

The Philosopher

THE THIRD CHRISTMAS OF THE WAR

Once more, in the yearly round of our globe around the sun,

"that season comes

Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated."

And for the third time since this sacred, holy war for the freedom of the world against the tyranny and deviltries of revived heathenism, we must sadly realize that we cannot say

"And then no evil spirit stirs abroad,

So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."

For the birthday of the Prince of Peace comes again to a world rocking under the shock of war, shrouded by the smoke of huge, thundering guns, and reddened with such carnage as there never was before. Not yet has been fulfilled the promise of the angels' song above the manger-cradle of the Divine Child that was laid in the stable at Bethlehem, the promise whose fulfilment is as sure as it is that to-morrow's sun will rise and which has rung out in the voices of the Christmas bells through so many generations—

"The Wrong shall fail,

And Right prevail,

With peace on earth, goodwill to men."

Christmas under the shadow of suffering and death cannot be merry; but it will not be without its fuller realizations of the true meanings of life, which will bring their own stern consolations even to the many among us who see in the vacant chair the memorial of the supreme sacrifice made to Duty. There are many homes in our country where the sense of bitter loss is tempered by the proud thought of that unflinching devotion to Duty, which is the highest and noblest thing there is in our humanity. And so with the sadness of Christmas will mingle the knowledge that the sacrifice has not been in vain, and that out of the pain and suffering will emerge a new birth of freedom and a nobler world.

CHRISTMAS AT THE FRONT

When Christmas morning comes, will not thoughts of the men in the trenches and the men in the hospitals be uppermost in the minds of all of us at home? And will not the men at the front and the men in the hospitals know that the thoughts of those they love are with them? Christmas boxes of soldiers' comforts have gone forward, and are still going forward in such numbers that surely not a man at the front or back of the front, or in hospital, will feel himself forgotten on Christmas Day. True, they are far from their homes and their dearest ones, and are deprived of the joy of filling small stockings. But what Christmas Day has there ever been that was not a lonely one for many hearts. Indeed, have not those who, even on ordinary Christmas Days, have been fortunate enough to be able to take part in family reunions, had reason to count themselves specially fortunate? This world is always full of separations—a truth which the coming again of Christmas in war-time brings more poignantly home to many hearts. We know what the soldiers at the front have not. But what things have they? First, the man at the front has comrades, brave hearts who, he knows, will stand by him to the death. The wounded men in the trenches, at the dressing stations, and in the hospitals, find their pain alleviated by the true Christmas spirit shining ever in the devoted service of ambulance workers, physicians and nurses. And every man of them, whether in training camp, or in a reserve trench, or on the firing line, or in the air, or afloat, or in hospital, has the knowledge that he has been faithful to the heavenly prompting to do his highest duty, not by compulsion, but freely of his own will and choice and resolve. And more satisfying knowledge can come to no man in this world.

"HUNGER YEAR" AT HAND IN GERMANY

Every possible effort is now being made from Germany with a view to impressing the world outside Germany with the idea that there has not been a considerable crop shortage in Germany in 1916. But that the food conditions in Germany are such as to bring into sight the certainty of desperate and hitherto unexperienced hunger in Germany in the coming year, if the war continues, is a fact established by a great mass of evidence that has leaked out from Germany, despite the highly organized precautions against the leaking out of such information. Moreover, there are these facts and considerations to be given their due weight to in this connection: The Germans in 1916 have lacked man power for intensive agriculture; they lacked nitric fertilizer, owing to the military demand for nitrates and to the blockade maintained by the British sea power which prevented their importation; they faced a season universally mediocre or unfavorable for crops in their country as elsewhere, late, chilly and wet; they tilled fields impoverished by the excessive cropping of 1915. Under these circumstances, it is quite impossible that they can have equalled the results of their really tremendous agricultural efforts in the favorable season of 1915. The pretences from Berlin that Germany's crop of 1916 is equal to the crop of 1915 will not stand analysis. It is, like the fictitious statements sent out by the Berlin Government, after the sea-fight off Jutland, dictated by considerations of policy and of military necessity, as Berlin had to declare in due time.

A CHRISTMAS TO COME

With two Christmases in war-time to look back upon, we are thinking less of the possibilities of peace coming soon than of the sacrifices that must be made before the only peace that will be worth its terrible cost, the only right and real peace, can be attained. We know that victory for the cause of human freedom and for all that makes life worth living and that makes true progress and welfare possible is to be arrived at, if we have the will to tread the road to it resolutely and unflinchingly. In the true cause of Peace, however long the way or bitter the sacrifice, we must pledge all we have or are. Truly has this war taught us the actual worth of things and their relative values. We know that the issue of life and death for civilization is yet to be decided; and that every nation in arms against the menace of Teutonic tyranny must stand ready to throw into the struggle all its reserves of power. We look forward to another Christmas, perhaps a year hence, perhaps more distant still, sadder than this third Christmas of the war because of the longer roll of record of sacrifices, but with the certainty of the sacrifices having been made, not in vain.

WOMAN'S DEEPEST INSTINCT

In looking over the newspaper reports of the activities of the advocates of woman suffrage in the United States, in connection with all the election campaigning through the breadth and length of that land last month, The Philosopher was struck by this motto which he read in one of the Chicago papers as having been inscribed on a banner carried in one woman suffrage parade:

"For the safety of the nation, to woman give the vote;

For the hand that rocks the cradle will never rock the boat."

