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FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1915,
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MICHAEL MONAHAN

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The Phoenix

Michael Monahan, Editor

AP
2
P568
v. 2
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Two Pictures

THERE is a famous passage in Carlyle which describes the meeting of two hostile armies arrayed for mutual slaughter and waiting only the word of their commanders. The common men of whom these armies are made up have not the slightest grievance against each other, nor are they moved by the least animosity. No supreme cause of country has called them into the field—they are there simply in obedience to the summons of their rulers, for reasons which touch them not at all, which do not concern their private fortunes or interests, and which they are not suffered to understand. Yet at the call of authority they have abandoned their wives and children, their fathers and mothers, their sweethearts or promised brides,—yes, all that attaches them to life, in order to shed their innocent blood and the blood of others innocent as themselves, merely to gratify some capricious whim, some guilty or vain ambition of their rulers.

On each side there are priests actively exhorting these common men to do their duty: that is, to shed their common blood with courage as they hope for salvation through the merciful wounds of Christ. And the priests are very careful to point out that in so doing they are but obeying the will of God, as expressed through their rulers, His chosen representatives. Now as this plea is put forth by the priests on both sides, and indeed ever has been since men first banded to slay and rob their kind, it follows that the horrible blasphemy is achieved of making God chiefly responsible for the crime of war!

Thus braced and stimulated by the blessing of religion,

these common men prepare bravely to slaughter their fellows and to submit to be slaughtered themselves; telling themselves that it must be the right thing to do, since their rulers desire it and the priests sanction it. Yet they go to the killing with reluctance or indifference, at first, until very soon, with the blind fury and savagery which the spirit of war engenders, they are changed in despite of themselves. From harmless common men, thinking only with regret of their abandoned homes and dear ones, of their peaceful occupations, the idle plough and loom and workshop,—they are in a few moments turned into murderers, delighting and exulting in the slaughter of their fellows, maddened by the sight of blood, crazy to kill—kill—kill!—and lost to the instincts of humanity.

Something like this is the terrible image of war, called up by Carlyle's famous description. I have here employed the idea—not the words.

There is another picture of two armies drawn by the hand of Karl Marx the Socialist, which, tho not now so famous and admired as that of Carlyle, will in time to come be far more celebrated, invoking greater praise and blessing upon the name of its author. It is in truth less a picture than a prophecy whose fulfilment no remote generation is surely destined to see.

Karl Marx describes the meeting of the armies for battle in much the same manner as Carlyle. They are made up of common men—that most abundant food for cannon. They are summoned to the field by their rulers and have themselves no interest or stake in the matter, no cause at issue, no passion of hatred or revenge to gratify; nor is there any true interest of patriotism to serve by the conflict to which they are driven. However, the priests are on hand to supply the cordials of faith and absolution; and after making the usual exhortation, they retire to the rear.

The armies are now face to face and almost eye to eye, when at the signal for battle given simultaneously on both sides, the mighty host of arrayed enemies throw down their weapons and with one universal hurrah rush into each other's arms!

In that tremendous shout the Spectre of War vanishes for-

ever. The priests and the vultures leave the field where the Brotherhood of Man celebrates its holy rites. The rulers abdicate their thrones and the Era of Humanity begins. . .

Who would not prefer the picture of Karl Marx? Who would not do what in him lies to speed the day of its realization? Who does not believe that what is now happening throughout Europe makes that Day as inevitable as the rising of the Sun of Justice!

MICHAEL MONAHAN.



The Savior

From the German of Richard Dehmel.

IN a desert lay a crowd of people
 Half dead from thirst. They waited aloud.
 One only suffered silently:
 A beautiful girl with brown
 And helpless eyes, whose bosom burned
 More greedily with pity than with thirst.
 Then, as if grown out of the scorched horizon
 There came a stranger to those people
 And raised toward them his forefinger;
 While from that pointed, quivering fingertip
 A blood drop welled—welled, trembled, fell—
 Fell down upon the sand.
 Astonished stared the people at the stranger.
 He stood quite still. Drop after drop
 Fell from his finger to the sand,
 And ever, as each red drop struck,
 He paled and shuddered, while they gaped,
 And some were heard to snarl: "He's mocking us!"
 Then cried he loud with his last strength:
 "Come here and drink—I bleed to death for you!"
 But as he passed away, the girl spoke up:
 "It's water that they want!"

EDWIN BJORKMAN.



I hate the woman who is not a mystery to herself as well
 as to me.