

## CHAPTER VI.

### ATTITUDE OF MEN OF THE PRESENT DAY TO WAR.

People do not Try to Remove the Contradiction between Life and Conscience by a Change of Life, but their Cultivated Leaders Exert Every Effort to Obscure the Demands of Conscience, and justify their Life; in this Way they Degrade Society below Paganism to a State of Primeval Barbarism--Undefined Attitude of Modern Leaders of Thought to War, to Universal Militarism, and to Compulsory Service in Army--One Section Regards War as an Accidental Political Phenomenon, to be Avoided by External Measures only--Peace Congress--The Article in the REVUE DES REVUES--Proposition of Maxime du Camp--Value of Boards of Arbitration and Suppression of Armies--Attitude of Governments to Men of this Opinion and What they Do--Another Section Regards War as Cruel, but Inevitable--Maupassant--Rod--A Third Section Regard War as Necessary, and not without its Advantages--Doucet-Claretie-Zola-Vogüé.

The antagonism between life and the conscience may be removed in two ways: by a change of life or by a change of conscience. And there would seem there can be no doubt as to these alternatives.

A man may cease to do what he regards as wrong, but he cannot cease to consider wrong what is wrong. Just in the same way all humanity may cease to do what it regards as wrong, but far from

being able to change, it cannot even retard for a time the continual growth of a clearer recognition of what is wrong and therefore ought not to be. And therefore it would seem inevitable for Christian men to abandon the pagan forms of society which they condemn, and to reconstruct their social existence on the Christian principles they profess.

So it would be were it not for the law of inertia, as immutable a force in men and nations as in inanimate bodies. In men it takes the form of the psychological principle, so truly expressed in the words of the Gospel, "They have loved darkness better than light because their deeds were evil." This principle shows itself in men not trying to recognize the truth, but to persuade themselves that the life they are leading, which is what they like and are used to, is a life perfectly consistent with truth.

Slavery was opposed to all the moral principles advocated by Plato and Aristotle, yet neither of them saw that, because to renounce slavery would have meant the break up of the life they were living. We see the same thing in our modern world.

The division of men into two castes, as well as the use of force in government and war, are opposed to every moral principle professed by our modern society. Yet the cultivated and advanced men of the day seem not to see it.

The majority, if not all, of the cultivated men of our day try unconsciously to maintain the old social conception of life, which justifies their position, and to hide from themselves and others its insufficiency, and above all the necessity of adopting the Christian conception of life, which will mean the break up of the whole existing social order. They struggle to keep up the organization based on the social conception of life, but do not believe in it themselves, because it is extinct and it is impossible to believe in it.

All modern literature--philosophical, political, and artistic--is striking in this respect. What wealth of idea, of form, of color, what erudition, what art, but what a lack of serious matter, what dread of any exactitude of thought or expression! Subtleties, allegories, humorous fancies, the widest generalizations, but nothing simple and clear, nothing going straight to the point, that is, to the problem of life.

But that is not all; besides these graceful frivolities, our literature is full of simple nastiness and brutality, of arguments which would lead men back in the most refined way to primeval barbarism, to the principles not only of the pagan, but even of the animal life, which we have left behind us five thousand years ago.

And it could not be otherwise. In their dread of the Christian

conception of life which will destroy the social order, which some cling to only from habit, others also from interest, men cannot but be thrown back upon the pagan conception of life and the principles based on it. Nowadays we see advocated not only patriotism and aristocratic principles just as they were advocated two thousand years ago, but even the coarsest epicureanism and animalism, only with this difference, that the men who then professed those views believed in them, while nowadays even the advocates of such views do not believe in them, for they have no meaning for the present day. No one can stand still when the earth is shaking under his feet. If we do not go forward we must go back. And strange and terrible to say, the cultivated men of our day, the leaders of thought, are in reality with their subtle reasoning drawing society back, not to paganism even, but to a state of primitive barbarism.

This tendency on the part of the leading thinkers of the day is nowhere more apparent than in their attitude to the phenomenon in which all the insufficiency of the social conception of life is presented in the most concentrated form--in their attitude, that is, to war, to the general arming of nations, and to universal compulsory service.

The undefined, if not disingenuous, attitude of modern thinkers to this phenomenon is striking. It takes three forms in cultivated society. One section look at it as an incidental phenomenon,

arising out of the special political situation of Europe, and consider that this state of things can be reformed without a revolution in the whole internal social order of nations, by external measures of international diplomacy. Another section regard it as something cruel and hideous, but at the same time fated and inevitable, like disease and death. A third party with cool indifference consider war as an inevitable phenomenon, beneficial in its effects and therefore desirable.

Men look at the subject from different points of view, but all alike talk of war as though it were something absolutely independent of the will of those who take part in it. And consequently they do not even admit the natural question which presents itself to every simple man: "How about me--ought I to take any part in it?" In their view no question of this kind even exists, and every man, however he may regard war from a personal standpoint, must slavishly submit to the requirements of the authorities on the subject.

The attitude of the first section of thinkers, those who see a way out of war in international diplomatic measures, is well expressed in the report of the last Peace Congress in London, and the articles and letters upon war that appeared in No. 8 of the REVUE DES REVUES, 1891. The congress after gathering together from various quarters the verbal and written opinion of learned men opened the proceedings by a religious service, and after listening

to addresses for five whole days, concluded them by a public dinner and speeches. They adopted the following resolutions:

"1. The congress affirms its belief that the brotherhood of man involves as a necessary consequence a brotherhood of nations.

