

The Fruit of Secret Alliances

How the War Came, by Earl Loreburn. London: Methuen & Co.

WHAT profit is there now in threshing over once more the question of who willed the war, if any one, by whose acts of crime or stupidity, by what institutional development, well meant in the first instance but perverted in the end, a world fell in ruins? Are we not now living under a new dispensation, excluding from possibility a repetition of the tragedy of 1914? Any one who is certain of this may omit Earl Loreburn's book from his list of required reading, although in so doing he will miss a rare intellectual pleasure. If the book is to be regarded merely as a historical essay, still it is one of the neatest and clearest ever written. Those who do not believe that the work of peacemaking was completed once for all at Versailles will place a far higher value on Earl Loreburn's book. It exhibits in a clear light the kind of thing that must be done and the kind of thing that must be avoided if peace is to be maintained among peoples nationalized enough to be conscious of definite interests that may need to be fought for.

Europe before 1914 was heading toward disaster. Inevitably? No; Earl Loreburn rejects, after a dispassionate examination, the theory of the inevitable war, bound to come sooner or later, and perhaps better sooner than later. That theory is merely an excuse for the crime and sloth and folly that brought on the war or failed to prevent it. The German military machine did indeed want war, as did the aristocratic and militaristic group surrounding the senile Austrian emperor. There were groups in other countries as well that welcomed war. But the vast majority of the people of every country, Germany included, feared and loathed war. And the anti-war forces were growing.

If the Serbian crisis could have been kept from blazing up into a general war, there would no doubt have been other crises to threaten the peace, but each crisis eased off would have strengthened the chance that the world war would never happen. Presently the old Austrian emperor was bound to die, to be succeeded by an heir less the tool of militarists and oppressors. The power of the German social democracy, bitterly hostile to the autocracy and general staff, was growing apace; in five years or ten of peace Junkers and Pan-Germans would have had something to occupy themselves with besides dreams of conquest and world empire. The condition of European affairs was precarious, not desperate, up to the last week of July 1914. And even in that last week, there was hope for a peaceful solution, until arrogance on the one side and weakness on the other pushed the balance of forces to the side of war.

Not that either the arrogance or the weakness were signally exemplified; they were disastrous because of the extraordinarily instable equilibrium of Europe. That instability is explained by Earl Loreburn in terms of the two storm centers, Alsace Lorraine and the Balkans, and the system of alliances, open or secret, that insured the transmission to the whole European structure of disturbances originating in those centers. Alsace Lorraine was relatively quiescent. Every one knew that France would never precipitate a war for the sake of recovering the lost provinces. But they remained a perpetual barrier to harmonious relations between France and Germany. They kept both countries in a state of suspicion. When the Bismarckian

policy of cultivating Russian friendship was dropped by the Kaiser in his pride, French diplomacy naturally seized its opportunity. Russia was bound fast to France, and thereafter the Slavic peril became the nightmare of the German people and the ever convenient propaganda of German militarism. What is more to the present point, by the alliance with Russia, France became subject to every bellicose impulse emanating from the Balkans. For to Russia, with her secular dream of Constantinople and her sentimental interest in the Southern Slavs, every shift of power in the Balkans was a matter of grave concern.

By her alliance with Russia, then, France was in perpetual danger of being drawn into war over some Balkan question that did not in any way affect her own interest. That was understood. Presumably the French found compensating advantage in the security offered them against German aggression. What was not understood was that Great Britain, also, had drifted into a similar position through a series of understandings with France. Sir Edward Grey did indeed assert, down to the very last, that England's hand was free. No doubt he believed it. The British people, certainly, was not aware of any engagement that might compel them to fight Germany and Austria on account of a Balkan quarrel. But was England in fact free to come into the war or stay out? She was not, Earl Loreburn shows quite conclusively. She had, in fact, by her naval agreements committed herself so far to France that in the event of an attack on France by Germany, England was bound in honor to defend France and French shipping against the German fleet. That was not unlimited support, but it was still less the neutral position that the British nation assumed to be theirs.

Those secret commitments, not the rape of Belgium, made British participation in the war inevitable. Does that need to be proved? Earl Loreburn proves it. Indeed, but for those commitments Belgium might have gone unravaged. If England had said, Touch Belgium and we fight; let her alone and we are neutral, would Germany have made a bloody highway of the Belgian fields? The supposition is absurd. England, if her hands had not been tied, could have required of Germany a guarantee of French integrity, also, as a condition of her neutrality. The Germans were well aware of the punishment the British fleet could inflict on them. They would have paid, and paid well, for neutrality. Now, most of us will agree that since the Germans would not keep the peace, it was best that the war should be extended until forces enough were marshalled to beat them. It was better that England was committed to the support of France. But that is beside the point, which is that the British were committed by their diplomats without their knowledge and without the knowledge of the world.

What, after all, was the practical difference, whether Britain was bound by a secret agreement or an open alliance, so long as the object was beneficent, the safeguarding of France against aggression, and so long as the final result was the overthrow of the Central European autocracies? If the British people had realized that they would inevitably be drawn into a continental struggle, they would certainly not have been caught unprepared. Believing as they did that the traditional British policy of aloofness from continental quarrels was still in force, the British public could see no reason whatever for huge armies organized on the continental plan. A small land force and a powerful navy, these were sufficient to meet any exigencies arising out of traditional British policy. They were lamentably inadequate to meet the exigencies of the new policy Sir Edward Grey

had fastened upon the country without the knowledge or consent of either parliament or public.

