

PEACE ON EARTH A PROBLEM OF PRACTICAL DIPLOMACY.

A SUGGESTION TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PEACE COM-
MISSION.

BY THE EDITOR.

MEN of good will have at sundry times, both in and out of season, preached peace on earth to mankind. The Gospel story selects this theme as the cradle-song for the child in the manger; and yet war has continued to the very present day, and if there is any abating of its power it is apparently due to the increase of its destructiveness, diminishing only in the ratio as it becomes more formidable. On the one hand, Moltke, the greatest strategist of modern times, regarded even a victorious war as a misfortune; on the other hand, Christ, the prince of peace, emphatically declared that he had come to bring not peace but a sword, and considering the constitution of the universe it would be difficult to refute the proposition that war is part of God's dispensation. Is it not, then, a fond illusion to convene an international conference and discuss disarmament, the abolition of war, and the arbitration of conflicts, by an international tribunal, and the establishment of peace on earth?

The advocates of peace on earth are, as a rule, zealous men who mean well but lack in proper comprehension. They are men of sentiment unfamiliar with real life, attempting the impossible. They imagine that the great national governments would voluntarily surrender their power—an act which would be neither wise nor right. If the average peace-advocates could have their way for a time, they would soon find out that their system would not work.

But while we must recognise that sentiment alone is an insufficient guide in life, we need not give up our ideals. The ideal of

peace on earth is not quite unfeasible ; on the contrary, the evolution of humanity is naturally tending toward it. We must only bear in mind that the abatement of war does not mean the abolition of struggle. A higher civilisation, therefore, must be brought about by substituting for barbarous methods of fighting, the civilised weapons of argument and demonstration. Struggling is a duty, as Professor Jhering has pointed out in his work *Der Kampf ums Recht*. Even the peaceful settlement of lawsuits remains a combat, and right is right only when it can be maintained ; for, after all, right is ultimately based upon might.

While it is true that struggle is part of the world-order, we should not be blind to the truth that the methods of struggle have been changed by the progress of civilisation. The old barbarous methods of the club have given way to gun and canon, and resistance in the face of an overwhelming superiority has become useless, so that to-day in civilised countries controversies between powerful institutions are decided not by arms but according to law through the verdict of a judge. The fact, however, is that while the court-room exhibits no direct display of warlike force, the power of the government and the collective will (*der Gesamtwille*) of the community stands behind the judge. The decisions of our courts are given by Right not by Might ; yet Right in this case has become Might, and the question is only whether or not it is possible to create among nations the same condition that has been established among individuals.

This question, I am confident, may be answered in the affirmative. The tendency of evolution is toward the substitution of the more spiritual for the more material and cruder methods ; and while Might must forever remain the basis on which alone all adjustments will be made, Right is actually acquiring more and more influence over the minds of the people, so as gradually to reverse the equation Might is Right into its opposite, Right becomes Might.

For the first time in the history of civilisation, representatives of almost all civilised governments are now assembled to discuss the feasibility of establishing peace on earth, and the question is, Will they be able to accomplish anything? The Czar of Russia has proposed disarmament, but the Russian government is at the same time enormously increasing the number of its battle-ships, and the Emperor of Germany frankly declares that peace can be maintained solely by sufficient war preparations ; and the old proverb holds good still : "*Si vis pacem para bellum.*"

Nevertheless the peace-conference is a symptom of progress,

and we may fairly hope that some good will come of it, for we may rest assured that the commissioners are wise enough to see what can and what cannot be accomplished. Yet there is danger on the one hand that the practical diplomat, the *Realpolitiker*, will have no faith in the ideal of peace on earth, and the idealist, the *Schwärmer*, will attempt the impossible and thereby delay the realisation of that which is possible.

We must bear in mind that struggle is the law of life and cannot be abolished, and power exists as a result of previous successful struggles, peaceful as well as warlike. Power is the essence of life, and we cannot expect any one, let alone any government, to renounce power. The idea of disarmament should, therefore, not be entertained at all; for discussion of the subject cannot lead to any result. In times when there is danger of war, it would not only be inadvisable but morally wrong, indeed criminal, for a government to disarm and expose its citizens to the humiliation of defeat; and since the world is a large battlefield, it is the duty of every government even in times of peace to be prepared for the emergencies of war. Because our government, as a rule, has done too little for the defence of the country, there is no reason to expect that other nations should do likewise. We are extremely lucky that we have not suffered for our neglect. If we had been a little less prepared during our disagreement with Spain we should have been confronted with great disasters, but if we had been a little better prepared, Spain would have been more amenable to our requests, and we might have bought the freedom of Cuba and Porto Rico without any sacrifice of human lives, for less money than the war cost us.

Disarmament is unfeasible, and a court possessing the authority to decide international disputes would play a very ludicrous part among the powers of the world, for we cannot expect that the strong nations would voluntarily submit to its decisions. They would uphold the court only so long as it suited them, and the institution that should bring peace on earth would most certainly suffer the worst injury possible—ridicule.

The only practical way of bringing mankind nearer to the cherished ideal of peace on earth would be by the establishment of an international tribunal, consisting of five or ten or perhaps fifteen commissioners, men of high standing, noted for their unequivocal love of justice and breadth of comprehension, whose duty should be, not to decide litigations of international politics, but simply to give, when called upon, an opinion from a purely moral stand-

point. If the members of such an international commission, after a careful investigation of the situation, should come to a substantial agreement on a question which threatens to be a *casus belli* they would necessarily influence the opinion of all the sober and fair-minded people in the countries involved and might thus contribute not a little to calm down the war-fever before actual hostilities began. Their verdict should not be a decision nor should they be regarded as judges. They should not be a court of arbitration. Their authority should be that of an advisory council. They should not be vested with the power to enforce their views, but should simply act the part of honest friends. They should be good patriots who love their country, and love it so well as to hate to see its honor tarnished by wrongdoing. They should be men who represent the conscience of their country, and thus when combined in an exchange of thought would represent the conscience of civilised mankind. The less political power they had, the weightier their opinion would be, and certainly no power on earth would be powerful enough to disregard their propositions or to treat them with indifference. The mere existence of such a tribunal—a kind of international conscience—could not fail to exercise a beneficial influence on politics, and would help to lift diplomacy to a higher realm, where integrity and justice would be the standard by which ultimately all transactions should be measured.