

rules, to amend international law, and to behave as the inconsiderate autocrat of the high seas. She has steadily encroached upon the rights of neutrals, she who is supposed to be fighting for the sanctity of neutrals. She has stretched the rules of contraband beyond all precedent, has subjected neutral commerce to her own caprice and made it suffer the penalties of her own cumbersome administration. All this Great Britain has justified, as the German Chancellor justified the invasion of Belgium, by proclaiming it a necessity.

If the United States submitted without protest, Germany might well smile at our proclamation of neutrality. In sheer self-respect this country could not afford to allow supreme naval power to destroy its neutral rights. But there is a larger reason than that. It is that the extension of neutral rights as against the "necessities" of nations at war is perhaps the one most immediate and practical step towards a better world organization. In time of war neutral powers alone have a direct interest in the preservation of international law. That interest is based on their desire to trade, to use their neutrality to protect themselves from the ravages of the conflict. Such protection is the common interest of neutrals, and if ever there is to be a league of neutrals its first and most unsentimental basis will be the intention to safeguard commerce.

For English newspapers to complain is for them to assume that we are England's official ally, which we are not. Some British comment, moreover, seems to imply that while it is a crime to use German militarism to destroy neutral rights, there is something to be said for British naval power when it follows the German example. If that were so, England would present the curious spectacle of a people fighting and dying for public law on land while it violated public law at sea.

The affair demonstrates that self-interest is still the real law of nations, that the brilliantly colored moral sentiments of international discourse will not often wash. The first positive action of this country in a world war has been to insure its export trade against stoppage and inconvenience; nothing more glorious than that. The note has chanced to reveal the unrhetorical United States, as British action at sea has revealed England minus her morals. After all the preaching of brotherhood, after all the beating of rusty swords into useless ploughshares, after all Europe's hope and our own vanity, our only utterance on the war is to protect our shipping.

It might have been otherwise. Had we protested when Belgium was violated we should have shown that we care disinterestedly about neutral rights, and our protest now would come with doubled force and heightened grace. Our champion-

a measure of obvious and justified self-interest into a service to the world.

The Minute-Men Myth

IT is highly ironical that the most bellicose utterances of the armament controversy should have come not from our militarists, but from the lips of our two most ardent advocates of peace. Secretary Bryan's words are already famous:

"The President knows that if this country needed a million men, and needed them in a day, the call would go out at sunrise and the sun would go down on a million men in arms."

An interview in the *New York Times* quotes Mr. Carnegie as follows:

"Our nation is unique in an important respect. Its individuals are the best armed in the world. . . . Most Americans can afford to and do own guns with which to shoot, and furthermore, most Americans, when they shoot, can hit the thing at which they shoot."

In other words, if these two statements are true, we do not have to go in for armament because we are a nation armed to the teeth, ready to spring forth at a moment's notice; we have a natural genius for shooting, and we can "lick anything on the face of the earth." And this from the lips of men who cry for peace because they love it so.

Both statements are of course untrue. Our preparations are utterly inadequate to put even fifty thousand fresh men into the field over night, let alone a million. Even super-militant Germany, after years of preparation, required a fortnight for mobilization. Short of the enemy being at our throat, it would be criminal folly to send our citizen volunteers to the firing line before at least three months' training. Lord Kitchener is at present engaged in breaking all records for training troops, and yet he is asking six months to put his million men into battle shape.

Mr. Carnegie's statement leaves us hardly less astonished. It is news to us that most Americans carry guns. We should have said off-hand that fully three-fourths of our population have no experience whatsoever with high-power rifles. It is true that a good many farmers still keep a shot-gun about the house to knock down a rabbit or put a few buckshots into an occasional deer. But we did not know that they were experts at a thousand yards with a Krag-Jorgensen. If we are to believe Mr. Carnegie, every golf links in the country is really a concealed rifle range. What have we all been shooting at, that we can hit the stem of a wine glass from the hip like any circus sharpshooter? In our innocent, peace-loving way we had gradually forbidden the carrying of revolvers.