"2. The congress recognizes the important influence that Christianity exercises on the moral and political progress of mankind, and earnestly urges upon ministers of the Gospel and other religious teachers the duty of setting forth the principles of peace and good will toward men. AND IT RECOMMENDS THAT THE THIRD SUNDAY IN DECEMBER BE SET APART FOR THAT PURPOSE.

"3. The congress expresses the opinion that all teachers of history should call the attention of the young to the grave evils inflicted on mankind in all ages by war, and to the fact that such war has been waged for most inadequate causes.

"4. The congress protests against the use of military drill in schools by way of physical exercise, and suggests the formation of brigades for saving life rather than of a quasi-military character; and urges the desirability of impressing on the Board of Examiners who formulate the questions for examination the propriety of guiding the minds of children in the principles of peace.

"5. The congress holds that the doctrine of the Rights of Man requires that the aboriginal and weaker races, their territories and liberties, shall be guarded from injustice and fraud, and that these races shall be shielded against the vices so prevalent among the so-called advanced races of men. It further expresses its conviction that there should be concert of action among the nations for the accomplishment of these ends. The congress expresses its hearty appreciation of the resolutions of the Anti-slavery Conference held recently at Brussels for the amelioration of the condition of the peoples of Africa.

"6. The congress believes that the warlike prejudices and traditions which are still fostered in the various nationalities, and the misrepresentations by leaders of public opinion in legislative assemblies or through the press, are often indirect causes of war, and that these evils should be counteracted by the publication of accurate information tending to the removal of misunderstanding between nations, and recommends the importance of considering the question of commencing an international newspaper with such a purpose.

"7. The congress proposes to the Inter-parliamentary Conference that the utmost support should be given to every project for unification of weights and measures, coinage, tariff, postage,

and telegraphic arrangements, etc., which would assist in constituting a commercial, industrial, and scientific union of the peoples.

"8. The congress, in view of the vast social and moral influence of woman, urges upon every woman to sustain the things that make for peace, as otherwise she incurs grave responsibility for the continuance of the systems of militarism.

"9. The congress expresses the hope that the Financial Reform Association and other similar societies in Europe and America should unite in considering means for establishing equitable commercial relations between states, by the reduction of import duties. The congress feels that it can affirm that the whole of Europe desires peace, and awaits with impatience the suppression of armaments, which, under the plea of defense, become in their turn a danger by keeping alive mutual distrust, and are, at the same time, the cause of that general economic disturbance which stands in the way of settling in a satisfactory manner the problems of labor and poverty, which ought to take precedence of all others.

"10. The congress, recognizing that a general disarmament would be the best guarantee of peace and would lead to the solution of the questions which now most divide states, expresses the



wish that a congress of representatives of all the states of Europe may be assembled as soon as possible to consider the means of effecting a gradual general disarmament.

"11. The congress, in consideration of the fact that the timidity of a single power might delay the convocation of the above-mentioned congress, is of opinion that the government which should first dismiss any considerable number of soldiers would confer a signal benefit on Europe and mankind, because it would, by public opinion, oblige other governments to follow its example, and by the moral force of this accomplished fact would have increased rather than diminished the conditions of its national defense.

"12. The congress, considering the question of disarmament, as of peace in general, depends on public opinion, recommends the peace societies, as well as all friends of peace, to be active in its propaganda, especially at the time of parliamentary elections, in order that the electors should give their votes to candidates who are pledged to support Peace, Disarmament, and Arbitration.

"13. The congress congratulates the friends of peace on the resolution adopted by the International American Conference, held at Washington in April last, by which it was recommended that arbitration should be obligatory in all controversies,

whatever their origin, except only those which may imperil the independence of one of the nations involved.

"14. The congress recommends this resolution to the attention of European statesmen, and expresses the ardent desire that similar treaties may speedily be entered into between the other nations of the world.

"15. The congress expresses its satisfaction at the adoption by the Spanish Senate on June 16 last of a project of law authorizing the government to negotiate general or special treaties of arbitration for the settlement of all disputes except those relating to the independence or internal government of the states affected; also at the adoption of resolutions to a like effect by the Norwegian Storting and by the Italian Chamber.

"16. The congress resolves that a committee be appointed to address communications to the principal political, religious, commercial, and labor and peace organizations, requesting them to send petitions to the governmental authorities praying that measures be taken for the formation of suitable tribunals for the adjudication of international questions so as to avoid the resort to war.

"17. Seeing (1) that the object pursued by all peace societies

is the establishment of judicial order between nations, and (2) that neutralization by international treaties constitutes a step toward this judicial state and lessens the number of districts in which war can be carried on, the congress recommends a larger extension of the rule of neutralization, and expresses the wish, (1) that all treaties which at present assure to certain states the benefit of neutrality remain in force, or if necessary be amended in a manner to render the neutrality more effective, either by extending neutralization to the whole of the state or by ordering the demolition of fortresses, which constitute rather a peril than a guarantee for neutrality; (2) that new treaties in harmony with the wishes of the populations concerned be concluded for establishing the neutralization of other states.

"18. The sub-committee proposes, (1) that the annual Peace Congress should be held either immediately before the meeting of the annual Sub-parliamentary Conference, or immediately after it in the same town; (2) that the question of an international peace emblem be postponed SINE DIE; (3) that the following resolutions be adopted:

"a. To express satisfaction at the official overtures of the Presbyterian Church in the United States addressed to the highest representatives of each church organization in

Christendom to unite in a general conference to promote the substitution of international arbitration for war.

"b. To express in the name of the congress its profound reverence for the memory of Aurelio Saffi, the great Italian jurist, a member of the committee of the International League of Peace and Liberty.

"(4) That the memorial adopted by this congress and signed by the president to the heads of the civilized states should, as far as practicable, be presented to each power by influential deputations.

