

1916 THE TURN of THE TIDE 1916

THE TRANSFERENCE OF THE INITIATIVE.

THE year that is just ending will be forever memorable as marking the real turning point of the war, a description not too narrow to be applied to the whole twelve months when the already great length of the war is considered and the gradual process of the change in the relative fortunes of the rival belligerents. This is the feature that most truly distinguishes 1916. The initiative, the ability, that is, of one side to compel the other to follow its military dictates and not to impose its own, did not pass from Germany and her Allies to the Entente Powers until the summer, though the preparation had been made before; nor did it pass entirely then, as the Trentino and Romania testify, but that it has so passed there can now be no question, and even these two great enemy offensives, and in a sense even that at Verdun, were largely of a defensive nature. For it has been one of Germany's first maxims that attack is the best defence, and the necessity she was under when the year opened of pushing home somewhere a great and decisive attack was becoming increasingly pressing. The previous year had been her triumph. Though held in the West she had with ease kept her lines there intact against the greatest efforts the Allies could make, at Neuve Chapelle and Loos, while Mackensen drove the munitionless Russians back and ever back until he was almost within striking distance of Riga, Wilna and Kiev, and Poland was completely subjugated to his arms. Then she had turned on Serbia and by the end of the year conquered her and her little neighbour Montenegro. The remnants of the latter's armies were escaping by sea from Albania, the Dardanelles expedition had definitely failed and the deadlock in the West seemed more than ever unbreakable.

VERDUN.

Thus the outlook that 1916 presented to the Allies was anything but favourable.

Yet the outward seeming of things was not the true one. Germany's tremendous and successful efforts were yet not successful enough to compass the decision she sought. She knew the silent work of preparation that was going on among her enemies and that some time her strength must wane while theirs waxed. It was necessary for her to strike somewhere with decisive force. She chose the West front, making a fatal mistake, but applying good tactics in selecting as her point of attack one of the strongest parts of the line. Verdun. No less than two and a half millions of men were assembled from the various fronts and an array of guns of which the fire, when it began, surpassed in weight and intensity anything theretofore dreamt of. The attack opened on February 19th and was destined to continue almost without intermission for six months. After a week Fort Douaumont fell and the position looked critical, but General Pétain obtained reinforcements and conducted a system of defence and counter-attack which was marvellously effective. After the first month the situation was in fact saved and the French victory won, though the Crown Prince persisted in the adventure and Vaux and Fleury, three miles from Verdun, were taken in June. This was the limit of his achievement. His loss of men has been calculated at as high as half a million, and undoubtedly the Verdun failure precluded the resumption of the invasion of Russia, which would probably have been a far sounder policy. The completeness of the failure is now seen in the recent brilliant recoveries by the French of practically all the ground lost in the great offensive.

THE EAST AND THE TRENTINO.

Meanwhile two large and ignominious British failures must be placed against the success of the French. On January 9th the last soldier of the ill-fated Dardanelles expedition left the shores of Gallipoli. The failure of the great undertaking was relieved somewhat by the gallantry of the troops and the remarkable and brilliantly successful withdrawal with hardly a casualty incurred, but it will remain as the greatest military disaster of the British arms. Shortly after followed the end of another and more reprehensible one, though fortunately far smaller and less important, when General Townshend, the brave defender of Kut-el-Amara, surrendered to the Turkish force that had besieged his little garrison for three months. On April 25th he capitulated with not more than 3,000 men, being treated by his captors

with marked clemency and honour. In pleasant contrast to these events was a successful Russian offensive in Asiatic Turkey. Under the Grand Duke and General Judenitch a large force crossed the Caucasus mountains, and in a rapid campaign that seemed to take Turkey completely by surprise captured the stronghold of Erzerum on February 18th after a short but furious and directly frontal attack. Trebizond, on the Black Sea, was next taken, though not until April 18th. Reinforcements to the Turkish arms and Russia's pre-occupation in her greater European campaign then imposed a halt, though a further advance westward was made in July, when Erzurum, the capital of Western Armenia, was also taken.

