties, or if it had been in good condition, would that train accident occurred at Codroy this spring.

Reid has lots of engines lying up in his yards at St. John's, but he keeps them there to cut down expenses, regardless of the public safety.

RESIDENT.  
 Clarenville, June 24, 1915.



**SO NECESSARY.**

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