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### THE LOGIC OF THE METHODS OF WAR.

IN the old barbarous days, some four or five centuries ago, there was not a standing army in Europe. With the advance of civilisation war has become one of the learned professions, and as over-crowded as the rest.

A new and deadlier engine of destruction is produced every year. Simultaneously, what remained of chivalry gives place to science, personal prowess fails before discipline and a calculator in spectacles. The soldier that was the ready follower in the fortunes of an elective duke, or a proud member of a local clan, is now a simple unit of a mass of obedient human machines. The poetry of war is on the wane; but what makes its "painful prose"—the roar of the rifled cannon, the scream of the shell, the rapid ping of the breech-loader, the thunderous sound of the torpedo, the compound noise of grape, canister, mitrailleuse—is more prevalent than ever.

The beauty of war, if there be any beauty in war, lies in the heroic qualities, the virtues that it evokes. As the method of war is subject now as ever to wide fluctuations and developments, any nascent military inventions, in order to be hailed with any good favour, ought to belong to one of three categories. They should be such as will foster personal virtue as an element of war; such as will reward a well-meaning and industrious race with power above that of a depraved or disturbing people; or such as tend to cancel war altogether. If the first of these alternatives cannot be realised, and the prosecution of the second becomes too heavy a burden to be borne, the last should be striven for by all practical measures possible, as well as by the gentle educative influences of the Utopianists.

Officialism, which in former days meant gentility, or the aristocratic

element, claims to regulate the methods of war, and there is even a sort of international agreement to such methods, which is reasonably adhered to until it suits some race or other to be iconoclastic and outrage conventional. The noble French knights of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries settled on gentlemanly principles that the well-born were the warriors, and the common herd best relegated to vulgar pursuits; and if there could have been maintained an international universality of chivalry, war no doubt would have been a combat of aristocratic champions making use of exquisite and strictly regulated weapons. But the English yeomen disdained not to string the yew tree bow, no seemly weapon for knightly hands, at least so said the knightly oracles; and the result was that tens of thousands of the keepers of the lofty military traditions were slain by inferior forces for their orthodoxy.

When the knightly lance, the plaything of the courtly tournament, as well as the arm of serious war, gave way to the plebeian arrow, which then in its turn was beginning to be accompanied by the still more indiscriminate weapon, the rude cannon, there was marked the beginning of a mighty revolution. For a long time the bellowing tube did not reveal its coming importance, owing to the rudeness of the arm and ignorance and awkwardness in its use. But it was a development further removed from the knightly ideal than even the charging of arrows for the long bow with a phial of quicklime or an ounce of wildfire. Those were small breaches upon the aristocratic methods of war, this was a baby giant coming to break them down. When artillery, in the sense that we now know the word,

first came to outdo the old and general "artillery," or craft of archery, the picture presented reminds us of times still more remote, when the barbaric elephant made panic among the mounted horsemen, brave enough so long as they might fight in wonted orthodox fashion.

The chivalrous and aristocratic idea of war is not of mediæval birth: the Spartans committed the cares of trade to the servile class, as unworthy of generous and free-born souls, and by a fierce asceticism prepared themselves for all the vicissitudes and hardships of the position of men of valour and honour. None were admitted to the roll of the cavaliers among the Athenians that were not both in good plight of body, and possessed of considerable property.

There is a possible philosophic theory of war very different from those already named, and a rather miserable one, namely, that war is an escape-valve for the turbulent element of the community, a resort for exuberant physical arrogance, a bitter medicine for hot blood. An old philosopher avers that the natural state of man is a state of warfare. This is an over-statement; the enthusiasm of war, except in the case of a few bravos, savage or civilised, or when a strong excitement is swaying a people, is for the most part a somewhat fictitious and unreal thing. Quarrellings, which sometimes spread to large oppositions; national antagonisms, selfish impulses, private or dynastic fanaticisms and rivalries, certainly actuate mankind, and lead up to war. But war is their outcome only, and not to be called the natural state of man.