"(5) That the following resolutions be adopted:

"a. A resolution of thanks to the presidents of the various sittings of the congress.

"b. A resolution of thanks to the chairman, the secretaries, and the members of the bureau of the congress.

"c. A resolution of thanks to the conveners and members of the sectional committees.

"d. A resolution of thanks to Rev. Canon Scott Holland, Rev. Dr. Reuen Thomas, and Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon for their pulpit

addresses before the congress, and also to the authorities of St. Paul's Cathedral, the City Temple, and Stamford Hill Congregational Church for the use of those buildings for public services.

"e. A letter of thanks to her Majesty for permission to visit Windror Castle.

"f. And also a resolution of thanks to the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, to Mr. Passmore Edwards, and other friends who have extended their hospitality to the members of the congress.

"19. The congress places on record a heartfelt expression of gratitude to Almighty God for the remarkable harmony and concord which have characterized the meetings of the assembly, in which so many men and women of varied nations, creeds, tongues, and races have gathered in closest co-operation, and for the conclusion of the labors of the congress; and expresses its firm and unshaken belief in the ultimate triumph of the cause of peace and of the principles advocated at these meetings."

The fundamental idea of the congress is the necessity (1) of diffusing among all people by all means the conviction of the disadvantages of war and the great blessing of peace, and (2) of

rousing governments to the sense of the superiority of international arbitration over war and of the consequent advisability and necessity of disarmament. To attain the first aim the congress has recourse to teachers of history, to women, and to the clergy, with the advice to the latter to preach on the evil of war and the blessing of peace every third Sunday in December. To attain the second object the congress appeals to governments with the suggestion that they should disband their armies and replace war by arbitration.

To preach to men of the evil of war and the blessing of peace! But the blessing of peace is so well known to men that, ever since there have been men at all, their best wish has been expressed in the greeting, "Peace be with you." So why preach about it?

Not only Christians, but pagans, thousands of years ago, all recognized the evil of war and the blessing of peace. So that the recommendation to ministers of the Gospel to preach on the evil of war and the blessing of peace every third Sunday in December is quite superfluous.

The Christian cannot but preach on that subject every day of his life. If Christians and preachers of Christianity do not do so, there must be reasons for it. And until these have been removed no recommendations will be effective. Still less effective will be the recommendations to governments to disband their armies and

replace them by international boards of arbitration. Governments, too, know very well the difficulty and the burdensomeness of raising and maintaining forces, and if in spite of that knowledge they do, at the cost of terrible strain and effort, raise and maintain forces, it is evident that they cannot do otherwise, and the recommendation of the congress can never change it. But the learned gentlemen are unwilling to see that, and keep hoping to find a political combination, through which governments shall be induced to limit their powers themselves.

"Can we get rid of war"? asks a learned writer in the REVUE DES REVUES.

"All are agreed that if it were to break out in Europe, its consequences would be like those of the great inroads of barbarians. The existence of whole nationalities would be at stake, and therefore the war would be desperate, bloody, atrocious.

"This consideration, together with the terrible engines of destruction invented by modern science, retards the moment of declaring war, and maintains the present temporary situation, which might continue for an indefinite period, except for the fearful cost of maintaining armaments which are exhausting the European states and threatening to reduce nations to a state of misery hardly less than that of war itself.

"Struck by this reflection, men of various countries have tried to find means for preventing, or at least for softening, the results of the terrible slaughter with which we are threatened.

"Such are the questions brought forward by the Peace Congress shortly to be held in Rome, and the publication of a pamphlet, *Sur le Désarmement*.'

"It is unhappily beyond doubt that with the present organization of the majority of European states, isolated from one another and guided by distinct interests, the absolute suppression of war is an illusion with which it would be dangerous to cheat ourselves. Wiser rules and regulations imposed on these duels between nations might, however, at least limit its horrors.

"It is equally chimerical to reckon on projects of disarmament, the execution of which is rendered almost impossible by considerations of a popular character present to the mind of all our readers. [This probably means that France cannot disband its army before taking its revenge.] Public opinion is not prepared to accept them, and moreover, the international relations between different peoples are not such as to make their acceptance possible. Disarmament imposed on one nation by another in circumstances threatening its security would be



equivalent to a declaration of war.

"However, one may admit that an exchange of ideas between the nations interested could aid, to a certain degree, in bringing about the good understanding indispensable to any negotiations, and would render possible a considerable reduction of the military expenditure which is crushing the nations of Europe and greatly hindering the solution of the social question, which each individually must solve on pain of having internal war as the price for escaping it externally.

"We might at least demand the reduction of the enormous expenses of war organized as it is at present with a view to the power of invasion within twenty-four hours and a decisive battle within a week of the declaration of war.

"We ought to manage so that states could not make the attack suddenly and invade each other's territories within twenty-four hours."

This practical notion has been put forth by Maxime du Camp, and his article concludes with it.

The propositions of M. du Camp are as follows:

1. A diplomatic congress to be held every year.

2. No war to be declared till two months after the incident which provoked it. (The difficulty here would be to decide precisely what incident did provoke the war, since whenever war is declared there are very many such incidents, and one would have to decide from which to reckon the two months' interval.)

3. No war to be declared before it has been submitted to a plebiscitum of the nations preparing to take part in it.

4. No hostilities to be commenced till a month after the official declaration of war.

"No war to be declared. No hostilities to be commenced," etc. But who is to arrange that no war is to be declared? Who is to compel people to do this and that? Who is to force states to delay their operations for a certain fixed time? All the other states. But all these others are also states which want holding in check and keeping within limits, and forcing, too. Who is to force them, and how? Public opinion. But if there is a public opinion which can force governments to delay their operations for a fixed period, the same public opinion can force governments not to declare war at all.

