



GENERAL HOMER LEA, CHINESE ARMY

A Los Angeles Jeremiah

Homer Lea: Military Genius and Prophet

by MARSHALL STIMSON

LOS ANGELES now has the honor of having one of its former citizens, the late Homer Lea, recognized as one of the great figures in world affairs.

At the present time Homer Lea's two books *Valor of Ignorance* written in 1909, dealing with the philosophy of war and his predicted contest between the United States and Japan, and *The Day of the Saxon* written in 1912, dealing with the British Empire and, in his opinion its inevitable conflict with Germany, are attracting wide attention. Lea's works are startling viewed in the light of the developments of the present war. As historical and philosophical treatises on the rise and fall of nations, they are profoundly disturbing. As the expositions of military strategy, they were iconoclastic. Events, however, have proved that the ideas which he advanced are now basic principles of modern warfare.

Lea was a mystic character. Moving thru the Orient in the early part of this century when events of dynamic importance were taking place, later visiting Europe to study the military situation, spending a period in England gaining the confidence of two of England's greatest men, Lord Roberts and Kitchener, moving up and down the entire western coast line of the United States, making a most minute study of its characteristics from a military standpoint, he sensed the great conflict that now convulses the world.

He not only displayed an accurate knowledge of history but demonstrated an ability to understand the portent of events that reached the heights of prophesy. In fact, as you read his words of burning scorn for the illusions and vanities of the nations as they come and go, his thundering denunciations of the evils of luxury, vice and commercialism, the tearing to pieces of the illusions of isolationism, ocean defense, fixed fortifications and popular uprisings to rebel invasion, one almost believes that one of the towering full-bearded ancient prophets has arisen. Yet, the writer of these great books was a tiny, frail hunchback whom nature had apparently attempted to bar from participating in the activities of ordinary men. By the sheer strength of his personality he forced his way into the current of great events

which marked the beginning of vast changes thruout the entire world.

The flyleaf of my copy of the book entitled *The Valor of Ignorance* by Homer Lea bears this inscription signed by him: "To Marshall Stimson, my companion from boyhood" with the date of November 6, 1910.

From my first acquaintance with Lea I found him a fascinating personality. We were members of the same class of the Los Angeles High school, class of 1896. At that time Theodore Roosevelt was making his appearance on the scene of public activity. He organized and sponsored an organization known as the Lyceum League of America. It maintained Lyceums in the various high schools thruout the country. Its purpose was to inculcate a study of parliamentary law, political conditions, administration of civic affairs and to stimulate in young men the desire for public service. This League had a southern California organization which held conventions in various cities. Lea always attended as one of the delegates. He was president of the local Lyceum and one of its most effective orators. His dramatic way of speaking, his piercing eyes, the intonation of his voice, and his characteristic gesture of raising his hand with his long forefinger extended, brought home the point generated by his keen mind. He was a great reader and a student of history. His special interest was military history. In his backyard he laid out replicas of the great battles and campaigns of the world, built mountains and streams and bridges and fortifications in miniature and plotted and carried out the battles of Caesar, Napoleon and General Lee of whom he was a great admirer. Chinatown was not far from the high school and in those days it was a very picturesque and alluring field of exploration by young fellows of our age. Lea was evidently viewed with a feeling of almost reverence by the Chinese because of his deformity and we were able to penetrate into the most remote places in the Chinese quarter and had a full picture of the life that went on there. We made the acquaintance of a very interesting well educated Chinese named Luie Suey. He had traveled all over the world and spoke English as well as any of us. His tales of life in the Orient and especially China appealed to our sense of adventure and we both decided that we would go there. Luie Suey was assassinated by members of one of the Chinese tongs. That brought on a war and later the one responsible for his assassination was also killed. We attended all of the various trials that took place in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County and acquired a considerable knowledge of the working of the Chinese mind. As prominent Chinese lived in more or less danger they had a technique of giving out the information that they were going somewhere when

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as a matter of fact they had just been to the place; or, giving out the information that they had been there when they were about to go there. I found that Lea adopted those tactics in later life which accounts for some of the apparent contradictions in the records which various persons give of his appearances in connection with certain events.

