

The FICTION of GERMAN TRIUMPHS

AT the moment of writing comes news of the resumption of fighting on the western front. The information is of the most meagre kind, but it indicates a British advance over a front of ten miles and a pushing back of the German lines to the extent of one mile. It is, therefore, a direct continuation of the previous battle that was waged eastward from Ypres, and that had the effect of obliterating the German salient and of creating a new British salient eastward. We may note as highly significant the many reports that have emanated from this area during the last two weeks, and to the effect that the Germans were denuding this area of its civilian population, either deporting them to Germany or compelling them to work upon military roads or fortifications. These measures were certainly not taken for the protection of the civilians. We may acquit the Germans of any such act of humanity as this. On the contrary, they point strongly to a German retirement under British pressure and to the evacuation of the present German military lines.

It is certain that the German hold upon its North Sea positions must become impossible if the British success should be continued, and the retirement is not likely to be confined to the area to the north of the immediate battlefield. The vigour of the German defence, ineffectual though it was, is easily to be explained by a reluctance to retreat while the latest German war loan is still pending. The success of the loan naturally depends upon a continuation of the fiction of German triumphs, a fiction that would be likely to fade in the presence of an unmistakable German reverse. The news is still too young to permit of an accurate assessment of its values, but at least we have here one more demonstration of German inability to resist attack and of a waning of military power upon which it would be difficult to place an excessive significance.

The late entry of Italy into the war and a certain suspicion of insularity in her policies have served somewhat to divert attention from the importance of her campaign. It has seemed to be even more tedious than the operations elsewhere, its course even more monotonous and indecisive. But the events of the last two or three weeks are startling by their magnitude and their significance. The Isonzo has suddenly become the centre of the war, and the Italian army its possible arbiter. For the first time we are disposed to recognize that General Cadorna has not only conceived a definite plan of campaign and that he has pursued it with undeviating force, but also that he has brought it within sight of success and that its possible results are of the most conclusive kind.

THE task of Italy has been one of extraordinary difficulty. She has had to fight offensively and defensively at the same time, to carry the war into her enemy's territory, and to protect her own territory from invasion. The northern frontier of Italy is like an enormous S, lying upon its side, and with its western loop projecting deeply into her provinces. This western loop, the Trentino, has been her vulnerable point. It has been impossible for the Italian troops to advance northward through the Trentino into Austria, but it has been quite possible for the Austrian troops to advance southward through the Trentino into Italy. Austria has been in possession of the Trentino, and its almost impregnable mountains have been her allies. It has been by the threat of invasion through the Trentino that she has answered every menace by Italy on the Isonzo. A sustained Italian offensive was impossible so long as there was danger of an Austrian incursion through the Trentino that would have brought Austrian armies to the rear of the Italian forces operating eastward of the Isonzo. The necessity of guarding the Trentino has been a sort of constant paralysis to the Italian armies that were dedicated to Cadorna's great plan of invading Austria northeastward in the direction of Vienna and southward toward Triest.

There is no need to recount the alternating operations in the Trentino and on the Isonzo. Again and again Cadorna has been compelled to stay his advance eastward in response to a renewal of the

A PENDING war loan in Germany makes it necessary to stage up small successes. Riga was the only point on the great iron ring where the Kaiser could score. Holland and Denmark have been spared only because of danger to Germany in increasing her defences in these regions. The Central Powers are no longer able to answer a big offensive on the Isonzo by their regular trick of a counter offensive on the Trentino. Cadorna may yet go the road to Vienna. The elimination of Austria by a big southern campaign is now a possibility. Keep your eye on Cadorna.

By SIDNEY CORYN

Austrian threat from the Trentino. A few months ago there was a Teuton army of a million men amassed in the neighbourhood of Trent, and it seemed likely that there would be an overwhelming rush into the Italian provinces from the north. Cadorna prepared to meet the blow, and so long as it was pending there could be no question of further advance on the Isonzo. But the blow did not fall. The Teuton army melted away in response to pressing Teuton needs in the west, and Cadorna was once more free to turn his attention toward his own aggressive. It was one more example of the sensitiveness of the battle lines, of which no one part can remain unaffected by the events upon all other parts. Perhaps there is no more significant feature of the present Italian campaign than the fact that the Central Powers are no longer able to answer an offensive on the Isonzo by their usual plan of a counter offensive in the Trentino. They are compelled to meet the Italian offensive by a direct resistance. There seem to be no armies available for the more effective method of a threat to invade Italy from the north. Indeed, we are told that the Austrians have asked for German aid and that it has been denied to them. Hindenburg can do no more than advise his ally to fall back to some position more easily defended. It has been his own plan in the past and will doubtless be so in the near future.