There is a lot of sound psychology, real history and sound argument in that motto. From the beginning woman has been a conserver. The first woman who

A
Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year

bent above the first rude cradle in the infancy of the race learned the lesson in preservation and conservation and protection, which has become the strongest instinct of the sex. The lesson was warm with love, with longing, and—is it too much to imagine?—with a vague vision of the conditions in which she might hope to have her young shielded against the dangers of field and beast and man and want. The plain, fundamental truth of the matter is that woman is really the practical sex, not man.

GERMAN ORGANIZATION

Surely it must come to pass, sooner or later, that the faith of the German people in German organization must be shaken, and must fall. This faith is the foundation of the profound, unquestioning belief in their own superiority in which they went to war—perfect faith that in every department of life German organization was absolutely infallible, and that Germans, therefore, could do anything and everything better than any other people. In a book by the German writer Ostwald, we find the whole thing concisely stated: "That faculty for organization has allowed Germany to attain a higher stage of civilization than the other nations to the fulness of which only the war will raise them. The French and the English are still at a stage of civilization which the Germans left behind them more than fifty years ago, namely, the stage of individualism. Germany is to-day at the higher stage, that of organization." But their colossal failure in this war is proof positive that their organization is not infallible. German organization has made a wonderful spectacle of itself, after its forty years of preparation for this war. There is not as much German boasting now as there used to be; they are making up for it by whining and lying, and in the whining and lying departments, it must be admitted, they are well organized. It is quite true that the Germans parted company from the British and French stages of civilization half a century ago, and they have been retrograding in civilization ever since. Their vaunted over-organization has made for slavery and wickedness. The human spirit is not a thing that can be shaped to higher developments by machinery, or synthetic chemistry or kultur, or Hohenzollern "organization," which has degraded it.

"TREASURY ROMANCES"

Part of the touching literature of the war is a little tract which has come to The Philosopher from London—an official publication, entitled "Treasury Romances." James Douglas, the compiler of it, explains that the records of the patriotism of great numbers of givers to Great Britain's war fund lie "buried five fathoms deep in the treasury files." In this little book he has brought to light a few instances. Here, for example, is a miner who sang at seventeen workmen's clubs and thus gathered in dribblets twenty pounds. An old woman writes: "I have much pleashr in sending you the pound"—which leads Mr. Douglas to add: "Her particular, and probably her only, pound." A child of seven sends a shilling, a poor man, ninepence. From Lonely Fanning Island, in the South Seas, came two contributions from natives of the Gilbert Islands, at work there. A man working on a ship bringing meat from Australia to England, writes at the close of an impassioned letter: "Do not mind the grammar. Grammar does not count as a rule with gentlemen. I inclose a pound as a start." And there are many thousands of such contributions Mr. Douglas tells us. They are manifestations of the spirit of true sacrifice and devotion.

THE PERIL OF THE GERMAN SYSTEM

In the Canadian University Magazine, as in many other organs of thought, earnest warning is sounded against the danger of being carried away by admiration of German system and organization. All the world knows that in the war Germany has failed to achieve what her guiding brains counted confidently upon achieving rapidly, and that Germany is destined, after the most stupendous expenditure of human life and treasure the world has ever known, to be forced to abandon the dream of world-domination. But, all the same, the "effectiveness" of Germany has impressed the world's imagination. Again and again since Germany began the war in her own way has that "effectiveness" brought her to the brink—the very verge—of decisive success, and the world has held its breath; and every time German "effectiveness" has failed. But nevertheless, the world is inclined to regard the German state system as wonderful. The peoples of the world who stand for the freedom of the human spirit must stand on guard against any form of this German poison of glorification of the State machine and making humanity mere soulless mechanism and prostituting science to the most ignoble and fiendish purposes.

ALI DINAR'S STEAM ROLLER

Inspired undoubtedly by the events of the war, Ali Dinar, Sultan of Darfur—who, had not Fate cast his lot in a jungle of Darkest Africa, might have made his name historic as that of the originator of a brand of Frightfulness all his own—has, at any rate, showed himself resourceful. He is a coal-black potentate whom, for his own good and that of his people, the British power has found it necessary to keep in order. He is given to outbreaks of violence. The most recent of these outbreaks of his occurred the month before last. A traction engine had been brought to his jungle realm, and it pleased him mightily. So much so that he decided to make it his Imperial throne, and go forth in fitting state and power, while his awed subjects trembled. As he crashed and smashed his way along, he rejoiced greatly, but in the end he came to grief. Whether the Imperial chauffeur, like the Sultan himself, became inflated with delusions of grandeur and did not pay due attention to his steering gear, does not appear; at any rate the traction engine, bearing the Sultan Ali Dinar, of Darfur, went over the edge of a small ravine, and the chauffeur was killed, while the Sultan saved himself by leaping. The report of the occurrence, written by a Darfur correspondent in one of the London papers, ends by expressing the hope that the experience will have the effect of teaching the Sultan of Darfur to restrain his exuberance—an expression of hope in which The Philosopher feels sure, all the readers of The Western Home Monthly will join.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST AND THE WAR

As the great annual household festival of Christmas-tide approaches once more, who is there anywhere in the world, so safe, so selfish, so little imaginative, as not to be visited again and again by piercing thoughts of the men at the front giving their lives to save the future of humanity from the yoke of despotic Force? Who is there in any land under the sun that does not daily think of the men in the trenches, in the war-machines in the air, in the war-machines afloat, in the hospitals? It was Jesus who said, "Think not that I am come to send peace upon the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." Blessed is Peace; but there are times when the Sword, the defender of the oppressed and the striker down of Evil, is better than Peace. When Wrong is rampant and undertakes to crush down Right, the follower of the Prince of Peace best shows his devotion to Righteousness by drawing the sword and fighting the good fight, holding the duty of fighting to the death, if need be, the duty nearest to his conscience.