Physical pride, among races in a state of comparative animalism, is no doubt in some cases so strong as to give a limited countenance

to the maxim that the natural state of man is a condition of warfare. To allow to the maxim a general truth is to reduce man to the level of rival game birds in a farmyard. The ancient theory of war is, indeed, not very unlike a picture of a fighting-cock state:—

Hands, nails, and teeth, these were  
archaic arms—

Stones, riven fagots from the woods,  
rough boughs,  
Fierce flaming brands;—succeed these  
rude alarms,

The force of steel, and brass, which  
mightier mischief rouse.

But there are even aborigines of gentle and peaceful kind, and in our more civilised communities the pride of the bravo element of society is not so pronounced as to drag the peaceful many into any war of magnitude. We may dismiss this physical view of war as of lessening moment. No modern statesman would argue that war is made to absorb a superfluity of physical energy that would otherwise make the country an ungovernable revel of outrage. Political objects, gradually popularised, and by consequence gradually productive of excitement and sympathy among the masses, now create wars, and the army performs its part not from an initiatory enthusiasm, but from obedience to habit and command. It cannot be said in the generality of cases that the men are unwilling to obey, but rarely are the ranks primarily eager for the fray, for warfare's sake. To repress the military ardour of an army, provided no strong passion held its natural leaders, or their communicative fire could be kept from exerting its influence, it would in the majority of cases be sufficient to disband the host.

“The end of war,” according to orthodox notions, “is either to

redress past injury, or to prevent future injury, and the mode whereby Belligerent Force operates to accomplish one or other of these objects, is by taking security from the wrong-doer; in other words, by the seizure of his property. Hence war implies necessarily a direct operation of Force against Property, while it entails only accidentally the employment of Force against the persons of individuals, by reason of the resistance which they may offer to the process of taking security from the wrong-doer.”

This view is perhaps no more circuitous than that of the legal eye in general in its theory of things. But it is too limited for a generalisation, in that it includes only certain kinds of war; it would not, for instance, apply to a battle of fanaticisms, where the employment of force is primarily against individuals, and the question of proprietary security comes on only after the personal passions are exhausted.

It may serve, however, as a modern representative opinion upon war, and will shew how completely the ancient notion of personal distinction or chivalry has disappeared from it.

The ennobling possibilities having well nigh vanished from the field of battle by the substitution of mechanical agencies for the personal energy and daring that met the foe hand to hand, war has become a scientific problem. Its object being to cripple or derange human machinery by the most elaborate enginery of slaughter, to profess to avoid cruelty in the actual conflict, or to conduct war according to principles of humanity and civilisation (in alternative phrase, brotherly feeling and politeness), would seem to be not very unlike trying to tell lies truthfully. The manner of fight now

is to wound from a distance; first with the ordnance of long range, then the mortar, afterwards come into play the rifle, the lighter cannon, the mitrailleuse, and at the nearest approach to close quarters, the revolver pistol; rarely now, comparatively, is there use for sword or bayonet, or the grapple of one with another. The rapidity of the breech-loader keeps an interval of death between actual contact of man and man.

Whether it is a wise, nay, a justifiable step, politically, to maim tens of thousands of the individuals of a community, to roughly repair their injuries, and then to return them to society to bring a tidal infusion of physical imperfection into its very bosom—incapacity, disease, burden—is a grave question on which it is scarcely competent for any single individual to give dogmatic judgment.

But that it is cleaner work, and not less humane, to make a "happy dispatch" by the most certain implements of death, than to half kill by a less deadly wound, some will be disposed to believe from the study of the accounts of the day after the battle. Here is a recital of the *sequela* of a modern action. The observer (*Daily Telegraph*, September 8th, 1877) is a surgeon of some position in the United States, on a professional tour through districts under war. The observations are of the practice of one of the Great Powers of Europe, one not only regarded as civilised, but posing itself as civilising; a so-called Christian nation at whose capital was declared, in 1868, a great international contract concerning humanitarian methods of war.

