

## MILITANT PACIFISM.

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THE one thing which unites the world to-day is the desire for the end of the Great War. The larger desire which animates many men is the passionate longing for an end of all war. But checking this desire, strangling this hope, are two widespread dogmas: the psychological dogma that man is inevitably a fighter and the ethical dogma that through war, and through war alone, he can rise to the supreme height of self-sacrifice. This paper proposes to subject these teachings to a brief examination.

## I.

It is unquestionably true that those who dare to hope and to work for the end of war must meet the protest of the critics who hold that this instinct is irrepressible and that war is, therefore, ineradicable. It is vain, these critics insist, to hope, to plan, to work for a league of nations, a world-state, a reign of perpetual peace. Such dreams belonged to the prophets of Israel who foretold swords beaten into ploughshares and to Roman poets who sang of a returning golden age of peace. But we moderns, it is urged, with our scientific training—we, alas, know that we are very much lower than the angels and only a little higher than the beasts who must prey upon each other in the fierce struggle for survival on which depends the development of living beings. The hopeless ideal of abolishing war should, therefore, make way for the intelligent purpose of replacing unjust, cruel, and dishonorable fighting by just, humane, and honorable warfare. To estimate properly the argument from the nature of instinct to the dogma of perpetual war it is necessary to study in some detail the instincts lying at the heart of war and, in particular, pugnacity. By instincts are meant feelings and bodily reactions reappearing in every generation, either born in individuals or else arising at a definite period of their

lives as original endowments of their nature. Like all the instincts pugnacity has two aspects, the mental and the physical, and appears in the forms of anger and of combat. In both its forms, it is a very early, a very permanent and a tremendously powerful instinct. Its outward signs, bared teeth, stiffened body and the rest, are known by everybody and explained by the biologists as the persistence, in bodily attitude, of reactions useful in the preservation and propagation of animal species. Pugnacity is widely diffused among animals, and very early observed among children; and it persists, a strong instinct, throughout adult life. People differ, to be sure, in the degree of their combativeness; and one man's pugnacious feelings and actions are far more readily excited than another's. Yet every normal man is a potential and, at times, an actual fighter; and everybody knows by his own experience how the flame of an intense anger may devour all other feelings and obliterate all memory and all thought, and how it may lick one's mind clean and bare of every control and restraint.

Pugnacity is always incited by opposition. Animals and men alike fight when they are thwarted or balked in the free play of any instinct, or (if we confine ourselves to human pugnacity) in the exercise of any volitional activity. It follows that pugnacity is excited in many specifically different ways and that it is affiliated now with one and now with another instinct. For our purpose this intimacy of interrelation is of utmost significance, and our valuation of pugnacity must hinge largely on our estimate of the fellow-instincts by which it is excited and which, in turn, it may reinforce and invigorate.

Pugnacity, in the first place, is sometimes excited when the instinct of curiosity is thwarted; as when a child shows anger if balked in his investigation of the contents of a wastebasket. Curiosity is an instinct common to animals and to human beings and so strong that hunters often appeal to it in decoying wild animals. It has many forms, appearing sometimes as component of the play impulse, and again, when it involves awareness of danger, as daring.

Now daring, morally controlled, is the virtue of courage; and so it comes about that the fighting-instinct, called into play by curiosity and daring, is closely associated with this heroic virtue of courage. In the thick of the fray, the fighters know no fear; they ignore danger; they hurl themselves against the bayonets of the enemy; they rush recklessly into the open swept by murderous shell-fire; they worm themselves along, half underground, to place the explosives by which they themselves, as well as the enemy's barricades, will be blown to fragments. And because pugnacity gives impetus and scope to heroic courage, therefore the fighting instinct will ever be glorified by men.

