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The Peace Fakirs

"IT'S an ill wind that blows no one good;" or, as a follower of Dietzgen would put it, misfortune, like all other things, is relative. The painful position of the slave class has made possible the "jobs" of the labor fakirs; and from the peace-hunger of a war-weary world, from the eagerness of those whose sons and brothers have been killed and maimed and ruined, from the suspicion directed to the League of Loot, from the premonitions of a new war—more scientifically horrible, more ruinous and devastating, has arisen the most popular parasite of the day—the Peace Fakir.

There is in society today a considerable section constituting a sort of middle-class, commonly called the middle-class. It consists of capitalists who hesitate to admit they are such, and of white-collared workers who do not know enough to know that they are workers. They do their work mostly with pen and ink and have a deep, fathomless veneration for scraps of paper. They are the chief support of the Peace Fakirs.

It would seem that the Peace Fakirs had very slight material to work on. There have been in "civilized" times about 9000 peace treaties concluded, every one of them intended to last for eternity. On the average they have lasted about two years*. Some still persist in having hope for the nine thousand and first. It is with singular precision that wars follow the attempts to preclude them. From the Amphictyonic Councils of the Ancient Greeks preceding their era of internecine strife to the arbitration propaganda of Napoleon III. a few months before the Franco-Prussian war, to the Hague Conference of 1899 with its sequence of the Russo-Japanese War, the Balkan War and the bloodfest of 1914-18, we gather experience all along tending to the conclusion that the way to war is lined with peace conferences. The Treaty of Versailles resulted in 22 wars in Europe and it is rumored that the present Washington conference may be even more successful.

Despite the evidence of the centuries "hope springs eternal in the human breast" and the Peace Fakirs continue to grow popular. Washington, they say, is not Versailles; for here is the American people with a long list of virtues we had not realized before. Viscount Bryce says the American people are essentially peaceful; they have no hankering after Imperialism. Mark it! the American people who tar and feather conscientious objectors, who lynch negroes, who perpetrate Centralias, who build Fort Leavenworths and conduct civil war in West Virginia, are essentially peaceful. American capitalists no longer look with lustful eyes to the oil of Mexico; the Philippines have been submerged in mid Pacific, Wall Street has relinquished its ninety per cent. share of Canadian industry; and all this without our knowing it. But it must be so, for Viscount Bryce says the Americans are an essentially peaceful people with no hankering for Imperialism. On this, then, build your hope for the Washington conference.

Lord Robert Cecil says that with the American people "the ardor of youth is not contaminated with cynicism and suspicion;" that they have not heard of Machiavelli and Frederick the Great. Note it well! Yankee business dealings and Tammany politics are not "contaminated with cynicism and sus-

picion;" the U. S. Senate is a body of pure minded ignoramuses who have not heard of Machiavelli or Frederick the Great. On this then build your hope for the Washington Conference.

J. Ellis Barker says the Anglo-Saxon race will not separate and fight, for it is one race. Our school histories must have erred indeed, for there we read that the Anglo-Saxons squabbled for years in early Britain; that Anglo-Saxon Yankees fought for independence from the motherland in 1776 that Anglo-Saxon Yankees fought Anglo-Saxon Canadians in 1812; that Anglo-Saxon Southerners fought Anglo-Saxon Northerners in 1861. But J. Ellis Barker is an honorable Peace Fakir and assures us that the Anglo-Saxon race will not separate and fight.

Nicholas Murray Butler, being a professor and a respectable sage, draws up some simple formulas for solving the problems that confront the human race. The first is the expansion of Japan without aggression, and the second the open door and integrity of China. Simple indeed! Japan must expand without expanding, and our statesmen must devise some way of eating up China without eating her up. The sage has solved the problem, so put your trust in the Washington Conference—unless, of course, you are "contaminated with cynicism and suspicion."

