

Letters to The Times

Children Called to Crusade

Young Folk Here Asked to Aid Those of the War-Torn Countries

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

When an invading army comes there is no choice for the human beings in its path but submission or flight. If they choose flight it can only be in a confused and writhing mass of panic-stricken old men and women, of mothers and youth and, most helpless of all, little children.

They go in cavalcades without form or order, their wagons and carts piled with what they most desire to save. In this frantic melee there is little possibility of those who belong together keeping together. Stricken elders die by the roadside; little children are separated and lost. These little children, too young to help themselves, too young to know what it is all about, separated from the only ones they have ever known as protectors, from the only ones they have ever accepted or trusted, create one of the most delicate and difficult problems of all the horde that war breeds.

What is to happen to a little thing lost in the confusion of flight before an enemy, protecting arms stripped away, nourishment, shelter stripped, thrown out into a world utterly unknown to it, with no strength and experience to care for itself?

Destruction and Restoration

One of the strangest anomalies of man's conduct of his affairs on earth is that while some destroy others seek to restore whatever is left in the path of destruction. After the invader come men and women who take upon themselves the particular human problems invasion raises. Among them are those who seek as their particular task the salvage of helpless childhood. They gather them up where they have fallen or take them out of the arms of strangers—men and women who have stopped long enough in their own flight to gather up the little ones by the roadside.

These Samaritans carry them to asylums which they have helped to establish, where men and women volunteers of many countries and many faiths are working not only to take care of the physical needs of lost children but to restore in them a lost faith in the good-will of human beings.

This restoration of faith is one of the most poignant and difficult tasks that can be faced. These little creatures have only known a loving and protecting world. This is their first knowledge of man's murderous cruelty to man. The shock to many a child is such as to make it cringe before every strange voice, bury its head at every strange noise, shrink from every strange arm, close its eyes to every effort to interest. How are you going to bring back such a child to the blessed fact that there are among human beings those who wish to protect and love it, to be father and mother, brother and sister?

Experience in World War

It was my fortune at the end of the great war to see a little of one of many efforts to rescue and restore little children lost in the invasion of Northeastern France by the invading German Army.

One of the most active backers of one of these undertakings was an American friend who had given himself from the beginning of the war to the rallying of a splendid American contingent to the support of a work for refugee children.

"Come with me," this man said, "the Sisters have called me out to such and such a place. I want you to see the condition in which these little ones often come to us; their utter lack of faith that the strange conditions which now surround them can be anything but hostile."

"I have called Monsieur," said the head Sister to me when we came in, "because we have here a frightened little creature that will not believe us. It never opens its eyes at our voice, never relaxes in our arms. There is only one human being to whose touch the little thing has responded. And that is your friend."

"You see, Madam, the child instinctively knows that he is a friend. I don't know how it is, but that is the truth and he has been our last resort in more than one case. Come with me and see what happens when he goes to pick up little Pierre."

Peace at Last

It was as she had said. The little child lay tense with closed eyes in its little cot, but when this man gathered it up with a gay laugh it opened its eyes, relaxed, settled down in his arms. It was one of the most miraculous things I have ever seen. He remained until the child under that divine touch was asleep in his arms, then he put it back into its crib to what the Sister assured us was to be a peaceful night.

It was night and the children had gone to bed, but when the word came that l'Oncle, as they called him, had come, nothing could have kept them there, not even the Sister's order. In their little white slips they filled the hall and the stairs, crying: "l'Oncle est venu, l'Oncle est venu!" They ran over him, submerged him in their arms until, clapping his hands, he ordered them to bed.

A month afterward I made inquiries about what had happened to the little one. "Normal again," the Sister said cheerfully. "It came at last to believe in us. Some day we hope we will find those to whom it belongs. That happens every day—distracted parents looking through all the asylums for those they lost in their panic flight before the invader."

Now it is for the support of these undertakings for the little children in the many countries today lacerated and tormented by invaders—China, Poland, Finland, as well as in all countries threatened with invasion—the children of America are called to a crusade.

The children of America are called upon to aid those who would soften the awful distress of the world's helpless childhood. A nation-wide effort by them can give a moral and financial support which no other factor of the

population can give with such pure and unadulterated sympathy.

