

CORRESPONDENCE

American Intentions

SIR: Since the appearance of your editorial entitled "Why Do We Arm?" I have been expecting you to deal further with the question you there presented. In that connection, may I suggest the view of some who while not handling directly public affairs, still give anxious thought to the question of increase of the army and navy and to the foreign policy of this country.

You reminded us that the real purpose of a large armed force is not actually to defend our country from attack, but is instead to give us greater power in international affairs. You therefore put the question, "What should be our attitude toward the rest of the world?" In seeking to give at least one reply to that question, let us remind ourselves of a few facts far too easily forgotten.

First, let us remember that we occupy, through no virtue of our own, the greatest extent of productive country that there is on this globe. While many a brave and worthy people fights for a scant living on the sterile slopes of mountains or on disease-breeding lowlands, we drive our gang plows through our rich land and reap an abundant living at comparatively little cost. In material resources we are, without doubt, the richest people on the earth. In everything else that makes life worth living, we are, without doubt, the best provided for, and, I repeat, with little or no credit to ourselves. We live surrounded by liberal traditions the like of which no other people is able even to imagine. Here, in whatever dispute of group, class, or party we may be involved, there is present in most of us the honest desire to discover real justice, the course that will best serve the welfare of all parties concerned. Of no other country under heaven, we fear, can this be said.

Believing that duty is ever imposed by privilege, how should we as a people look upon the question of preparedness for international dispute? What should be our creed in the society of nations? You mention the Monroe Doctrine and the Open Door, and in the same breath deplore that neither has any very specific meaning. Are they not merely incoherent gropings toward a statement of faith? The writer cannot say what such a statement of faith in its entirety should be, but surely there are one or two points upon which we can come to an agreement at once.

For instance, do not all the American people believe that each national unit, each group that feels that it is one people, different from others, should be self-governing? Let us see how that idea might be applied. Let the Cubans govern themselves; let the Philipinos govern themselves; let the Belgians govern themselves; let the Bulgarians govern themselves; let the Koreans govern themselves. And so on. You see where it brings us, but is the principle a true one or not?

Then, if equality of opportunity be a good thing within our borders, is it not a desirable thing everywhere? Should not, in every market of the world, an American, a Russian, and Englishman, a German, a Turk, if you will, receive equal treatment? In our business at home we insist that the monopoly shall not squeeze the independent, that the stronger shall not take unfair advantage of the weaker. In international business things are not ordered so.

My plea is not that we rush into international controversy. There will be enough, and more than enough, of that forced upon us. But is it not rational that we as a people should determine beforehand by what principles we

shall be guided when we must act upon such questions? When a particular case arises sentiment is generally guided, for lack of a predetermined principle, by the personal interests at stake. National acts which are not always subjects for national pride often result.

If then we arrive at a few such principles, how shall we make them count? By putting what power we have behind them. Some say a national boycott is the proper weapon. Up to the present battleships seem to have worked best. Let us, then, have as many as the purpose demands. Are we too poor to back our beliefs with the instruments that will enforce respect of them?

We must recognize, of course, the manifold difficulties of deciding just what steps to take in any particular case. This is merely a suggestion looking toward an answer to the question, "What should be our attitude, as a nation, in international affairs?" That this is the final answer I do not presume to say, but does it not bear upon a side of the question which *THE NEW REPUBLIC* might well discuss further?

E. W. DOLCH, JR.

Ames, Iowa.

A Word for Germany

SIR: In a recent review of a book which has evidently excited some favorable interest in America, I notice that *THE NEW REPUBLIC* has loaned its voice, without of course pledging its opinion, to the pronouncement that "the East Prussian Kultur of daily life is a backward English culture at a lower stage." The book is "The Pastor's Wife" and the reviewer is Elsie Clews Parsons. I do not cavil at the idea because it is, perhaps, debatable, but it raises the possibility of the presentation of the explanation of the grounds of German Kultur.

Patriotism is sane only so long as it is loyalty to a nation that is progressing. It becomes a folly when it is no more than a blind devotion to a name. When a nation stands beside the anvil and with the wrought iron of a purpose fashions the labored tools which are its national ideals, then that nation is a living force, an honest claimant for a "place in the sun." At the present time there are two strikingly progressive nations, the United States and Germany.