But, it will be replied, there may be such a balance of power, such a PONDÉRATION DE FORCES, as would lead states to hold back of

their own accord. Well, that has been tried and is being tried even now. The Holy Alliance was nothing but that, the League of Peace was another attempt at the same thing, and so on.

But, it will be answered, suppose all were agreed. If all were agreed there would be no more war certainly, and no need for arbitration either.

"A court of arbitration! Arbitration shall replace war. Questions shall be decided by a court of arbitration. The Alabama question was decided by a court of arbitration, and the question of the Caroline Islands was submitted to the decision of the Pope. Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, and Holland have all declared that they prefer arbitration to war."

I dare say Monaco has expressed the same preference. The only unfortunate thing is that Germany, Russia, Austria, and France have not so far shown the same inclination. It is amazing how men can deceive themselves when they find it necessary! Governments consent to decide their disagreements by arbitration and to disband their armies! The differences between Russia and Poland, between England and Ireland, between Austria and Bohemia, between Turkey and the Slavonic states, between France and Germany, to be soothed away by amiable conciliation!

One might as well suggest to merchants and bankers that they

should sell nothing for a greater price than they gave for it, should undertake the distribution of wealth for no profit, and should abolish money, as it would thus be rendered unnecessary.

But since commercial and banking operations consist in nothing but selling for more than the cost price, this would be equivalent to an invitation to suppress themselves. It is the same in regard to governments. To suggest to governments that they should not have recourse to violence, but should decide their misunderstandings in accordance with equity, is inviting them to abolish themselves as rulers, and that no government can ever consent to do.

The learned men form societies (there are more than a hundred such societies), assemble in congresses (such as those recently held in London and Paris, and shortly to be held in Rome), deliver addresses, eat public dinners and make speeches, publish journals, and prove by every means possible that the nations forced to support millions of troops are strained to the furthest limits of their endurance, that the maintenance of these huge armed forces is in opposition to all the aims, the interests, and the wishes of the people, and that it is possible, moreover, by writing numerous papers, and uttering a great many words, to bring all men into agreement and to arrange so that they shall have no antagonistic interests, and then there will be no more war.

When I was a little boy they told me if I wanted to catch a bird I

must put salt on its tail. I ran after the birds with the salt in my hand, but I soon convinced myself that if I could put salt on a bird's tail, I could catch it, and realized that I had been hoaxed.

People ought to realize the same fact when they read books and articles on arbitration and disarmament.

If one could put salt on a bird's tail, it would be because it could not fly and there would be no difficulty in catching it. If the bird had wings and did not want to be caught, it would not let one put salt on its tail, because the specialty of a bird is to fly. In precisely the same way the specialty of government is not to obey, but to enforce obedience. And a government is only a government so long as it can make itself obeyed, and therefore it always strives for that and will never willingly abandon its power. But since it is on the army that the power of government rests, it will never give up the army, and the use of the army in war.

The error arises from the learned jurists deceiving themselves and others, by asserting that government is not what it really is, one set of men banded together to oppress another set of men, but, as shown by science, is the representation of the citizens in their collective capacity. They have so long been persuading other people of this that at last they have persuaded themselves of it;

and thus they often seriously suppose that government can be bound by considerations of justice. But history shows that from Caesar to Napoleon, and from Napoleon to Bismarck, government is in its essence always a force acting in violation of justice, and that it cannot be otherwise. Justice can have no binding force on a ruler or rulers who keep men, deluded and drilled in readiness for acts of violence--soldiers, and by means of them control others. And so governments can never be brought to consent to diminish the number of these drilled slaves, who constitute their whole power and importance.

Such is the attitude of certain learned men to the contradiction under which our society is being crushed, and such are their methods of solving it. Tell these people that the whole matter rests on the personal attitude of each man to the moral and religious question put nowadays to everyone, the question, that is, whether it is lawful or unlawful for him to take his share of military service, and these learned gentlemen will shrug their shoulders and not condescend to listen or to answer you. The solution of the question in their idea is to be found in reading addresses, writing books, electing presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries, and meeting and speaking first in one town and then in another. From all this speechifying and writing it will come to pass, according to their notions, that governments will cease to levy the soldiers, on whom their whole strength depends, will listen to their discourses, and will disband their forces,

leaving themselves without any defense, not only against their neighbors, but also against their own subjects. As though a band of brigands, who have some unarmed travelers bound and ready to be plundered, should be so touched by their complaints of the pain caused by the cords they are fastened with as to let them go again.

Still there are people who believe in this, busy themselves over peace congresses, read addresses, and write books. And governments, we may be quite sure, express their sympathy and make a show of encouraging them. In the same way they pretend to support temperance societies, while they are living principally on the drunkenness of the people; and pretend to encourage education, when their whole strength is based on ignorance; and to support constitutional freedom, when their strength rests on the absence of freedom; and to be anxious for the improvement of the condition of the working classes, when their very existence depends on their oppression; and to support Christianity, when Christianity destroys all government.

To be able to do this they have long ago elaborated methods encouraging temperance, which cannot suppress drunkenness; methods of supporting education, which not only fail to prevent ignorance, but even increase it; methods of aiming at freedom and constitutionalism, which are no hindrance to despotism; methods of protecting the working classes, which will not free them from

slavery; and a Christianity, too, they have elaborated, which does not destroy, but supports governments.

Now there is something more for the government to encourage--peace. The sovereigns, who nowadays take counsel with their ministers, decide by their will alone whether the butchery of millions is to be begun this year or next. They know very well that all these discourses upon peace will not hinder them from sending millions of men to butchery when it seems good to them. They listen even with satisfaction to these discourses, encourage them, and take part in them.

