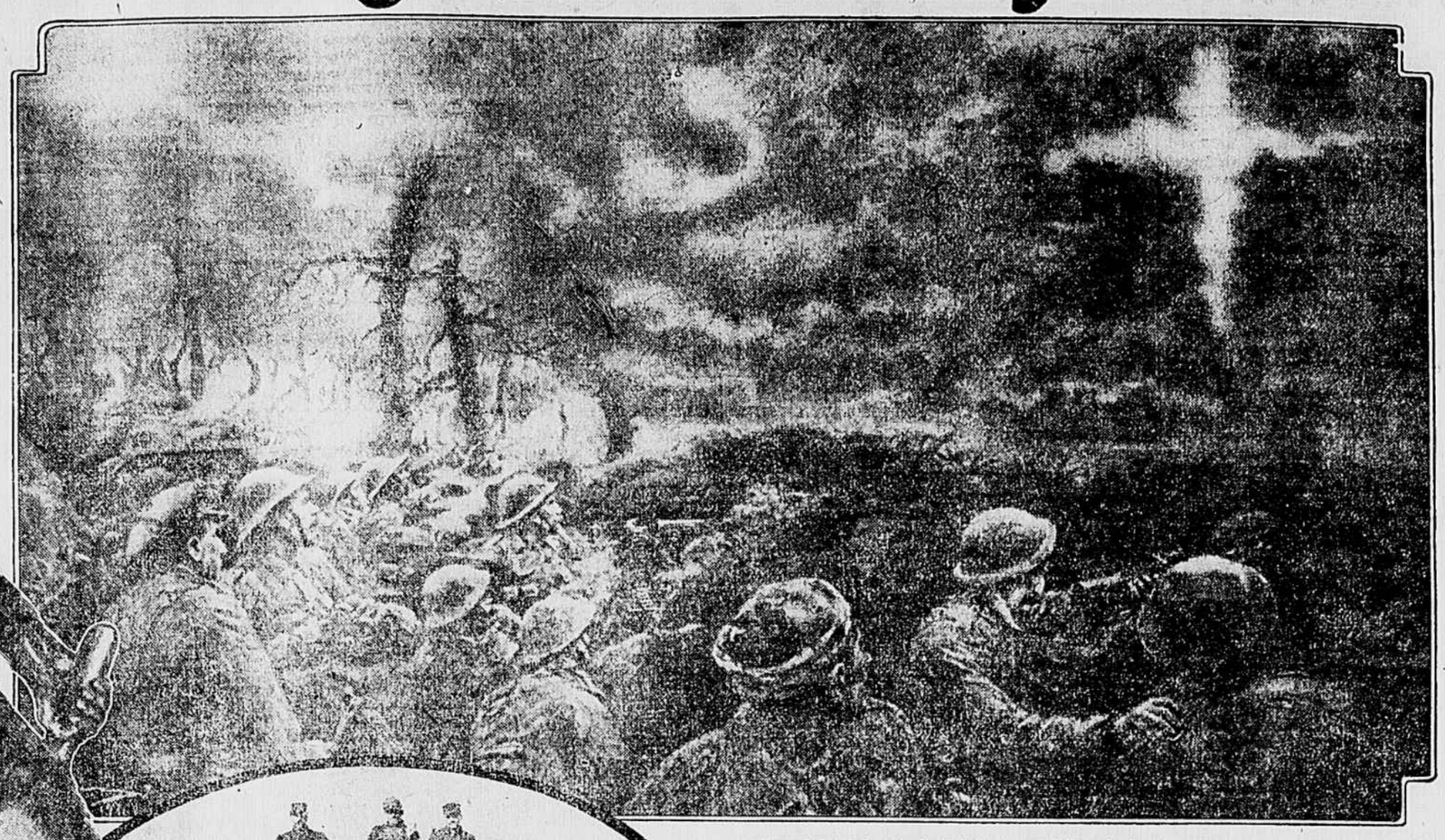
Unexpected Moral Changes Produced By The War

The Profound Alterations in Soldiers' Characters and Thoughts After They Have Faced the Terrors of Battle, the "Throw-Back" to Primitive Emotions and Ideas Explained by Dr. G. Stanley Hall, President of Clark University, and Other Scientists



