

POOR DOCUMENT

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Great Struggle Yet Ahead of The Allies

Harvard Professor Tells of Conditions In France As He Saw Them—French Weakened But Gallant

A report in the Harvard Alumni Bulletin of the war lecture given by Professor Hill on his return from "over there."

What I say is merely the result of five weeks in France, added to the knowledge every American who thinks and reads about the European situation. If I have formed and now express positive opinions it is because the impressions one gets in France are so astonishingly clear and vivid that they inevitably leave equally clear and vivid results. But I have had no peculiar sources of information, and I neither attach nor want anyone to attach any finality to my views. In the great welter of fact and emotion one must be prepared to allow large scope for misinformation and mistake, to keep a saving skepticism not only concerning what other people tell you but also concerning one's own power of seeing clearly and justly. And every conclusion must be held only tentatively, ready to be amended or cast aside whenever new information is obtained or cooler judgment corrects an impression gained in the heat of anger or pity.

One of the dominant impressions held is that we in America have hardly yet begun to grasp the enormous task which lies before us and our Allies. The thing that struck us who were in France when we received the rare American papers and letters which reached us was the tone of jaunty confidence which pervaded them. To read the news from America you would believe the American soldiers were almost at the gates of Berlin, or at least that the war was settled by our entrance into it, that Germany was as good as beaten, that you could look for a final and victorious result sometime in the near and immediate future. That was not the feeling of any well-informed person whom I met in France. I talked with soldiers, I talked with diplomats, I talked with men of affairs, and one and all had the same sense, that Germany was very far from beaten today, that beating Germany meant still an enormous expenditure of blood and of effort.

The Task of the United States. Now, that being so, what is to be the task of the United States? That task, of course, must depend in the first instance on the condition of our Allies, and above all on the condition of France and of England, for it would be unfair to expect Italy to bear a large part of the burden, and Russia, I think, we must dismiss as a negligible quantity in the future of affairs.

Of England I shall not attempt to speak in detail. I have not seen enough of England really to form a judgment. From all I heard, the English army is in a state of extraordinary efficiency and of high spirit. From all I could learn in the few days I spent in England and in the many talks I had with English people, the resources of England are still enormous, and still to a very large extent untouched by the war, and the spirit of England is as high and her courage is as steady as it has ever been in any part of her history. The English believe that ultimately they are going to win. They have set themselves to win with their dogged persistence, with that inability even to contemplate the possibility of defeat which is one of the strongest traits of the English character. They, at least, will be able to do their share and more than their share of the fighting that is still to be done.

It is of France more particularly that I want to speak to you tonight, and France is in a very different position from England. Consider for a moment what the French have had to do. When the first great rush of the Germans came in 1914 and carried them almost to the gates of Paris, it was on the French that the full brunt of the attack fell. They supported that attack sub-

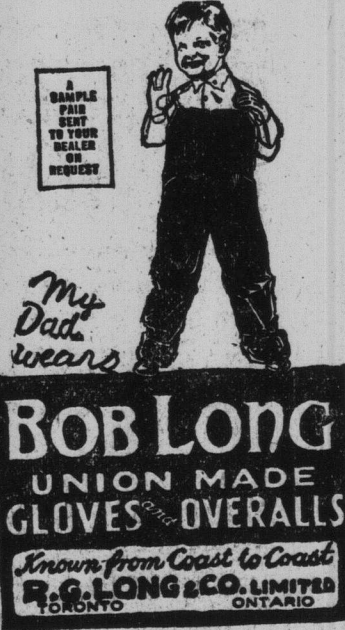
stantially alone for two years, for though the English could do something, they were very far from ready, and the help that they could afford to give, the help that they did give, was only a very small part of the fighting force that was necessary to save the world from conquest by the German army. It was the French who drove the Germans back at the Marne. It was the French who held them for two long years held them in their trenches, substantially where they are held today, and forced them back little by little, almost inch by inch, until some part at least of their conquests had been wrested from them. Even now it is the French who hold the greater part of the long battle front stretching from the sea to the Alps which divides Europe today. It was a great exploit. It was an exploit which no nation in modern times has ever equalled. It was an exploit the heroism of which it is impossible to overstate; but it was an exploit which cost France fearfully dear.