"The men are, as a rule, put into bullock carts, close to the field of action, not even a first bandage having been applied to their hurts, and are

jolted off for ten or twelve miles to some village where there is a field hospital, generally already crowded. There they are allowed to lie, just as they first fell, in their uniforms, stiff and stained with blood, wallowing in their own excrements; nobody attends to them, brings them food or water, or does the least thing for them; they groan their wretched lives out in agony of body and despair of soul. I was at Radonicza, the head-quarters of the Czar, on the second evening after the great battle. About ten p.m. a train of about 2000 wounded came in in bullock carts. There was no one to receive them. Nobody brought them a cup of bouillon or a drop of brandy. They had had no food save a small ration of black bread, since they were carried off the field. None of their wounds were dressed. Their condition was simply indescribable. There they were, in the carts ranged along the side of the road, filling the air with their cries and groans; and there they remained all night, exposed to the bitter cold, within a few hundred yards of the Emperor's sleeping-place. I left Radonicza between ten and eleven a.m. of the following day; and then *not one* of these unfortunates had been taken out of a cart, had his wounds dressed, or received the least nourishment or attention. Whatever assistance I proffered was uniformly refused on the plea that none but a graduate of a Russian surgical college could be allowed to touch Russian wounded. Over fifty hours certainly elapsed between the time at which these poor wretches received their wounds and that in which they had any treatment whatsoever. . . . Utterly inexcusable is the barbarous roughness of the Russian army surgeons, especially in cases where the utmost gentleness is needed as a psychological means of soothing and encouragement to the patient. I have repeatedly been a distressed and indignant witness of brutalities, and even sheer cruelties, practised by the medical officers towards wounded soldiers, such as I could not have conceived it possible that any civilised human being would have been guilty of. . . . Just

before an operation, bound to be attended with hideous pain to the patient, I asked the surgeon in charge why he did not administer chloroform or ether, to alleviate the suffering of the soldier, at least during the operation. He replied, scornfully, 'Do you think I have time to waste upon giving anaesthetics? He must make the best of it!' . . . . On my road from Plevna to the Danube I passed over 600 wagons laden with wounded of all ranks. They had been for forty-eight hours on the road, with no provision whatsoever for food or medical attendance, under a burning sun by day, and a cold heavy dew by night, guarded by a few Cossacks. No nurses, no commissary, no stimulant to cheer, no kind word to encourage; they were wounded, and therefore no longer useful as slaying-machines—the sooner they died the less trouble they would give. At Gorny-Studen I saw the first hospital worthy of the name; it was arranged by Drs. Prisselkoff and Wyrodsoff, accommodates about 1200 men, and may be made to receive 2000 at a pinch. Well situated and excellently organised, it is provided with comforts as well as mere necessaries, and an excellent staff of able surgeons. In this hospital, and in this one *only*, can I conscientiously testify that the wounded received the attention they merit. But what is an arrangement applicable at the outside to 2000, when the fighting of one week alone has yielded between 14,000 and 15,000 wounded? If these appalling shortcomings are sought to be excused upon the pretext that money has been lacking to complete the hospital organisation of the army, I can only say that a country has no right to go to war if it cannot afford to ensure proper treatment to its wounded; and that the money spent in champagne and luxuries in the Russian headquarters would be better applied to the alleviation of the agony endured by the Czar's 'children' at his behest. His Majesty should put a stop to the splendid living, rioting, and drunkenness of his high officers, and insist that the poor wretches whom he has forced into the fight shall be properly taken care of."

If the conditions of warfare are such that one of the leading nations of the world, entering upon a struggle at an hour chosen by itself, and after months if not years of preparation, can only produce results like the above-described to vouch for its vaunted humanity, then indeed it is idle to profess civilisation in war; and the logical mind turns to the more frequently fatal result of the explosive bullet, or the most deadly arm that can be devised, as to a merciful alternative. What soldier himself would not choose to die like a man in his place rather than like a dog in the ditch, or than to be one of those who "prayed to be killed outright rather than continue to suffer the tortures inflicted upon them by ignorance, neglect, and want of foresight;" which very natural cries the American surgeon avers that he heard issuing from the lips of men who had lain forty and even fifty hours with untended wounds.

