

none of them come forward and say a word for the old decencies of which they are supposed to be the guardians?

America's action in refusing to ratify the Peace Treaty has apparently given the coup de grace to that unhealthy infant the League of Nations. We have already given our reasons for describing the League as merely a League of Allied Capitalists. We therefore shed no tears over its corpse. The exclusion of Germany, Austria and Russia from the League, and the undemocratic nature of its constitution, were sufficient to condemn the League in the eyes of those who were not deceived by a name. The withdrawal of America will, it is hoped, swell the number of the disabused. The League must now cease to exist or declare itself for what it is. We do not despair of a real and effective League of Nations, though it may not come in our day. Such a League must be conceived, however, not in the spirit of Militarism and Capitalism, but of simple goodwill. It will be possible only among a society of free and equal peoples. Whoever wishes to work for the real League of the future must begin at home. We do well to look forward and imagine the future, but we have to grasp firmly the fact that, until Capitalism is overthrown, plans for the peace of the world are premature, and will only bring disappointment to those who set their hearts on them.

THE SLEEPERS.

Having slept so long, men do not wish to wake,
Nor stir, nor understand,
Nor brush the darkness from their brows and take
The grandeur close at hand.
Are songs and cries of weariness that mark
Labour and revelry,
But lonely waters crying in the dark
That flow down to the sea?
Courageous ires, the fruits of ireful claims,
Are folded in a keep
Of dreams and smoke that once were acts and flames—
For men, poisoned with words and bitter names,
Have cried themselves to sleep.
And in that sleep are dreams of frightful hue;
Drag slow across the brain
Marauding talons of the Golden Few,
The coroneted pirates saunter through;
The load of dreaming breaks the heart in twain,
The sleeper wakes—to find those dreams are true—
And falls asleep again!

FURNLEY MAURICE.

OPEN LETTERS TO FELLOW-CITIZENS.

II.—To Mothers Bereaved by the War.

Mothers,

For many days I who am writing this was my father's sole companion when we fished for a bare living in Hobson's Bay. Eight children, as well as my father and mother, relied on these very scanty earnings for their living. We, however, managed somehow for a couple of seasons, till one evening, with some strange dark birds hovering around, a slight squall struck us and we were capsized. My father was of sturdy build, while I was small and in my teens. Strange to say, my father was excited and breathless (for some water must have got into his lungs), while I was calm. After a long struggle, I realised I was alone. The oars had floated away, and our small dinghy was waterlogged. I felt so lonely, helpless, and despondent that I did not dare to call out for my father, as I knew I could not reach him. That was about nine at night in the month of May. The lights of Melbourne twinkled from Cape Gellibrand to Sandringham, and I thought how many strong and willing hands would have been stretched toward us could we have but made those on shore hear. My mother, brothers, and sisters paced the shore during the night, peering into the darkness and wondering why we did not come. Kind boatmen searched for us without success. My father's body was never found. It was a cold night, but, after about three hours' rowing with a small board, which I lifted from the inside of the boat, I got to shallow water, and tried to hurry, as I found my strength going. I fell fainting in the water, but the waves washed me in, or else the tide went out—I was found half-frozen in the morning, and recovered in the hospital. I mention this to you to show that I have known poverty, anguish, bereavement and despair. When very much younger my brother and I tried hard to amuse our little brother, who was very ill. But he was too far gone. It was before the days of anti-toxin. Lately I have on several occasions seen my youngest brother, who has just qualified for a doctor, sitting over his magnifying glass reading his doom, and knowing his days are numbered. Such are some of life's tragedies.

My sorrows, however, compared to yours, were only momentary, for I have thought and pondered and wondered how you mothers stood the great strain of parting with your sons, waiting for news, yet dreading it. The postman's and the minister's call made your heart for the moment stand still. The marvel to me was that your brain did not give way. One mother told me that if she had to go through again what she had suffered during the last four years, she would rather be dead. Her companion, after many doubts and misgivings, parted with her son after telling the minister who was urging her to send him to the front, "My boy is more to me than King or Country." The minister was scandalised, probably because he was a minister, and not a mother. The day is not far distant when it will be an impertinence for a minister or a king to ask a mother to give "the fruit of her body" for such a vile cause as war. The king never suffered at your child's birth, never nurtured him countless days and nights, and has no

RUSSIAN BALLET, AND AN OLD COMEDY.