A more hesitating estimate will be placed on the very frequent coalition between pugnacity and the instinct of acquisitiveness, in its two forms, getting and hoarding. This is the instinct illustrated, at its extremes, by the squirrel who fills the hollows of the trees with nuts and by the financier who first makes and then prudently invests his money. Everybody knows that pugnacity is far more often excited by balked acquisitiveness than by thwarted daring. The dog fights to get and then to defend his bone; the militia is called out to protect mill or mine; the nation fights to extend or to defend its boundary, its prestige, or its trade. And here, again, pugnacity is estimated not for itself but according to the moral value of the instinct which excites it and to which it lends its support. The individual or nation which fights gallantly for an object rightly gained and rightly held is known as a heroic defender; whereas the attack on property or rights possessed by other men is condemned as burglary or piracy.

Pugnacity, in the third place, is as all biologists know very often the outgrowth of fear. Fear, like pugnacity, is a primitive reaction in the face of danger. It is one of the earliest and most compelling of the instincts—shown by all animals, early observed in babies, directed toward objects, animate or inanimate, of the most varied sorts, and manifesting itself in the sharply contrasted forms of flight and immobility. Fear is, therefore, absolutely in-

compatible with pugnacity since no animal can at one and the same time shrink back and make attack, feel afraid and feel angry. And yet it is plain matter of observation that fear incites to pugnacity, and in two ways. On the one hand, the fleeing animal, brought to bay, turns on its pursuers and the desperately frightened child suddenly attacks his tormenter and thus the instinct of fear suddenly gives way to anger. And, on the other hand, fear may stimulate the deliberate and premeditated creation of the machinery of attack.

Pugnacity, finally, may be excited in an altogether different way and may reinforce instincts of an entirely different character. Men and animals alike sometimes fight not through balked courage, or thwarted acquisitiveness, or in swift reaction against paralyzing fear but to protect or succor others, that is, because their social and sympathetic instincts are violated. The neglect, even the denial, of these social instincts was one of the unfortunate results of the superficial popularization of Darwinian teaching. But every biologist recognizes *gregariousness*, approach in its social form, the basal instinct which crowds animals into herds and is manifested in the flight of birds in flocks, *protectiveness*, the instinctive attitude of parent to offspring, and *imitation*, the instinctive attitude toward leaders or parents, as primitive endowments of animal and of human selves. In their higher manifestations these developed social instincts are directed toward ever widening groups of persons and are transmuted into the virtues of generosity and sacrifice on the one hand, into loyalty and obedience on the other. We are here concerned with the abundantly established fact that the fighting instinct normally lends force and vigor to these social instincts. No battles for private ends are so fierce as those which the animal or human mother wages to protect her young; and the glory of war is the lavish sacrifice of life and love and work for the beloved fatherland.

At their surface value these considerations seem to support the theory of those who disparage the war against war.

For pugnacity has appeared in its true colors as a strong and widely diffused instinct, excited when any other instinct is hampered or thwarted. And those who assert the inevitableness of war assume that a man is the prey of his own instincts and helpless in the face of them; that they have a right of way and must ride rough shod over the paths of his life even when these intersect the ways of other lives. This psychological naturalism is, however, contrary to all observation. Not merely the higher vertebrates but metazoa and (according to good observers) even certain unicellular animals learn by individual experience, that is to say, they modify their instincts; and man, too, possessed as he is of more instincts than any animal, has advanced precisely in proportion as he has controlled these instincts. This acquired habit of controlling the instincts must be sharply distinguished from any form of ascetic practice. The effort to crush the basal instincts betrays a very inadequate conception of the place of the instincts in human life. For they are the very springs of life and we should impoverish ourselves if we checked their outpouring of life and energy. But as has just appeared, biology and psychology alike abundantly attest the fact that it is possible to modify instincts without destroying them.

