

IT IS ABSOLUTELY UNTHINKABLE

LAST week, immediately before the fall of Bucharest, I tried to estimate the real inwardness of the German attack upon Roumania from the military and from the political points of view. They seemed to be very different. From the military aspect the German success is, so far, nearly barren. That is to say, its gains and losses closely balance each other. Germany is now in a position to threaten the Russian left flank. She has rescued Bulgaria for the time being, and she will doubtless profit from her seizures of grain and oil. On the other hand, she has an entirely new military area to care for, she has lost men that she can not afford, she has paid a heavy price in her reverses at Verdun, on the Somme, and on the Isonzo, and she has the prospect of heavier fighting in the new field of war than she has yet experienced there. But from the political point of view her gains are of a far more substantial kind, if she can but succeed in holding them. She has tightened her grip upon the transcontinental railroad, she has secured control of the great waterway of the Danube, and she is in possession of the four rail lines that pass through Roumania and that have a high commercial importance. She is now in a position to suggest a bargain that would have the most advantageous results for herself. She knows well that she can not hold Belgium, and that she can not hold the occupied portions of France. She is not in a military position to do so, and she is equally prohibited by the public opinion of the world. But public opinion, and particularly public opinion in America, is not greatly interested in the Balkans. Why, then, she will ask, should she not offer to restore the status quo in the west so long as she is allowed a free hand in the east? With an open road into Asia Minor, with an all-German rail line to Bagdad, she might well say that she had not fought in vain, and that the cards in her hand were of much greater value than those that she had discarded? The conquest of Roumania enables her to say that the cards are actually in her hand, and so to proceed to her bargain on a basis of accomplishment. She would also point to her Roumanian success as one more proof of her invincibility, and in disregard of the fact that a long succession of titanic efforts in the west have wholly failed. For the situation in the west is to be judged wholly by our vision of what Germany intended to do there, and by the extent to which she has done it. And her plan of campaign certainly never included a tenacious but slipping grip of a small strip of territory, and nothing more.

LAST week it was suggested in this column that Germany's military aim in the conquest of Roumania was to give her the necessary cards with which to bargain. This view is now confirmed by Mr. Frank Simonds, in the December issue of the Review of Reviews. Bucharest had not fallen when Mr. Simonds was correcting his proofs, but he foresaw its fall, and he foresaw practically everything that has since transpired. Even though Roumania should be wholly crushed—and she is not wholly crushed even now—Mr. Simonds says: "Personally I do not think the biggest possible victory in Roumania will change the political situation, so far as the Allies are concerned, just as I did not believe German success at Verdun could alter French determination. But what is important now is the fact that Germany believes it will, and therefore means to achieve it." Germany's misinterpretation of the psychology of other nations, and particularly of her enemies, has been one of her chief misfortunes since the beginning of the war, and indeed for long before the war, and there is nowhere the least expressed doubt that she is making a misinterpretation here. Germany, says Mr. Simonds, is making "a new bid for peace by battle." She is profoundly convinced that the Allies are discouraged, and that nothing but a few more victories are needed to bring them to terms. She may be supposed to say that by striking down Roumania almost before her armies have taken the field we shall give to the world a demonstration of the helplessness of the Allies to save their friends and therefore "our opponents, already tiring of the war—that is, the people, not their leaders—will be ready to listen to reason." This, says Mr. Simonds, is the German conviction, and it must be faced if we are to understand the

Arbitration by Neutrals would be a farce. Not the faintest sign that the Allies are discouraged. Public opinion in England is behind the New War Cabinet

B y S I D N E Y C O R Y N

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situation. Germany attacked Roumania, not because of any particular military advantage that would accrue from a success, but because Roumania was the only place where she could win a victory, and because such a victory would give her a sufficiency of cards with which to conduct the bargain of give and take that she confidently believed would follow at once.

But even the most enthusiastic of pacifists, who are outside the sphere of illusion and who are exempt from the professorial order of intelligence, must now perceive that the Roumanian disaster does not clarify the situation. It complicates it. There is not the faintest sign that the Allies are discouraged. On the contrary, there is every sign of that almost unreasoning stubbornness that there is no known way to combat. That there is a peace party in England, for instance, goes almost without saying. There is always a peace party in all countries that are at war. There was a strong and persistent peace party in America upon both sides of the Civil War, but it had no other effect than to stimulate the war parties. The peace party in England during the Napoleonic war attracted many of the best minds of the country, but, once more, it did no other than intensify the determination to carry on the struggle to a successful conclusion. It seems almost a paradox to say that peace parties are the enemies of peace, but to a great extent it is literally true, because such parties call forth a certain exaggeration and even fanaticism of opposition that otherwise would not exist. The peace movement now under way in America will have just this effect. The mere suggestion of a moral interference will call forth a resentment that will emphasize the determination to continue, and that will bring to a focus the demands of the ex-

tremists. That the Allies should now listen to any demand for arbitration is not merely improbable. It is absolutely unthinkable. Arbitration by neutrals would be regarded as a farce, and a rather insulting farce. We all know what such an arbitration would mean. It would have none of the nature of a judicial determination of the causes of quarrel. It would be a mere equal division and award of the points at issue, and it would satisfy no one. There would be a new war before the court adjourned.

