

WAR AND THE BRITISH ELECTIONS

Mr. Lloyd-George's Utterance on Saturday makes Mr. Blatchford's Appeal of Remarkable Interest

NOW that the Canadian Parliament has begun to consider the question of a Canadian navy of eleven vessels, it is possible for Canadians to revive their interest in the navy question which at the present time seems to be almost submerged by the Budget and the election in England. The big gun in the navy problem just now is Mr. Robert Blatchford, who has been called the Imperial Socialist. He has written a series of articles for the *London Daily Mail* which so far have done more to prepare the fuel for a huge flare-up than any utterances of any public men or other journalists in England.

Mr. Blatchford is a believer in war, even while he hopes for peace. He would have the world believe that the spectre of civilisation is now Germany, just as once it was Napoleon and at an earlier time Charlemagne and again imperial Caesar. He goes at the navy question at one who believes that there is no internal problem in any country so vast and imminent as the external problem of defence. To him the British Empire is a huge peril. He thinks armies and navies and guns as naturally as a millionaire thinks bonds and a labourer dollars. He out-Herods Herod so far as ordinary Socialists are concerned. He is the arch-Socialist who does not believe with Keir Hardie that if Socialism and Labour in England and Germany decide to unite to prevent war, there will therefore be no war. He says that war is imminent no matter what. There is no such thing as Peace. Arbitration societies are vain and hollow. The theory of industrialism being inimical to war is false. The idea that capital has become so cosmopolitan and international that no country can afford to have a huge war with any other because of destruction to vested interests—he scouts that to the point of poo-pooing by inference. Ordinary alliances are to him of little moment; as things that can be made and unmade even as they have been in days of old. Kinship of the great powers by marriage—merely a matter of ineffective sentiment. The sky is red. The red is not of the sun. The clouds are not of vapour but of smoke. The present election in Great Britain has no significance so far as Lords and Commons and the Budget are concerned, compared to the importance of Germany *vs.* England. It is "War! War! War! is a bountiful jade," with Mr. Blatchford.

Follow some of his trenchant arguments; from articles which are the fruit of a powerful mind brought to bear upon a huge problem which some would term an infatuation. In these sayings there is much to ponder. Much he says may be right, though it is to be hoped that the common-sense of most will unite to prove that they were but the harsh bugles of a bold, bad prophet. Whether Mr. Blatchford's theories are right or wrong they have the merit of apparent sincerity, of profound study by one who has been in the army, and of extreme novelty in arrangement. He has out-Kiplinged Kipling and out-Steaded Stead. Moreover, he has managed to sum up the drift of recent international gossip so well that one may see in imagination the phantom of Lord Rosebery up the mast of the ship of state listening to the "ominous hush."

The Bugles of Mars.

"I write in *The Daily Mail* in the hope of arousing the public from the fatal apathy and complacent optimism which blind them to the greatest peril the nation has ever been called upon to face. At the present moment the whole country is in a ferment about the Budget, and the Peers, and the Election. It seems sheer criminal lunacy to waste time and strength in chasing such political bubbles when the existence of the Empire is threatened by so brave and powerful and indefatigable a nation as Germany. Serious warnings have been uttered publicly by Mr. Asquith, by Mr. Balfour, by Sir Edward Grey, by Lord Lansdowne, by Lord Cromer, and by Lord Roberts. But these warnings have not been sufficiently gross or sufficiently explicit to be understood of the people."

