

HOW ONE PAINTER WORKED FOR PEACE

By CLARENCE DARROW.

Verestchagin painted war; he painted war so true to life that as we look upon the scene we long for peace.

He painted war as war has ever been, and as war will ever be—a horrible and ghastly scene where men drunk with blind frenzy, which rulers say is patriotic pride, and made mad by drums and fifes and smoke and shot and shell and flowing blood, seek to maim and wound and kill, because a ruler gives the word. He paints a battlefield, a field of life and death, a field of carnage and of blood: and who are these that fight like fiends and devils driven to despair?

What cause is this that makes these men forget that they are men, and vie with beasts to show their cruel thirst for blood? They shout of home and native land, but they have no homes, and the owners of their native land exist upon their toil and blood. The nobles and princes for whom this fight is waged are far away upon a hill beyond the reach of shot and shell, and from this spot they watch their slaves pour out their blood to satisfy their rulers' pride and lust of power.

What is the enemy they fight? Men like themselves, who blindly go to death at another king's command: slaves, who have no land, who freely give their toil or blood, whichever one their rulers may demand. These fighting soldiers have no cause for strife, but their rulers live by kindling in their hearts a love of native land—a love that makes them hate their brother laborers of other lands, and humbly march to death to satisfy a king's caprice.

But let us look once more after the battle has been fought. Here we see the wreck and ruin of the strife; the field is silent now, given to the dead, the beast

of prey and night. A young soldier lies upon the ground; the snow is falling fast around his form; the lonely mountain peaks rise up on every side; the wreck of war is all about. His uniform is soiled and stained, a spot of red is seen upon his breast. It is not the color that his country wove upon his coat to catch his eye and bait him to his death; it is hard and jagged and cold. It is his life's blood, which leaked out through a hole that followed the point of a saber to his heart. His form is stiff and cold, for he is dead. The cruel wound and icy air have done their work.

The government that took his life taught this poor boy to love his native land; as a child he dreamed of scenes of glory and of power and the great, wide world just waiting to fall captive to his magic strength. He dreamed of war and strife, of victory and fame; if he should die kind hands would smooth his brow, and loving hearts would keep his grave and memory green, because he died in war. But no human eye is there at last, as the mist of night and mist of death shut out the bloody mountains from his sight. The snow is all around and the air above is gray with falling flakes, which soon will hide him from the world; and when the summer time shall come again none can tell his bleaching bones from all the rest. The only life upon the scene is the buzzard slowly circling in the air above his head, waiting to make sure that death has come. The bird looks down upon the boy into the eyes through which he first looked out upon the great, wide world and which his mother fondly kissed; upon these eyes the buzzard will commence his meal.