

**LOOKING BEFORE
AND AFTER: SOME
WAR-TIME ESSAYS**

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Looking before and after: some war-time essays by Clay MacCauley

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CLAY MACCAULEY

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SOME WAR-TIME ESSAYS

They err, who count it glorious to subdue
By conquest far and wide; to overrun
Large countries; and in field great battles win,
Great cities by assault: What do these worthies
But rob, and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
Peaceable nations, neighboring or remote,
Made captive, yet deserving freedom more
Than those their conquerors, who leave behind
Nothing but ruin wheresoe'er they rove,
And all the flourishing works of peace destroy.

* * * * *

But if there be in glory aught of good,
It may by means far different be attained,
Without ambition, war, or violence;
By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
By patience, temperance.

From "Paradise Regained."

JOHN MILTON,

1671.

BY

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INTRODUCTION

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Five years ago, I was one in a large number of observers of current events and students of the historic development of mankind, who believed that they had much to justify their hope in a near realization of their cherished ideal of "Peace on Earth and Good Will among Men."

Prompted by seemingly clear signs of the times, I had published, three years previously, —1911—a booklet under the title, "Thought and Fact for To-day."

In the introduction to the book I declared that, "War is not a necessary, and therefore is not to be a perpetual, accompaniment of social, or national development. It has become a relic, or a survival of the life of savage and barbaric man, unworthy of toleration under the enlightenment fast spreading among the mankind of to-day. And even though, for the purpose of self-defense against the lust of gain and power of some nations, it may be necessary for the best of peoples to continue to bear arms, it is still one of the highest of national and international duties to advance continually the plea for a World-Peace, and to use all ways that open towards it."

One of the essays in my little speculative venture was an argument favored by the gradual development, in the course of the human ages, of Altruism as a directing and formative influence in man's social progress. Much of that essay bears repetition now.

THE THEORETIC SUPREMACY OF PHYSICAL
FORCE IN SOCIAL EVOLUTION.

"There is a form of philosophy" I said "whose fundamental assumption is that human life is subjected to a struggle for existence, in an arena essentially material, under the sole determination of material forces. The upholder of this theory allows no place in his speculations for what may be called Altruism, or practical unselfishness, as a dominating or regulative power; much less does he allow any decisive influence to such social factors as Good Will and Justice. To him no equitable and happy solution of the great Social Problem is possible. Nor can there be to him any growing dominion among nations of such reciprocal amity as will conduce at length to a World-Peace. In the creed of the empirical necessitarian, man's physical struggle for existence, outwardly against Nature, and inwardly as a Society, is contemporaneous with his existence. Any attempt to emancipate himself from this struggle, or to enter a serener domain is a delusive mockery; an effort 'to create out of the nebosity of sick brains elements unknown to nature;' 'to invent out of airy nothings

that which the laws and forces governing the world deny.' ”

I said further,—“ It is not at all beyond question, that ‘ the beginnings of Social Order and its intervals of peace,’ were established when primitive mankind, who were living ‘ in continuous individual strife,’ happened to produce ‘ one brawny fighter ’ who ‘ killed or subdued all those who fought and roamed in his immediate thickets.’ Also, it is far from being an established fact, that, when ‘ the last blow ’ of the primeval savage’s ‘ crude axe had fallen, and he saw about him the dead and submissive, he beheld the first Nation ; ’ or, that, ‘ in his stone axe there was the first law, and, by means of it, the primitive process began by which through all succeeding ages nations were to be created or destroyed ; ’ or, that, since the beginnings of social life took place ‘ there has been no cessation nor deviation from this inexorable law.’ ”

BUT PRUDENCE, ALSO, IS A REGULATIVE
SOCIAL AGENT.

“ As a matter of course, no one of human kind knows, or can know, anything about the actual beginnings of Human Society. But, so far as the facts preserved by authentic history may be used to justify a guess, these facts make it probable that primitive humanity learned that the instinct for self-preservation can often be fully as well served through some form of Mutual Concession and Agreement as by perpetual battle. Beyond the range of the immediate family, we do not find that mon-

archy is the typical method of government among even the lowest of the groups of mankind now existing, Gentes, clans and tribes are to be found everywhere, as fundamental forms of Social Order, among the most savage and undeveloped of the mankind now on the earth. It is rather highly probable, indeed, that human beings, from the very beginnings of their associated life, were impelled to regulate that life much as we now see animals of all kinds managing their living together. They have learned through experience not only ways of safety and gain by conflict and victory in mortal combat, but also, and even more effectively, by a practical acknowledgment of some such principle as, 'Yours is yours and mine is mine.' It has required no very extended experience, probably, in any association of animals to lead them to a recognition of the fact that it is far more conducive to their own safety and welfare, generally, to leave certain burrows, dens, caves and ranges, in field and forest, in the possession of their occupants, than to be constantly seeking battle over them; also, to let others associate with certain mates and their offspring undisturbed. 'Mine is mine and thine is thine,' is fully as effective a regulative and formative social principle, no matter what its originating causes, as 'Mine is mine and thine is mine, too,' and 'I will have thine even though I lose mine, or die for it.' "

CO-OPERATION, TOO, IS A SOCIAL FACTOR.

" More than this. Even the beasts of the

forests seem to have learned that at times they can further and strengthen self-preservation much better by forming themselves into groups, and pursuing certain common ends together, than by acting alone. Surely, it would need no very long course of experience for a reasoning being, which, eminently, man is, to learn that his instinct for self-preservation could often be served full as well through a prudent suppression of the combative impulse; through effort at mutual concession; through conciliatory and reciprocal agreement, as by reckless assault and implacable, murderous battle. In fact, self-preservation can, as a rule, be far more easily served and assured by mutual allowance and forbearance than by persistent conflict. Battle means death to one or both; or conquest for one and subjugation for the other. Conquest is followed by slavery tyranny, or spoliation. All these ends violate, for one or for all the combatants, the law imperative over all living creatures,—‘Protect thyself.’ ‘Self-preservation is the first law of Nature.’ ”

MANY FACTORS ARE BACK OF SOCIAL
ORDER.

“In all likelihood, therefore, at the beginnings of Social Order, not only was Aggressive Greed, through ‘the stone axe’ of the ‘brawny fighter,’ active in creating the first State, and continued as the embodiment of the first social law: with it, too, as a condition necessary to any persistence, or betterment of the supposed Society, there must have been some other