All this, far from being detrimental, is even of service to governments, by turning people's attention from the most important and pressing question: Ought or ought not each man called upon for military service to submit to serve in the army?

"Peace will soon be arranged, thanks to alliances and congresses, to books and pamphlets; meantime go and put on your uniform, and prepare to cause suffering and to endure it for our benefit," is the government's line of argument. And the learned gentlemen who get up congresses and write articles are in perfect agreement with it.

This is the attitude of one set of thinkers. And since it is that most beneficial to governments, it is also the most encouraged by all intelligent governments.



Another attitude to war has something tragical in it. There are men who maintain that the love for peace and the inevitability of war form a hideous contradiction, and that such is the fate of man. These are mostly gifted and sensitive men, who see and realize all the horror and imbecility and cruelty of war, but through some strange perversion of mind neither see nor seek to find any way out of this position, and seem to take pleasure in teasing the wound by dwelling on the desperate position of humanity. A notable example of such an attitude to war is to be found in the celebrated French writer Guy de Maupassant. Looking from his yacht at the drill and firing practice of the French soldiers the following reflections occur to him:

"When I think only of this word war, a kind of terror seizes upon me, as though I were listening to some tale of sorcery, of the Inquisition, some long past, remote abomination, monstrous, unnatural.

"When cannibalism is spoken of, we smile with pride, proclaiming our superiority to these savages. Which are the savages, the real savages? Those who fight to eat the conquered, or those who fight to kill, for nothing but to kill?

"The young recruits, moving about in lines yonder, are destined to death like the flocks of sheep driven by the butcher along

the road. They will fall in some plain with a saber cut in the head, or a bullet through the breast. And these are young men who might work, be productive and useful. Their fathers are old and poor. Their mothers, who have loved them for twenty years, worshiped them as none but mothers can, will learn in six months' time, or a year perhaps, that their son, their boy, the big boy reared with so much labor, so much expense, so much love, has been thrown in a hole like some dead dog, after being disemboweled by a bullet, and trampled, crushed, to a mass of pulp by the charges of cavalry. Why have they killed her boy, her handsome boy, her one hope, her pride, her life? She does not know. Ah, why?

"War! fighting! slaughter! massacres of men! And we have now, in our century, with our civilization, with the spread of science, and the degree of philosophy which the genius of man is supposed to have attained, schools for training to kill, to kill very far off, to perfection, great numbers at once, to kill poor devils of innocent men with families and without any kind of trial.

"AND WHAT IS MOST BEWILDERING IS THAT THE PEOPLE DO NOT RISE AGAINST THEIR GOVERNMENTS. FOR WHAT DIFFERENCE IS THERE BETWEEN MONARCHIES AND REPUBLICS? THE MOST BEWILDERING THING

IS THAT THE WHOLE OF SOCIETY IS NOT IN REVOLT AT THE WORD WAR."

"Ah! we shall always live under the burden of the ancient and odious customs, the criminal prejudices, the ferocious ideas of our barbarous ancestors, for we are beasts, and beasts we shall remain, dominated by instinct and changed by nothing. Would not any other man than Victor Hugo have been exiled for that mighty cry of deliverance and truth? 'To-day force is called violence, and is being brought to judgment; war has been put on its trial. At the plea of the human race, civilization arraigns warfare, and draws up the great list of crimes laid at the charge of conquerors and generals. The nations are coming to understand that the magnitude of a crime cannot be its extenuation; that if killing is a crime, killing many can be no extenuating circumstance; that if robbery is disgraceful, invasion cannot be glorious. Ah! let us proclaim these absolute truths; let us dishonor war!'

"Vain wrath," continues Maupassant, "a poet's indignation. War is held in more veneration than ever.

"A skilled proficient in that line, a slaughterer of genius, Von Moltke, in reply to the peace delegates, once uttered these strange words:

"War is holy, war is ordained of God. It is one of the most sacred laws of the world. It maintains among men all the great

and noble sentiments--honor, devotion, virtue, and courage, and saves them in short from falling into the most hideous materialism.'

"So, then, bringing millions of men together into herds, marching by day and by night without rest, thinking of nothing, studying nothing, learning nothing, reading nothing, being useful to no one, wallowing in filth, sleeping in mud, living like brutes in a continual state of stupefaction, sacking towns, burning villages, ruining whole populations, then meeting another mass of human flesh, falling upon them, making pools of blood, and plains of flesh mixed with trodden mire and red with heaps of corpses, having your arms or legs carried off, your brains blown out for no advantage to anyone, and dying in some corner of a field while your old parents, your wife and children are perishing of hunger--that is what is meant by not falling into the most hideous materialism!

"Warriors are the scourge of the world. We struggle against nature and ignorance and obstacles of all kinds to make our wretched life less hard. Learned men--benefactors of all--spend their lives in working, in seeking what can aid, what be of use, what can alleviate the lot of their fellows. They devote themselves unsparingly to their task of usefulness, making one discovery after another, enlarging the sphere of human intelligence, extending the bounds of science, adding

each day some new store to the sum of knowledge, gaining each day prosperity, ease, strength for their country.

"War breaks out. In six months the generals have destroyed the work of twenty years of effort, of patience, and of genius.

"That is what is meant by not falling into the most hideous materialism.

"We have seen it, war. "We have seen men turned to brutes, frenzied, killing for fun, for terror, for bravado, for ostentation. Then when right is no more, law is dead, every notion of justice has disappeared. We have seen men shoot innocent creatures found on the road, and suspected because they were afraid. We have seen them kill dogs chained at their masters' doors to try their new revolvers, we have seen them fire on cows lying in a field for no reason whatever, simply for the sake of shooting, for a joke.

