

# The Case of Leonard Wood

*Why are His Military Genius  
and Great Experience Not Put  
to Their Fullest Use?*

**W**HEN civilized Europe went to war against Germany, the world predicted a short war. Public opinion, supported by the world's ablest statesmen, confidently predicted peace within nine months. But there was one man in England, a soldier—if not a military genius, at least a proven organizer of men, a man of vision, and a student,—who, unmoved by popular opinion or the views of any statesman, confidently predicted at least three years of war. That man was Kitchener of Khartoum.

The world was incredulous, it had a tendency to mock. But the British Civil Government, itself unbelieving, nevertheless knew that this quiet soldier had acquired, through years of study and of observation, a thorough knowledge of the military forces of Europe: the points of strength and of weakness of the various belligerents.

He might be right; he might be wrong. But whether right or wrong, the British Empire could not suffer by accepting his opinion and advice. So the Government accepted Kitchener's theory and began its preparations for a long war. And the task of organizing and training the vast army which would be needed was given to Kitchener, the man who had conceived its necessity, and whose experience and proven ability as an organizer, this army so sorely needed. And it is largely Kitchener's army which is now fighting in France; Kitchener's army which, in these trying days, is standing between the Hun and the coast of France, between civilization and barbarism.

In the United States we have, too, a Kitchener! A thorough military student, a man with the vision to see, and the courage to express his views, even though they may be contrary to those of the Government at the moment—as, be it remembered, were Kitchener's—a man who is also a proven organizer. That man is General Leonard Wood.

**G**ENERAL WOOD'S record in the United States Army is one of long, continuous and brilliant service. He first came into prominence in 1886, in the campaign of General Nelson A. Miles against Geronimo, where he served with the late General—then Captain Lawton. In writing to General Miles after Geronimo's capture, Lawton made the following comment on Wood's work: "He sought the most difficult and most dangerous work, and, by his determination and courage, rendered



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a successful issue of the campaign possible."

When the Indian campaigns were concluded, Wood continued in the service, as a surgeon, until our war with Spain, in 1898, when he entered the ranks of the volunteers in command of the Rough Riders. While in Cuba he was given the rank of Major General of Volunteers. After the surrender of Santiago, which practically ended the Spanish War, General Shafter, the Commander in Chief of the American forces, said, in a cable to the Secretary of War, that "they (Generals Wood and Lawton) are the two best men in the army here." These are but two of the many instances, of the high esteem in which he was held by his commanding officers. Both, it may be noted, were for military services in the field.

But, apart from his field service record, General Wood has gained great distinction as an administrative officer. After the treaty of peace with Spain, in the interregnum before the government of Cuba was turned over to the natives, General Wood was appointed Governor General of Cuba, taking office in this capacity in December, 1899. He held this office until the formal transfer of the Government was made.

**I**t is doubtful if the history of this country contains a record of more brilliant administrative work. Cuba, at that time, was a country infested with plague and disease. Yellow fever, which annually killed more people than our total casualty list in the Spanish War, was rampant. The larger cities were literal pest holes. There was no government, no officials, no instrumentalities other than the United States Army through which order could be enforced, and, of course, no judicial system, since there were no laws to be either obeyed or broken.

The country was largely in ruins (except the larger towns), agriculture had dwindled until production of food stuffs was negligible; hunger and starvation were found on every hand. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine



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a more complete condition of chaos. The entire island, and every function of government, had to be re-moulded and remade, beginning at the absolute zero. Under the Wood régime, yellow fever was stamped out completely, the cities throughout the island were cleaned out, and a complete and modern system of sanitation installed in the entire island.

Under General Wood's administration, a constitution was drawn up and a government shaped very much along the lines of our own. A legal code was perfected, and a workable electoral system evolved, with proper laws for its administration.

When General Wood transferred the Government of Cuba to its owners and sailed for the United States, he left behind him a new nation, the various departments of whose Government were functioning smoothly and efficiently. Of General Wood's work in Cuba, Elihu Root said: "Out of an utterly prostrate colony a free republic was built up,—the work being done with such signal ability, integrity and success that the new nation started under more favorable conditions than has ever before been the case in any single instance among her fellow Spanish-American republics."

In recognition of his services, Wood was made a Brigadier General in the regular establishment, in 1901, and a Major General in 1903. Six years later—in 1909, he was appointed Chief of the General Staff; but, in 1914, he was put in command of a department because, as the Secretary of War stated, since the Chief of Staff was the personal military adviser of the Secretary of War, he should be *persona grata*, which we may therefore assume that General Wood was not. This was the department of the East, a department which in 1917 was to assume a vital importance in our war preparations, but which in 1914 had no distinctive position in relation to the other departments.

