

War as a Factor in the Progress of Civilization.

Graduating Thesis.

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War as a Factor in the Progress of Civilization.

The most prominent feature that arrests the attention of the student in history, in studying the rise and downfall of a country or countries, is their wars and their effect on those countries. Those who have not inquired carefully into the significance of the great wars of the past are prone to prejudice their minds so they can see only the horrors and and disasters connected with war. This is, I think, a wrong attitude to take, because a prejudiced mind cannot be expected to be fair to both sides of a question. The paramount controversies of all ages and of all degrees of civilization have appealed to war for their final decision. It would be rash in the extreme to state that war in itself is an imperative requirement to a high degree of civilization, but as long as human nature remains as it is, antagonistic and jealous, it will be a necessary factor in bringing about any new movement towards higher civilization.

All animate nature teaches us that her species are constantly in a state of opposition. The plants that are fittest for existence

crowd out the more delicate ones that they might thrive more luxuriantly. The large ferocious animals prey upon the defenseless creatures and consume them for food. Those animals alone which can defend themselves against the enemy are able to continue long in healthy existence.

Then, since war is liable to spring up at any time unawares, it behooves a nation to have, at all times, a strong means of defence. This is especially applicable in these days when the art of war has reached such a marked degree of proficiency. The untrained man, fresh from the workshop or the farm, will no longer do for a soldier, to meet on the battle field men who have been trained for the special purpose. In some of the European countries, military training, for a limited time, is made compulsory for boys of all vocations. After they have served their time they are per-

mitted to return to the pursuit of their profession as trained men, ready at the slightest call to defend the rights of their country. Our own country is becoming more and more aware of having men trained along military lines, consequently many of the college curriculum make provision for a department in military science and make military drill compulsory for a specified length of time. Besides, we have in every commonwealth military institutions that make a specialty of developing in their cadets the art of war. It was for a long while argued that, since the continent of America was isolated from the other powers of the earth, there was no danger of foreign invasion and for this reason a large standing army would be only a burden to the people. Germany, France, and most of the other European powers, bordering on either side by another country, needed a standing army for defence; but the United States, a powerful nation among a few weak republics had won their independence and therefore had no

further need of a standing army. So they argued; but, however well this argument might have held for the past our increasing responsibilities with the acquisition of new territories, the growing importance of our commerce, and our quickening interest to enforce the Monroe doctrine, make a strong means of defence absolutely imperative.

European countries are just awakening to the realization of the real immensity of this country of ours. Nothing has contributed more to stimulate this feeling than the naval enterprise of the American sailors in the late war with Spain, by which the world over learned that this liberty loving people has the interests of oppressed humanity close to heart and that, with less than four decades of peace, she was able to accumulate a large mass of wealth and had adopted the best methods of warfare to lead the Stars and Stripes, sustained by an impregnable armament against the strongest foe that might attempt to defeat her noble purpose.

It may be well here to devote a passing thought to the comparative progress of civilization in a peaceful country and a warlike country. If peace had always held sway civilization would still be con-

fined to a small portion of Southern Asia, and the people there would, doubtless, still be hugging the early philosophy, and living after the fashion of the old tribal customs. Study the history of any country and if that country has had a long reign of peace civilization there is found to be in a state of stagnation. I think it might be safely laid down that peace and stagnation, in any country go hand in hand. To verify this statement we need only to turn our attention to China and India and compare their civilization of the present with that of Western Europe. China, until the recent boxer uprising and the war with Japan a few years before the former, has had comparatively few foreign wars for centuries. Her civilization to-day is little advanced compared to what it was two thousand years ago. (owing to the superstitions and ignorance (as far as the outside world is concerned) of the people their ports have been closed against every modern improvement that has a tendency to facilitate labor and add to the beauty of the country. They still bend low in worship to old Confucius, and bear bodily tortures that they might appease the wrath

of him whom they call God. I believe the action of the powers during the boxer trouble will prove to be of the highest intrinsic value to that vast empire. It is said by good authority that the people, as a rule, are plucky and industrious; and if they could be prevailed upon to give up their superstitious ideas they would be susceptible of the highest intellectual pursuits. Moreover they have already begun to realize that they are far behind the other powers.