"That is what is meant by not falling into the most hideous materialism.

"Going into a country, cutting the man's throat who defends his house because he wears a blouse and has not a military cap on his head, burning the dwellings of wretched beings who have nothing to eat, breaking furniture and stealing goods, drinking

the wine found in the cellars, violating the women in the streets, burning thousands of francs' worth of powder, and leaving misery and cholera in one's track--

"That is what is meant by not falling into the most hideous materialism.

"What have they done, those warriors, that proves the least intelligence? Nothing. What have they invented? Cannons and muskets. That is all.

"What remains to us from Greece? Books and statues. Is Greece great from her conquests or her creations?

"Was it the invasions of the Persians which saved Greece from falling into the most hideous materialism?

"Were the invasions of the barbarians what saved and regenerated Rome?

"Was it Napoleon I. who carried forward the great intellectual movement started by the philosophers of the end of last century?

"Yes, indeed, since government assumes the right of annihilating peoples thus, there is nothing surprising in the

fact that the peoples assume the right of annihilating governments.

"They defend themselves. They are right. No one has an absolute right to govern others. It ought only to be done for the benefit of those who are governed. And it is as much the duty of anyone who governs to avoid war as it is the duty of a captain of a ship to avoid shipwreck.

"When a captain has let his ship come to ruin, he is judged and condemned, if he is found guilty of negligence or even incapacity.

"Why should not the government be put on its trial after every declaration of war? IF THE PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD THAT, IF THEY THEMSELVES PASSED JUDGMENT ON MURDEROUS GOVERNMENTS, IF THEY REFUSED TO LET THEMSELVES BE KILLED FOR NOTHING, IF THEY WOULD ONLY TURN THEIR ARMS AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN THEM TO THEM FOR MASSACRE, ON THAT DAY WAR WOULD BE NO MORE. BUT THAT DAY WILL NEVER COME" [Footnote: "Sur l'Eau," pp. 71-80].

The author sees all the horror of war. He sees that it is caused by governments forcing men by deception to go out to slaughter and be slain without any advantage to themselves. And he sees, too, that the men who make up the armies could turn their arms against

the governments and bring them to judgment. But he thinks that that will never come to pass, and that there is, therefore, no escape from the present position.

"I think war is terrible, but that it is inevitable; that compulsory military service is as inevitable as death, and that since government will always desire it, war will always exist."

So writes this talented and sincere writer, who is endowed with that power of penetrating to the innermost core of the subjects which is the essence of the poetic faculty. He brings before us all the cruelty of the inconsistency between men's moral sense and their actions, but without trying to remove it; seems to admit that this inconsistency must exist and that it is the poetic tragedy of life.

Another no less gifted writer, Edouard Rod, paints in still more vivid colors the cruelty and madness of the present state of things. He too only aims at presenting its tragic features, without suggesting or foreseeing any issue from the position.

"What is the good of doing anything? What is the good of undertaking any enterprise? And how are we to love men in these troubled times when every fresh day is a menace of danger?... All we have begun, the plans we are developing, our schemes of work, the little good we may have been able to do,



will it not all be swept away by the tempest that is in preparation?... Everywhere the earth is shaking under our feet and storm-clouds are gathering on our horizon which will have no pity on us.

"Ah! if all we had to dread were the revolution which is held up as a specter to terrify us! Since I cannot imagine a society more detestable than ours, I feel more skeptical than alarmed in regard to that which will replace it. If I should have to suffer from the change, I should be consoled by thinking that the executioners of that day were the victims of the previous time, and the hope of something better would help us to endure the worst. But it is not that remote peril which frightens me. I see another danger, nearer and far more cruel; more cruel because there is no excuse for it, because it is absurd, because it can lead to no good. Every day one balances the chances of war on the morrow, every day they become more merciless.

"The imagination revolts before the catastrophe which is coming at the end of our century as the goal of the progress of our era, and yet we must get used to facing it. For twenty years past every resource of science has been exhausted in the invention of engines of destruction, and soon a few charges of cannon will suffice to annihilate a whole army. No longer a few thousands of poor devils, who were paid a price for their

blood, are kept under arms, but whole nations are under arms to cut each other's throats. They are robbed of their time now (by compulsory service) that they may be robbed of their lives later. To prepare them for the work of massacre, their hatred is kindled by persuading them that they are hated. And peaceable men let themselves be played on thus and go and fall on one another with the ferocity of wild beasts; furious troops of peaceful citizens taking up arms at an empty word of command, for some ridiculous question of frontiers or colonial trade interests--Heaven only knows what... They will go like sheep to the slaughter, knowing all the while where they are going, knowing that they are leaving their wives, knowing that their children will want for food, full of misgivings, yet intoxicated by the fine-sounding lies that are dinned into their ears. THEY WILL MARCH WITHOUT REVOLT, PASSIVE, RESIGNED--THOUGH THE NUMBERS AND THE STRENGTH ARE THEIRS, AND THEY MIGHT, IF THEY KNEW HOW TO CO-OPERATE TOGETHER, ESTABLISH THE REIGN OF GOOD SENSE AND FRATERNITY, instead of the barbarous trickery of diplomacy. They will march to battle so deluded, so duped, that they will believe slaughter to be a duty, and will ask the benediction of God on their lust for blood. They will march to battle trampling underfoot the harvests they have sown, burning the towns they have built--with songs of triumph, festive music, and cries of jubilation. And their sons will raise statues to those who have done most

in their slaughter.

