



German—and British—"Shirks"

EVERY now and then, the British Intelligence Office prints a letter found on a German prisoner, or an expression of opinion from one of the enemy who has fallen into our hand, which indicates that there are men fighting in the German army who do not want to be there. Of course there are. It is quite plain, also, that there are men in the British Empire who do not want to fight for their country. And they are not fighting for their country—for they will take precious care not to volunteer. Every time a British citizen of military age, health and circumstances—who has not enlisted—reads one of those cowardly letters from a German "shirk," he ought to sign his name to the bottom of it. So far as actions go, those are his sentiments. The only difference between the two cases is that the German "shirk" cannot get out of doing his share of defending the policy which his Government has adopted; while the British "shirk" can.

I KNOW a whole army of men who do not want to pay taxes. If we had the volunteer system for raising our national, provincial or municipal revenues, sometimes this country would have to get along with an exceedingly slim budget. A great many estimable men would conclude that they "needed the money" much more than the Government did; or they would make a personal objection to some money-spending proposal of the Government a sufficient excuse for withholding their contribution "that year." Yet what business has the Government to compel men to pay taxes? Isn't this a free country? Can't we keep for ourselves whatever money we may manage to make? Isn't a man's first duty to feed and clothe his family? Should a "pacifist" be compelled to pay for Sam Hughes' drill halls, or a Government-ownership man for the Government grants to private railways? I tell you that, if we had the fine, free and enlightened voluntary system of tax-paying, there would be some tall tax-dodging exploits in this patriotic country of ours.

NOW, why do we brutally and ruthlessly and despotically compel citizens to pay taxes when they do not want to do so? Why do we, just because we are bigger than they are, knock them down and go through their clothes for what we decide, by majority vote, they ought to "cough." We do it with a good conscience, because they get the benefits of the government—federal, provincial or civic—which these taxes support. The Government gives them value for their tax-money. Well, isn't the British Government giving the British people value to-day for their military service? Does not the Government policy which puts that navy in the North Sea and that army in Flanders and France, confer benefits upon the British peoples of such unlimited value and immeasurable worth that we could not express it, even in terms of the priceless lives which are being paid down so grimly for these benefits? Yet it is only the volunteers who are paying their share of this "blood tax." The "shirks" are staying at home, rolling themselves in their cherished and blood-bought liberties like sleek cats—and permitting the brave and the patriotic and the self-sacrificing to do their dying for them.

THAT is the way the beautiful voluntary system works out. The generous, the patriotic, the self-sacrificing, go into the army, while the selfish, the cowardly and the self-indulgent stay at home and reap the benefits. The British subjects who do not fight, will enjoy every liberty won for us all by the men who are risking death under the storm of shrapnel from German guns; and they will pay nothing for it. They will be precisely in the position of the citizen who had his property protected by the police, his person safeguarded by all the machinery of justice, his health cared for by the sanitary department, water in his house and pavements on his street—and yet refused to pay his taxes. Of course, he cannot refuse. We have compulsory municipal service—so far as tax-paying goes. Perhaps, a better illustration of what the man who shirks his military duty is doing, could be secured from club life. He is like a member of a club who takes full advantages of all its benefits, and then refuses to pay his dues.

WE all know what we would say about such a man. Yet—so narrowly have we understood the meaning of the word "liberty"—we have actually elevated a systematic shirking of military duty into a sort of noble devotion to "liberty." We grandly contrast our freedom in this respect with the servile condition of "the conscript nations of

Europe." We say that they are enslaved by their "military caste"; while we are free as air from any such ignoble domination. And we pride ourselves on this gospel of "shirking." It would be incredible—if we were not so accustomed to it. Nor is it hard to see how we fell into this mistake. It is another of the consequences of the impractical and misleading teachings of the "pacifists." They have taught us that all preparation for war betrays a lack of faith in the triumph of religion which is to banish war—that to prepare for war is to cause it—that we have a nobler ideal than the military nations which do prepare for war. So we have sincerely flattered ourselves that we had found honour in a course of dishonour.

Is There a Slav Peril?

Facts as Narrated by a Canadian Traveller Furnish the Answer.

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

THIS is what a Canadian thinks about Russia. Not Professor Mavor, who is a Scotchman; but a man who has for years been in the electrical engineering profession and spent a long while in Russia engaged in negotiating contracts for electrical traction and other undertakings. Mr. F. C. Armstrong has traveled much and he knows Russia by a direct method; not so much by books, but more by rubbing up against Russians in many walks of life, from high officials down to the ranks of the people who formed the mass-dynamics of the Russian revolution. He is a personal friend of several Russian officials who stand high in public service and who both understand and represent the forces that are making the Slav empire a great modern force among world democracies. And it is of the new, modern Russia that Mr. Armstrong delights to talk. To him the old Russia of the pogrom and the knout and the penal colony is a shadowy, receding background to the eager, splendid and virile Russia that since the war began has made even military experts eat their criticisms about the "glacier" and the "steam roller." This regenerated Russia—

"Believe me," he said, energetically, "she is not yet understood. Europe does not know the Russia whose aim is to establish a new, practical culture of civilization in Europe. England is only beginning to find out the Russia that is taking her for a model of government and avoiding the state policy of the Germans."