It is a maxim as old as the hedonists that everything in this world is qualified. It is true of little things and it is true in the big. It is not possible for one nation to be universally good, just, honest, pure; because there is present the constant pressure of circumstance and personality. Every nation must, however, work out its salvation either as an onward-pressing, vital unity, relentlessly pursuing the problems that confront it, or else as a contented, hand-folding professor of peace. In this world there can be no peace, there should be none. Bloodshed and that ultimate piece of argumentation, the cannon, will, let us hope, be but historic memories; but never must we relax our eternal vigilance against national sloth, satisfaction or tranquillity.

This world has no gratitude for forces but only for facts. Without remorse it swallows nation after nation, thanking its victims for their contributions, but deaf to their pleas for continuity. That is reasonable; it is just. It is the only way in which to accommodate the undying procession of human activity. That people which, either by its strength or its diplomacy, can hedge itself with divinity, as Hamlet would say, or can with great foresight modulate itself to the ever-shifting demands of time, may dominate

the stage for a thousand years before it yields the palm. Sooner or later, nevertheless, it must be content to sit in obscurity as it watches some more vigorous actor strut his little piece. To weep at such a downfall is human; to recognize the law behind it is our duty when we form our judgments.

The United States and Germany are the two nations of to-day which stand sponsors for fundamental progressiveness. We do not agree in our programs, and perhaps some of the ramifications are in determined opposition, yet the fact that our wills are bent on improvement indicates that we are nations of the future. It is easier, perhaps, to understand the aims of Germany because she has crystallized her policy, whereas we are still being molded. First of all she stands for order. Into a world that has been the prey of caprice she introduces an iron devotion to system. With precision she attacks the problems of disease, of poverty, of labor, of capital, of government, of religion. She has divined the great Napoleonic truth that most men are sheep ready to follow a shepherd. She has taken up the crook, the symbol of leadership. She emphasizes not the individual, often ineffective, liberty of the Englishman who is apt to value personal prerogative over team play, but rather the mastery of cohesion resulting in a nation which is willing to bend every sinew in its back to lift its burden. That is what is admirable in Germany.

If the following of this scheme were indeed the final destiny of man, then we should be foolish people if we did not do everything possible to thwart Germany's success. But it is not final any more than we as Americans are final. We are both only steps in the great evolution; we are only the rising suns of to-day. To-morrow will come the Slavs or the Chinese or the negroes or the reincarnate Spaniards of South America. But at this moment Germany is on the threshold. She seizes the sceptre which England has so long and so ably wielded. Are we going to allow our sympathies for the peoples to blind us to the towers of fact that rise behind them? Are we going to damn Germany either with faint praise or thoughtless denunciation?

Let us welcome Germany for her merits; let us assail her for her faults, but let us not turn our backs upon her. Out of Prussia, out of Bavaria, will probably come many a good thing which we need. Perhaps the "Kultur of daily life" which Mrs. Parsons smiles at may in time ripen into a new zeal for the obligations and the holiness of marriage, into a renewed reverence for those institutions of intimate living which we are not yet ready to see chopped on the butcher's block of modernism.

J. P. MORGAN.

Hawaiian Islands.

Making Copy of the War

SIR: May I suggest to Mr. Harrison Smith that he has replied to my letter without answering it? I did not ask whether he reported the incident as he saw it. I hardly doubted that he did. But the literary imagination clothes things in strange colors. I asked him whether he was satisfied that it was an accurate, comprehensive, well-balanced account. I thought, and do think, that otherwise the article had better not have been written. We must not expect an Englishman or a German to write about things in this war even as he sees them. He will, quite conscientiously, write as he feels, whichever extreme his feelings may carry him. But I think there rests upon the member of a neutral nation a peculiar responsibility to exercise not his sympathy, not alone his power of observation, but first and last a detached judgment. Where else are we to find it?

What, in the end, will be more needed? Perhaps if I had any fear of the striking of the balance it would be my duty as an Englishman not to write this to an American paper; but I have none. I have a very strong opinion, though, that loose, excited journalism does little service to those it upholds, does none at all to the general cause of humanity and civilization. It does but set the pendulum of sympathy swinging the more violently.

Not that I so accuse Mr. Harrison Smith. He may believe, too, that I am not trying to score off him; he must forgive me for using his article as a pinhole to ventilate this question. But it is one, maybe, of growing importance, since peace and the consequent need for a settled mind is coming nearer. America is making capital out of the war whether she likes it or not. I have not met, and do not expect to meet, an American who would not gladly hand back his profits and double his profits if by so doing he could bring the war's end nearer. I believe there is much to be gained and a danger, though but a negative danger, to be avoided if American journalists will, whenever possible, forbear to make mere copy out of the war now.