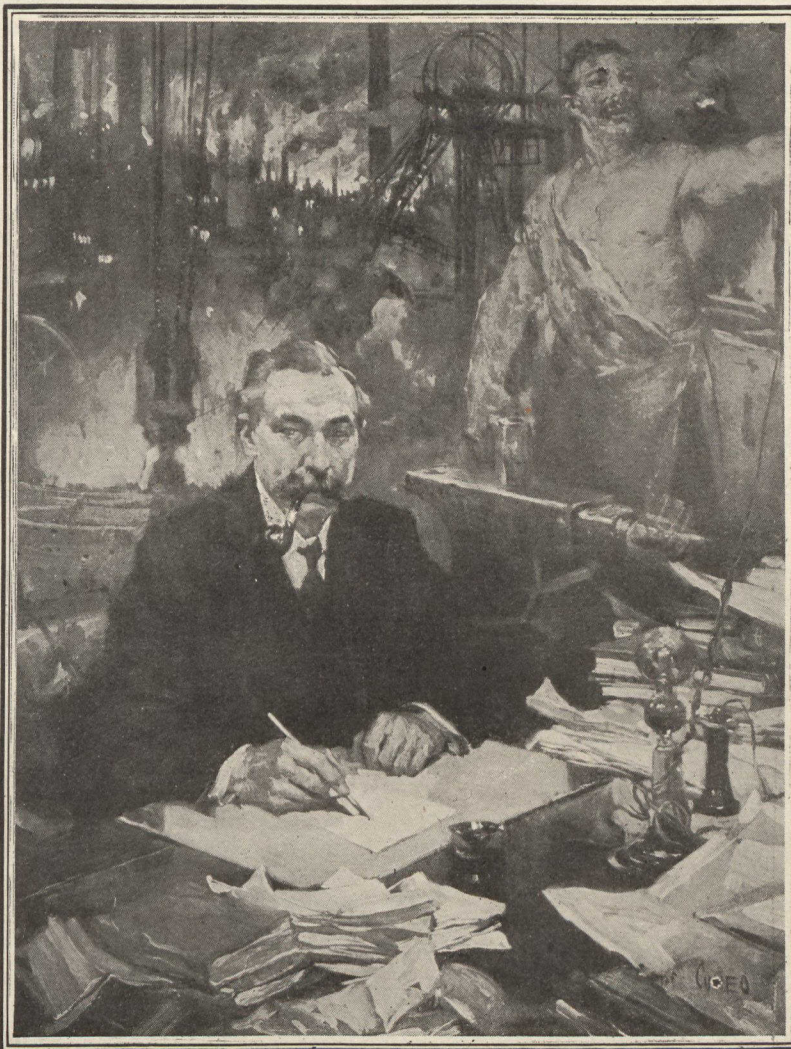
In other words the only way to have sound government is to go to war.

"Why should Germany attack Britain? The population of Germany is rapidly increasing. Germany needs colonies; Britain has taken all the

colonies worth having. Britain holds India, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Egypt, and the most desirable parts of Africa. Germany is hungry for trade and for influence in distant seas; Britain holds fortresses and coaling stations all over the earth: Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Capetown, the West Indies, and many others. If we glance at a map we find the North Sea exit threatened by Dover and the Mediterranean entrance threatened by Gibraltar. Germany sorely needs more ports, a greater sea-board."

There is really nothing new in this till Mr. Blatchford rings in the theory that Germany's first act of eruption will be to make a meal of France as a mere prelude to absorbing England. He says:

"Supposing France attacked and conquered by Germany, how would our fleet prevent the annexation of Calais and Cherbourg? And what could our fleet do to prevent the German conquest of France?"



Mr. Robert Blatchford, Socialist Editor of *The Clarion*, who believes that the greatest issue before England is not the Budget.—*Illustrated London News*.

As for Belgium and Holland there would be no need for Germany to annex them. With Calais in German hands the Netherlands would be quietly absorbed. Then Germany would have Calais at one end of the Channel and Cherbourg at the other. Also she would have Amsterdam and Rotterdam and Antwerp, which Napoleon said was like a pistol pointed at the heart of England. Also she would have the Dutch navy and the Dutch craftsmanship. Then France would be a crippled power, and Britain would be unable to keep pace with the German output of battleships and sailors. That is why I say that the problem of British defence is the problem of the defence of France."

