

SPEAKING OF DEFENSE

BY NELSON A. MILES

LT. GEN., U. S. A. (Retired)

"Trice is he armed who hath his quarrel just."

WARS are justifiable as a last resort to maintain some great cause, to sustain a noble principle, the honor of a nation, or the welfare of a race. Wars are never justifiable when prompted by selfish ambition, political intrigue, or to gratify a lust for conquest and spoliation. Those who appeal to the prejudice and animosity of a people until by agitation and false alarm they excite them to acts of violence and hostility, are committing the most serious of offenses.

In the book entitled "The Valor of Ignorance" the author has evidently endeavored to demonstrate the practicability and probability of one of the smallest of the great Powers not only assuming supremacy and control of the largest ocean, but of acquiring and holding for an indefinite period nearly one-third of the territory of one of the mightiest of the world's Powers. In the entire book there does not appear a single strong sentence condemning such an unjust, ruthless war against a friendly Power.

The book is prefaced with letters of introduction by two distinguished officers of our army. I deem it unnecessary to reply to the peculiar philosophy of the first, and shall not question the second, wherein he speaks of our injustice toward the red man, the black man, and the brown man, and makes the statement that "The United States within the last ten years has ruthlessly suppressed in the Philippines an insurrection better justified than was our Revolution of glorious memory." His justification of it, however, will be questioned by many historians. I believe these two officers would give a good account of themselves with any command of Americans on equal terms with one of any nationality.

The principal object of the book appears to be to demonstrate that Japan's ambition and purpose is to acquire control of the Pacific, not only in commercial supremacy, but by developing a military and naval power sufficient to become the dictator of that quarter of the globe. For hundreds of years the people of all nations have used the Atlantic Ocean without anyone attempting its absolute "supremacy," notwithstanding the fact that some have occupied the islands thereof, fortified harbors, and established coaling stations. To assume that any one nation would be permitted to control the Pacific is simply preposterous, and an unjustifiable insinuation against the Government and people of Japan.

Japan during the last few decades has made great progress. The Japanese are a polite, intelligent, and enterprising people. As a result of their skill, valor, and sacrifice in war, their achievements have naturally made them a strong nation and a proud people. Their success against two of the great Powers (one of the Orient and one of the Occident) has placed them, as far as military prowess is concerned, in an enviable position.

Yet their achievements against China must be taken with some degree of allowance. War has been unpopular in the Celestial Kingdom for hundreds of years. Very little attention has been paid to the art of war, and the nation was practically defenseless. This was demonstrated in the Boxer campaign, when it was found possible for a strong division or corps of American or European troops to move in any direction over that country. And we may add here that in that campaign the American division was the best equipped of that of any nation, and that when the much favored staff system of the Germans failed in the field their troops had to be assisted by the Americans.

In the war between Japan and Russia, the former excluded the Russians in the enterprise of their offensive naval maneuvers at the very opening of hostilities. Their army was handled with masterly ability and their troops displayed great valor, fortitude, and devotion; yet their list of casualties demonstrates the fact that they met a foeman worthy of their steel. They had the advantage in strategic position. The theater of war was at their very doors. They could move large armies to the field in as many hours as it took Russia days to gather her military forces from the remote quarters of her Empire in Europe and transport them five thousand miles over a single line of railway in winter, across Siberia. The Japanese are now in Korea and Manchuria, with every indication that they hope to remain there. They have great and vital interests nearer at home than any-



thing that could attract their attention across the broad Pacific. To maintain the prowess they have won on land and sea will require all the astute statesmanship and all the military and naval ability that they may possess. The mighty Empire of China is not in a condition of dissolution, and it may resume a stronger political and military attitude than it has maintained during the last few generations. The powerful Empire of Russia has been humiliated; but by no means seriously injured, and the lesson she has received will undoubtedly be one that in time will result to her advantage.

Japan is an island Kingdom. A good percentage of the Japanese are seafaring people. Their salvation to some extent depends upon their commerce and the power of their navy. To assume that they would secretly desire the conquest of a nation in many respects stronger than their own, which

for years has been on friendly relations with them, would be as unjust as it would be improbable. Reference has been made with much significance in this book to the treaty made August 12, 1905, between Great Britain and Japan; but careful reading of that document will show that the high contracting parties are interested in protecting their own territory and interests, and the treaty is not for the purpose of interfering with the interests of any other nation. It is carefully drawn to respect "the principles of equal opportunities for commerce and industry of all nations."

It will not be questioned that the United States must be classed as one of the other, or "all nations," and a war against the interests and welfare of the United States would practically be a nullification of that treaty, or at least relieve Great Britain from any obligations under it. It will also be observed that this important treaty refers entirely to the territory and interests of the high contracting parties in the regions of Eastern Asia and India, and has no more concern with the Japanese in America than it has with the British in Africa. Surely Great Britain would not be bound by any obligations to aid or countenance any action on the part of Japan that would menace her own interests or would appear to be an effort to assume the supremacy of the Pacific, and thus absorb control of the interests of any nation holding territory adjacent thereto! Great Britain, in China, British Columbia, and Australia, is more interested in the affairs of the Pacific than almost any other nation.

The author appears to be more of an imperialist than a republican. His deductions are that we are a heterogeneous people and consequently incapable of true patriotism or strong adhesive qualities. He questions the stability or perpetuity of our democracy or of our devotion to country and principle. In fact, he says that "only so long as the political and military power of a heterogeneous nation remains in the hands of a single element does it endure."

Now, the fact is we have been that kind of people for hundreds of years. Except for the handful of native aborigines, we are all descendants of immigrants. Our fathers founded the mightiest of Republics. Besides Washington, Putnam, Greene, Warren, and Lee, were Lafayette, Rochambeau, Steuben, Kosciuszko, Pulaski, and thousands of their compatriots. The foreign born or descendants of foreign parentage have served with valor and fortitude in every war of our country, and their blood has made crimson every battlefield of America. They fought for a principle, and not at the dictation of some monarchical despotism or religious fanaticism.

He claims we have no military system or regular army, and he has no confidence in our militia or volunteers. He cites several cases in which the militia failed more than a hundred years ago; but fails to note the fact that the Revolutionary army was all volunteers, that they fought the veterans of Europe and won the most glorious victories for humanity. The same is true of the Mexican War.

He cites a single incident in the last hundred years, by saying that the militia under McDowell all

ran at the Battle of Bull Run. So did the regulars, while the volunteer army of Confederates remained on the ground. The great Union army, which fought over a wider theater of war, in more campaigns and desperate battles, made greater sacrifices and achieved greater results, than any army of the world's history, was chiefly volunteers with very few regular regiments. Those armies fought against the Confederate armies which had not a single regular company or regiment in their organizations, and no one will question the skill, heroism, fortitude, and sacrifice displayed in that war of Americans against Americans.

The same was true of the troops of the Spanish-American war. They were both regulars and volunteers taken from every part of the United States. They fought