"The destiny of a whole generation depends on the hour in which some ill-fated politician may give the signal that will be followed. We know that the best of us will be cut down and our work will be destroyed in embryo. WE KNOW IT AND TREMBLE WITH RAGE, BUT WE CAN DO NOTHING. We are held fast in the toils of officialdom and red tape, and too rude a shock would be needed to set us free. We are enslaved by the laws we set up for our protection, which have become our oppression. WE ARE BUT THE TOOLS OF THAT AUTOCRATIC ABSTRACTION THE STATE, WHICH ENSLAVES EACH INDIVIDUAL IN THE NAME OF THE WILL OF ALL, WHO WOULD ALL, TAKEN INDIVIDUALLY, DESIRE EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT THEY WILL BE MADE TO DO.

"And if it were only a generation that must be sacrificed! But there are graver interests at stake.

"The paid politicians, the ambitious statesmen, who exploit the evil passions of the populace, and the imbeciles who are deluded by fine-sounding phrases, have so embittered national feuds that the existence of a whole race will be at stake in the war of the morrow. One of the elements that constitute the modern world is threatened, the conquered people will be wiped out of existence, and whichever it may be, we shall see a moral force annihilated, as if there were too many forces to work for

good--we shall have a new Europe formed on foundations so unjust, so brutal, so sanguinary, stained with so monstrous a crime, that it cannot but be worse than the Europe of to-day--more iniquitous, more barbarous, more violent.

"Thus one feels crushed under the weight of an immense discouragement. We are struggling in a CUL DE SAC with muskets aimed at us from the housetops. Our labor is like that of sailors executing their last task as the ship begins to sink.

Our pleasures are those of the condemned victim, who is offered his choice of dainties a quarter of an hour before his execution. Thought is paralyzed by anguish, and the most it is capable of is to calculate--interpreting the vague phrases of ministers, spelling out the sense of the speeches of sovereigns, and ruminating on the words attributed to diplomatists reported on the uncertain authority of the newspapers--whether it is to be to-morrow or the day after, this year or the next, that we are to be murdered. So that one might seek in vain in history an epoch more insecure, more crushed under the weight of suffering" [footnote: "Le Sens de la Vie," pp. 208-13].

Here it is pointed out that the force is in the hands of those who work their own destruction, in the hands of the individual men who make up the masses; it is pointed out that the source of the evil is the government. It would seem evident that the contradiction

between life and conscience had reached the limit beyond which it cannot go, and after reaching this limit some solution of it must be found.

But the author does not think so. He sees in this the tragedy of human life, and after depicting all the horror of the position he concludes that human life must be spent in the midst of this horror.

So much for the attitude to war of those who regard it as something tragic and fated by destiny.

The third category consists of men who have lost all conscience and, consequently, all common sense and feeling of humanity.

To this category belongs Moltke, whose opinion has been quoted above by Maupassant, and the majority of military men, who have been educated in this cruel superstition, live by it, and consequently are often in all simplicity convinced that war is not only an inevitable, but even a necessary and beneficial thing. This is also the view of some civilians, so-called educated and cultivated people.

Here is what the celebrated academician Camille Doucet writes in reply to the editor of the REVUE DES REVUES, where several letters on war were published together:

"Dear Sir: When you ask the least warlike of academicians whether he is a partisan of war, his answer is known beforehand.

"Alas! sir, you yourself speak of the pacific ideal inspiring your generous compatriots as a dream.

"During my life I have heard a great many good people protest against this frightful custom of international butchery, which all admit and deplore; but how is it to be remedied?

"Often, too, there have been attempts to suppress dueling; one would fancy that seemed an easy task: but not at all! All that has been done hitherto with that noble object has never been and never will be of use.

"All the congresses of both hemispheres may vote against war, and against dueling too, but above all arbitrations, conventions, and legislations there will always be the personal honor of individual men, which has always demanded dueling, and the interests of nations, which will always demand war.

"I wish none the less from the depths of my heart that the Congress of Universal Peace may succeed at last in its very honorable and difficult enterprise.

"I am, dear sir, etc.,  
"CAMILLE DOUCET."

The upshot of this is that personal honor requires men to fight, and the interests of nations require them to ruin and exterminate each other. As for the efforts to abolish war, they call for nothing but a smile.

The opinion of another well-known academician, Jules Claretie, is of the same kind.

"Dear Sir [he writes]: For a man of sense there can be but one opinion on the subject of peace and war.

"Humanity is created to live, to live free, to perfect and ameliorate its fate by peaceful labor. The general harmony preached by the Universal Peace Congress is but a dream perhaps, but at least it is the fairest of all dreams. Man is always looking toward the Promised Land, and there the harvests are to ripen with no fear of their being torn up by shells or crushed by cannon wheels... But! Ah! but----since philosophers and philanthropists are not the controlling powers, it is well for our soldiers to guard our frontier and homes, and their arms, skillfully used, are perhaps the surest guarantee of the peace we all love.

"Peace is a gift only granted to the strong and the resolute.

"I am, dear sir, etc.,

"JULES CLARETIE."

The upshot of this letter is that there is no harm in talking about what no one intends or feels obliged to do. But when it comes to practice, we must fight.

And here now is the view lately expressed by the most popular novelist in Europe, Émile Zola:

"I regard war as a fatal necessity, which appears inevitable for us from its close connection with human nature and the whole constitution of the world. I should wish that war could be put off for the longest possible time. Nevertheless, the moment will come when we shall be forced to go to war. I am considering it at this moment from the standpoint of universal humanity, and making no reference to our misunderstanding with Germany--a most trivial incident in the history of mankind. I say that war is necessary and beneficial, since it seems one of the conditions of existence for humanity. War confronts us everywhere, not only war between different races and peoples, but war too, in private and family life. It seems one of the principal elements of progress, and every step in advance that



humanity has taken hitherto has been attended by bloodshed.