"J'aime Shakespeare," Verlaine said once to Arthur Symons, "mais j'aime mieux le ballet—I love Shakespeare, but I love the ballet still more."

With the Russians the ballet is a serious art. Fokine was the first to break away from the 18th century conventions by introducing a richly romantic element. He produced "Schcherazade" and "Prince Igor" from the music by Rimsky-Korsakoff and Borodin, and the still more admirable "Peroushka" (music by Stravinsky), with its quaint street scenes and folk dances. Then Nijinski cultivated what has been called a plastique art, the finest example of which is his rendering in ballet form of the Mallarmé Debussy "L'Après Midi d'un Faune." The latest phase is that of Leonide Massine, who, especially in his latest work, "The Three-Cornered Hat," reveals himself as a lover of actuality, an uncompromising realist.

A most original work is this ballet of Spanish peasant life; it is not the Spain of the conventional theatre, but the true Spain studied on the spot. What passes in the theatres for Spanish dancing is an artificial product, with little connection with art or nature.

Massine spent two years making studies, in the little-frequented places of Spain, and in the cafes of the people themselves. Spaniards are born dancers, it is said, born with a perfect sense both of technique and rhythm.

In an interview, Massine said that the greatest change in the future will be the emancipation from the classic school, which has held the field for three centuries, for, despite its great achievements, it is none the less a heavy burden. "In the classic school," he said, "there are laws governing every action. If, for example, a man wants to express his love, he is taught to put his hand to his heart and to look enraptured; and, if he wishes to kill you, he must take three steps forward in a determined way, and raise one of his arms in the attitude of striking a blow. These and all similar gestures are really missing. To me they seem just as false to art as if everyone were taught to say the same phrases in precisely the same manner." Yet, the ballet is a dance; and Massine, a great dancer himself, never employs the usual means of imitative gesture taken from ordinary life, but always seeks to create his new efforts by purely chorographic gesture.

No wonder the old-fashioned critics were shocked. Instead of the sentiment and picturesqueness associated with the Spain of the theatres, we found real people, peasants in odd, violently-coloured costumes, expressing real feelings through the movements of the dance. But the chances were not the Andalusian measures of a young maiden's fancy. They were rough, harsh, furious in their merriment, but always full of rhythm. The whole body danced, as in true Spanish dancing, and every movement had meaning, character. The story of the miller and his wife is broad farce; but you felt the hot atmosphere of the country village, for the dances were truly expressive, coming straight out of life.

call on his life. If you say that it is what the king stands for—Empire, Christianity, etc., etc.—then we say the claim is, if possible, more remote from truth than ever. You, like the rest of us, were hypnotised, deluded, drugged. Like the mothers of Israel, who thought they were doing a great religious act and appeasing their god, you gave your firstborn—the fruit of your body—for what? A great illusion.

Many a time the thought must have come to you that all was not right—that it was very unfair to require your son, on the threshold of manhood, to fight for commerce—or such vague talk as the nation's integrity—or the independence of small nations—when all the nations engaged have been sooner or later the oppressor. The sacrifice has been in vain, but we need not despair. If the bereaved mothers made the effort, they alone could stop the next war. They alone, if they warned with their eloquent passion their younger sisters, or their daughters who had eligible sons of what they had uselessly suffered, then war would be impossible. You could spare them the mental and spiritual agony of seeing their stalwart sons in a few days or hours shattered to pieces to be tossed aside with disgust.

And the men your sons fought for—are they remorseful? Do they grieve? Have they in their anguish cried out, like David, "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away"? Do they implore the daughters of Israel "to weep over Saul"? Do they cry, "I am distressed for thee—my brother Jonathan"? Do they exclaim, "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished"? No. Even if they felt so, their policy restrains them from uttering it. Eleven millions of men slaughtered, many more millions of children and women starved, tens of thousands become insane—and not one thing your sons fought for an accomplished fact! War as a method of reform is useless: as a policy it is entirely inefficient. Bereaved mothers, end war!—Yours, etc.,

WARRIGAL.

NOTE.

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