

The Revolt of Youth

By

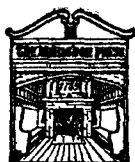
STANLEY HIGH



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PREFACE

A FLOOD of pessimistic literature, some of it setting the date of the final collapse of to-day's culture not more than two hundred years hence, and all of it agreeing that our civilization is in a state of progressive decay, is bringing the mind of the reading public to a state of drenched despair. Nor is this condition made less actual by the fact that many books which, through their major portions, draw calamitous conclusions from the present state of world affairs, contain tucked within a few pages some cherished scheme for world redemption.

That much, perhaps most, of the day's news gives support to these cries of the apostles of pessimism it is impossible to deny. And it is equally apparent that a too-easy optimism may become, in like manner, a menace to straight thinking. But the pessimists have had their day—and say. And it is a question whether both have not been extended beyond the point which the facts justify. There are certain great constructive forces at work, even in Europe, which this literature for the most part ignores. Among those forces perhaps the most significant is the spirit of the world's youth, who, in the face of difficulty and repeated disillusionment, are

carrying on, in school and out, toward a better day in which youth still believes.

It is of this youth movement—this revolt of youth—that I have chosen to write, not because in it is to be found a cure-all for the world's ills; and not because I am unmindful of other forces, sometimes even more powerful, which are working contrary to its purposes, but because it represents, in the midst of so much despair, a spirit in which one may find hope, if only a little hope, for a reconstructed world. If in writing I have omitted the darker side of the picture, the omission has been a conscious one, dictated not by an unfamiliarity with that side, but by the feeling that the facts pertaining to it have been so frequently and so extensively set forth elsewhere that to attempt to include them here would greatly extend the scope of this book and add nothing to the particular theme under consideration.

This literature of pessimism not only ignores—is obliged to ignore—certain great constructive facts in the present world-situation, but by its very existence it hastens the day wherein its own dire prophecies will be fulfilled. Pessimism itself is a most certain indication of retrogression. This is a fact of which scientists take increasing cognizance.

Dr. Thomas S. Baker, acting president of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, in addressing the December, 1922, meeting of the American

Association for the Advancement of Science, declared: "The energy of the race can be conserved only through new ideas, new discoveries, and the application of these discoveries. If the springs of inspiration dry up, if the desire for exploration into new fields should subside, if the sources of intellectual power should for any reason be stopped, progress would be at an end. And at the very basis of all human conservation must be placed an optimistic world-view and a faith in the idea of progress."

I have desired, therefore, to present the material in the present volume, not only because it has been almost completely ignored in previous accounts of the trend of world affairs, but because it is in itself of such a nature as to contribute toward a strengthening of faith in the idea of progress and in this higher conservation.

I am very grateful to Dr. Samuel Guy Inman and Dr. Arthur Daniel Berry for their chapters on South America and Japan, which have helped me to present a more comprehensive survey than I was in a position to make. To many other friends throughout Europe and Asia who have helped to gather and shape this material, to Mr. Hugh B. Fouke, Jr., who helped me with translation, and particularly to Mr. J. Earl Gilbreath, a companion of unfailing spirit, I wish to express the most real appreciation.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

CHAPTER I

THEIRS NOW TO REASON WHY

THE youth of Europe, going about youth's meaningless odd jobs, were suddenly taken from their apprenticeships in August, 1914, and given the task of saving a threatened civilization. From the seclusion of inexperience they became, overnight, the center of world attention. Their importance was proclaimed from flaming placards and in the impassioned speeches of elder patriots in city halls and parliaments. To them, for four years, the faith and hope of the world were fixed. It appeared, even, that the purposes for which the Great War was waged were arranged to conform to ideals which youth would arise, spontaneously, to defend. Not for the youth of Europe only but for the youth of the world this was the supreme hour. The war needed the youth to fight it. Out there the great adventure waited and the world watched with bated breath while they went out to meet it.

It was early in the fall of 1917. America, at the task of building up a war machine, needed aviators. The War Department had asked for young men—college-trained young men—and, in asking, pictured the aviator as the modern Pegasus

riding atop the clouds, the guardian of war's romance, and aviation the arm of offense which, finally, would be called to finish the job.

We were in San Antonio for the examinations. For an entire day at Fort Sam Houston we had gone up, one by one, to stand before the intelligence board in mental inquisition. Waiting our turn outside the offices, in the army's inevitable line, we found little encouragement in observing the number who went in to the ordeal before us and returned with the unmistakable air of rejection. It was clear enough that only young men, fit mentally and physically, were wanted.