France's Economic Burden. In the first place, there was the cost of territory. The German invasion swept over the richest part of France, or one of the richest parts of France, perhaps the very richest, certainly a part of France which because of its manufactures, because of its mines, because of the character of its inhabitants, made up a very large part of the national wealth of the country. Consider how we should be here in New England, if a foreign enemy had swept across Massachusetts from the west very nearly to a line running through the city of Worcester. That is as near as the Germans are today to the heart of France to Paris. It is less than a day's ride by automobile, it is not more than between sixty and eighty miles, before you come to the German lines, to that black cloud of invaders, which hangs over the edge of France, which their men have been struggling desperately for the last two years to push back. That means that the inhabitants of those territories have practically all been uprooted from their homes, some of them carried captive to Germany, others swept backwards into France. Some of the captives in Germany are slowly filtering back through neutral nations to seek some sort of refuge in their mother-country. How many of those refugees, how many of those repatriated ones as they call them, there are, it is impossible to say, somewhere I fancy between a quarter and half a million—uprooted from their homes, deprived of all their property, cast as objects of charity on the rest of the country. That economic burden the French are carrying today. That alone would be a tremendous addition to what any nation has to carry.

Then, too, there is the loss of men. How many men the French have lost nobody knows. They don't give out their losses; we can only estimate what they are. We can only gather indirectly from what one sees in the country and from the character of the fighting that has gone on how terrible those losses have been. I heard figures, but I heard no figures on which I dare rely, and can only say that I have many French friends, and that I don't know a single family among them which has not lost at least one man in this war.

You see the signs of death on every side. You see the signs of death in the numbers of women in mourning that you meet in the streets. These black figures are everywhere. In every public conveyance in which you ride you see half a dozen women in black. Every time you look down the street those sombre figures meet your eye. Every time you go into a shop there is one chance in four that the woman behind the counter—and there are no men behind counters any more in France—is

Men, Men, Men. Next to that we want to put every man we can upon the fighting line in France. That is being done today, I believe, from all I could learn, as fast as the conditions admit and being done, I think, with great wisdom and with great intelligence in detail by our government. All I heard about the American preparations in France, their thoroughness, their care and their broad grasp of the conditions which the country has to meet, impressed me with enormous strength. The administration is doing all that any administration could do, given the conditions it has at its command. I don't say one may not differ with this or that detail; but in the main the work is being well done and done with a wise confidence in the men who are in charge at the front, with a wise readiness to let them have control of what is being done, so as to do it in the most effective and the most



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had in black in sign of mourning for some son, some brother, or some husband.

Again and again as I went through the country there came to me those lines in Macaulay in which he describes the march of Louis Forens against Rome, and speaks of the way the work had there to be done by the women and the old men, by the boys and the young girls, because their sires had marched to Rome. And that is France today. It is a whole nation in arms. Three years of that mean a terrific strain.

Today in France the first joyous optimism for the war has gone. Today they have rather come to a sober second wind, to a feeling that they have taken the war inside their lives, as one of the things which must be borne, which must be carried, which must be put up with. They go to it no longer singing with joy, but rather with stern resolution, with firm resolve to fight to the end, with firm intention of doing their duty, to carry on their part of the contest, no matter what it costs them, no matter how long it will take. More than that, no one could ask for. More than that, it would be base of us to ask. They fought the fight while the English got ready. They fought the fight while we hesitated and did not know whether we belonged in it or not. From now on it is for us and the English to take up the full share of the burden, to carry, I believe, the greater part of the struggle that is to come.

The Allies Must Control the Sea. Now, that being so, what is it that it behooves the United States to do? The first and most important task is to keep and strengthen the Allied control of the sea, to add to the number of ships which can transport men and munitions and food to Europe. That is the one great necessary thing. That is the only thing which is absolutely indispensable to success. Other things may retard an Allied victory. It may be postponed by the failure of this or that country to do its full part. But in the long run, if we keep control of the sea, if we are able to send supplies to Europe as they are needed, the issue cannot be doubtful. No group of countries, no matter how brave, no matter how well organized, in the long run can fight successfully against the world. Germany and Austria are great countries, but in many ways the best strategic position in this war, but Germany and Austria in the long run are bound to be beaten, just as France was beaten in the Napoleonic wars, when it had a military power perhaps relatively greater than the German power today, when it held an even larger part of continental Europe in its grasp, and when it was led by the greatest of men, the genius whom the modern world has known. In the long run there can be only one result in this contest, if we keep control of the sea, and because that is so it is vital above everything else that we should strengthen our navy, should build ships and yet more ships, and should enable ourselves to put forth the full force which is at our command and the command of our Allies.