One very dramatic incident took place during our senior year in High School. I was a candidate for a position which is tantamount to the head of the school, that is, president of the Star and Crescent Society. Lea was my campaign manager and after a ballot in which I led, the second ballot was taken by which I was apparently beaten by a vote. Before the result could be announced Lea had taken the platform and in his most dramatic manner had charged that the vote of a certain young lady had been changed and asked the presiding officer to question her as to how she had voted. Upon her reply that she had intended to vote for me and had so marked her ballot and that she had seen one of the tellers mark something on it, the entire vote was declared void and later I was elected. I give this illustration to show Lea's alertness and ability to grasp and handle a situation.

In spite of his physical difficulty he was fond of tramping and hunting. He never permitted anyone to refer to his trouble, would carry his gun and perform all of the duties around the camp that anyone else did. One very cold night when we were camping in an exposed position and could not keep warm in our blankets, he made a sleeping bag out of old sacks, put a hot rock at his feet, and slept comfortably all night. On leaving High School Lea attended Occidental College, studying history and later, while at Stanford University he became friendly with a group of Chinese who were interested in attempting the restoration to the throne of the Chinese Emperor. He organized at Stanford a local group to affiliate with Po Wong Wui a society to restore the Chinese Emperor. In that group were several adventurous spirits of Los Angeles heritage. Among others were present Justice Walton J. Wood of the District Court of Appeals, the late Bill Treager, ex-Sheriff of Los Angeles County, and others. Justice Wood went to the Philippines and was in Manila for a period, met there Chinese who were well acquainted with Lea and on invitation went to Hong Kong, thence to Canton where he was given a banquet by leading Chinese connected with the restoration movement. According to Justice Wood, Lea was held in the very highest esteem by all of the Chinese who were members of his reform party. I found Lea again in California when I returned home during one of my vacations. At that time he was drilling a group of young Chinese to

become officers in the Chinese army. Lea formed and incorporated a military college called Western Military College and these young Chinese were students. They took part as a military body in one of the Tournament of Roses Parades and created quite a sensation beside being noticed for their fine military appearance. Lea was in command of a division of the Chinese Reform Army and saw some fighting in China. He just escaped being captured when one of the supposedly loyal leaders betrayed a group to the supporters of the Empress Dowager. The Chinese Emperor, on his succession to the throne, had very progressive ideas and intended to put into effect certain reforms which were distasteful to the Manchu group. They rallied around the Empress Dowager who had been a former concubine of the Emperor's father. She was not the Emperor's mother, but a hardheaded, ruthless little woman who headed the cause of the reactionary party and deposed and imprisoned the Emperor, placed a price upon the head of the Chinese Premier, Kong Yu Wei a liberal, Leung Cheu, the Treasurer, and Homer Lea. They all escaped. Homer Lea went to Japan with Sun Yat Sen. Lea told me that Japan was secretly, for purposes of her own, friendly to the cause of the reformers and Russia, supposedly, to that of the Empress Dowager and her supporters.

While in Japan Lea had apparently abundant opportunity to study Japanese methods. He was apparently friendly with many of those in power. I have seen letters written to him by Marquis Ito. Lea returned from Japan and for a period again lived in Los Angeles. I saw him here and he introduced me to the former Premier, Kong Yu Wei. I attended a banquet of friends of the reform movement at the Chinese Restaurant on Alameda Street and have been told later that Sun Yat Sen was present altho under an assumed name. Lea's boyhood friends included the well-known lawyers, Roger S. Page, Edw. G. Kuster, now living in Carmel, Justice John M. York, Marco Newmark and Harry Carr whose column "The Lancer" was a feature of the Los Angeles Times. Lea spent much time in travel and study of the military tactics in various parts of the world. Prior to writing the *Valor of Ignorance*, published in 1909, he made a personal study of the entire Pacific Coastal area of the United States. He discussed with General Adna R. Chaffee, one-time Chief of Staff of the United States Army, the military problems of the Pacific Coast. General Chaffee was greatly impressed with his ideas and acted as umpire in a war game with officers of the United States Army in which Lea, representing Japanese forces, was able theoretically to successfully take over every city on the Pacific Coast. Lea also traveled extensively in Europe