GENERAL WOOD'S most conspicuous service to his country has been his persistent efforts to induce America to take their military situation seriously, and to undertake some common-sense measures of preparedness. As far back as 1912, in a speech at Los Angeles, he spoke in behalf of a measure creating a reserve army of 600,000 men. In 1913, he succeeded in establishing two camps for university men where the rudimentary training for officers could be given.

He appreciated, far in advance of any of the countries now numbered among the Allies, that the great difficulty of all the Allies would be in finding officers to command the units of the huge army that war with a great power would involve.

It was because of his sympathy and inspiration that the series of "Business Men's Camps" was born. In 1915 (*Continued on page 94*) so great was the faith and confidence of the public in General Wood's knowledge and judgment that he was enabled to organize, in July of that year, the camp at Plattsburg. This was followed by a



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second camp at the same place in August. The entire country seized the idea and before the end of the summer, camps had been organized at Fort Sheridan, Ill.; Ludington, Mich.; American Lake, Wash., and San Francisco, Cal.

The Administration gave its consent to the movement and loaned the equipment. But the entire expenses of running and constructing the camps and of feeding and clothing the men were borne by the American public—largely by the men who went to the camps and their friends. The expenses ran into millions of dollars, and that they should have been met in this way in itself constitutes a remarkable public tribute to General Wood's soundness of vision. It was out of this experiment of "Business men's camps" that there grew the series of Officers' Training Camps. We owe to both of them our ability to play our present part—inadequate as it is—on the battlefields of France.

**I**N 1916, the underlying principles of this great campaign of education, which he initiated and for so long fought alone, were crystallized in his book "Our Military History; Its Facts and Fallacies". One quotation from this book reads as if it had been written today:

"The safety of our country and its institutions, the opportunity to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness under the American flag, will be jeopardized unless there is a well thought out, well organized preparedness, based upon the principle that—with equality in opportunities and privileges of citizenship—goes, hand in hand, equality of obligation to the nation in peace or war."

The whole book was an inspired warning to the American people. But what was the result of his campaign for preparedness and of his warning? Congress passed, and the President signed, one of the most deceiving, tricky and mischievous bits of military legislation that ever stained our statute books; a bill which even its author, Mr. Hay of Virginia (who was subsequently rewarded with an appointment to the Federal bench), admitted was designed principally to still the popular clamor for preparedness. And the American people, rocked in the cradle of a materialistic idealism and sung to sleep by the lullaby of the pacifist, were satisfied.

General Wood is a soldier whose record in the field of battle has always merited and received the highest commendation from his superior officers; he has proven resourceful, sound in judgment, keen in mind, courageous in spirit.



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As an administrative and executive officer his accomplishments have been extremely brilliant. As a prophet, he saw far ahead of any other officer in the service, farther ahead than any officer in the civil government. On his complete record, then, and the proven ability he possesses, he should be performing some very great and important duty in this hour of our national emergency, instead of which he has been continuously thrust into the back-ground.

**T**HE attitude of the Administration towards General Wood is most difficult to understand. From the moment it became apparent that the United States must enter the war, every attempt has been made to relegate him to positions of relatively minor importance. At the time Count von Bernstorff was sent home, General Wood was in command of the Department of the East, with headquarters at Governors Island. Unimportant as this command was in 1914, it can be easily understood that this department, because of the strategic position of New York as a shipping point and a point of embarkation for our men, had become the most important in the entire country.

But what happened to General Wood between the sailing of von Bernstorff and the declaration of war? Without consulting General Wood, without previous intimation of its intention, the Administration issued orders, on March 24th, 1917, dividing the Department of the East, removing him from his command and concluding by giving him his option of taking command of the "Southeastern Department, with headquarters at Charleston, S. C."—(a department not yet in existence) or "The more important ones at Manila, or Hawaii." The question naturally arises if Manila and Hawaii—with Japan in the ranks of the Allies and the oceans cleared of German ships by the British fleet—were more important posts than the newly born Southeastern Department, just how important was the latter post? General Wood preferred Charleston and accordingly, was ordered there, later being transferred to Camp Funston in Kansas, about as far from the sea coast as he could well be sent.

He remained at Camp Funston until the early part of this year when he was sent to France, without command, presumably to study our situation there with a view to making a report. In April he returned, after several weeks spent in inspections and conferences, and then the most mystifying incident of our activities occurred.