A consideration of the methods of controlling instincts is, therefore, abundantly justified. Such a study at once discloses the fact that the effort to modify an instinct in a purely negative way, by merely willing that it subside or change its direction, is utterly futile. By such a method the attention is simply turned full upon the instinct-to-be-modified with the inevitable result of stimulating it. The control of the instincts is, in truth, always positive and it takes two main forms. Either the instinct is directed toward new objects or it is subordinated to another instinct. Many illustrations of each of these methods suggest themselves. When the dog is taught to retrieve, his instinct is directed away from chickens toward wild birds. And the boy in Miss Alcott's classic tale diverted his fighting instinct from boys to gnarled roots of trees and was seen

“wrestling with the ungainly knots, with red face and wrathful eyes, till he had conquered them, when he exulted and marched off with an armful of oakwood in triumph.” The pointer whose instinct to kill is checked by his instinct to return to his master illustrates the modification of one instinct by subordination to another. And, similarly, the shyness of a little child may be wholly neutralized by the curiosity which drives him nearer with every puff of the red balloon which the strange person holds out to him. There is no reason to suppose that these practical, psychological methods, so constantly employed in the education of animals and human beings, are inapplicable in the self-discipline of nations.

## II.

The outcome of our study of pugnacity is, thus, the assurance that war is not the inevitable result of unmodifiable instinct. But this conclusion leaves us with our ethical problem still on our hands. We have still to examine the ethical doctrine that war is morally, if not psychically, inevitable—that war must be cherished as an awful but necessary human experience which purges men’s souls of cowardice and selfishness and fans to a flame the fires of courage and devotion. That war may—nay, always does—create and invigorate daring and sacrifice no student of history will deny. And the world has need of these human qualities. We would not if we could blot out of the great book of human history the names of the warriors: David and Hector, Leonidas and Cæsar, Richard of the Lion Heart and Henry of Navarre, Wallenstein and Gustavus Adolphus, Drake and Farragut, Sir Philip Sidney and Rupert Brooke. And we could not press forward in the struggle toward a righteous social order unless men were nerved to fight in the great causes of truth and justice. In the words of William James, the “martial virtues . . . intrepidity, contempt of softness, surrender of private interest, obedience to command must still remain the rock upon which states are built.”

The bold ideal of militant pacificism is, however, to pre-

serve and even to strengthen the fighting instinct, with all these martial virtues which it inspires, but to direct it to radically new ends. The militant pacifist, in other words, expressly challenges the assumption that pugnacity can find moral expression only in the war of human being against human being. He believes that men should go on fighting but that they should attack no longer human lives but human ignorance, human injustice, and the great nature-evils. In this conviction, the pacifist is evidently in line with the psychological teaching that an instinct may be modified and still cherished by being supplied with a new object. And in his effort to divert pugnacity from the ends of war, he is seeking to preserve for human use not merely lives—for which, as physical values, he claims no special exemption—but the great spiritual values, human love, human virtue, human toil.

And the whole gruesome record of war attests the urgency of the pacifist's claim that pugnacity must be redirected toward inanimate instead of human objects. For the great lesson which history imprints on the mind of the candid reader is the tragic certainty that all wars gain their ultimate ends, whether great or petty, by the violation of personality, by the destruction of homes, by the paralysis of art and industry and letters. The irony of the terrible situation is precisely this: that even wars entered on from high motives must rouse greed, cupidity, and blind hatred; that even in defensive warfare a people can defend its rights only by inflicting new wrongs; and that chivalrous no less than self-seeking war entails relentless destruction. This truth, that there is inherent inconsistency at the heart of every just war, and the sad fact that a war, unless it is on both sides the outgrowth of popular fear, must be, on one side at least, a war of aggrandizement, illumine with blinding light the truth that no individual or nation can be trusted to define its own rights and then to fight for them, to act, in a word, at once as advocate, judge, and inflicter of punishment in its own cause. In this crisis of conflicting needs—on the one hand the crying need of all nations for men of

courage and self-sacrifice who will fight for the ends of justice and humanity, on the other hand, the dire need of nations desolated, blighted and impoverished, to be rid of war—the militant pacifist, in season and out of season, preaches his fighting gospel of a war against obdurate nature-evils, against floods and fires, famine and disease; and, even more insistently, he urges the necessity of organized and tireless war against human error and human selfishness in individual hearts and in social customs and institutions. Such a war, it is true, is fought with intangible weapons but it is, none the less, literal fighting and it involves all the vigor, the passion, the unyielding determination of the warrior. In truth, these warriors have need to put on “the whole armor of God” for they wrestle “not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.” This spiritual warfare demands also, in a manner as yet only dimly apprehended, a systematic organization of effort and a rigid training of combatants. For only by disciplined obedience to their leaders, by the harmonious exercise of their powers and by the outpouring of their common toil, their time, their talents, their fortunes, their lives, if need be, can men successfully attack opposing nature-forces and entrenched human evil and victoriously fight for better customs, better laws, better men—in a word, for a regenerated and redeemed society.

