

Paris June 10th. 1917.

Dear Sir William Osler,

I am sending you my little book "Common sense Patriotism". I hope you will not feel: "My enemy hath written a book". Anyhow I have been careful not to quote any words of yours written privately that you might regret.

I have been reading your fine Oration on the Campaign against Venereal Disease in the British Medical Journal of May 26th. 1917, the first paragraph of which is so full of striking antitheses:- "Nature is the form of disease more fatal to man than man with his weapons"! I had not thought of "Nature" pure and undefiled in the shape of the gonococcus and the pale spirochaete and the efforts of "Nature" to destroy life by tornados, earthquakes and cyclones seemed funny indeed alongside of the bombs, mines, gas-jets and thousand of enormous guns belching forth death for years on end. However I suppose "Nature" is, in a sense, more responsible even than man for venereal disease whereas the application of dynamite to his own destruction is essentially man's idea. "The needless deaths of peace far exceed those of the most disastrous wars"! I venture to think that you might have made it a little clearer that you knew how needless the disastrous wars were and always had been. But the tremendous point I fear you miss is the close and constant relation between the two - we have the needless deaths of peace because of our endless wars and rumours of wars. At bottom it is a case of money. In the budget of every "great" nation the expenditure on army and navy (for defensive purposes "preparedness", of course) is by far the heaviest item. A nation that spends a hundred million sterling a year on war pre-

parliament cannot afford to clear its slums, to tackle alcoholism, to put aside the few paltry millions that would make tuberculosis deadlier than a door-nail. Jaurès himself said that he spent thirty years of his Parliamentary career trying to get the Old-age Pensions Bill passed. Always at the crucial moment some colonial or military question arose - Algeria, Morocco, Siam, Madagascar, or God knows what or where - millions were voted, social reform shelved and the spirochaete and infantile mortality given a new lease of life.

Can you not see it? The "great" nation in the sense of the powerful, aggressive, colonizing, imperialistic group, is, ⁱⁿ in its ultimate, individual cellules, an unhealthy nation. Can you not see the intimate and causal relation of war, every war, and rottenness of every sort? In your note on Victor Horsley's death in the British Medical Journal, I remember you wrote 'what demon drove such a man to the muddy pool of politics?' (I quote from memory). But it was no demon. It was the vague but yearning desire in the heart of the man to put wrong things right, to replace injustice and death by fair dealing and life.

'In 1915 nine of our soldiers died abroad every hour to save their country (the enemy, Koch, Erlich or Roentgen could write the same), while twelve babies died at home, to the scandal of their country'. Ah, Osler, Osler, what a muddle of thought and suggestion for you, a teacher of the youth, to spread abroad, Is it not to the scandal of every country that their soldiers should still, in the twentieth century, be 'dying abroad to save their country'? That no statesman, no man should have been found to realize and proclaim that the fist, the knife, the method of war could never decide justly between them? That even to-day

our countries pretend to be aiming by this war at a world-peace - a world peace that every day of the war postpones by so much? Please also note that if Nature slays twelve babies an hour she does not select them or rather selects the weakest and those least likely to survive; man, on the contrary, selects his nine soldiers, the strongest, bravest, most intelligent, to be sacrificed, while the old and diseased continue the race. War is a reversed selection, a selection à rebours, and leads to the survival of the unfit. "And it goes as your per immer, how I can be a Pacifist"!!

"There shone round about him a light from Heaven, and immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith."

My last letter to Osler (not sent) was written in comment upon his address as President to the Oxford Classical Association, entitled "The Old Communities and the New Science". It may, I think, fairly be taken as his last message to the world and written, as it was, while the "great" war was still being waged, it is of supreme interest.

July 13th. 1914