Then in a paragraph Mr. Blatchford proceeds to depict the obliteration of the British Empire, apparently heedless of the fact that it took Gibbons twenty years to trace the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, which was a mere postage stamp on the envelope compared to the British. For instance:

"But imagine the effect of a disaster to our navy; imagine the effect of a German annexation of the ports of France and Holland. Credit would be shaken to its foundations. Banks would break, food would rise to famine prices, commerce and industry would be paralysed. And then as our power waned we should be starved and crushed into an abject surrender. We should lose India and our colonies. We should lose our fleet. We should lose our trade. We should have to pay ten times as

much as security would have cost us, and after unimaginable suffering we should be compelled to serve as German soldiers under German commanders."

For instance Hoch (God Save) Der Kaiser (the King)—how the Germanised Tommy Atkins would sing the new national anthem!

Further, the Imperial Socialist harps loudly on the jarring string that the Unionists have been twanging of late in the campaign across the water. He shows wherein Germany is inherently superior to Great Britain both from an industrial and military point of view.

"The Germans believe that Britain has grown fat, and stupid, and cowardly. They see that Germany has a population 50 per cent. larger than Britain, and very much better educated, better trained, and better organised. They see that our army is small and unready; and they know that theirs is excellent in quality, overwhelming in numbers, and in readiness and organisation without a peer. They are sure that they can crush us on land. They believe they can beat us in trade; they hope that they can outbuild and outspend us and so become our masters on the sea."

Imperial Militarism.

Again he superbly worships the military idea. He has caught the German spirit. To him the Empire is evidently measurable by its men-of-war and its battalions and its bugle-calls—which is part of the old idea of an Empire built upon conquest. Herein he includes the colonies and says:

"Call it what you please, I am not afraid of names. I call it compulsory military service and fiscal warfare. I am not in favour of Tariff Reform as Tariff Reform is likely to be applied if adopted in this country. But Free Trade never was a part of my political faith. Free Trade means free competition, and free competition is anti-Socialist, is anti-trade union, and anti-democratic. Free Trade is based upon the fallacy that 'as we are all consumers it is to the general advantage that commodities should be cheap.' But though we are all consumers we are not all producers."

"Then, as to compulsory military service, I have, in the past, opposed it. I preferred a kind of universal military training which I have more than once explained. But I recognised always that my plan would only serve as a safeguard against invasion."

"Australia, I rejoice to see, has adopted universal service, and is preparing the nucleus of a fleet. If Australia can afford it surely Britain can. We are an Empire; if only we would make good use of our advantages we are a powerful and a wealthy Empire. For in educating our military and naval force we must reckon on the loyalty of our colonies. Australia, South Africa, and Canada, once trained and organised, would be a valuable military asset. And the colonies are high-spirited and loyal; free from much of the poverty and degeneration of our overcrowded industrial centres."

"The army trains men in comradeship; it infuses what I call the collective spirit. The difference between an army and a crowd is enormous; but its chief and most valuable factor is that collective spirit. A regiment is very much more than a crowd of men all dressed in the same uniform. It is a regiment. It has that which a mob never has: a collective mind, a collective soul. The 10th Infantry Brigade is a very different thing from a crowd of 3,000 young men in khaki: it is an organism: all its units are parts of a whole: all its units move and feel and act together. It is not what so many civilians often call it—a machine. A machine has no soul: but a brigade of soldiers has a soul. When it marches all its 6,000 legs move as one."

This is perhaps the most seductive paragraph in all Mr. Blatchford's articles. It betrays the man. Though a flaming Socialist, he evidently worships the red god of war. That Mr. Lloyd-George presumes to differ with Mr. Blatchford when he says that if Germany undertook to invade England the German fleet would be at the bottom of the German Ocean in a few hours, merely proves two things; that great minds do not always think alike, and that the Liberals have not lost sight of the war in contemplation of the Budget.