for his health. He spent some time in Carlsbad. He attended at the invitation of the Kaiser the spring maneuvers of the German Army, becoming acquainted with certain new weapons of the German Army. He visited England and had conferences with Lord Roberts and General Kitchener, both of whom were impressed with his military sagacity. Lea showed me letters from Lord Roberts from which I could see with what high esteem he was held by that great military leader. I visited him in his home here at various times. He married his secretary, a very able, well educated woman, who helped him with his writings. His health was breaking and she was a most devoted wife and undoubtedly prolonged his life by the care which she gave him. He died in November 1912 at Ocean Park.

I regret that I did not make more notes of the various things that he told me, some of which do not appear in his books, but I remember one in particular—he advocated the building of a broad-gauge railway line from the northern to the southern border of the United States, far enough back from the Pacific Coast waters to be out of range of guns from the enemy, with laterals leading to all of the points where enemy landings might be effected; the mounting of long range guns upon heavy railway trucks and troop trains which could rapidly mobilize strong military forces at any threatened points.

Lea's books were written in the hope that the prophesies which he made would constitute a warning that would be heeded by both the United States and the British Empire. With the exception of a few military men they were for the most part ignored until the events of the present day reveal the marvelous insight which he displayed in these books. Japan and Germany understood them and they were not only read but studied in those countries.

The Valor of Ignorance

This book is a great exposition of military and naval strategy. It presents the results of a deep study into the laws which govern the rise and fall of nations and the causes of wars. Lea writes from the standpoint of a scientist. His understanding of economic law in its relation to war and international affairs is astounding. He also sizes up the social, political and economic conditions which prevail in the United States. He blames our present state of military unpreparedness and the importance wealth plays in our scheme of things upon the commercial spirit. Listen to these biting words: "High or low, the ambitions of the heterogeneous masses that now riot and revel within the confines of this Republic only regard it in a parasitical sense, as a land to fatten on and grow big in, whose resources are not to be de-

veloped and conserved for the furtherance of the Republic's greatness, but only to satisfy the larval greed of those who subsist upon its fatness."

When we read of the dollar-a-year men who got on the government payroll while still under salaries to their companies and who used this position to the advantage of industrial interests rather than their country; and how there has been so much racketeering in labor among union laborers, how men have been forced to join the unions and pay an initiation fee in order to get jobs on government work, and how, in some instances, the unions have actually restricted the amount of work that can be performed, we realize the truth contained in Lea's terrible indictment.

In *The Valor of Ignorance* Lea laid down the Japanese plan of attack against the United States. By chart he outlines the Japanese campaign in the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska and the entire Pacific coastal area.

The Day of the Saxon

In this book Lea predicted the war between Germany and Great Britain. He warned the British people in these words:

"At this late hour or never must the Saxon people arouse themselves to the somber consequences of their neglect and break away from the pleasant security of their delusions. To them has now come that gloomy dawn so familiar to men throughout all the nights and dawns he has bedded and risen together, falling asleep upon a peaceful earth and getting up to find it a place of strife; going to bed under the serene and happy heavens and awakening to find them filled with demons; laying his head upon the pillow of his gods and rising to find himself abandoned. This has ever been the fate of nations as they have laid themselves down to sleep throughout the ages much in the same manner as the Saxon race, in all their glory and hope and vanity, only to awake at a predetermined hour to find themselves upon a savage dawn, stripped and desolate."

He advised England that there must be one plan for the defense of the British possessions and that at every vital point there must be a sufficient military and naval force to withstand any force that might be brought against it by Germany or Japan. He also strongly advised that the British Empire and the United States should form a strong alliance and have a definite plan for establishing, not alone their dominions, but their liberties and principles throughout the



HOMER LEA, THE LOS ANGELES HIGH SCHOOL BOY, 1896

world. However, he doubted that this could be accomplished on account of the mixed racial conditions in the United States.

This book and *The Valor of Ignorance* are so filled with valuable military information and discussion of world-wide conditions that it is impossible to do more than barely outline them.