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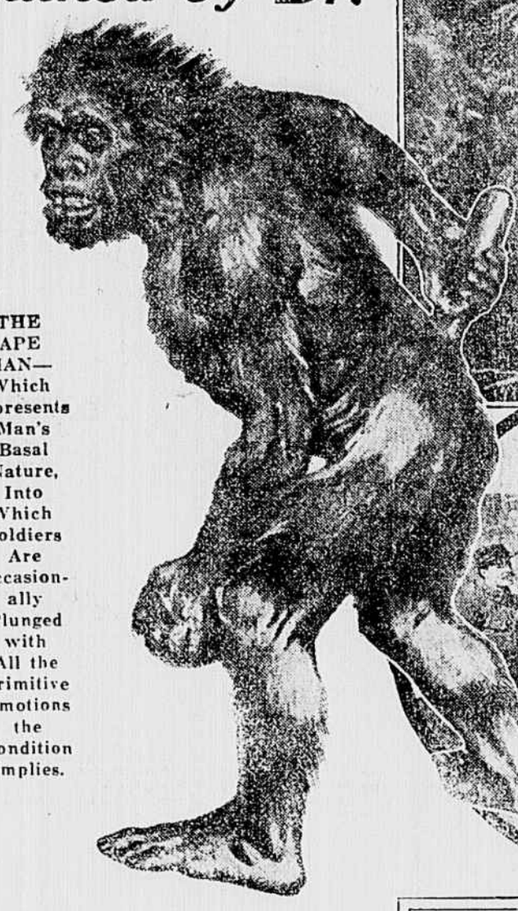
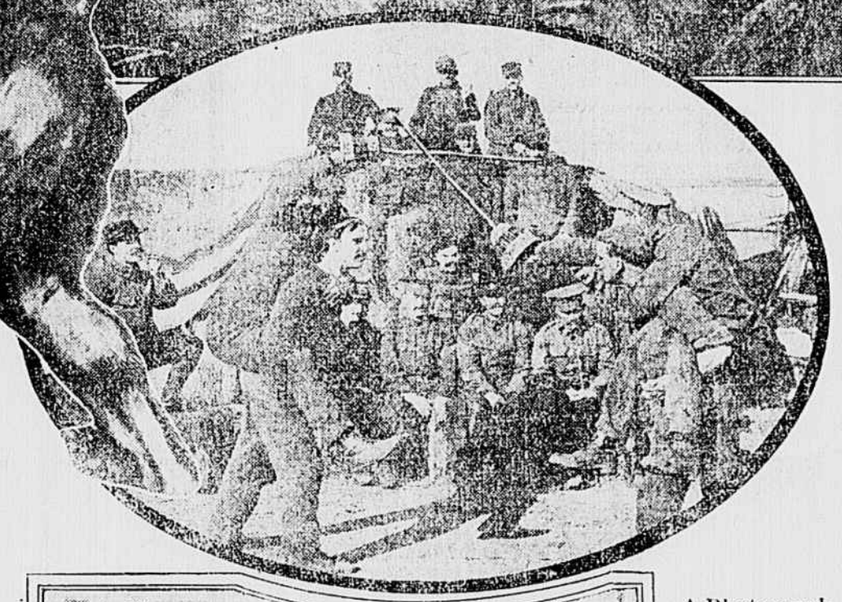
THE CROSS IN THE HEAVENS—A Painting by A. C. Michael, the English Artist, Which Illustrates the Curious Effect of Purely Natural Phenomena Upon the Overwrought Nerves of Soldiers. "In Ten or Fifteen Minutes, While This Effect of Moonlight Lasted," Wrote the Officer Describing It, "There Was Not a Shot Fired. There Was Absolute Silence on Both Sides."



THE APE MAN—Which Represents Man's Basal Nature, Into Which Soldiers Are Occasionally Plunged with All the Primitive Emotions the Condition Implies.



A Photograph of the Simple Amusements of Soldiers at the Front, in Which They Find a Maximum of Pleasure Because of the Narrowing Life of the Trenches.

THE SLEEP OF THE TRENCHES—This Fitful, Nightmare-Haunted "Rest" Is One of the Factors That, by Disturbing the Complex Nervous System, Cause the Most Profound Mental and Moral Changes in the Soldiers of This War, According to Science.

THE great war in Europe is turning out to be a war of surprises. At every phase it develops the unexpected. In its mechanical aspect this titanic convulsion has given the lie to established war axioms, overturned long established principles of strategy, brought forward entirely new methods of destruction and of defense.

But on the human side there are even more unexpected effects.

Thinkers and teachers all over this country and in Europe are reviewing these manifestations. Prominent among them is G. Stanley Hall, LL.D., president of Clark University, whose article in the Journal of Race Development contains much that is vitally interesting and important.

"To my mind," writes President Hall, "there is no more splendid illustration of the spirit of fair play, of toleration, of true neutrality, in a word, of Americanism, than the spectacle, all over the country, of our schools coolly utilizing this war to teach its geography, history, economics, on a basis of facts that all admit, but without bias toward or offense to any class of our citizens of whatever nationality; and also of our college youth debating everywhere with fervor and conviction the merits of both sides of this conflict, singing alternately 'Die Wacht am Rhein,' 'Rule Britannia,' 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' and the Marseillaise,' and in the end all joining hands and voices in 'The Star Spangled Banner' as a Doxology.