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expeditious way. Week after week transports are going under convoy, carrying our soldiers to France. Week after week our little army there, as yet a very little army, but increasing day by day, is strengthening and training for the work it has to do. Week after week stores are accumulating, roads are being got in condition, hospitals are preparing and all the rest of the paraphernalia necessary to a successful modern war is being carried on.

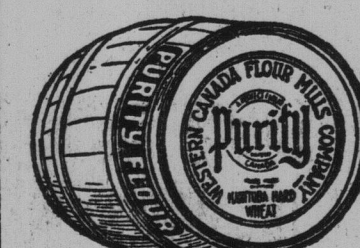
Fight Has Got to Go On. It may seem to you that I have spoken pessimistically in much that I have said. I do not feel pessimistic. What I saw in France gave me above all the sense that here was a fight which has got to be fought to a finish, that any compromise with the Germans as things stand today is worse than useless, that it was useless to talk of any peace which would leave them strong enough to be a danger to the rest of the world. The fight has got to go on and it has got to go on for long, but that in the long run the Allies can win, that the spirit that animates France and England and that will animate us when we are fully awake to the reality of this war, is one which in the long run will bring victory. I do not for a moment doubt. I saw many Frenchmen who have suffered keenly. I saw many

Frenchmen who felt a deep discouragement as to the future of their country. I did not see a single Frenchman who was even ready to consider the possibility of yielding without ultimate victory. The word with all of them was the same: "There is nothing for us but to conquer or to die."

That is the spirit in which they are fighting this war. That is the spirit in which it behooves us to join them. But we must be ready to pay the price that victory demands. That price has got to be paid by every man, by every woman, by every child in America, for that is the dominant thing in modern war. It is no longer fought by a handful at the frontiers. It is no longer possible to say, as Frederick the Great once said, that in a well-governed state the ordinary citizen would not know whether it was at war or not. Today the army at the front is nothing but the spearpoint. The strength of the army depends on the shaft of the spear, on the nation which is behind it. Every particle of economic strength, every particle of honest effort at home goes to add to the fighting force of the men who are at the front.

Henry Theakston. The friends of Rev. L. J. and Mrs. Leard, now of Halifax, will regret to hear of the death of Mrs. Leard's father, Henry Theakston, who passed away suddenly at his home, 86 Seymour street, Halifax, on Monday night, December 31.