With accounts like these in mind, and they do not strike us as particularly novel, it seems the effort of a somewhat pitiful civilisation for diplomacy to cry out in injured tones about the explosive bullet. If warfare is to be made comfortable, or what is called civilised, it seems strangely illogical to complain of the most violent death whilst tolerating a lingering agony ending in death or in mutilated life. Here is the voice of authority relative to events in the great European war preceding the present conflict:—

"There have been committed on the part of the French, acts not less contrary to treaties than to the right of nations, and the usages of war among civilised peoples. In the battle of Woerth it was remarked that musket-balls buried themselves in the soil, and afterwards with the most distinct report of explosion made the soil fly around them. Immediately after this observation Colonel

Beckedoff was seriously wounded by an explosive ball. . . . Researches prosecuted on this matter, and not yet concluded, have led to the discovery among the munitions taken in Strasbourg of explosive balls for the tabatière gun."

This complaint bears the signature of no less a personage than Prince Bismarck, whose text is the violations by the French in 1870-1 of the Convention of Geneva.

We are told that "the measures to be adopted for overcoming resistance are susceptible of infinite modifications; and it is in respect of such modifications that the civilisation of the nineteenth century is far in advance of that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and may be expected in its turn to be left behind by the civilisation of future ages."

This observation from Sir Travers Twiss may lead us to the question, What is the accepted creed with regard to the conduct of war? If not known to chemists already, any day may disclose the secret of the chemical or electrical process by which a battalion can be annihilated at a distance of miles from its enemy. The torpedo represents, probably, the infantile stage of a still more terrible maturity of deadly power, just as the awkward early cannon steadily developed into the Armstrong, the Gatling, or the Krupp.

Does the theory of civilisation incline to the doctrine of the old military nobilities, that war is to be conducted by persons of birth and position, and that plebeian weapons are to be excluded from it; or to the conviction that the enlargement of the mechanical powers of slaughter must be pursued to its bitter end? We see no logical alternative, and in the belief that science to the uttermost is the only path that can be fol-

lowed, we see the best opportunity of the party of peace.

That the terrible progress of the science of slaughter is the only possible road to pursue is evident on general or historical principles, but the fact may be argued partially in detail. If a nation from the gentle promptings of humanity consents to eliminate from its warlike methods the more wholesale or fatal engines of destruction, it suffers paralysis if it stands alone. The strongest nation morally becomes the weakest physically; and the higher law which that nation might be the means of introducing to the world loses its sanction on the ultimate plane. Nay, further, if a group of the more advanced of nations withhold from use amongst themselves chemical powers that shock chivalry, what will be the fate of one of them if engaged with a nation outside the civilised ring, or one degree less compunctious? In these days a deadly secret cannot long remain hidden; the civilised man may take years to develop a destructive process of which a barbarian might learn to avail himself in a single month.

There are possible exceptions to the fact just stated. A race in a low state of mechanical development might become possessors of a line of armour-plated vessels and a battery of rifled ordnance with its complicated machinery and delicate adjustments; and these mighty engines, so formidable in capable hands, might be to them nothing more practicable than a Chinese puzzle. Imagine a savage trying to "sight" a Krupp, or even to load it!

But this comfortable doctrine must not be pressed too far; the inventions of the future may take a form not less deadly while more simple. Trade is so very free that a barbaric monarch may invest his

surplus funds in the most advanced productions of the most renowned manufactories, and may obtain the most skilful engineers of the most civilised countries, if he will bid a high enough price for them.

The hopes of peace for the world lie apparently rather in science than in civilisation. Civilisation compromises and says, Fight, but with weapons not quite the most cruel. Science says, Give me my full tether, and I will shew you how to make war impossible by evolving powers of annihilation that no hostile band can face. Thus as between a peace-loving race and wanton and less highly developed aggressors. On the other hand, between nations on an equality, or between whom there is a possibility of compact, as at present with regard to explosive bullets among the chief European powers, chivalry may have a word to say even as to modern war. Slay not these poor wretches by their ten thousands; let our select band represent the nation. Gentlemen of the enemy, we give you choice of weapons, our own preference is for the rapier. This sounds old-fashioned, but if nations, on the plea of humanity, can agree upon one restriction, why not upon others? Present civilisation wavers between opinions. It is too moral to tolerate the chivalrous theory; it is too short of faith to be able to retire from war altogether; it is afraid to let loose the powers of destruction quite to their extreme limit. So standing armies are maintained at burdensome cost, and we gradually get accustomed to the details provided by the special correspondent on the battle field.