Nothing is accomplished in merely exposing a th-

how they could have been made and why they have been so largely accepted. It is a noteworthy fact, as yet hardly appreciated, that political thinking, and in fact all mass-thinking, is peculiarly subject to the influence of sheer mythology. An obvious myth or a flattering tradition gradually gains credence and becomes established in the popular imagination. Its tendency is to usurp the place of fact and to block the path of candid observation. It can do this because it is invested with more emotional warmth than the facts, because it pushes in the direction of our preferences and our national vanity, and because, very often, as in the case of patriotic myths, we have absorbed it from our earliest childhood. It is also the tendency of such political myth-thinking to increase the proportion of myth, so that in time the originally slight exaggeration overshadows the whole. Such myths are a godsend to the politician. He knows that any reference to a favorite myth will always bring an immediate response. If his followers begin to grow restless under the onslaught of facts and investigations, he need merely touch those old favorite chords. Usually the politician, if in the worst sense of the word he is a good politician, himself implicitly believes the myth.

In both Mr. Bryan's and Mr. Carnegie's statements the mythical foundation is transparent. It is the myth of the Revolutionary minute-men. We have all been taught in our school histories that the minute-men of Lexington and Concord performed prodigies of valor. We have been taught to revere their statues and to recall them as we ascended the Bunker Hill Monument. We have come to love the thought of the embattled farmer rising up over night to throw off the hated yoke of British tyranny. We played our boyish war games in that belief, just as we still build upon it our lackadaisical militia. Emotionally we are convinced that all an American citizen need do is to take down his gun and shoot the presumptuous invader of our shores.

Let us examine the historical truth that underlies this myth. What, as a matter of fact, were the minute-men of the Revolution? They were citizens-at-large whom the Provincial congresses and the Committees of Safety of 1774 instructed to keep their powder-horns filled and hold themselves in readiness to shoot Britishers. They had had no military drill, and no practice except in shooting Indians and small game. They went down to defeat after defeat, they were chronically under-supplied with ammunition, they were hardly more than an armed rabble, until men like Lafayette and De Kalb took them in hand and until untold and unnecessary hardships turned them into seasoned troops. They came well within the modern defini-

of invasion would give short shrift to such roadside amateurs. All that has been forgotten.

Will the myth of the minute-men ever be shaken? It probably did not become firmly entrenched in the American imagination until the war of 1812. At that time many veterans of the Revolutionary War were still alive who must have had the personal confidence that they could take on any dozen Britishers single-handed. How disastrous the myth was then has never been appreciated by us. It has conquered most of our historians. It is almost impossible to pick up any school history and get a realistic sense of the defeats we sustained, of the ignominious burning of Washington, of our utter demoralization. We think only of a series of brilliant naval victories, and of Jackson's comfortable victory at New Orleans over half-hearted British troops, just as we assume that it was we who won the battle of Bunker Hill. And who now remembers the bloody rabble of Bull Run or the more recent shame of Tampa? That is the nether side of the myth. It has become an arch concealer of facts, has inured us to what is really a monstrous callousness. It allows our planless and bewildered pacifists to pass off a purely emotional aversion to warfare as an established peace, and thoughtlessly exposes the next generation to all the vicissitudes of unpreparedness for war in order that the present generation may enjoy a simulacrum. Permanent peace is not necessarily a myth, but it can never be established on a myth, and a bellicose myth at that.

The Socialist Vote

WHSOEVER reads Mr. Ghent's skillful reply, printed elsewhere in this number, to our editorial article of December twelfth, will see that while he refers to our "clumsy concoction" and our "inaccurate and misleading statements," he does not in a single instance deny any of those statements, but merely supplants our interpretation by his own. He does not deny that the Socialist party is weak in the great industrial states and much stronger in states like Kansas, Minnesota and Texas. He does not deny that the relative vote of Florida is over three times that of industrial Massachusetts, while that of Oklahoma is more than six times as great. Nor does he deny that "year by year an ever smaller proportion of the Socialist vote was to be found in the great industrial commonwealths, and in several states an increased vote has been followed by an absolute decline." What he claims is merely this: that the vote in the industrial states, though admittedly a smaller proportion of the Socialist vote than ever before, is still increasing faster than the total vote of those states, and that in many of the