

which at best is useless and may be positively mischievous. It is better to avoid drugs altogether than to take a drug which deludes the mind without even mitigating the disease.

The primary blunder made by the advocates of the League lies in the fact that they have pinned their faith on a particular form of machinery for preventing war instead of devoting their energy to trying to remove the causes of war. So long as nations by their continued expansion press upon the necessarily limited resources of the globe, it is inevitable that they should come from time to time into conflict with one another, and no League of Nations will ever be able to prevent such conflict developing into war unless the League itself is possessed of a sufficiently powerful police force to separate the combatants. Neither Lord Robert Cecil nor any other advocat e of the League has yet explained how the League of Nations is to acquire such a police force. It would have to include not only armed soldiers, but also a powerful navy and a powerful air force; it would require barracks, camping grounds, shipyards, naval stations, ordnance factories, and a supply of raw materials. All these things are at present under the control of the different nationalities who divide the world between them, and there is at present not the least sign that any one of these nationalities will surrender the control of any portion of its territory or of its subjects to any League of Nations.

At the present moment the advocates of the League, combining temporarily with the advocates of International Socialism, are much distressed because Poland, in order to ward off the danger of a Bolshevik invasion, has herself invaded Bolshevik territory. Do Lord Robert Cecil and his momentary allies of the Socialist party really

suggest that the Poles ought quietly to have waited unarmed until the League of Nations was sufficiently equipped with military forces to keep the Bolsheviks from invading Polish territory? Lord Robert Cecil appears conveniently to have forgotten that the Bolshevik Government refused to admit the envoys of the League.

The world has long been familiar with the proverbial absurdity of using a steam engine to crush a fly; the advocates of the League of Nations, in effect, propose to use a single fly to crush a hundred steam engines. Their whole scheme is a delusion, popularized by methods which are peculiarly attractive to persons who, because of their idealistic conceptions, claim a quasi-religious superiority to the rank and file of their fellow citizens. Idealists always seem to think it sufficient to formulate an ideal and then to condemn as a cynic everyone who asks how their dreams are to be realized. If we are to build a better order of society, we must begin by being sure that our foundations are made of firm material, and not merely of vague aspirations.

[*Le Temps* (Semi-Official Daily), April 3]

## AN INTERESTING PRECEDENT

BY PIERRE MILLE

IN spite of the courageous and despairing efforts of many of its citizens, the United States was still bone dry in 1930. Wine, beer, and alcohol had ceased to lave the thirsty lips of men. All the stocks accumulated before the law went into effect had gradually been exhausted.

In spite of predictions the people had not taken kindly to such substitutes for spirits as cocaine and hypodermics. These were not satisfactory substitutes. Most men want to associate their cere-

bral stimulation with the satisfaction of the palate. This is a taste they have inherited from their primeval ancestors. It is unnecessary to cite Noah on this point.

Such a situation had unexpected effects. Hundreds and thousands of Americans, in spite of their firm pacifist convictions, rushed to the recruiting offices to volunteer for military service, subject to the express condition that they be given an opportunity to serve with the Allied forces on the Rhine. The obligations of the Versailles Treaty were still far from being filled by Germany. Moreover, the English had made themselves very comfortable at Cologne. They had discovered that this city, like Danzig, was, after a fashion, a maritime place; and that fair-sized vessels might reach it by the Rhine as easily as they reached London by the Thames. Having demonstrated this to their complete satisfaction, they had conceived a strong sentimental attachment for this ancient city.

Therefore, the recruiting officers of the United States found themselves obliged to reject a formidable number of applicants for enlistment, such as had not flooded their offices since the beginning of the war. In order to check this rush, an announcement was published by the government that no men would be accepted for this service except teetotalers. Furthermore, it was announced that only a few men were needed for the army of occupation on the Rhine. At one time the government had proposed merely to leave the American flag flying there, as physical evidence of the fact that all America stood solidly behind the occupation. But it had been obliged to give up this plan, from considerations of both domestic and foreign policy. However, only a few regiments would be kept abroad. Unhappily, after the recruiting

officers decided to enroll only teetotalers, not a single person volunteered for service. The pendulum swung to the other extreme. Americans were eager to enroll themselves under the starry banner for service on the old continent only subject to the condition that they should be permitted to refresh themselves with something else than tea and ginger ale. If that were not allowed, they preferred to stay at home.

As a result, the few thousand stalwart warriors who garrisoned Coblenz and its vicinity, were famous drinkers, worthy comrades of Bassompierre and the valiant Pouyer-Quertier — not to mention Mr. Bismarck, for that might provoke ill-humor. They did not waste time testing the wines of the Moselle with their delicate bouquet, or those of the Rhine with their heavier body. They started out with schnapps to sharpen their appetite and finished with schnapps to aid their digestion.

Sometimes this stimulated unduly their ingenuous minds. How was it possible to avoid occasional excess, especially on great national holidays, when a dollar would buy more than two hundred marks at current exchange? One of the former coins would purchase six bottles of the best 'forty-rod,' each containing at least twenty glasses. So these intrepid warriors were encouraged to consume for the honor of their country as much spirits as a hundred million of their compatriots at home would have used, if they had not been deprived by their own laws of such enjoyment.