The text of an international convention may help us to realise the present position of civilisation. The following provisions are extracted from the Declaration of St. Petersburg of 1868:—

“Considering that the progress of civilisation should have the effect of alleviating as much as possible the calamities of war;

That the only legitimate object, which States should endeavour to accomplish during war, is to weaken the military forces of the enemy;

That for this purpose it is sufficient to disable the greatest possible number of men;

That this object would be exceeded by the employment of arms which uselessly aggravate the sufferings of disabled men, or render their death inevitable;

That the employment of such arms would, therefore, be contrary to the laws of humanity;

The Contracting Parties engage mutually to renounce, in case of war among themselves, the employment by their military or naval troops of any projectile of a weight below 400 grammes which is either explosive or charged with fulminating or inflammable substances.”

To this Declaration, Austria and Hungary, Bavaria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Persia, Portugal, Prussia and the North German Confederation, Russia, Sweden and Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and Wurtemberg signed adherence. *Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus.* A score of great nations meet professedly on the common ground of humanity to alleviate the calamity of war; the total upshot of their august deliberation and resolve is that men must not be pelted with an explosive sphere weighing a pound troy, but may rightfully be shot with a similar missile of the weight of a pound avoirdupois.

A child of two once asked his mother, à propos of the ritual of the Church: “You say, ‘We have done those things that we ought not to have done . . . miserable sinners,’ every Sunday: why have not you been better?” It might similarly be asked of the

Great Mothers of Nations, "Why do you profess so much humanity, and end in placid agreement to forget it in the tithing of the 'mint and cummin' of destruction, in the accurate assessment of a round pound of scattering death?"

What wonder that three years after such a piece of civilisation's shadowy show, one of the high contracting parties should be making political capital out of blame of another for nonfulfilment of the bond, or that in less than ten years the Government at whose capital the Declaration was signed should be letting its soldiers die of the fester of untended wounds, a fate infinitely more aggravated than the "inevitable death" of an explosive ball weighing one pound troy.

But the importance of the Declaration of St. Petersburg, or any similar convention, is that it is an evidence of a new or revived principle in war; that of international restriction of its method. If the principle is sound there is no reason why it should end in a paltry question of a bullet; if international agreements can be trusted to hold good in time of trial, they can be indefinitely extended, even until war becomes attenuated to a contest between selected champions. If such agreements cannot be trusted to be maintained, the time spent in making them is time wasted.

On the other hand, if Science be left to accomplish her bitter work on the path of apparent cruelty, there is a gleam of hope that war may eventually be made too destructive to be waged.

But to follow neither alternative honestly, and instead thereof to compromise with much show of tender humanity, and taboo one miserable weapon while not ceasing to manufacture or invent others equally deadly, or even more destructive still, this is to palter with

the question, to do a petty thing in presence of large events, and to help to perpetuate a kind of war that makes wretched cripples of tens of thousands of men.

When we pass from the actual enactments of governments to the general question of custom in war as carried on between civilised nations, the effect of feeling upon its methods is shewn with much more fulness. The following is from Dana's edition of Wheaton's "International Law":—

"Nations seem to concur in denouncing the use of poisoned weapons, the poisoning of springs or food, and the introduction of infectious or contagious diseases. As to the nature of weapons not poisoned, there is, and perhaps can be, no rule. Concealed modes of extensive destruction are allowed, as torpedoes to blow up ships, or strewed over the ground before an advancing foe, and mines; nor is the destructiveness of a weapon any objection to its use. Hot shot is permitted, and bombshells to set fire to a vessel or camps or forts; but it is not thought justifiable to use chemical compounds which may maim or torture the enemy. It seems to be thought that a steam vessel on the defensive may throw her steam or boiling water upon boarders. Assassination is prohibited. As war will avail itself of science in all departments for offence and defence, perhaps the only test, in case of open contests between acknowledged combatants, is that the material shall not owe its efficacy, or the fear it may inspire, to a distinct quality of producing pain or of causing or increasing the chances of death to individuals, or spreading death or disability, if this quality is something else than the application of direct force, and of a kind that cannot be met by countervailing force, or remedied by the usual medical and surgical applications for forcible injuries, or averted by retreat or surrender. Starving a belligerent force by cutting off food and water is also lawful, for that may be so averted."