There remains the insistent practical question: how, precisely, may we redirect pugnacity? How may we teach ourselves to make war no longer against the lives and homes of our fellow men but against their errors and ours, and against our common enemy, hostile Nature? It is, of course, beside the restricted purpose of this paper to answer this question in sociological terms—to explain, for example, the constitution of international courts and international police, to set forth the methods of the general strike as applied to international relations, or to debate William James’s great conception of a “conscription of the whole youthful population” as part of “the army enlisted against



Nature." For we are here concerned with the human instincts and volitions that control all social machinery and we are urging, against upholders of the dogma of perpetual war, that the abolition of war is psychologically possible and even reconcilable with the retention of martial virtue. But the difficulty of the undertaking, the obstacles in the pathway of such a redirection of our fighting instincts, must certainly not be minimized in an outburst of mere emotional enthusiasm. The abolition of war requires nothing less than the divorce of pugnacity from the great egoistic instincts, fear and avarice, with which since the dawn of human history it has been most intimately affiliated. For fear and acquisitiveness are instincts so strong and so primitive that, reinforced by pugnacity, they lead almost inevitably to the attack on personality, on home and on society, which is war. Those who bewail war as inevitable reiterate their conviction that such a separation of pugnacity from fear and greed and physical aggressiveness is impossible. And those who idealize war as the "sacrifice of individual motives to group motives"<sup>1</sup> insist that the only alternative to war is a selfish, cowardly and supine peace. But students of animal and human life know the power of the social instincts. And students of history attest the fact that even nations, though public opinion so largely exempts them from moral obligations in their international relations, do yet on rare occasions in circumstances which might well lead to war voluntarily and without compulsion treat each other with justice tempered by courage—yielding and exacting the fulfilment of international obligation. Thus, on the basis of actual experience we may assert the conviction that the fighting instinct of a virile people may be under the control of its social instincts. For it can not too often be reiterated that liking and sympathy, as well as anger and acquisition, are instinctive impulses—impulses which may be transmuted into the virtues of generosity and justice. War against human life will cease when these social instincts dominate

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Lyman Wells, in *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1916, Vol. 118, p. 46.

pugnacity. But the New War, against Nature and against human greed and sloth and cruelty, will only then be fairly initiated. In this new war unjust nations, like unjust individuals, will be resisted but not destroyed. And the people for whom this new war is fought will be no longer the tribe, or state, or nation, but the great world-self, the universal community of sentient beings. For this great war which shall liberate men from the blight of nature, and from the neglect and injustice of their fellows, the time is over-ripe. From the one side, the heroic bodily risks of physician, explorer, and engineer make their claim on men's courage and devotion. And on all sides are walls of privilege to be demolished, strongholds of public inefficiency and graft to be stormed, attacks on democracy to be repelled, insidious influences of sloth and luxury to be checked; and human rights to be defended against relentless industrial competition and selfish social content. This Greatest War will never be brought to victory until it enlists us all. And those who arm for this conflict must have eyes open to descry injustice and misery, minds trained to judge fairly, hearts pulsing with sympathy, and loyal spirits strong to fight to the finish.

Like Socrates, we have followed whither the argument has led us; and now, with this last turn of the path, light fully illumines the problems which we set for ourselves, in the beginning. We asked whether war is an inevitable expression of human instinct and whether anything less than war can move a man to supreme self-sacrifice. And we have found that the instincts lying at the heart of war can be converted to the uses of a strenuous and militant peace and that the instrument of their conversion is loyalty to the Great Society, a loyalty rooted in the deep-lying social instincts. *Sed sine dolore non vivitur in amore.* The law of this loyalty, also, is sacrifice.

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