There are more Peace Fakirs than can be counted; but we can cover the balance of them with that most general of all fakirs, the Press. Here is a typical editorial on the four-power treaty, culled from the Philadelphia "North American:"

"The great fact is that statesmanship has found a formula for the establishment of peace . . . a simple arrangement of understanding and cooperation based upon candid conference and good will."

Here is the great fact, they tell us, and the fact turns out to be a formula. One would almost expect that every instrument of war had been lost in mid-ocean. It is only that they have left states equipped with submarines and aeroplanes to keep the peace on a basis of good will, when they confine the ordinary criminal, equipped with nothing but his arms and legs, in gaol. The Press is but describing Arthur Brisbane's "Four Gentlemen highwaymen trying to agree not to cut each others throats over the spoils."

Has the Washington Conference done anything to safeguard the world against war in the future? No—it has only in accordance with the development of the technique of destruction, decided to do away with certain useless weapons that draw considerably on their limited financial resources. The submarine and cruiser have replaced the capital ship; Henry Ford offers the current junk rate; so as "business" they shall be scrapped. The development of chemical warfare has made much of the old "preparedness" a foolish expenditure. George Bernard Shaw summarized the net results of the conference when he said:

"Their submarine and airships will all be commercial ones; their explosive factories will be mere dye works; their gas plants will provide chemicals for ordinary industrial purposes; the working drawings of the latest magazine-rifle will be hid securely in a pigeon hole. And the next war will be just as likely to occur, and be much the same when it does occur, as if the Powers were visibly armed to the teeth."

Neither peace fakirs nor astute statesmen have

done away with war; nor have those conscientious pacifists who make a clear case with much labor that there is no satisfaction in being killed nor no pleasure in being blown to pieces, and proceed to eliminate war by showing it to be unproductive, or cruel, or contrary to the New Testament. War, with its evermore terrible prospects, will be with us so long as we support an economic system that results in violent aggression on the less developed countries with their natural resources and trade potentialities. To those who disregard the class nature of society, the phenomena of class society is beyond explanation. Here lie the pacifists. Exploitation proceeds from violence, persists by violence, necessitates its own violent extension, and can be ended only by the overthrow of the exploiters by the exploited—and that too probably by violence. Peace is not made by scraps of paper, or by a spirit of brotherly love, but is only to be made by the development of class-consciousness in the slave-class. F. W. T.

WORRIES FOR THE BOSS

If in a future war France were in the anti-British camp, she could do England a very great deal of harm as she possesses a wide net of Atlantic, Mediterranean and Indian ports and could decide the war for the Pacific coast. But the world may very well break out over some European issue instead of about the Pacific coast, and here the interests of England and France strongly diverge. France is England's nearest neighbor. England considering, before the war, that it did not befit her position as a first-class power to allow Germany a navy representing 60% of the British, now would have to consent to America having a navy equal to the British navy, and in addition that the Japanese alliance be cancelled, that Japan in spite of this be allowed 60% of the naval power of England and that beside all this France, keeping 880,000 men under arms, should have a navy equal to that of Japan. This is too much for John Bull's stomach. But this is not even all. The French demands called Italy into the ring. Italy says, that France is not a Pacific, but a Mediterranean country and if she is to have such an enormous navy, that would endanger Italy's position in the Mediterranean. For this reason Italy demands the same privileges for herself which are to be granted to France.

Another dispute arises in the question of naval armaments concerning the submarines. The submarine boat is a weapon, the future is all before it, but even in its present infancy it can make itself very much felt by countries depending on overseas imports for their food supplies. England's home-grown bread supplies would last her not more than seven weeks. The attack of the small German submarine fleet could be beaten off by England, only because Germany did not possess a sufficient number of naval bases. Besides, the radius of activity of the submarines was much smaller then, than at present. If France is allowed to build submarines, she will be ten times more dangerous than Germany in this respect, as she has plenty of naval bases all over the world. And it is precisely this, that France has in view. Briand, in his fighting speech openly declared: "Big battleships are weapons for rich countries,—France is a poor country and needs sub-

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* See "War," Novikov, p. 17.