What raises Lea to the eminence of a world figure is the fulfillment today of the predictions which he made in 1909 and 1912. In the military and naval realm he said that Germany would take over Austria, conquer the Balkan Countries, move into Denmark, Belgium and Holland, overthrow France and attack England. He predicted that Germany would infiltrate the South American countries, attack the United States in the Caribbean Sea and war with the United States over the Monroe Doctrine. Italy would become an ally of Germany and would overshadow her but that in the end it would be Germany and not Italy that would control the Mediterranean. As far as Japan was concerned, her plans of campaign would be to take over Manchuria, part of Mongolia, attack China, declare war on England, take Hong Kong, Indo China, Singapore, move into and subjugate the Dutch East Indies and then conquer Australia. He predicted war upon the United States, that Japan would take the Philippines, make an attack upon Hawaii, then upon the Aleutian Islands and establish bases below the United States border to the South, attack the Panama Canal and take the entire Pacific Coast.

All of the preliminary steps, Japan has already taken and in the manner indicated by Lea. We still have a foothold in the Philippines, but Australia has already been attacked and submarines have appeared on the Pacific Coast.

In the realm of military strategy, Lea ridiculed the value of fixed fortifications. His conclusions on this point have been verified by the destruction of the Maginot Line and the taking of Singapore. He proclaimed the folly of isolationism and the ocean as a defense. Japan's long-distance ocean campaign and the submarine campaign of Germany in the Atlantic have proved the correctness of his views. He was the first to advocate the use of mobile armies. Germany proved the soundness of his ideas on that point. Both England and the United States are now struggling with might and main to get on that basis. He advocated universal compulsory military service and the use of trained forces rather than volunteers. No one would now think of combatting those propositions. He attacked the theory of relying almost solely upon navies, either for successful offense or defense. Events have proved Lea to be right and Mahan to be wrong. In the field of economics as it relates to war, he refuted the idea that a bankrupt

nation could make a successful war against a populace and wealthy nation. No longer can politicians and pseudo economists rely on that theory. He attacked the statement of pacifists that money spent in preparing for war was money wasted. As far back as 1909, long before technocracy was thought of, and before men had begun to discuss to any great extent the effect of the use of machines upon the industrial world, he predicted that the world would soon become so mechanized that a huge unemployment situation would arise. In using a certain portion of the populace in the army and navy and in the production of defense materials, this spreading over a period of years, would be a solution of the industrial problem and would also provide for the protection of the wealth of the nation. He also laid down in a scientific way the conditions which would result in warfare between nations and predicted the results.

He predicted the war between Germany and England and said that if England won there would be another war or series of wars and if Germany won the victory would be conclusive.

It is safe to say that no man who ever lived to so accurately forecast events which have in so many instances worked out according to the picture laid down by him.

In the light of the warnings given by Lea and in the face of the terrible danger that the British people and those of the United States face which is nothing less than a complete and absolute destruction of their national existence and culture, I ask these questions: How can it be that men still strike and quarrel over wages and hours; how can businessmen be so concerned over profits; how can there be so much resistance to the necessary curtailment of individual rights; how can we still deal so softly with criminals and radicals and the graft of public officials; how can we still indulge in luxuries, trivial amusements, vice and the satisfying of appetites that can only result in physical deterioration and mental stupidity? It must seem incredible to any patriotic and sensible person, and yet these very things which Lea said would be our destruction are still going on. No one must ever hold the idea that Lea was an advocate of war. No one must ever question his sincerity in writing the truth as he saw it and from his own words you can be assured that he wrote in the hope that what he said would be given proper attention and the disasters that he predicted would not be allowed to come to pass—his words are:

“If this republic is to achieve the greatness and duration its founders hoped to secure for it; if it is to continue to spread over the earth the principles of its constitutions or the equity of its laws and the

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hope it extends to the betterment of the human race, then it must realize that this can only be done by possessing an ability and potentiality to be supreme over those nations whose ambitions and expansion are convergent. Preparations for wars consequent upon the growing compactness of the world and increasing convergence of all the world powers must go on ceaselessly and in proportion to the increase of expansion and fullness of years."