H. GRANVILLE BARKER.

New York City.

Critic, Plaintiff, Judge and Jury

SIR: I was much surprised that "Q. K." in your issue of October 30th should have so completely missed the point in his review of "Quinney's." Even so, I might have passed it by but for his unbecoming flippancy in asking whether his bewilderment at the turn of events was a sign that his own mind had become poisoned by much play-going, or whether Mr. Vachel, the author, was guilty of introducing a clumsy and inartistic device in order to inject an element of surprise into the story. That "Q. K." should raise the question only to declare Mr. Vachel guilty, and himself a person of sound mind, is decidedly a one-sided performance. I would not say what kind of poison affected "Q. K.," but his understanding was undeniably clouded on the night he assumed the combined role of plaintiff, judge and jury.

"Q. K." was as surprised as Quinney himself that James, the foreman, did not turn out to be the scoundrel that Mr. Vachel made us, for a time, suspect that he might be. But had "Q. K." asked himself how it happened that Quinney so consistently misjudged all those around him, he would have discovered the key to his bewilderment, the very central theme of the play, namely: that concentration upon things dulls the power of observing and judging persons. Quinney has been for years absorbed in his "sticks and stones," as his wife repeatedly tells us. Thus he fails to observe his daughter's new frock, but at once pronounces her new necklace a fraud. He glories in his antiques, but misjudges his daughter, his foreman and his typist. To emphasize the theme, Mr. Vachel introduces a parallel series of events into the story through Quinney's failing eyesight, culminating in his purchase of the eight half-Chippendale chairs. Quinney is obliged to resort to spectacles, much against his will, for he believes, or wants to believe still in his power to judge things, just as he believes in his power of judging persons. But having used his new glasses, and being secretly delighted and amazed at his clearer vision, the author now prepares us for a similar transformation in Quinney's moral vision, and such is the course of events. Instead of being puzzled, "Q. K." should have admired the skilful manner in which the parallel themes are carried out to their conclusion. "Q. K." does say that the shop-interest and the love-interest are cleverly blended, but it is

most remarkable that he did not see that there was a connection in the two stories which was the very framework of the play.

D. PAUL MUSSELMAN.

New York City.

Prefers Demonstration to Cheers

SIR: On reading Mr. Hiram K. Moderwell's excellent well's ability arguing in favor of ragtime that it "has a place in the affections of 10,000,000 or more Americans," and retorting to a critic with the *argumentum ad hominem* that he who sees in the fondness for it a debased taste, and in the class which entertains this taste an inferior class, is a "snob." Would Mr. Moderwell offer the comic supplement to a painter as a model because it has a place in the affections of some 10,000,000 or more Americans? Would he seek literary standards among the best sellers, or dramatic ones among the Broadway hits? And can we not prefer Bernard Shaw to Augustus Thomas, H. G. Wells to William de Morgan, William Vaughn Moody to Ella Wheeler Wilcox, without being snobs? If all who try to substitute the qualitative standards alone relevant to art for the quantitative ones so widespread in this country are to be called snobs, their obvious retort will be that they would rather be "snobs" of this sort than sheep whose only rule is to follow the herd.

If Mr. Moderwell, instead of hurrahing for ragtime, would examine the case on its merits, as a man trained at Harvard and writing in THE NEW REPUBLIC ought to do, I think he would see that there are two sides to the question. That there are musical possibilities of a high order in ragtime no one can deny who knows Dvorák's experiments with it, not to mention Mr. Chadwick's, Mr. Henry F. Gilbert's, and others. That its rhythmic vigor is American in the best sense, and will in the future inspire fine work, I personally do not for a moment doubt. But associated with this nervous energy is an itch for mere stir-about, for epileptic twitching and jerking, which is almost more characteristic, and which is but the musical aspect of that unthinking restlessness, that demand for superficial excitement, which is the curse of our national temperament. In speaking of the "nickel thrillers" dear to the same millions of readers who are the patrons of ragtime, an editorial writer in the current number of the Outlook says: "These books . . . are a form of cheap whisky. They not only intoxicate, but they destroy the tissues of the brain and contribute to the fostering of that lack of discipline which is shown in every department of life in the United States. . . . These cheap stories do not stimulate the imagination; they dissipate and waste it, and so destroy the greatest power with which boys and girls are endowed. They relax the attention to such a degree that it is impossible to hold the attention of their victims except by what are called thrills. 'A thrill a minute' is a phrase not uncommon in theatrical advertisements and is highly significant of the widespread relaxation of brains and will in America."