Contrast this state of affairs found in China with that in England, Germany, and France. These countries have been in war continually for several centuries with short and often no intervals between the wars. Where do we find a higher degree of civilization than in those countries? The people there have been the most successful in utilizing the forces of nature, they have been the most successful in their systems of governments, and they have taken the lead in scientific researches and the development of literature. The civilization which originated in these countries blended to form the great United States of America.

A question of vital interest to the student in history is, whether the conquered or the victorious people receive the highest

uplift in civilization as result of a war. From facts gathered from the important wars of the past a general statement may be laid down; namely, that if the victorious people already possess the higher civilization the conquered will naturally have theirs raised to the level of their conquerors. But if the subdued people possess the higher degree of civilization then the victors will become parasitic and absorb the ideas of their victims. Seldom however, in the latter case, is the leveling process complete, for the race whose soldiers have been successful on the field of battle will not readily adopt the customs of their adversaries, however superior to their own these customs might be, nor are the others liable to accept the less skillful methods of their captors. But history abounds with facts to show that barbarous people, after mingling thus with civilization, have had their lives transformed from careless pirates or warriors to enlightened civilians. The Roman Empire was overthrown by barbarians but these made use of the arts and sciences of the Romans; and, while we can hardly say that they have yet reached the intellectual attainments of the old Romans, they have unquestionably improved their

own condition by the transaction.

Another example will suffice to make this point clear. What is now called England was, during its early history, occupied by wild, fierce people called Britons who did little to improve the condition of the island. When the forces of the Roman Empire invaded the country and captured some of the people, driving the rest to the mountainous regions, those who submitted and mingled with the new arrivals, and adapted their civilization, which was indeed crude and corrupt compared with modern ideas but a great improvement over their own. About the middle of the fifth century England was overrun by still another race, the Anglo-Saxons. These two tribes, the Saxons and the Angles, came originally from what is now known as the Schleswig-Holstein provinces of Northern Germany. Many of them were half civilized pirates, dreaded in the extreme by sea faring people. In spite of their wild nature they had certain qualities that were superior to those of the Celts of the British Isles. Compared with the moral corruption of the decaying Roman civilization their lives stood sound and pure. The passion of love seemed to be entirely absent from their lives.

But we see in them that instinct for law and freedom which in the coming generations was to create parliaments and build republics. They possessed the qualities of steadiness and seriousness, which combined with the keen insight into the beauty of nature and an ardent love for the homes of the Celts, gave rise to the unexcelled English literature and made a people destined to lead the whole world in civilization. We can better appreciate this when we remember that William Shakespeare, the greatest genius of the modern world, was born in a district where the mingling of the Teuton and the Celt was especially great, and by inheritance as by the qualities of his genius, we may think of him as the highest type of this union.

Another change in the English people was brought about by the Norman Conquest (1066). The effect of this conquest on the English people might be discussed at length, but suffice it to say that it connected England to the leading nation of the continent at that time. The Normans, by their adventurous habits, had come into contact with the leading nations of their time and had absorbed the best of civilization wherever they had been.

And, last but not least, it effected the formation of the flexible English language.

It is natural for everybody to wish to see his country great and powerful. He desires his country to lead in commerce, in manufacture, in Agriculture and in learning. But in a country like our own where the people of the different sections are engaged in industries of such widely different nature, and, for this reason, require different regulations of law, there is a tendency to lose sight of the interests of the central government, which leads to lack of patriotism and loyalty to country. History teaches us that a long continued reign of peace in a country, almost invariably, is inclined to create a lack of patriotism in the people. They are apt to grow sensuous, selfish, and narrow minded; but let the signal be given to the people that the occasion has arrived when they must arise to defend their country, either against foreign invasion or to support some principle held sacred by them, they immediately forget their own individual interests and ~~the differences~~ ^{which} might have hitherto existed among them, and unite their efforts for action. History is rich in examples to confirm this statement.