"Men have talked, and still talk, of disarmament, while disarmament is something impossible, to which, even if it were possible, we ought not to consent. I am convinced that a general disarmament throughout the world would involve something like a moral decadence, which would show itself in general feebleness, and would hinder the progressive advancement of humanity. A warlike nation has always been strong and flourishing. The art of war has led to the development of all the other arts. History bears witness to it. So in Athens and in Rome, commerce, manufactures, and literature never attained so high a point of development as when those cities were masters of the whole world by force of arms. To take an example from times nearer our own, we may recall the age of Louis XIV. The wars of the Grand Monarque were not only no hindrance to the progress of the arts and sciences, but even, on the contrary, seem to have promoted and favored their development."

So war is a beneficial thing!

But the best expression of this attitude is the view of the most gifted of the writers of this school, the academician de Vogüé. This is what he writes in an article on the Military Section of the Exhibition of 1889:

"On the Esplanade des Invalides, among the exotic and colonial encampments, a building in a more severe style overawes the picturesque bazaar; all these fragments of the globe have come to gather round the Palace of War, and in turn our guests mount guard submissively before the mother building, but for whom they would not be here. Fine subject for the antithesis of rhetoric, of humanitarians who could not fail to whimper over this juxtaposition, and to say that 'CECI TUERA CELA,' [footnote: Phrase quoted from Victor-Hugo, "Notre-Dame de Paris."] that the union of the nations through science and labor will overcome the instinct of war. Let us leave them to cherish the chimera of a golden age, which would soon become, if it could be realized, an age of mud. All history teaches us that the one is created for the other, that blood is needed to hasten and cement the union of the nations. Natural science has ratified in our day the mysterious law revealed to Joseph de Maistre by the intuition of his genius and by meditation on fundamental truths; he saw the world redeeming itself from hereditary degenerations by sacrifice; science shows it advancing to perfection through struggle and violent selection; there is the statement of the same law in both, expressed in different formulas. The statement is disagreeable, no doubt; but the laws of the world are not made for our pleasure, they are made for our progress. Let us enter this inevitable, necessary palace of war; we shall be able to observe there how

the most tenacious of our instincts, without losing any of its vigor, is transformed and adapted to the varying exigencies of historical epochs."

M. de Vogüé finds the necessity for war, according to his views, well expressed by the two great writers, Joseph de Maistre and Darwin, whose statements he likes so much that he quotes them again.

"Dear Sir [he writes to the editor of the REVUE DES REVUES]: You ask me my view as to the possible success of the Universal Congress of Peace. I hold with Darwin that violent struggle is a law of nature which overrules all other laws; I hold with Joseph de Maistre that it is a divine law; two different ways of describing the same thing. If by some impossible chance a fraction of human society--all the civilized West, let us suppose--were to succeed in suspending the action of this law, some races of stronger instincts would undertake the task of putting it into action against us: those races would vindicate nature's reasoning against human reason; they would be successful, because the certainty of peace--I do not say PEACE, I say the CERTAINTY OF PEACE--would, in half a century, engender a corruption and a decadence more destructive for mankind than the worst of wars. I believe that we must do with war--the criminal law of humanity--as with all our criminal laws, that is, soften them, put them in force as rarely as

possible; use every effort to make their application unnecessary. But all the experience of history teaches us that they cannot be altogether suppressed so long as two men are left on earth, with bread, money, and a woman between them.

"I should be very happy if the Congress would prove me in error. But I doubt if it can prove history, nature, and God in error also.

"I am, dear sir, etc.

"E. M. DE VOGŨÉ."

This amounts to saying that history, human nature, and God show us that so long as there are two men, and bread, money and a woman--there will be war. That is to say that no progress will lead men to rise above the savage conception of life, which regards no participation of bread, money (money is good in this context) and woman possible without fighting.

They are strange people, these men who assemble in Congresses, and make speeches to show us how to catch birds by putting salt on their tails, though they must know it is impossible to do it. And amazing are they too, who, like Maupassant, Rod, and many others, see clearly all the horror of war, all the inconsistency of men not doing what is needful, right, and beneficial for them to do; who lament over the tragedy of life, and do not see that the whole

tragedy is at an end directly men, ceasing to take account of any unnecessary considerations, refuse to do what is hateful and disastrous to them. They are amazing people truly, but those who, like De Vogüé and others, who, professing the doctrine of evolution, regard war as not only inevitable, but beneficial and therefore desirable--they are terrible, hideous, in their moral perversion. The others, at least, say that they hate evil, and love good, but these openly declare that good and evil do not exist.

All discussion of the possibility of re-establishing peace instead of everlasting war--is the pernicious sentimentality of phrasemongers. There is a law of evolution by which it follows that I must live and act in an evil way; what is to be done? I am an educated man, I know the law of evolution, and therefore I will act in an evil way. "ENTRONS AU PALAIS DE LA GUERRE." There is the law of evolution, and therefore there is neither good nor evil, and one must live for the sake of one's personal existence, leaving the rest to the action of the law of evolution. This is the last word of refined culture, and with it, of that overshadowing of conscience which has come upon the educated classes of our times. The desire of the educated classes to support the ideas they prefer, and the order of existence based on them, has attained its furthest limits. They lie, and delude themselves, and one another, with the subtlest forms of deception, simply to obscure, to deaden conscience.

Instead of transforming their life into harmony with their conscience, they try by every means to stifle its voice. But it is in darkness that the light begins to shine, and so the light is rising upon our epoch.