When we consider that the formula of ragtime is essentially "two thrills a beat" we cannot but realize that its power of jading the attention for less highly galvanized stimuli is fraught with danger for our appreciation of simpler, sincerer, more thoughtful music. Mr. Moderwell may none the less have good reasons for believing that its merits still outweigh its dangers. But he owes it to himself to defend these merits by analyzing them, not by counting their devotees or calling their critics names.

DANIEL GREGORY MASON.

New York City.

Extols Ragtime Article

SIR: On reading Mr. Hiram K. Moderwell's excellent article on "Ragtime" in your journal a few weeks ago I immediately thought that some person would address you in your columns and attempt to take Mr. Moderwell to task for claiming that ragtime is a typical American expression.

I see that my thought was correct. Mr. James Cloyd Bowman, in your issue of November 6th, finds "confusion of thought" in Mr. Moderwell's article. I should be happy to have him point out just where this "confusion" lies, as I have read the article very carefully and am unable to find it. The fact that Mr. Bowman, at some time in his career, asked "a famous artist to express in music the most immoral feeling possible" and that "the famous artist" in response whistled a bit of ragtime, seems to me to be poor proof that ragtime is not typical of America's bustling life. Mr. Moderwell treated his subject in the article under discussion with veritable mastery and I have heard many persons who are vitally interested in this country's music speak of the article in terms of high praise. Ragtime is American and no one can prove that it is not. It expresses something that we feel; to be sure, it is not lofty in its theme. It may be, for all I know, "music of the feet." But what of that? It surely has a greater justification for existing than have turgid symphonies by some of our pedantic musicians, symphonies which have in them nothing of the breath of life, but are purely calculated affairs, brought into being to satisfy their perpetrator, who feels that he *must* write a symphony.

I would also like to correct Mr. Bowman when he says that "so long as some people remember that America has produced men like Greeley and Bryant, Emerson and Hawthorne, Phillips Brooks, MacDonald, Damrosch and Muck." Mr. Damrosch was born in Germany—I take it that he refers to Mr. Walter Damrosch, conductor of the Symphony Society—so was his brother, Mr. Frank Damrosch, and Dr. Muck, conductor of the Boston Symphony, also first saw the light of day in that land which our especially neutral citizens enjoy calling "Barbaria," the land which in music has given the world Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Wagner.

A. WALTER KRAMER.

New York City.

This Still Gullible Age

SIR: The apparent irreconcilability of the methods of accumulation and of spending practiced by the philanthropic millionaire as exemplified in Mr. J. D. Rockefeller, Jr., seems, from your editorial of October 2nd, to be causing some confusion in your mind. Does not this discrepancy, however, resolve itself, under a closer analysis of apparent underlying motives, into one of method only? When the various activities involved in this spending are stripped of the technique and the phraseology of modern science, and detached from the personalities of their agents, how do they differ in essentials, and above all in aim, from those familiar not only to the nineteenth but to many preceding centuries? The endowment of hospitals and of educational centers controlled by the donors and labeled with their names, donations for palliative and relief work, even to the spreading of the Gospel (only of bodily instead of ghostly health) to China, where do these reflect, as you say they do, the actual, constructive strivings of our undoubtedly "younger and better" (but still how gullible!) age?

CHARLTON ELLIS.

New York City.

After the Play

HAVING heard that "The Unborn" is a drama which exploits in a way calculated to create a favorable impression, certain practices which a very large number of people look upon as "the greatest and most pernicious and dangerous peril of our times," Cardinal Farley requested the present Commissioner of Licenses in New York City to stop the play. The Commissioner acceded, and then a judge granted the producers a temporary injunction against him. The play was produced Monday evening at the Princess Theatre.