He admitted that many people in the British Empire had talked of the Slav peril as a thing worse, if possible, than the German menace."

"When there is no Slav peril," he said. "Why should there be? Russia is regenerated. We all admit that the past ten years has put a new face on England, on Canada, on France, and in a different sense Germany. We know that democracy has earmarked the twentieth century for her own. We must also admit that Russia above all nations, even more than the monarchical democracy of England, or the republican democracy of the United States, or the Socialist democracy of France has cut herself loose absolutely from autocracy as she used to know it, from bureaucracy as she had it, for from all the dark methods of mediaevalism."

The regeneration, of course, dates back to the revolution that followed the war with Japan; the war which was fomented by Germany and is now not regretted by Russia because it awoke the giant of 175,000,000 Slavs to a new sense of the need for inner reform and a new possibility of standing dead against the mediaeval militarism of Germany. The Canadian traveler admitted this.

"HIGHER critics may have poohpoohed that revolution," he said. "But it still lives and it is a tremendous and dynamic sincerity. I don't mean that universal franchise could have done anything for Russia. Of what use is the manhood suffrage to a people the majority of whom can neither read nor write? That was a fallacy. The limited franchise of the October party in the Duma is the real thing; the enfranchisement of the great middle class who, in any country, are the real power of the State. That has been accomplished in Russia. In fact a man may be of low birth and rise to the very top rank in the Russian State. Such a man was De Witte. There was no barrier to that man. His talent was recognized not less than that of Stolypin, who was a born aristocrat. Russia is not, as some people have supposed, governed by her grand-dukes and the Czar. As far back as 1865

THOUSANDS of people are ready to go to war now, who were not ready to be trained for war before war broke. Their hearts are right, but their judgments were misled. They believed the silly "pacifist" gospel that war would not come if we kept our souls clean from the soiling business of preparing for it. Now they know that the exact opposite was true. War would not have come, in all probability, if we had been prepared for it. Universal military training, indeed, would only demand of us what we are all quite willing to grant now. If the British Government finds that the voluntary system does not give it enough troops to finish this war, and if it has recourse to "the draft"—as the Americans did during their Civil War—the country will support it loyally. That will be compulsory military training. The Americans had it—and it did not destroy their democracy. Yet the moment this is granted, the only question which it leaves open is whether war is sufficiently probable to make universal military training, in time of peace, of value to the nation. And after our costly and horrifying experience with this war—which the "pacifists" constantly assured us could never happen—there ought to be no doubt on that point.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

the grand-ducal estates were purchased by the government and resold to the peasantry. The grand-dukes were dispossessed of their sway. They rushed to spend their money on the Riviera. The workers and the producers pushed up to take their places."

Mr. Armstrong diverted for a moment to notice the economic basis of the new movement in Russia. He pointed out that eighty-six per cent. of the population live on the land; fourteen per cent. in the cities and towns—a direct contrast to all other modern states. The government has seized upon this as a fundamental dynamic in the reorganization of Russia; not merely for the present or as a pretext, but for all time to come and as a principle. When Mr. Armstrong uses a word like "dynamics" he knows what it means in a political sense, for he is an engineer; and to him Russia is a great potential dynamo of energy among the nations, working out her salvation not by the blazoning of abstract ideas or vague dreams about Slav domination in the world at large, but by practical measures for the reorganization of the Slav people as a vast inside empire which has already all the land and all the population it needs, and a natural Slav increase of 3,000,000 a year.

"Russia is now and expects to be what Germany may yet fear to become," said the Canadian traveler. "a nation of farmers. Germany has built up her trade empire on the factory. Russia is building hers on the farm. She does not expect to become a great manufacturing nation. She does expect to become in a greater sense what she already is, a producer of the world's wheat and cattle and butter and fruits. She expects, also, to become a colossal market for the world's manufactures. And the recent paternal movement originated by her government proves that she is in earnest about this."

HE spoke of the great land movement from congested European Russia to the vast, arable domains of Siberia; a movement almost doubling for a number of years back the settling of the Canadian North-West. That movement began with the completion of the trans-Siberian Railway, built and operated by the government. In a single year 700,000 farmers had been shifted from Europe eastward into these fertile pampas of wheat and cattle; not only along the railways, but up and down the rivers that feed into the trunk line. To each land-holder goes 40 acres of land for every head of his family; and to the average Russian family of eight that means what we call a half-section of land in Canada—as good land as can be found in the world. Transportation makes use of the rivers as well as the railways. Flat-boats float the farmer's grain and cattle down in the open season. The ice is a roadway for the farmer's sleds in winter; and the Russian farmer has no objection to a long haul that occupies days at a time between field and elevator. The average price of a bushel of wheat in Siberia is about fifty cents to the producer; which to the cheap labour of Russia means more than seventy cents to the Canadian farmer in the North-west. The rail haul is longer; the water-haul shorter. But Russia is able to compete at a lower price of production than any other country in the world. And by this paternal system of land settlement, Russia is building up a vast hinterland empire of food-producers that means incalculable wealth to the nation.

Here rises the railway problem, which in Russia as yet is a huge infant. For 175,000,000 population extending from Dalny on the north Pacific to

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