Consequently, a spirit of habitual gaiety took possession of their souls. First of all, as was proper and natural, they felt inspired to poetical and musical efforts. They conceived themselves possessed of grand creative imaginations. They were good-hearted lads; their kindness to the people among whom they were stationed was for a

long time beyond measure. How did it happen, then, that some of their number were suddenly excited to violence? It was never discovered. Perhaps it was the quality of the schnapps. Possibly it was rivalry over some fair German girl. Troy is not the only city that was lost on account of a Helen.

The fact is that one evening, Siegfried Stork, at Mülhausen, near Coblenz, was found dead in the streets as a result of a fight with American soldiers. He belonged to the Citizens' Guard, a local police corps, or a Spartan group. As usually happens in Germany, it was not possible to tell which. But the fact brought out at the inquest without difficulty was that his death was caused by William Thomas Harris, a Connecticut infantryman.

That soldier was promptly arrested and imprisoned. He was very remorseful, but could remember nothing that had occurred. 'They say I did it, but my honest belief is that that d—d Stork committed suicide in order to injure me.' He was remanded for court-martial, and was certain to be sentenced to death unless extenuating circumstances were shown.

The sergeant who conducted him to his cell said: 'You'd better resign yourself to the worst without expecting mercy. In the first place, the judges will want to show the people here that they are absolutely impartial. In the second place, some of them will take the position that inasmuch as drunkenness is a crime in the United States, you cannot plead it as an extenuating circumstance in the Old World.'

'You're right,' answered Harris, 'and yet, poor Stork! I wished him no harm; I never saw him; I don't remember how he looked. It is really too bad they buried him. It seems to me that I'd die more easily if I knew how he looked.' But here the sergeant could give him no information.

When the court-martial was held, Harris neither admitted nor denied anything. He merely insisted that he remembered nothing of what occurred. Then the German witnesses were called. They were very specific. They identified Harris and swore to his acts. His American comrades could remember no more than did the unhappy infantryman.

The officer in charge of the prosecution thought he foresaw that the defense would plead drunkenness in an effort to show that the prisoner was not responsible. He made his argument to that effect. Intoxication was not an extenuating circumstance. It was dishonorable to the United States and contrary to American law. He was very much astonished when Harris's attorney, another officer, who had been a lawyer in Nashville, rose and stated simply:

'It is now 1930. Is there anyone here, either in the honorable jury, or among the spectators present, who can recall that the Treaty of Versailles has been signed by the government of the United States at any time since 1919?'

The seven officers composing the court looked at each other. A confused and contradictory murmur rose from the bystanders. The troops had been stationed on the Rhine so long that no one could recall exactly under what conditions they were there. It was necessary to look up the authorities and precedents. These filled sixty-eight bound volumes of general orders, ordinances, correspondence with Washington, and diplomatic communications. It was necessary to adjourn the trial six months in order to consult these records. In addition, a cable was dispatched to Washington.

At the end of six months that point was settled. No, the Treaty of Versailles had not yet been signed by the Americans. So the Nashville lawyer,

now a veteran officer, opened his pleadings before the court-martial as follows:

‘Gentlemen, my remarks will be brief. May it please the Court, it has no jurisdiction in this case, which should never have been submitted to it. Inasmuch as no Treaty of Peace has been signed by the United States, we are not at peace with Germany. Unless we are at peace with that country we are still at war with it. There cannot be a status which is neither war nor peace. Either there is one or the other. Now, inasmuch as we have been unquestionably at war with Germany since 1917, the death of the unfor-

tunate Siegfried Stork cannot be regarded as a crime, inasmuch as he is enrolled in one of the innumerable enemy military organizations. It was an act of war, and William Thomas Harris, my client, must be immediately set at liberty. I demand further, as is just, that he receive his back pay from the date of his arrest, and that his record as a soldier shall suffer no prejudice from this incident.’

The court-martial, after brief deliberation, declared that the defense was valid. As a consequence, William Thomas Harris was released and compensated for what he had suffered through his arbitrary imprisonment.

[*The New Statesman* (Liberal Labor Weekly), May 15]

## THE FRENCH STRIKES

THE General Confederation of Labor in France — usually referred to as the ‘C.G.T.’ — has done what, a few months ago, many people believed British Labor to be on the point of doing — it has invoked ‘Direct Action’ in support of the policy of nationalization. The issue in the present French strikes, though it has seldom been clearly stated in the press, is simply the issue of ‘nationalization.’ It is not exactly the same sort of nationalization as the British miners demanded before the Coal Commission; but it is like their demand in being non-bureaucratic, in attempting to reduce parliamentary interference with the working of industry to a minimum, and, last but not least, in being based definitely on the idea of a participation in control by the workers. It differs both from the miners’ scheme, in demanding a less measure of control, and from the

Sankey scheme, in eliminating far more thoroughly the possibilities of political interference. It springs, however, clearly from the same sources and responds to the same human demands, as the proposals put forward by our own miners and railwaymen.

Before the war, Syndicalism used to be spoken of in this country, if not with quite the same horror, at any rate with the same disapprobation, as Bolshevism to-day. The French C.G.T., the originators and upholders of Syndicalism, were the most terrible people, and in this country only the firebrands of the extremist left and a few of the younger ‘intellectuals’ took up with their theories. Now, no one who reads the pronouncements and policy of the C.G.T. can accuse it of undue violence in theory or practice — or at least, no one could have done so until the sudden outbreak of the strikes last week.