Nor is that all. If Germany had been given plainly to understand that in case she made war upon France and Russia, she would have to reckon also with the resources of the British Empire, she might well have paused to consider whether mobilization on Russia's part was not sufficiently answered by her own mobilization, without a declaration of war. The course of negotiations in the week before Germany declared war showed plainly that England wanted peace, and so did France and Russia, that civilian Germany hoped for peace with honor, and even Austria was ready to consider a compromise. War broke because the Kaiser and the German General staff were keyed up to such a pitch of war insanity that the Russian mobilization seemed to them necessarily a direct challenge. It would not have seemed so direct a challenge if they had not been confident of an easy victory, and this confidence rested on the assumption that England would not come in.

If Germany had known that England was committed against her there might have been no war. If England had not been committed, and had been able to say to Russia, Mobilize provocatively, and we wash our hands of you, the mobilization which gave Germany her cause of war would probably not have taken place. England might have prevented the war if she had been either openly allied to France or had had her hands absolutely free. And it is no wonder that Germans of the Machiavellian school should argue from the ambiguity of England's policy that she willed the war that was to destroy her commercial and naval rival.

That, of course, is rubbish. No one can follow the negotiations of the period preceding the declaration of war without becoming convinced that if there was one man in Europe who sincerely desired peace, who labored incessantly, desperately for peace, that man was Sir Edward Grey. The responsibility for precipitating the war rests squarely with the Kaiser and his military advisers. They thought England would not fight; they would otherwise have acted differently. That makes their moral culpability greater rather than less. But the fact remains that Sir Edward Grey and his collaborators had bound England secretly to the defense of France instead of by an open compact, accepted by Parliament and fortified by preparations commensurate with the responsibility. Thereby, what they could not have foreseen, they had placed themselves out of position to say the decisive word that might have prevented the war. For the apparent advantages of flexibility and friendliness of international relationships they had led their country along the path of secret diplomacy to an impasse where all their good will and that of a peace loving nation were impotent to ward off the greatest disaster of the ages. Will an honorable statesman ever again put his trust in secret understandings?

The peace of the world can not be securely established except by international organization. But no practicable organization can of itself make war impossible. If intrigue and secret commitments go on among the nations within the organization, we have no guarantee whatever against the rise of factions that may ultimately appeal to force. Let there be no separate alliances within the League: that was one of Wilson's soundest contributions to internationalism. But above all, let there be no secret alliances, to fill the new world with the suspicion and resentment that ruined the old.

ALVIN JOHNSON.

Industry for Service

Organizing for Work, by Henry L. Gantt. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe.

"THE prime function of a science," says Mr. Gantt, "is to enable us to anticipate the future in the field with which it has to deal." Looked at thus in its proper perspective, it may be truly said that "scientific management" has served the world well. For out of a cult which insisted somewhat stridently that "facts" and "science" were the solvents of industrial ills grows a spirit daily sweeter and more reasonable which points out that if our economic institutions are to be truly scientific, they must also be democratic and human.

Mr. Frederick W. Taylor's scientific principles despite their insight and utility have always had a tendency to become metallic, inflexible and even exploitative in the hands of some of his followers. Now, twenty years after his pioneer work, a disciple faithfully carries forward the principles by the same scientific methods to the point where he says in italics, "we have proved in many places that the doctrine of service which has been preached in the churches as religion is not only good economics and eminently practical but because of the increased production of goods obtained by it, promises to lead us faithfully through the maze of confusion into which we seem to be headed, and to give us that industrial democracy which alone can afford a basis for industrial peace."

The milestones on the road of this gradual but fundamental conversion are not only interesting in the history of ideas, they are an earnest of that intellectual outlook which promises to gain ascendancy among genuine industrial leaders. Indeed, these leaders have already brought substantial improvement in their method of attacking the economic maladjustment. Mr. Gantt is himself today his predecessor's adequate critic. "It is undoubtedly true," he confesses, "that the 'efficiency' methods which have been much in vogue for the past twenty years in this country, have failed to produce what was expected of them." And the explanation is, he says, that these methods "have been applied in a manner that was highly autocratic."

But the earlier critics of Taylor were not allowed to offer such criticism unchallenged. They fought their way against a formidable opposition. Robert G. Valentine, addressing the Taylor Society as late as 1915, on *The Progressive Relation Between Efficiency and Consent* was received with an almost abusive absence of sympathy. Robert F. Hoxie after writing *Scientific Management and Labor* was only spared a grilling from the same group by his untimely death. Valentine and Hoxie deserve credit for irritating the devotees of the science of management into a most uncomfortably questioning state of mind. "Efficiency," and "science," these two insisted, were not absolute values. They were relative concepts to be viewed always in relation to social utility and human happiness.

Robert B. Wolf added the weight of his evidence and the force of his personality to the case against the autocratic manner and for a setting up of human values, by telling individual production records in New Hampshire and later of his success with collective bargaining in the Northwest.

Carleton B. Parker was at the same time attracting attention by his popularized presentation of the psychology of industrial behavior. He joined with Wolf in insisting that the normal human being could and would be interested