And then, during the day following, from seven until six, we were passed from the hands of one medical specialist to another for physical examination. At the end, those who still survived the myriad and ingenious tests were lined up and further questioned. Some of the men, it appeared, were too old for aviation. Aviation, we were curtly told by the officer in charge, was a job for younger men. It required quick thinking, unerring judgment, and cool self-confidence. A man of twenty-seven or thirty years of age, however well he might stand in the mental and physical examinations, would have little chance in ground school or on the flying field in competition with a youth of nineteen or twenty-one. America, clearly, was out to win the war with her youth.

But America was not alone in this. They were

British youths who went out to stand with England's first hundred thousand; and Wandervoegel lads from German *gymnasiums* who, as volunteers, were swept into the army in the great wave of patriotism which flooded Germany in 1914; and college students who filled the quotas of America's first officers' training camps. European universities were depopulated. Each new class, coming on, went from prep school to training camp and the trenches. For four years the youth of Europe carried on the desperate business of destruction. And if, as the struggle dragged on, the demand exceeded the supply and the ranks where they had stood were filled by older men, it was still the youth spirit which was called upon to meet every drive and carry forward every new offensive.

Then came the armistice and demobilization. The world situation, being no longer a matter of blood and iron, of "quick thinking, unerring judgment, and cool self-confidence," reverted to the hands of the elder statesmen. The youths who had been taken, in August, 1914, from meaningless odd jobs were left to find their own bewildered way back to their old apprenticeships. And now, after four years of green tables and attempted peace, the spirit of youth is once again reasserting itself. There are no placards or oratorical appeals to herald its reappearing, only the kindly tolerance of maturer minds for what, in times of peace, are called "youthful idealisms."

And if now the youth spirit is no longer called upon to meet new drives and carry forward new offensives, it can be seen at work in nationalist uprisings and new declarations of independence, in discontent of oppressed minorities, in attempted monarchist restorations, and in widespread revolt against the politics of disorder which perpetuate all that youth fought to destroy.

In the midst of world conditions where so much is oppressive despair this reassertion of the spirit of youth presents one—perhaps the only—constant factor of hopefulness. Among the youth—in disregard for the ascendancy of the old order—there still persists a faith that out of the present turmoil a new and better world may yet emerge. True, they do not go about as the heralds of a renaissance. Many of them, if questioned, would disclaim all belief in such a possibility and look to its coming with dread. But while the elder statesmen continue to carry on behind barbed barricades, the youth of the world have set about it to clear away the physical and the mental debris of war. They are finding themselves, in that undertaking, confronted with common disillusionments and common difficulties, in the sharing of which they are approaching a common ground of understanding. Whatever their profession may be, the spirit in which these difficulties are being met is the spirit of a new day.

It is out of great disillusionment that this

youth spirit has arisen to reassert itself. The youth who fought, see, now, that though they sacrificed to usher in a new day, the principles by which statesmen proposed to build it have been stamped as "idealistic" and consigned, again, to the custody of pulpit and of chair. They see the cauldron of hates and prejudices left by the war and the suffering following in its wake, and, remembering their comrades who will remain in northern France and Italy, in Russia and Mesopotamia, they have begun to ask whether these men died in vain.

It was not for love of it that the youth of the world gave of themselves for four years to accomplish their own destruction. They went out to fight in defense of home and state and to establish justice. And now, with home and state and justice more than ever imperiled, they are coming to see the terrible futility of it all. The youth who fought begins to realize that the ideals for which he believed himself to be fighting were much the same ideals that inspired the youth against whom he fought. He sees now that whatever spontaneous response there was to the call to arms in the Great War came in answer to idealistic appeals which were much the same in all of the nations engaged. And in view of the post-war world it seems plain enough that these ideals were dictated much more by the demands of immediate necessity than by a sincere belief in their eventual effectiveness. The war needed the youth

of the world to fight it. Without such appeals they never could have been rallied to its support.

The lads who volunteered to fight in the German army in 1914 went out to fight for "Haus und Herd." And the Oxford and Cambridge men who crossed the channel with England's first contingents, they, too, went out to stand in a thin line of defense for Britain and for British homes. Now, in Oxford and in Cambridge one sees the names, long, endless lists of them—not of the men who went, but of those who did not return. In the halls of Magdalen College, above the stone memorial tablets there, is this inscription: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." In Göttingen and Heidelberg and Leipsic, one sees like endless lists of the youth who fell. And at Berlin, above the entrance to a famous seminar, over stone memorial tablets like the tablets at Magdalen College, one may read: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

It is equally true that much of the hatred, which, like idealism, is a requisite part of the incongruities of a successful war, was the manufactured product of necessity. Europe abounds with thriving hates and prejudices which go to the very foundations of national and racial history. But fundamental and bitter as these may be, the further fomentations of well-planned propaganda were needed to breed passions of suffi-