THE official bulletins from Italy have given us no inkling of Cadorna's main purpose. We have assumed that it was the capture of Triest, but while this is undoubtedly included in the Italian campaign we can no longer suppose that it is its chief feature. The Italian battle line is over seventy miles long, and if its southern flank is heading in the direction of Triest, its northern extremity is pointing toward Klagenfurt, which may be said to be on the direct road to Vienna. It would doubtless be premature to say that Vienna is the goal of the Italian armies, just as it is incorrect to say that Paris was the goal of the German armies before the battle of the Marne. The goal of the German armies was the destruction of the French forces, and Paris was no more than an ultimate objective unattainable so long as the French forces were in the field. In the same way we may say that the goal of the Italian armies is the annihilation of the Austrians, with Vienna as their ultimate destination. But it would be equally a mistake to make light of the threat to Vienna. At any moment it may become a very real threat, and we may be sure that it seems already to be a real threat to the Austrian command. If Cadorna is able to reach the Chiapovano Valley, and to dominate it, he will be able at the same time to cut the Austrian army in two and to deal as he pleases with its two halves. Then the road to Vienna will be open to him with immediate results impossible to measure. Such a success as this far outweighs the importance of Triest. To take Triest would have great moral results, but actually it would lead nowhere in particular. There can be no question that if Cadorna were to concentrate himself against Triest he could take it without much trouble. It is actually within range of the Italian guns at this moment, and they could easily reduce it to powder. That this has not been done is conclusive evidence that the Italian quarry

is of a much bigger kind, and we need not have much doubts as to its whereabouts. Cadorna has been steadily unfolding a big plan, and its nature is becoming increasingly visible. He says himself that his present battle is the biggest of the war, and this is certainly no idle boast.

NOR is it difficult to see that the attention of the Allied commanders has been arrested by the magnitude of the events on the Isonzo. It has reminded them forcibly of their earlier and better plan to break the Teutonic chain at its weakest link, and to eliminate Austria at all costs. We must wait for the historian of the future to tell us why this first plan was abandoned, and the real inwardness of the fluctuations that have marked the Allied strategy, and it is not likely that many of us will be still alive when that story is fully told. But at the

present moment we may note the announcement that there will be a military council in Paris with a view to a "complete revision of the Entente military plans for the fall and winter months." It is a significant statement, and we need not doubt at all that the Italian situation has been instrumental in calling it forth. Competent observers in Europe tell us that Cadorna unfolded his plans a long time ago to the French and British commanders, and that they looked upon it somewhat coldly as beyond the power of the Italian armies. It does not seem that they actually withheld their assistance. Indeed, we know that there is a force of British artillery now with the Italian forces. But they did not believe that the centre of gravity could actually be shifted to the southern field, or that the situation in the west had lost any of its relative importance. But now we are told that Cadorna has so far accomplished his plan as to convert his French and British coadjutors to a belief in its ultimate possibilities and that they are hurrying to supply him with everything that he needs. They are now convinced that the final crushing of the Austrian armies is clearly within reach, and that the elimination of Austria is within sight. In the meantime the Austrians are putting up the most determined resistance, and are allowing no hint of their reverses to wander into their bulletins.

It is now evident, as was suggested last week, that the capture of Riga carries with it no military advantage whatever for Germany. Indeed the advantage seems to have been rather the other way. German bulletins admit a reverse to their advance lines to the east of Riga, and at the same time comes news of a distinct success for the Russians and Roumanians in the south. There is an evident connection between German successes and German peace proposals. With that curious obliquity that seems to belong to the German vision it has always been a conviction in Berlin that a German success must necessarily dispose the Allied governments to seek peace more than a display of German strength. It was mainly for this reason that Roumania was overrun, and indeed there is good reason for the belief that the German element in the Russian government compelled Roumania to go to war for the express purpose of providing an easy prey for the German armies, and therefore one of those triumphs so necessary to the German government in its efforts to persuade the compliance of its enemies. But there are now no more small nations that can serve such a purpose as this, unless indeed Germany should find in the American embargo an excuse for hostilities against Holland or Denmark. It is quite possible that she will do so. Indeed she would unquestionably have done so long ago but for the fear that she would thereby expose herself to greater dangers than she would avoid. Looking around the circle of her enemies there appeared to be no point but Riga at which she could score a success. She would have taken Riga long ago if there had been any attendant military advantage, but of course there was none. But there seemed to be a moral advantage at a time when it was urgently necessary that her search for peace should seem to proceed from strength rather than from weakness. The transparency of such a proceeding does not seem to have occurred to her, or that it would be construed as desperation.