Lessons of War
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Once again nations are observing the solemn ceremonies which have marked the occasion of the close of the greatest war in human history and the termination of hostilities which the peoples of the world hailed with unquenchable rejoicing.

To multitudes this somber Armistice anniversary brings bitter grief which the lapse of time cannot assuage, though it may be hoped that all who have passed through this awful furnace of affliction may allow their experience to fortify their resolve to strive to build upon securer and more durable foundations the edifice of world peace.

The hideous sacrifices on an unprecedented scale came to an end fifteen years ago, but not the aftermath. Even so it is necessary to remember that a new generation is growing up to whom the grim lessons of the world war and its appalling realities are only hearsay, not a fact of hard suffering experience, but only a matter of history.

The hardships and horrors are not so poignant as they were, even for those who were active participants in the terrible struggle. Moreover, many of those who have experienced the impoverishments of the post-war years fail to realise how much their sufferings are due to, or have been intensified by, the tremendous waste caused by the loss of manhood and treasure, coupled with the economic loss and devastation of the four years of the world conflicts. But surely both the experiences of the post-war years, not less than the perils and sacrifices of the war itself, reinforce the lesson that peace is the common concern of all peoples, the essential condition of economic prosperity, and the basis upon which the standards of well-being can be maintained and improved.

Patriotism for Peace

Through the long history of mankind, war has been regarded too often as an inevitable and unpreventable condition of human existence, and peace has been regarded as a cessation from active military hostilities. There have been only fragmentary efforts to inculcate into the minds of either young or old the true ideals and principles of moral disarmament. Patriotism has been exploited for war and not for peace.

Under such conditions the peoples see in armaments on an increased scale the only sure method of guaranteeing their national security. During recent years much has happened which has invested the cause of peace with a new and an added significance. The essential importance of a policy of international co-operation and good understanding between neighbour States is now more widely appreciated. There is also an increasing confidence that something really effective can be done to organise peace, to end the curse of war and relieve mankind from the thralldom of the militarist mind. This is all to the good, for we must make no mistake nor cherish any illusions about the nature of our task and the problem. There remains much to be done on the positive and constructive side, as it has to be admitted that the will to peace among the nations is feeble and intermittent in contrast with the steady and persistent development of bellicistic purpose. Foresighted and resolute planning, research and the application of scientific methods, as the laboratories of the world could testify, are the keynote of modern military policy.

On the other hand, peace-makers have hardly as yet begun to organise public opinion towards that carefully planned concerted effort for peace for which it is essential that we should persist as long as in the past the nations have planned and prepared for war.

Mere warnings and predictions concerning the awful consequences of war under modern conditions will not suffice. The fact that whole nations found themselves involved in the struggle and had death rained upon them at random from the skies is not sufficient to guarantee the world against a repetition of so terrible a tragedy. If any reminder of these things could serve, what a moving picture of the conditions of the last war and of the next could be painted, for have not the resources of chemical research been placed at the disposal of those who prepare the instruments of war, and are they not producing more frightful and more deadly weapons and poison gases against which effective defence is practically impossible? Yet all these horrors from which most of the people of every country would recoil are not sufficient to arrest the on-coming of war if nations continue to base their policy upon the belief that force is the sole and ultimate arbiter in human affairs.

Confidence is Security

Though much has been attempted in recent years with the object of building up a peace-keeping system through the League of Nations, it needs to be emphasised that peace can only be permanently won by a practical matter-of-fact plan, which gives the nations a sense of security and enables them to embark upon national security in those methods of law and justice which govern the relations of citizens in civilised States.

This surely is the task upon which the governments of the world are at present engaged, for they are but supplementing the decisive step taken five years ago when they signed the Kellogg Pact renouncing the right of war. For as an instrument of national policy was the nature of a formal pledge to peace; by it the governments undertook to seek a settlement of their differences with one another by other than military means. With such a condition of international relationships operating universally, armaments begin to lose their former significance. The moment nations agree solemnly to seek security by other methods than by preparation for war, disarmament by world action enters into the realm of practical politics. It provides an interesting landmark in the progress towards general disarmament, as nations can no longer go on piling up armaments against one another. The mad competitive race, especially in the manufacture of aggressive weapons, should come to an end and the problem of progressive reduction and limitation of all classes of armaments should assume a different complexion. We must not make the mistake of thinking that the task of concluding an international disarmament convention will be an easy task, as there are centuries-old traditions, jealousies and suspicions which we are up against and which make the achievement of our objective extremely difficult.

Abandon Force . . .

But, in spite of the many difficulties, if the Kellogg Pact is to have any real meaning, governments must abandon methods of force and organise international relations upon the basis of peace. There is an imperative necessity therefore to conclude a disarmament convention which must include the reductions to which the Governments agree and which must impose a stringent limitation and control upon the manufacture of armaments. Belligerent nationates the treaty may not be all that peace lovers desire, but we should all remember it will be a start upon a new road, for the arms of a nation will be no longer its own exclusive concern, but a part of the collective peace system of the world.