

“ANCIENT AND MODERN WARFARE”

The art of war is probably as old as the human race – certainly it is as old as human history. The remotest traditions show us man making war upon his brother man even as the beasts of the fields made war upon one another. It would seem as if nature ‘aided and abetted’ this feud for the attainment of her inexorable ideal, the “survival of the fittest”.

The world still contains a few savage races, and by going among them we can get a pretty accurate idea of what primitive warfare was like. For the ordinary person, however, an examination of the relics found in our museums will be enough – perhaps too much. The assegai of the Zulu, the club of the Maori, the boomerang of the Australian, the poisoned arrow of the Chocktaw are specimens of the weapons that various races still employ. In the earliest stages man probably fought with the fists, then he used stones, then clubs, then the sling and so on until the modern man developed the obnoxious quick firer, which has revolutionised war and made it more destructive than ever.

While, however, the mere mechanical instruments of war have shown wonderful development, the behaviour of the belligerents towards each other has changed in an equally remarkable manner. War is more appallingly cruel and barbarous than ever, of course it is also interspersed with more mercy, as was shown by the valiant efforts of Napoleon’s soldiers, to save from drowning, the Russian soldiers under whom they had broken the ice, with their cannons. It will be contended that the enemy’s wounded are cared for, that the Red Cross is conspicuous on every battlefield – but the main thing is that the battlefield remains, and besides, the instruments of war are deadlier and the number of men disabled tremendously large.

The argument that war has become less revolting or less ugly is futile, the plain truth is that it has become more terrible, but in this one may see hope. At the present time England and Germany are having a ludicrous but not inexpensive race for armaments, England trying to bully Germany into ceasing to build dreadnoughts, Germany coweringly replying by rattling the sword in the scabbard. Mutual fear of annihilation combined with the awful destruction which would ensue, prevents them going to war. This destruction then, is the hope, and may eventually lead to the realisation of Tennyson’s dream about –

The Parliament of man, the Federation of the World.