

The Soldier and the War

The following passages comprise one of six fragments appearing in the "Dreadnought" from a novel by Dudley Howard Tripp, a young soldier who enlisted early in the war and here records his impressions.

V.

There is only one crime that we cannot forgive and of which we ourselves have been guilty. The crime of narrow patriotism; the crime of not having insisted on open diplomacy and full, unvarnished facts; the crime of not extending to international relations, international disputes, the same procedure, the same judicial system of prosecution and defence as we enjoy in the courts of common law. There is the world-crime of infinite folly, infinite ignorance, infinite tragedy.

It was towards the end of 1915 that I began to see that; it was then that I began to think and wonder. I had been a year in the trenches. I said to myself one day, looking at a shivering uncomplaining man upon the bitter parapet: "He did not make war." It was an astounding thought; it burnt into my brain with sudden, penetrating fire. It took me from him to the Kaiser, from the Kaiser to his Generals of armies, and his chancellors, and from those great men to the simple, suffering, grey-coated guard in the line opposite our own.

I pictured him then as ignorant, as helpless, as uncomfortable, as heroically uncomplaining as the khaki-clad figure a yard away from me. I could see him drawing his coat-collar round his ears as the rain lashed him, hear him muttering doggedly to himself: "It must be seen through; I must stick it; it is just."

I put them side by side—grey and khaki—the rain glistening on their sodden great coats, streaming from their caps, marked their numbed hands, broken nails, red-encircled eyes; listened, even, to their terrible laughter.

Then I said: "Naked men, both of you, when you came into the world! Today, if I sent you

FROM THE "WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT," LONDON, ENGLAND

forth in your multitudes, silent and uncomplaining, stripped of your uniforms, and bade you fight, how would you say, either of you: "This is my enemy; him will I kill!"

It is not in your ranks that the enemy is to be found; it is not in your home that the spirit of hatred and revenge makes its bed. Uniform is thrust upon you, and made symbol of racial enmity; nationality is impressed upon you, and made a synonym for false pride. You have not been taught; you have not understood that all war is civil war, that all men bleed red no matter what color be their skin or their hair, that the brotherhood of man—Internationalism—is the truth of Christ, the very key to the citizenship of the world.

So I looked deeper, and the deeper I looked the more terror-stricken I became. For I saw that, somehow, millions of every land were bound by the thread of an idea to the will—if necessary to the evil will—of a few. I saw that they were emerging half blinded from holes in the ground, from darkness and ignorance, helpless as yet in the growing light, and flung hither and thither in their blindness by those accustomed to command. I saw the chains of economic serfdom, the lack of education, the absence of the critical faculty that made them easy slaves to an unrelenting wheel. I understood, or began to understand, how their ideas and ideals were shaped for them by those whom, unreasoningly, they had learned to obey; how the Press ceaselessly hammered partisan creeds into their indiscriminating ears; how a half-truth for lack of its balancing moiety became to them a convincing whole; how their lack of individuality had made them dependent on the care-free agent of mighty class and financial interests.

And then I looked for light. For a long while I saw none. For many days in this first groping of mine I beat against dark encircling

walls. So many things were hidden from me, so many books and ideas shut away from those blood-stained lines. Thought, dimly stirring, became agony as it moved like a child in some confined womb. Then . . . then, Noel was killed.

With the death of a real pal something dies, but something newer and deeper is born. We had been pals for a long time, had suffered and wept, laughed and sworn together. We had broken a last crust evenly, and licked at a tablespoonful of water. We had buried men—even our intimate pals—together. I understood, for the first time, what the love of a chum meant, the good, clean, honest open love of a man for man. . . . I saw him die. I had not thought before that he could die. . . .

Peter's voice shook a little.

He did die, for he took the last spark of credulity from me. He died; ah! don't forget this, without having touched the fingers of the thought that was awakening in me. He died, having missed, missing something. There had been no questions on his lips. His grave faced many a silent German grave—in silence. He did not ask why men should die as he died—in agony, choking, with black, bitter blood, and silent save for their moans. But he made me see that the living alone can talk, that the living alone have the key of thought, the key of action, even though they must pluck it from the grave.

Do you see what I mean? The chain of thought is easy and swift. When you know, when you feel that a dead German is on common ground with a dead Britisher, or a dead Frenchman; when you comprehend that their death is similar, the stopping merely of a heart-beat, you begin to understand the significance, the similarity of their life. Death broadens the issues you have to face, lines in and then erases your class distinctions, gives you perspective. The common bed of humanity, generally speaking, is the same; you realize that whether you look at it from the altar of the ale-house, or the city slum and the warehouse, or the green open fields of God.

DUDLEY HOWARD-TRIPP.

OUR BOOK REVIEW

(Continued from Page Two)

power in letters from the same alphabet that the Allies are now trying to teach the Germans.

"Then the old Central Executive Committee stepped down, and in their places appeared Trotsky, Kamimiev, Lunatcharsky, Madame Kollantai, Nogin. . . . The hall rose thundering. How they had soared, these Bolsheviki, from a despised and hunted sect less than four months ago, to this supreme place, the helm of great Russia, in full tide of insurrection!"

The order of business at the first meeting of the Congress of Soviets—Organization of power, war and peace, constituent assembly—shows further that the Bolsheviki grasped and understood wherein lay their strength, and that there was any doubt on the matter, at the same moment that "Organization of Power" came up for discussion in the Congress, the methodical muffled booming of cannon sounded from the Bolsheviki gunboat Aurora shelling the Provisional Government in the Winter Palace.

"So with the crash of artillery, in the dark, with hatred and fear and reckless daring, new Russia was being born."

BENNETT.

NOTE: The Editor informs me that he cannot let me have the whole paper. As this is as much a propaganda article as a review, and there are many who may not be able to get the book, I will tell you some more next week of the part played by the workers in the Red Guard, of the sailors from the fleet, of the trades unions, of the cowardly bourgeoisie and their hireling press, and of the tireless and resourceful men and women who made history during these ten days.—W. B.

OPINION IN GREAT BRITAIN ON INTERVENTION IN RUSSIA

The London "Common Sense," of April 12, whose editor is the well-known economist, F. W. Hirst, protests, in a long article, against the criminal folly of intervention in Russia by Great Britain. The writer of the article says "that intervention has produced three results. It has caused the death and imprisonment or large numbers of persons suspected rightly or wrongly, of counter-revolutionary activities. It has immensely aggravated the sufferings of the mass of the people directly, as a consequence of the blockade; indirectly, as a result of the diversion of the productive resources of the country to military operations. It has strengthened the Bolshevik government."

After reviewing the whole political and economic situation in Russia, the growing strength of the Bolshevik regime in the face of foreign invasion and at the same time explaining the desperate need for locomotives, agricultural machinery and engineers, he closes his article as follows: "The Revolution has gone too deep to be permanently overthrown; but for a period it might be submerged in blood and chaos.

"This, then, is the prospect to which those who clamor for more war would hurry us. If we pursue it we can gain nothing of the slightest worth to this country, while we shall assist to reduce a vast number of people to indescribable misery, and shut off from any use or profit to the world as a whole a vast storehouse of potential wealth—material as well as moral. To enter upon negotiations with Lenin and Trotsky—as the Allies themselves proposed to do in January—commits

us to nothing save the opportunity of securing peace and the possibility of Russia's regeneration. No vital interest of ours will be compromised: no sound principle endangered. When we made the alliance with the Czar we went further in approval of an infinitely worse government." It was an exploiters' government though, and a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.

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