Take, for example the history of our own country. The North and South were antagonistic to one another from their very origin; The North always strove for educational improvements and for nobler and higher living, while the South were indifferent to these qualities and cared only to gratify their own passions. But when the call came to shake off the shackles of the mother country both North and South responded and joined hands to win their independence. This proved to be insufficient; it did not destroy the old enmity that existed between them. So when peace was again restored the wedge was driven in deeper and deeper separating the people of the two sections farther and farther apart, until it had reached its limits when the people went to arms against each other. This resulted in the most destructive war, both to property and human lives, known in modern history. Sorrow was brought to every American home. Industry was brought to a state of stagnation throughout the whole country, bloody and desperate narratives are told from both sides. Yet who would doubt to-day that more good effects resulted from this war than bad effects? Was it not the only means by which the

most cursed institution that has ever marred the pages of our history could be abolished? And was it not the only means (human nature remaining as it is) by which the North and the South of the United States of America could be united into loyalty to one flag?

Germany, in the early portion of the sixteenth century had received a breach which scattered her central government to the four winds by the Reformation of Luther. In this helpless condition, one faction pulling one way, and another pulling a different way, Germany lay until about the year 1866 when the great German Statesman, Bismark, succeeded in forming a confederation of that portion of the old empire lying north of the river mainz. He made no aggressive movements to bring the Southern States into the confederation, hoping that time would lead them to see what influence unity of action would have on the progress of the country. For four years this government lasted - the strong confederation in the north with Prussia at its head and the feeble South consisting of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Baden, and Hesse.

But however strong Bismark's faith might have been in the feasibility of uniting Germany by peaceful measures it remained for war, the highest court of appeals for all controversies, to make the final decision.

France became more and more jealous of the rapid growth of Prussia; and, in order to offset her, attempted to extend her territory farther to the Rhine, and only awaited an opportunity to involve the whole country in war. A little incident afforded this opportunity sooner than France was ready to meet it. The Spanish Throne became vacant and parliament offered the crown to Prince Leopold of the House of Hahenzollern.

As Leopold was a relative of King William the offer caused not a little excitement in Paris. So, largely on this account, Leopold refused the crown. But refusing the crown pure and simple did not satisfy the French, so they demanded that Leopold should not become a candidate for the crown any time in the future. When, upon being refused this, France declared war (1870) and threatened the invasion of the entire German States. Religious and

other differences were now immediately forgotten among the German States; it was a question of how to save their country against the invasion of the enemy.

Thus banded together they were able to get out on the field of battle sooner than the enemy and were successful from the beginning. It was not merely the victories at Sedan and Paris that the soldiers had won but a greater victory was the Unification of the German States which had been destroyed nearly three centuries before. Not only was a strong confederation of the German States formed but France was compelled by virtue of the Treaty of Peace to relinquish Alsace and Lorraine besides forfeiting one billion of dollars, which all put together, placed Germany on a strong footing with the other European powers.

Religion has always received its greatest boon through the instrumentality of war. When the Israelites were to take possession of the Promised Land they had to contend with mighty giants before they could take the country. The land, indeed, flowed with milk and honey but they

could not dwell there on flowery beds of ease, and they had a greater mission than merely take the land in peace— they were to extend the circle of their religion and destroy heathenism as they went.

The Reformation of Luther is one of the greatest religious movements known in history. Although Luther was spared the pain of seeing his countrymen in arms, caused by a movement created by himself, there followed a great struggle which lasted for a long period of time. It was a struggle between the pope and his adherents and the men of the new renaissance; in other words, it was a struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism, irrespective of race or social standing. At first the war seemed to be unfavorable to the cause of the Protestants. In the war of the Schmalkalden Charles, advancing step by step, put a sudden end to the war at one stroke at the battle of Muhlberg. But this defeat of the Protestants by no means put an end to the Reformation. The war, like nearly every other, had a

providential mission. Nor did the idea of the new religion remain confined to the fertile mind of the German, but it took root and spread among the more active and skillful English. It was the defeat of the Spaniards which resulted in the destruction of the Armada that made the Protestant world secure against Catholic reaction and put it on a firm basis to fight the battles of the Thirty Years War. The latter was the most significant of all religious wars. The questions that were decided by this war would doubtless take centuries of peace to produce the same results. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) confirmed the Peace of Augsburg which had proved to be almost a total failure. The year 1624 was taken as a landmark, whatever had been Protestant at that time remained Protestant and vice versa. While the principles of religious toleration granted by this treaty were far from being as liberal as those enjoyed to-day, they were far in advance of any that had existed at any time previous to it.

