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The United States and Armaments.

In view of the fact that the subject of armaments is sure to come up in some form and constitute perhaps one of the most urgent and possibly troublesome problems at the approaching Hague Conference, the question naturally arises, "What attitude should the delegates from the United States take on the subject?"

It has been heretofore generally assumed that the question is one which belongs exclusively to the great military powers of Europe and that our government, because of the relative smallness of its armament, should abstain from taking part in any discussion of the subject. This was the position taken by the United States delegation at The Hague in 1899. They took no part in the discussions which then occurred. Though concurring in the conclusions of the First Committee "that the proposals of the Russian representatives for fixing the amounts of effective forces and of budgets, military and naval, for periods of five and three years, cannot now be accepted, and that a more profound study on the part of each state concerned is to be desired," the delegation, in its statement on the subject, said that it wished to place upon the record "that the United States in doing so does not express any opinion as to the course to be taken by the states of

Europe," and desired to express its determination "to refrain from enunciating opinions upon matters into which, as they concern Europe alone, the United States has no claim to enter."

Though taking this position, the delegation went so far as to vote for the Bourgeois resolution, couched in the following words: "The Committee considers that a limitation of the military charges which now weigh upon the world is greatly to be desired in the interests of the material and moral welfare of humanity." This resolution was adopted by the Conference as a whole.

At the present time no satisfactory reason can be conceived for the continuance of this attitude of our government. It was, in our view, an untenable one even then, resulting more from timidity and calculating reserve than from reluctance to meddle with what was considered purely the business of Europe. The question of armaments was already at that time a world question on which the United States had both the right and the duty to make itself heard. The feeble position which it took was probably the determining factor in the refusal of the Conference to go further in the direction of the Russian proposals than it did. It has likewise led to very unfortunate results both for this country and Europe in the further development of the armaments then recognized to weigh so heavily upon the world.

But whatever may have been the case at that time, all reason for the attitude then taken has passed, and there are several very strong grounds why the opposite attitude should be assumed. The resolution adopted at The Hague, as quoted above, has laid upon all the governments, the United States among the rest, the obligation to make a more serious examination of the question than has yet been attempted. This obligation cannot be fulfilled by a mere negative position. Furthermore, the rivalry of armaments has continued, and the burdens imposed by them to-day are much heavier upon the world than they were when the Bourgeois resolution was adopted. Their limitation is now more imperative than it was then.

Besides this, the growth of the United States navy has made the question a vital and urgent one for this country. When the dozen or more battle-ships, the large number of cruisers and the many smaller war craft now under construction are completed, our navy will be, all things considered, the third and possibly the second in the world. The