"Such spectacles are possible only in a land measurably free from the awful handicap of ancient racial animosities and national antagonisms, some of them in Europe as old as the crusades. The spirit that hears all sides with malice toward none and charity for all is not only American, but it is peculiarly academic, for that culture is a very spurious one that does not make man more tolerant toward honest views the opposite of his own."

As to the moral and religious effects of the war, Dr. Hall finds in its literature indictations that, as war tends to bring a reversion in other respects, it is bringing more or less in all the countries involved a reversion toward the religion of youth or childhood. He writes: "Baumann, a German professor, tells us that there is a great trend among the educated soldiers from Nietzsche to the New Testament, and perhaps quite as much to the Old; and Kahler says that the army feels it has four fronts, three toward the enemy and one toward Heaven.

"Another writer describes Jesus as standing before the door of the heart of the German people as he did before the tomb of Lazarus, about to awaken it. We are told of the eagerness of soldiers for simple religious services and their consumption of religious tracts and books. In France there has also undoubtedly been a movement in the same direction, to instance only Psichari's Le Voyage du Centurion," which seems to have had immense vogue not only among soldiers, but among civilians.

France, of course, since the end of the Concordat, has has been becoming more indifferent to religion; and the State, and especially the educational department, had made prodigious efforts to substitute the worship of France itself for loyalty to the Church, somewhat as Japan had done; for as there is little Protestantism of few half-way stations along the grammar of assent, the problem here is peculiar.

The centurion of the New Testament was a military man having soldiers under him, who believed Jesus could heal his servant at a distance. This he did with evndent great surprise and hearty commandation that a soldier and a Gentile should have such faith.

"So Psichari's assumption is that no man can be a soldier without being a Christian and vice versa because the Christian must be ready to lay down his life for something dearer than it. As his hero, who is himself, leaves Paris, he feels the artificiality of civilization there, and as he advances through successive degradations into Mauretania, he finds himself as never before, because he has found something larger than self—namely the love and service of Christ, which he identifies as the love and service of man.

The fina. moral is that, just as the hero was really converted in his campaign against the disciples of Mahomet, so French soldiers are being slowly converted to a larger, higher life in their advance against the great anti-Christ devotees of Thor, the Germans. This is the work that has made its appeal.

"Very interesting to the psychologist, too, are the striking illustrations of credulity, as instance the angels at Mons, who were said by so many to have actually appeared and turned the Germans eastward when they had their enemy in their power, stories which the Psychical Research Society has rather elaborately studied and which Machen has embodied in 'The Bowmen'; the false story of the Russian bells, of which 'L'Illustration' printed a full account, that scores, if not hundreds of them, to which the Russians attach an almost superstitious reverence, were taken from the churches overrun by the Germans and deposited in the public square of Moscow.

Other instances are the credulity with regard to the Russian Army going from Vladivostok through England to Flanders; the persistent myth of a yellow French auto carrying a prodigious sum of money secretly and by night through Germany to Russia, which caused watches to be set in many cities and caused the deaths of a number of men; the rumor that the Crown Prince had committed suicide; that the Kaiser was dying; that a great earthquake had overthrown the lions in Trafalgar Square in London; the Wolfe Agency's report that King George had been captured; that England had sought to buy with numberless donkey-loads of gold the allegiance of the Sultan; the stories of spies, fliers, of wounded soldiers who lived supernaturally with their limbs and in one case the head shot away."

It is found that the war has been very hard on the nerves of those who have stayed at home. After referring to those in the trenches—their panic to kill as a means of self-preservation—Dr. Hall mentions interesting transformations in the character of the stay-at-homes. He says:

"Quite often those thought phlegmatic before have seemed to find their ideal medium for efficient action in the excitement of the war. Several agencies have been developed for eliminating the unfit because those prone to panic are extremely dangerous, and in Germany three stations of examination for incipient nervous troubles have been developed at home and supplementary agencies in the field. Panics of horses constitute another rather interesting chapter. So does the increase of the population of asylums. No war was ever so hard on the nerves of those who participated as this, with its trench life, terrific explosions and so on. It is in a semi-unconscious state and purely impulsively that most of the great acts of heroism are performed, so that people become heroes without knowing it.

"Freud and many others have shown how regressive war is, how it plunges man back into his basal nature, how it may perhaps in a sense be a psychological necessity occasionally, because it relieves both the tension of progress, which is hard, and the monotony and specialization of life. It immerses man in the rank primitive emotions. Some of these genetic psychologists believe that it is almost regenerative of energy, and some are pessimistic, holding that the basal instinct of mankind is to kill in the sense of Hobbes, that the murder lust is the deepest thing in man, and that such a war as this shows how very superficial and ineffective are all the restraints that culture has imposed, how the hundreds and thousands, perhaps millions, of years in which man's basal nature has been developed, are still incomparably stronger than the superficial veneer of culture of the last two or three millennia. Man longs for things racially old. He lives on an evolutionary ladder. Retrogression is a means of regeneration.