There are of course difficult minor questions, such as the em-



ployment of savage allies by nations bound to international methods of battle, which need not be here considered. The above may be taken as a reasonable general presentment of the modern custom of warfare.

It would no doubt be fair to give to the governments of the so-called civilised nations some credit for their efforts, however tentative, in the direction of the alleviation of the horrors of war. That the showy Declaration which ended in a pound fire-ball was not cast out by the ridicule of Europe, implies that public opinion is not so fully alive on the question of the conduct of war as on many others that seem of less importance. It is a strange thing that so little discussion should be awakened amongst ourselves by the present methods and possible future of war. Do we bow effortless heads to the inevitable? Do we fear to criticise in the rude popular manner the dictates of military specialists? Or do we imagine that everything is going on in as progressive a manner as possible, if we let it alone? It should not be forgotten that where popular feeling is dormant on such matters, there will always arise a sort of class conservatism. There is no reason to doubt its existence in methods military.

With the following paragraphs, drawn from the work of a legal authority already quoted (Sir Travers Twiss), no doubt most will agree within certain limits:—

“War presupposes always a certain sacrifice of life, but the civilisation of the present century is steadily striving to mitigate that sacrifice, and the conduct of the wars of the last ten years [dated October, 1875] has shewn that it has been in many respects successful.”

This is no doubt true in theory; in practice the sacrifice will be

proportional to the murderous power of the weapons employed; and no one can question that present engines are more deadly than those of the uncivilised past.

“The modern theory [is] that war should be regarded as a state of relations between governments only, and not between nations.”

“The European Governments are steadily acting in concert with a view to mitigate the practice of warfare.”

On the question of the protection of neutrality being afforded to buildings, ambulances, or vessels containing sick or wounded, and their attendants, there can be no doubt whatever.

But on the question of the logic of the methods of war, the current theory as we find it is most confused and confusing. If nations can agree upon the engines of war upon grounds of humanity and civilisation, how do they fix their point of judgment with regard to such engines or methods? What mystic virtue is there in a measure for an explosive ball between a pound troy and a pound avoirdupois? Moreover, as the powers of destruction develop, what is being done to decide upon the still deadlier means of offence of the future?

The brave of old liked to die by the hand of a brave; he deemed it inglorious to fall at the storming of a fort by a stone dropped by some abject creature from the battlement, by a missile from the hand of a woman or a boy. Nevertheless, there were fire-balls employed and showers of burning sand, weapons that it needed no trained or strictly military strength to direct.

Similarly our authorities protest against explosive bullets and yet make use of the torpedo, with its blind, impersonal, but fatal blow. Civilised governments would feel

horror at the general use of the poisoned arrow of the savage, or at resort to the poisoning of wells, but it may be doubted whether if a little band defending its country and reduced to the last gasp by an imperious and superior foe, were to have recourse to the most unconventional and uncivilised expedient that could be devised to get free of its antagonist, it would not meet with sympathy rather than condemnation. Again, the modern theory that war is a state of relation between governments solely, and not between nations, can only be sustained in regard to countries where the populace is unenergetic. Were it possible for England's shires to be touched by the foot of an invading host, there would soon be a state of relations rather more extended than that between government and government, or the temper of our people is greatly changed.

We have the story of the American War, concerning old John Burns, of Gettysburg, who, when battle neared his native place, put on his ancient best clothes, took his rifle, and by the side of the men in uniform

Unmindful of jeer and scoff,  
 Stood there picking the rebels off,—  
 With his long brown rifle, and bell-  
 crown hat,  
 And the swallow-tails they were  
 laughing at.

Then at the end of the day, the  
 rebels, pressed backward,

Broke at the final charge, and ran :  
 At which John Burns—a practical man,  
 Shouldered his rifle, unbent his brows,  
 And then went back to his bees and  
 cows.