If the Cardinal and the Commissioner had not taken part in the performance, "The Unborn" might be put aside as a dull play based on pseudo-science and confused in its own good intentions. The scene is the home of a young couple just returned from their honeymoon. They are happy except for the fact that the wife has a morbid fear of bearing a child. There is insanity in her family, and she herself drinks too much wine. She must not have children, she must not, she must not. Enter Billy, the doctor whom she jilted. Jilting has been good for the doctor's character, for his goodness and wisdom pervade the room. Will Billy tell her how not to have children? Billy, being a stage doctor, will not tell her, though she is obviously rich enough to be told. So the young wife grows dizzy, and Billy the doctor goes out murmuring significantly "nausea in the morning."

Jeff, the husband, comes in and quarrels with his wife over the abstract question of children. He shouts and she faints, and his mother tells him that "Yes ... thank God".... The wife overhears this terrible news, and as soon as she is alone telephones to Billy the doctor asking him whether he will do her the very greatest favor. The second act is twenty years later, and it is clear that Billy the doctor didn't, for there is now an epileptic son named Lenox. He is a rather gruesome young man who presses home the lessons of eugenics for two acts by trying to burn up a poodle dog and choke his ex-fiancée. He kills himself in the end.

The intention of the author was to argue that women should know how to prevent the conception of unfit children. This is what the Cardinal objected to. He didn't say that the play was rather a bore. He didn't object to the backstairs science which assumes that if a mother hates an unborn child that child will hate her when it grows up. He didn't object because there was a single incident in the play which wasn't rigorously decent. For "The Unborn" is not the kind of play from which people go forth to a life of sin. They are far more likely to shiver and go home. No, what the Cardinal objected to was not that the play makes sin alluring, but that it makes certain statutes based on certain ecclesiastic taboos rather unpleasant to the imagination.

But what I should like to know is how Commissioner Bell's mind worked in this crisis. New York will stand a good deal on the stage. Any night you can see almost any kind of immorality made attractive; crooks, swindlers, get-rich-quick men, are, on the whole, the heroes of the contemporary American drama. In "The Birth of a Nation" we tolerated a spectacle so poisonous to good will that one wonders whether there is any gallantry left in our democracy. We have endless farces devoted to getting drunk, walking into the wrong apartment, waking up in the wrong bed. But when a group of serious men and women want to discuss the future of the race in a solemn and uninteresting way, the church says nay, and the state submits.

The most interesting part of the evening was a short speech by Dr. Haiselden of Chicago. It was a delight to discover that he is utterly incapable of making a speech, that whatever else he may be he is not a talking doctor. He was most horribly uncomfortable standing up before an audience. His speech came in squirts, for he had tried to memorize it, and it made him tired to have forgotten so much of it. Everybody loved him because he couldn't find where he was in his typewritten manuscript, and his stiff kid gloves kept him from turning the pages. He is a tall angular American, all homespun and no lace. He looks as Senator La Follette might look if he lengthened out and ceased to be an orator. But what Dr. Haiselden said I do not remember. It seemed at the time a jumble of superb sincerity and extreme unworldliness. Yet the man aroused immediate trust and affection, because he is part of the authentic virtue of America. When he said that he wanted the Americans to be a virile people, not a nation of degenerates, you could almost smell the background of corn and hogs and sober piety which he had in mind.

Dr. Haiselden said enough on Monday night to make one wish that he would be very sparing in his public utterances. He has not the sophistication to find his way through the tangles of publicity. He is one of those sincere, shrewd men, so common in America, who are insensitive to people of a different psychology. Dr. Haiselden has clever enemies, and traps will be laid for him.

W. L.

VERSE

The Room Over the River

Good-night, my love, good-night;
The wan moon holds her lantern high,
And softly threads with nodding light
The violet posterns of the sky.
Below, the tides run swift and bright
Into the sea.

Odours and sounds come in to us,
Faint with the passion of this night;
One little dream hangs luminous
Above you in the scented light;
Roses and mist, stars and bright dew
Draw down to you.

How often in the dewy brake,
I've heard above the sighing weirs,
The night-bird singing for your sake
His lonely song of love and tears;
He too, sad heart, hath turned to rest,
And sleep is best.

Flower of my soul! Let us be true
To youth and love and all delight.
Clean and refreshed and one with you
I would be ever as to-night,
And heed not what the day will bring,
Nor anything.

And now the moon is safe away,
Far off her carriage lampions flare,
Lost in the sunken roads of day,
They vanish in the icy air.
Good-night, my love, good-night,
Good-night.

CUTHBERT WRIGHT.