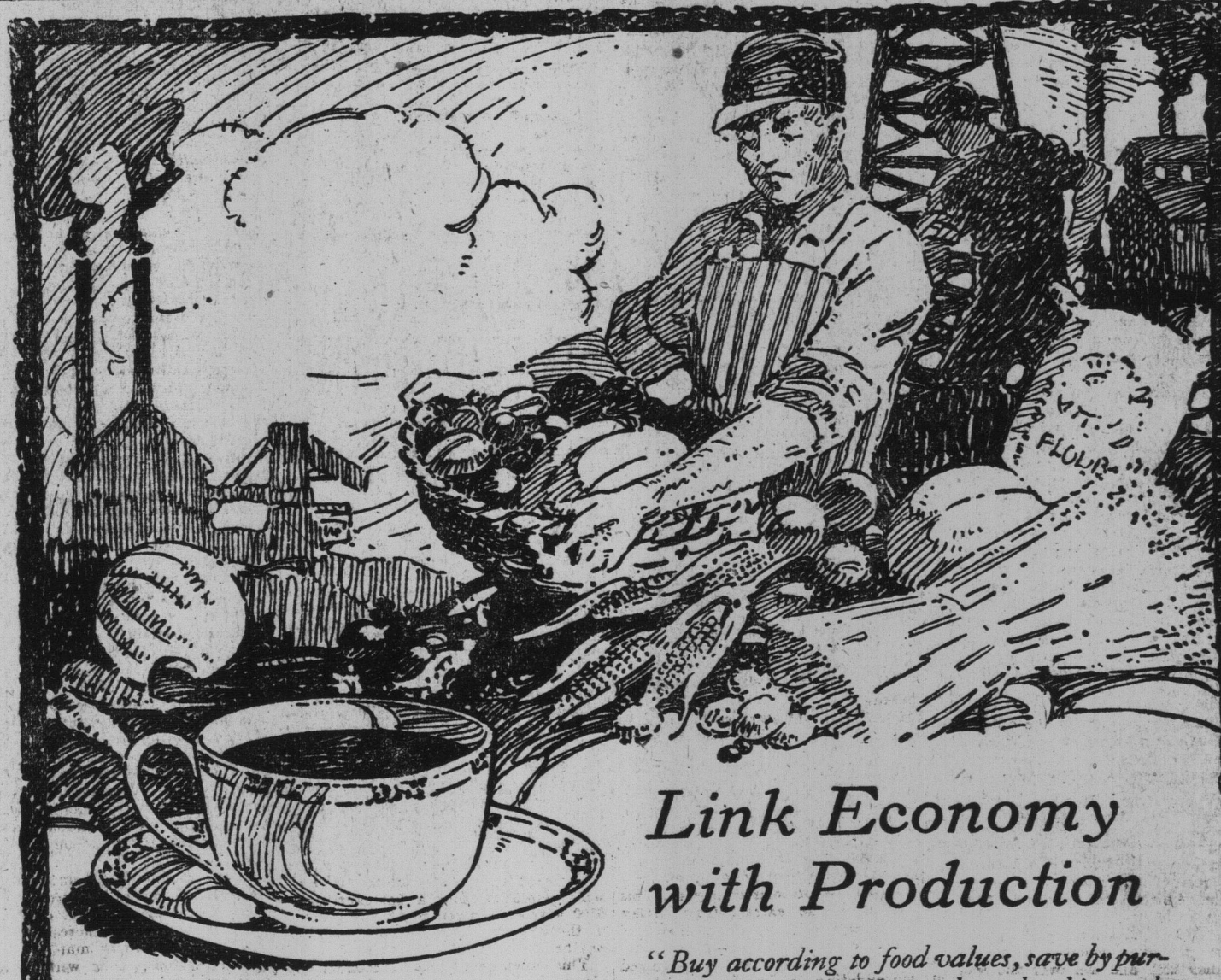
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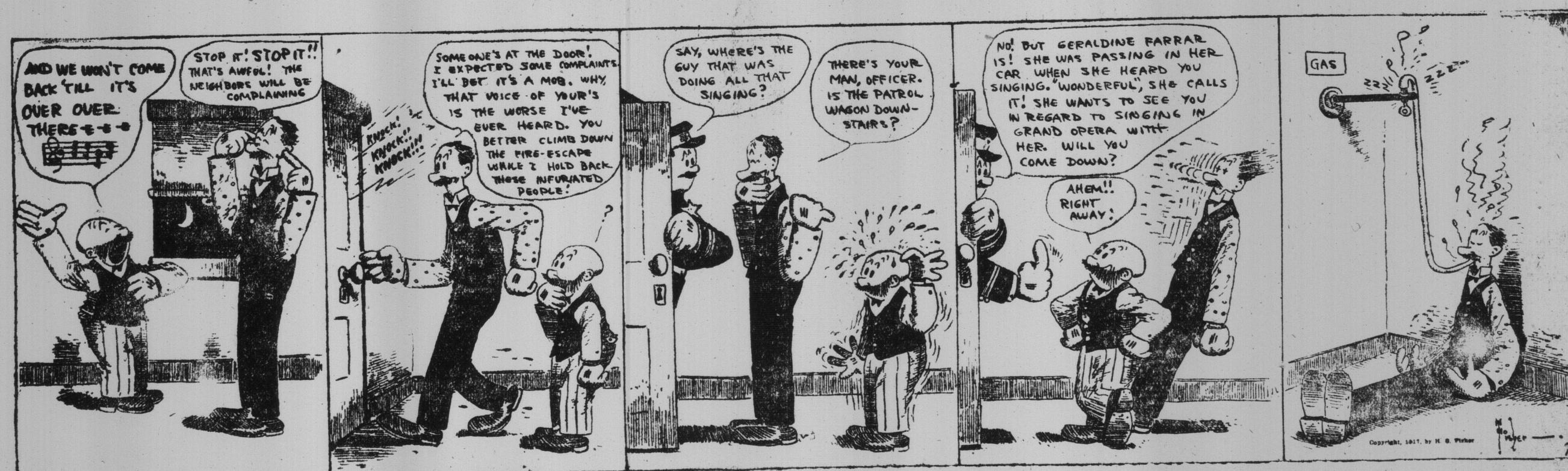
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