"From a eugenic point of view the war is unspeakably horrible. We have various estimates as to the number of thousands of babies per month that would have been born had the twenty million men in the field stayed at home, and already we have a number of appalling statistics as to the unprecedented drop of the baby crop.

"Now heredity is the most ancient and precious wealth and worth, and if it is impaired in quality or quantity, disaster must follow, for only the young, the old, and the feeble are left at home to propagate the race. Of the schemes that this situation has suggested this is not the place to speak. There can be no doubt that a war involving such terrific and unprecedented strain upon the nervous system will vastly impair the quality of parenthood, not only for years but for generations, because we know something of the very close connection between the nervous and the reproductive system.

"Again, if Europe is set back, does it not follow that the fecund east, e. g., China, which has already begun its regeneration, will at least greatly lessen the culture interval that separates the yellow from the white race? It seems to me the main thing in view of all these stupendous problems in this country is for us to keep our pose and make real neutrality our religion; to insist upon a judicial attitude; to always hear the other side; to be ready not only to learn of the side to which our sympathies run counter, but to study, to appreciate this point of view.

The glory of this country is that those who come here to make a tabula rasa of all these ghastly inherited prejudices and animosities and rancors, and that toleration means that people must agree to differ. That we have none of these old chimneys to burn, but that we can develop the philosophic temper to keep questions on which men differ wide open, is the glory of the country and gives us cause to love it more than ever."

Referring to the violent denunciations of German war methods and of the Kaiser as the individual upon whom that responsibility rests, Dr. Hall thinks that we should try to understand the German ruler and his motives better.

"It is hard for us to understand the normal state of mind of an able man in his position. It is inevitable that he should believe in his destiny, and perhaps it is necessary for him to be no less violently antagonistic to the Social Democrats, who seem to be his bete noir. Perhaps he did tell the Potsdam recruits in 1905 that they might be called upon to shoot even their parents or brothers, referring to the Social Democrats; that they were the only foe he knew, etc. But it seems to me our function as neutrals is to try to understand the attitude of such a man in such a position before we pronounce him insane or the mad dog of Europe, etc. We really have a great task before us to comprehend a type of race and nationality which is so different from our own and which can so readily be made to seem both outrageous and absurd."

It is quite generally understood that participation in actual warfare is apt to result in a general decline of moral and religious feeling. Recently The Church Times, of London, printed a symposium of observations regarding this point by chaplains at the front, the result being another surprise out of this war of unexpected phenomena.

"As regards the effects of open Christianity, one man remarked that in billets if one went on saying one's prayers sometimes the other man (or men) would also. In huts men were quite civil, and would sometimes quiet down while men were praying. In two cases, after some time, the hut put up a demand that the men should say their prayers aloud for the general benefit."

Historians of the wars of the Crusades agree that the exalted Christian motive of these wars exercised no restraint over the soldiers, who were as licentious in their words and acts as soldiers customarily are. But it appears as though the very magnitude of the European war, with its slaughter running into millions of lives, and its unexampled horrors, is producing a profound moral effect upon the whole world.

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A New Scientific Reason for Not Sleeping in Our Clothes

THERE is another reason besides cleanliness why civilized people do not sleep in the clothes they have worn during the day. It is because the extremes of external temperature are much less bearable when we are asleep, and consequently the man sleeping in his clothes finds himself too cold in Winter and too hot in Summer.

As recent scientific experiments have shown, the body's capacity to regulate temperature is diminished through sleep. This appears to apply both to heat and cold. A healthy man's nervous and muscular activity is reduced to the natural minimum when he falls asleep, and it is then that his temperature falls to its lowest point.

The chief factor in the daily variation which takes place in the temperature of every normal human being is the alternation of a day of activity with a night of rest. The man who reverses the usual order of things and works at night and sleeps through the day, brings upon himself a corresponding change in the variations of his temperature.

Owls and other birds which are active at night show a rise of temperature during the hours of darkness and a fall during the day. This is a result of the well-known fact that muscular activity means an increased production of heat.

During the deep sleep which follows extreme fatigue, the sensitiveness of the nervous system is greatly reduced, and it becomes unable to perceive the lowness of temperature. The unconsciousness of sleep gradually passes into the unconsciousness of collapse. According to the popular belief such a man dies "frozen to death," but as a matter of fact he was killed long before his temperature fell to zero.

What really killed him was the reduction of the activity of his tissues, which always follows the loss of nervous control. As a result there was less and less chemical change accompanied by the production of heat, and at an internal temperature of aboot 68 degrees life ceased.

This is why, as experience has often shown, the weary traveller who gives way to the imperative desire to sleep upon the line of march is doomed to death when he has no adequate protection from extreme cold.