But there is more in this crusade than what it may do for the helpless, it is what it may do for the children of our country. What does the child of school age in America get out of the war today? Unavoidably he lives in an atmosphere where his elders sympathize with one or another side. He hears rejoicing or alarm all about him as one side or another marches in or out—a successful invasion carried on by his side he rejoices in. If it is an invasion by an enemy it distresses him as it does his elders. Instinctively he has become a partisan. He does not see what war is doing to the little children like his own little brother and sister.

This crusade may open his eyes to war's horrors, temper his rejoicing, touch springs which are in him but which war with its exciting brutalities has closed.

Future Benefits

Once years ago I sat at a table with a group of men, seventy-five or more, every one distinguished for some special form of noble work, and I heard these men tell how in their childhood the call upon their pennies for help for the Greeks, at that moment suffering from the fear of Turkish invasion, had first opened their hearts and their minds to what war does to the weak. They remembered that their first gift had been to help the victims of war. Every one of them from that day on had been working to prevent wars and, if they came, to encourage and support every effort for the amelioration of the suffering that they caused.

Out of this Children's Crusade to help the pitiful little victims of the armies which are ravaging countrysides the world over today may well come American men and women to fight war as a method for settling human difficulties, as well as supporters of every human effort to care for its victims.

IDA M. TARBELL.

New York, April 17, 1940.

Charting a Course for Us

Former Minister to Belgium Sees Need for Definite Declaration

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

At this crucial moment a declaration somewhat as follows might well prove a turning point in history:

The United States has a vital interest in the preservation of democracy and true representative government, which it regards as one of the greatest forward steps in political history, and it hereby cautions any country which may now take up arms in behalf of the aggressor nation, Germany, that the United States will cut off all communication with such country.

THEODORE MARBURG.

Baltimore, April 17, 1940.

In Praise of Democracy

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Your editorial "Greatest Inventions" is a proud record. It ends with a thought which should be a ruling conviction in the mind of every American. "Patents" and the well-being which springs from them "are only indications of a social point of view." Our point of view—our democracy—made possible the fruition of inventions to which our American prosperity is so largely due.

Our country is a democracy. The proof of the success of real democracy is the extraordinary command over their environment achieved by men in areas where government permits unrestrained initiative and effort to the individual, so long as he respects the rights of his fellows; that is the secret of the success of our Western civilization. May we long preserve its ideals and enjoy its prosperity.

THOMAS L. JARROTT.

Senneville, Que., April 12, 1940.

Some A. S. M. E. History

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

As one of the three original proponents of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers—the others being Professor John E. Sweet and a Professor Robinson of Northwestern University, in 1876—I may be permitted to suggest some corrections for your editorial concerning the society.

The first meeting was not held at the Stevens Institute, but in the office of the American Machinist, Feb. 16, 1880. There were present thirty engineers from eight States. Alex. A. Holley was chosen chairman, S. S. Weber secretary. Letters from eighteen other engineers were read, expressing their earnest approval of the formation of the society. The next meeting was held at the Stevens Institute.

I am the only survivor of the original thirty founders. ROBERT GRIMSHAW.
Leonia, N. J., April 15, 1940.

Flag Etiquette Prescribed

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

May I refer Miss Sybil V. MacPherson to the Flag Circular issued by the Adjutant General's Office, Washington, February, 1925, or to "The Spirit of the American Flag," published by the United States Flag Association and edited by Colonel James A. Moss, U. S. A. (retired), for information concerning flag etiquette?

MITCHELL TEMPLETON.

New York, April 15, 1940.

IN VAIN THE TEMPLES

Put by the chisel, let the stone remain
Sleeping forever and the hammer lie;
Still sealed beneath the vast, the Nilean
sky

Is found the unknown word; a shifting
plain

Supports this age. Historians at last
Will peer amid these ruins and will say:
Here rose a dying city for a day,
Whose statues crumbled and whose
glory passed.

In vain the sacred groves, the salt
spring of

Poseidon by the white Acropolis;

In vain the temples and the Parthenon,
The Caryatides, if avarice

Alone shall speed the chisel, gluttonous
love

Leave but a Moloch staring at the sun.

HAROLD VINAL.