Here was a bit of chivalry rare  
 in modern war, entirely unconnect-  
 ed with governments, and as real  
 as any exploit of the most puncti-  
 lious knight of earlier times.

What may be termed senti-  
 mentality in the conduct of war

would no doubt gain popular support, but it may be questioned whether to make war just tolerable is the best course to strive towards. That is evidently the object of modern governments in their very mitigated mitigations of the more horrible methods of battle. Either such attempted mitigation is a mistake, or once begun as an international arrangement it should be pursued much more broadly and earnestly than is at present the case.

We have seen such vast changes in the methods of war that there is no antecedent improbability against the advent of changes still more vast. The road towards these, whether baneful or beneficent, is certainly not to be found in the maintenance of a condition of war just not too horrible to be borne.

Without being at all Utopian or over-enthusiastic in view, we may turn for a moment to an imaginary state, as depicted by a not unstatesmanlike man, the late Lord Lytton, who in his most ideal pictures is rarely without some relativeness to possibilities in actual life, and never without a large store of that practical experience that makes a man sane, and saves him from theory-ridden vagaries. In "The Coming Race" he points to an electric agency discovered and developed by an imaginary community, a power invigorative, and variously useful, but also, what is more to our present purpose, a power destructive to an enormous extent. "The effects," says Lord Lytton, "of the alleged discovery of the means to direct the more terrible force of 'vril' were chiefly remarkable in their influence upon social polity. As these effects became familiarly known and skilfully administered, war between the vril-discoverers ceased, for they brought the art of destruction

to such perfection as to annul all superiority in numbers, discipline, or military skill. The fire lodged in the hollow of a rod directed by the hand of a child could shatter the strongest fortress, or cleave its burning way from the van to the rear of an embattled host. If army met army, and both had command of the agency, it could be but to the annihilation of each. The age of war was therefore gone." In "the great public museum . . . are hoarded, as curious specimens of the ignorant and blundering experiments of ancient times, many contrivances on which we pride ourselves as recent achievements. In one department, carelessly thrown aside as obsolete lumber, are tubes for destroying life by metallic balls and an inflammable powder, on the principle of our cannons and catapults, and even still more murderous than our latest improvements. My host spoke of these with a smile of contempt, such as an artillery officer might bestow on the bows and arrows of the Chinese."

Looking back upon the history of this old world of ours, we may well be inclined to doubt whether war will ever come to an end upon it. Nevertheless, that is no reason why we should not keep ourselves open to the general question of war, even regarded in the large field of the imagination. That we have the power to which Lytton gives the name of *vril* is reasonable enough, however latent it be at present. The electricity which rends an oak only requires control to riddle an army. At present we only explode our torpedoes with it; but what would our English bowman of a few centuries ago have thought of that? But even if we leave, as quite impracticable for

the present, the question of the extinction of war, we may still plead that to avoid sentimentality in the methods of action, that is, to employ the most destructive forces at our command, would be beneficial. It would reduce war to a minimum. Uncivilised tribes would increase their respect for the dominant races, which again, amongst themselves, would be chary of battle did they know that it was to be conducted according to the fullest powers of destruction, untrammelled by well-meaning but inefficient and temporising restrictive regulations, at once arbitrary and inconsistent.

Personal prowess in war, though waning, is not yet wholly nullified. In the comparatively rare conflicts hand to hand, weight tells, and courage is power. But as mechanical agencies continually expand themselves, the hand to hand struggle becomes less and less attainable. As this change continues there will be less and less reason for not following chemical might to its utmost extent and destroying at once armies and war by explosive gases. It is no more than sentimentality or class-feeling which allows such devilish engines as torpedoes and then arbitrarily draws the line, So far and no farther. It is not only inconsistency but culpable insanity to disallow fatal engines, and yet leave men to die hardly of wounds envenomed by neglect. The hoarse rumour of war being now set regularly ringing in our ears day by day, we may perhaps be led to prove ourselves as to our own real creed thereon, and to strive for the truest formation of our principles, and the communication of our individual influence with regard to war and its methods.

KENINGALE COOK.