

CLEMENCEAU

(Or, The Senate and The Tiger.)

By Donald Downie.

"Ils crient, donc ils paieront."—Cardinal Mazarin.

In the fencing school and on the field of honour, no less than in the turbulent Chamber, Georges Clemenceau, in the course of his long and stormy career, has often heard from his home-thrust the warning cry: "Touché."

Touché.

So the Pacifists and the pro-Germans are touched and enraged. Therefore there is hope. And the venerable senators, as we see, are afraid of that formidable hyphenated vote. And so the fiction of New World gratitude to the land of Lafayette and Rochambeau—that pious sentiment which had lasted more than a century—has disappeared like so many of our illusions, at the very first testing time. Disappeared the moment that a European statesman, with courage that is rare and splendid, sets foot upon their sacred soil and tells them the sober truth.

For this commercially clever, precocious, interesting, amiable, gullible and childlike race of people in America—quite in the kindergarten class so far as international politics and foreign affairs are concerned—are accustomed to only one language from all foreigners, distinguished and otherwise, who come among them. And that is the language of flattery. They have supped full of that; until their healthful mental appetite for simple food and plain facts is vitiated and destroyed.

Spoiled Children.

Heretofore every diplomatic ambassador, true to his trade, every social lion looking for recognition, and every learned literateur or lecturer looking for dollars and applause—with the brilliant exception of Charles Dickens—have thrown themselves at the feet of this youthful and receptive race; and from Bowling Green to the Golden Gate have told them exactly that which they wanted to hear. That they won the war; that they have saved humanity; that they are the greatest people on earth; that without their assistance, and perhaps that of the Russians and the Germans, the world cannot recover; and that without their intervention the hands upon the dial of our Old World civilization must inevitably be turned backwards.

Are not our own university men even here telling them today that they are the only people able to write a history of the Great War fit for Canadian schools? We all know it would be ridiculous, of course, to think that any British, French or Canadian could do so. We were too close to the fighting line; without proper perspective; while they were calmly looking on. Or—to use the figurative expression of old Doctor Johnson—they were standing on the bank while we struggled for our lives in the water, and when we had reached shore they overpowered us with help.

Ambassador to the World.

But here, in this unofficial ambassador, we have something altogether new to the American audience. Here is one who does not get down flat upon his stomach in front of them. One who stands erect; who can handle the rapier—in both senses—and who, launching out in his very first public pronouncement, is designedly and completely provocative. And he has drawn their fire.

Their alert young pressmen call him derisively, "the aged statesman." And they question his tact. Well, I wish some of these "smart Ales"—mostly suffering from extreme youth—and some of their Borahs and Hitchcocks and Hearsts—had tried to act as a secretary for this octogenarian war minister of France any time in the past few years, in order to test their energy. They might have received some lessons in tact, in mental vigour and in practical ability from the

ablest and the most accomplished tactician of the age. It was he who on the momentous 11th November, 1918, in the tribune of the House, all standing tense with the excitement of victory, closed his speech with these peaceful words of thanks to the army:—

"Grace a nos soldats, la France, hier Soldat de Dieu, aujourd'hui Soldat de l'Humanite, sera toujours le Soldat de l'Ideal."

But today he speaks again to us in a language which happily even every American can understand, upon matters in which every one is interested.

The Elite of America.

And so, in fine, let us hope that the intelligenzia—the saving remnant of the excellent American people—those of the Roosevelt school, who recognize genius when they meet it, and who know and deplore what Clemenceau bluntly calls the former tardiness and the present weak-kneed isolation of their country—may yet have the courage to save it from its present unworthy attitude of Teutonic superiority and Olympian detachment. And leaving Germanic Kultur and German propaganda, may turn, as Britain herself does today, more sympathetically towards that land of France to which all other lands are debtors, which has long led the world in peace and war, in fine arts, in fine manners and polite learning, and that still holds the banner high and the torch bright in the very vanguard of our modern civilization.

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