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**T**HE most distinguished, the most able, the senior officer of our military establishment returned from an official visit to the most important battlefield of the world's history, where, not armies, but nations are facing each other, and where the sons of America are daily shedding their blood in our defense, and the President could not find a moment in which to receive him; in which to take advantage, in behalf of the American people, of his matchless counsel and advice.

And this counsel, this advice, was urgently needed.

The most serious criticism which has been directed against our war preparations has been lack of vision—a failure to look ahead in the European situation, a tendency to contemplate the mobilization and equipping of 1,500,000 men (our total present force in the field) as the full measure of our duty, without any attempt to plan for the total which might be required later on.

The message which General Wood brought from France bore directly on this situation. Briefly his message was an appeal for men, above all else, men! 2,500,000 men in France and as many more, in reserve, in America. In other words, an American army of five million men.

So, here we are, once again, at the crossroads. In 1912—two years before the World War—General Wood told us what to do,—raise a reserve army of 600,000 men. We refused to do it. Again—all through the progress of the war, from 1914 to 1917—General Wood again told us what to do,—prepare adequately for our national defense, in every branch of the service. Again we refused to do it.

**A**ND now, finally, after we have been at war for more than a year, he returns from the front, and again tells us what to do,—equip an army of at least five million men, so that we can have some assurance at least, that our war program will be on a scale to insure victory.

So far, there are, unfortunately, indications that the Administration is failing to follow his ad- (Continued on page 96) vice in this, our third great crisis in six years, any more than it followed it in 1912, when he wanted to create a reserve army of 600,000 men; or in the years from 1914 to 1917, when he urged us to prepare to the fullest possible extent against our possible, not to say probable, participation as one of the Allied powers.



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General Wood's abilities as a soldier are common knowledge, not only in America but abroad, where he is regarded as one of the first soldiers of the world. Representative Medill McCormick of Illinois is authority for the statement that in England he found some measure of distrust based on the fear that we are not using our best men; and the same authority quotes the British Premier as expressing the desire that General Wood should represent the United States on the Allied War Council. But General Wood is still here, still filling a function in our war preparations which could be filled by any of a dozen men of lesser rank and vision—his great abilities disdained, cast aside, at a time when the safety of America demands the full employment of every military man's gifts.

I do not pretend to fix the reason which lies behind the Administration's refusal to avail itself, in the fullest degree, of General Wood's services. I would, however, lay down as fixed and undebatable, certain truths in regard to our war efforts.

**WE** have a double duty to perform—a duty to ourselves, and a duty to our Allies. Although we dogmatically declared—with a fatuous belief in our own safety, that, with the great issues of Europe, we had no concern, it is now painfully evident that our concern was—just as General Wood has told us—identical with that of England and of France, and that during 1914, 1915 and 1916 they were fighting our fight, and in our defense, just as truly as in their own.

And, since we hung back, isolated by the oceans which only the British fleet made safe for us, attending to business while those nations were pouring out the life blood of their bravest and their best; while the women of England sweated in munition plants and the women of France turned themselves into beasts of burden and ploughed their fields, our debt to our Allies is very much greater than if we had, at the very beginning, joined hands with them in their struggle for civilization.

And it is a debt, furthermore, which can never quite be liquidated. So that we owe it to them, as much as to ourselves, not to limit our participation to money and to men, but to place behind them our every resource in both administrative and military genius.

**GENERAL WOOD** has committed the sin of having been right from the very start. He has always been



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right. He has been right when Washington has been wrong. It is upon the heads of those who have decried General Wood's repeated pleas for preparedness; it is upon the heads of the entire pacifist crew who sold their shrivelled souls and their country's safety to the devil of German propaganda, that is falling the blame for the blood of those who are dying on the hills of Picardy and the plains of Flanders.

From this blame there can be no escape. The question before the Administration, during those first two and a half years of the war was one of money against human life. Had Washington taken Wood's advice—and found that advice to be wrong—it would have cost us a few millions of dollars and nothing more; but when it declined that advice and that advice proved sound, it adopted a course that may cost us, and our Allies, millions of human lives.

We weighed the two solutions in the balance, and the gospel of the pacifist prevailed. But all this is past history.

Looking now, confidently, to the future: is there not every reason for national recognition of the fact that General Wood is a military leader of the first rank; that his advice has been sound from the very start; and that his counsel is imperatively needed in matters affecting the organization and administration of our military forces.

Why are his extraordinary talents not put to their fullest and completest use?

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