THE main fact overlooked by the pacifists and the professors is that most of the present contentions are irreconcilable, and that the contestants will not consent even to discuss them, or to admit that they can be discussed. The Allies, for example, are pledged to the complete reconstitution of Serbia as an independent state. But the reconstitution of Serbia would be absolutely fatal to the single advantage that Germany can now discern amid the wreck of the war. To suppose that there can be any process of give and take here is merely puerile. It would be just as intelligent to argue that a Japanese claim to Hawaii, for instance, should be made the subject of arbitration. The fate of Serbia can be settled only when one or other of the combatants is beaten into impotence, and not before. And there are other claims just as hopeless. We know now that Russia has been promised the possession of Constantinople. Is it seriously suggested that Russia be asked to debate the validity of this promise, short of her complete defeat? And can there be any compromise? There can be no compromise that would not be regarded by both parties as defeat and humiliation.

Last week I said that the most hopeless problem of all was Alsace-Lorraine, and now comes the confirmation of this view from many quarters. The total lack of comprehension of national sentiment on such points is shown by the Springfield Republican, which says that "if the central powers were given a free hand in the east, they could well afford to withdraw their armies from Belgium and France, and if they were wise they would voluntarily cede Alsace-Lorraine in exchange for colonies." How easy it sounds when thus airily set before us with the wisdom of Massachusetts. But what a large and formidable "if." Germany would certainly be willing to withdraw from Belgium and France if she were given a free hand in the east, but how about the pledge to Serbia? How about the pledge that has certainly been given to Roumania? How about the promise of Constantinople to Russia? How about the resulting open door to the Persian Gulf, to Egypt, and to India? How about the absolute dominance of German trade in the East? The Republican does not seem to understand that this is not a matter of a political caucus arranging the boundaries of electoral districts. It is a matter of national sentiments and national passions that have been growing stronger for five hundred years. Such matters are not to be settled by a few gentlemen sitting around a peace board. This is the fourth great war that Russia has waged for a national policy that was bequeathed to her as something sacred by Peter the Great, and that concerns not so much statecraft as a national resolve so deep as to be almost a superstition. And this immovable national policy is now confronted by the equally immovable resolve of Germany to thwart it. How can there be a compromise?

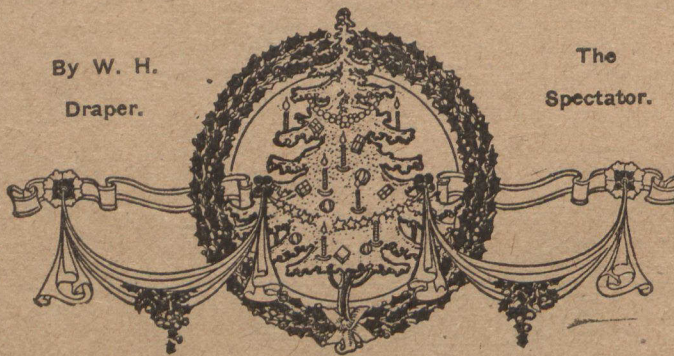
THE hopeless nature of the Alsace-Lorraine impasse is shown by the fact that it is barely allowed to enter the field of discussion. One does not discuss axioms, and here we have a French axiom that the lost provinces must be restored and a German axiom that they must be retained. Swiss newspapers and others of equal importance say that the loss of Alsace-Lorraine would mean the end of the Hohenzollern dynasty, that no one guilty of such a proposal could maintain his seat on a German throne. On the other hand, we are told that France would instantly sever her connection with any of her present allies that should even consider the possibility of allowing Germany to retain these provinces. Therefore it is evident that this is not a matter for debate. Indeed, it is the one thing that can not be debated, that can hardly even be mentioned, that can be settled

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THE RED CHRISTMAS

By W. H.
Draper.

The
Spectator.



O take away the mistletoe
And bring the holly berry,
For all the lads are gone away,
And all the girls look sad to-day
There's no one left with them to play,
And only birds and babes and things unknowing
Dare to be merry.
Then take away the mistletoe
And bring the holly berry.

But, oh, its leaves are fresh and green,
Why bring the holly berry?
Because it wears the red, red line,
The colour to the season true,
When war must have his tribute due,
And only birds and babes and things unknowing
Can be merry,
So take away the mistletoe,
Yet keep the holly berry.

And shall we never see again
Aught but the holly berry?
Yes, after sacrifice sublime,
When rings some later Christmas chime,
When dawns a new and better time,
Not only birds and babes and things unknowing
Shall be merry,
But you shall see the mistletoe
Twined with the holly berry.