It was the instrument by which religious questions ceased to be the burning subjects of discussion and thinking men were thus enabled to turn their attention to the improvement of their country and the development of literature.

But no student in history can be so blind as to overlook the evil that war brings upon the country or countries involved in it. The Crusade, which was a military expedition undertaken by the Christian powers in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries to regain the Holy Land from the Mohammedans, proved to be a great loss to the people and all the expeditions failed in their purpose. The people who joined were in a religious frenzy. Great rewards were promised: all who fell in the cause were insured against perdition. Hundreds of people were seduced to sell their property and break up their homes to take advantage of these blind promises. The treatment of the Turkish

Mohammedans towards those who are so unfortunate as to be conquered by them, in a war, well exemplifies the evil connected with war among barbarians and half civilized nations. They compel their victims to accept their religion or die a cruel death.

War, however leaves its disasters, not only among barbarians and half civilized nations, but with enlightened people as well. The condition of Germany immediately after the Thirty years War, was helpless and insensible in the extreme. A people who had, for many centuries before, been steadily increasing in intellectual attainments was, as a result of the tyrannical sway of this war, reduced to a state that might almost be termed barbarous. The children had been permitted to grow up without education, and all profitable labor had become to be looked upon as degrading, because the ravages and plunders of war had so disgusted the people that they had long ceased to provide for ^{more than} the immediate es-

sentinals of life. From this exhaustable condition it took Germany at least one hundred years to recover; indeed she is but now completely recovered from the vast destruction of this war. The population of the empire was reduced to nearly one-third of the original.

The Reign of Terror in France, during the Revolutionary War there, made the lives of the people of little value. Men, women, and children, innocent and guilty alike, were daily marched to the great public square at Paris and executed before the gaze of raging mobs. People as different in character as Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette became victims of the guillotine there. Madame Roland, who truly had the love of her country close to heart, was lead to this awful doom. The Duke of Orleans, whose life to a very large extent justified his sentence, here met his death; and finally Robespierre himself, who had so much to do with this horrible reign became so odious to the convention that on July 27, 1794, he

was condemned by his followers and executed the next day.

But the real horrors as experienced by the Soldier, are portrayed to us very dimly by the general's report and popular history. Veterans tell us that the Soldier's life, during actual service during rainy weather, is one of constant suffering. Often they are compelled to march all day through rain and mud in their wet clothes and then at nights sleep in the same clothes on the damp ground. Their food supply is so uncertain that often they are obliged to go for days with scanty and sometimes no food at all. I remember of hearing an old Soldier of our civil war telling how he and his comrades were at one time snow-bound for weeks, and during that time they had nothing to eat but horse flesh and that was sorrowfully scarce. Another relates of an instance during his service, as a Soldier, when he ate with relish the flesh of

rats, mice and other small animals he could find. Everybody is familiar with the story of that terrible winter at Valley Forge when the patriots had to go barefoot and hungry over the snow, leaving bloody tracks in their way ~~to and from~~ their tents. The moral influence of such a life would naturally tend to make the soldier rough, hardy, and insensitive to the more beautiful things of life, but unquestionably it tends to create in him a keener sense of the true value of liberty and makes him more patriotic.

20 I have not attempted to settle the question whether there result more good effects than evil effects from war, but I think I speak within bounds when I say that civilization, of whatever nature, has been extended more widely over the world through the agency of war than any other one factor except the teachings of

the Bible; and, in many instances it was only through war that the influence of the Bible could reach men. War is bloody and desperate even in its mildest form, and every means possible should be used to prevent it, but the greatest precautions will not always prevail in keeping it away any more than the most carefully planned Sanitary System is proof against all disease germs. The powerful nations of the earth are ever on the alert, seeking what new territories they can acquire at the expense of the weaker countries. Therefore the only means to prevent war and be safe against foreign invasion is to have a strong well organized armament.