While the Crown Prince was hurling his forces vainly against Verdun and still winning a few kilometres of ground at a terrible cost, another stage in the war, which showed more clearly than Verdun that the turning-point had been reached, began in the Italian theatre. Our Allies had by prodigious labour eaten their way into several of the mountain passes that surrounded the Austrian town of Trent. Suddenly, in May, a huge Austrian army of 400,000 men and an enormous artillery of large guns, both drawn principally from the East front, drove down these passes with the clear purpose of cutting through the Italian forces and, issuing into the Venetian plains, surrounding and cutting off Gen. Cadorna's army on the Isonzo. At first the surprise of the attack and greatly superior range of the Austrian guns prevailed over the defence, and the Italian centre was driven back about a dozen miles. But Cadorna rallied his troops, summoned reinforcements and before the plains were actually reached was able to announce that the attack had been definitely checked. Whether this would have been the case if Russia had not created a great diversion at that moment is a moot question; beyond doubt her attack compelled Austria to resist, but it is probable that the Italians would in any case have held their ground. Be that as it may, the offensive was a terribly costly blunder. It achieved nothing, it lost Austria 100,000 men and as soon as the pressure was released General Cadorna resumed the attack. The Italians are now in much the same position as before in the Trentino, but during the summer they switched their major effort to the more important region of the Isonzo. After most patient and skilful preparation, Cadorna on August 9th launched a sudden attack against the supposedly impregnable bridgehead of Gorizia, on the Isonzo. It was taken and with it a large number of prisoners. Gorizia itself fell soon after and an advance against Trieste was begun. The contending armies now face one another in entrenchments on the Carso Plateau, and the spring will see a renewal of the Italian attack which should soon compass the capture of that part of the Italia Irredenta and possibly much greater results.

The Russian diversion which we have mentioned began with June. Taking advantage of the transfer of so many Austrian troops to Austria, and the preparations which Russia had quietly made during the winter, General Brusilov assaulted the Teutonic lines on a front extending from the Roumanian border northward beyond Lutsk. After a terrific bombardment, which belied the impression of Russia's dearth of munitions, the Russians attacked with their infantry and broke through the Austrian defence everywhere. They retook Lutsk in the north, advanced towards Lemberg, and conquered practically the whole of Bukovina in Austria, taking Czernowitsh on June 17th. The first month of their offensive netted them over 200,000 prisoners and a great quantity of booty. Thoroughly alarmed, Germany hurried troops, estimated at nearly 200,000, to the East and Austria withdrew as many men as she could spare from the Italian theatre. The Russians were held before Kovel and Lemberg, and still are, but they pushed Bothmer and Linsingen back across the Strypa and the Stokhod. The Germans under Hindenburg made a couple of attempts to break the Russian line in the northern section as a diversion, but they were unavailing. The losses of the Teutonic Powers in this fighting must have exceeded half a million men. Austria without Germany's assistance would have fared badly indeed, and was at one time panic-stricken by the threat of an invasion of Hungary. The resumption of fighting in the spring is certain to be intense in this region, and we may confidently expect to see Kovel and Lemberg fall and the whole line in the east retire, possibly as far as the Vistula. This Russian offensive has

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME.

A British offensive in the West had been for some time expected by Germany, who had massed a great number of troops at the places where she expected it most likely to come. It began on July 1st south of Arras in the region of Albert, France, and somewhat to the surprise of the Germans was made in concert with the French, the two armies uniting at this point. What still more surprised them was the greater initial success of the French, whom they had fondly supposed to be exhausted by the strain of Verdun. The attack followed more than a week of heavy bombardment along the whole line, increasing to a terrific intensity for several days before it was delivered. It covered a front of about twenty miles, from Gommeourt south to the river Somme, from which the campaign takes its name. Checked in the north at Gommeourt and Beaumont Hamel (where so many of our brave men lost their lives but won for Newfoundland undying fame), the British forged ahead in the centre and south, while the French met with even better success. Fricourt, Contalmaison, Curlu, Estrees and a score of other places of immense strength were taken in the first stage of this tremendous battle. Day after day the Allies' fire was kept up, being intermittent only to allow of an infantry attack. Trenches and redoubts considered impregnable were taken in succession, being rarely and then for a short time only recaptured. This methodical, unrelenting system of attack has characterised and distinguished the battle of the Somme, and also the far-like extension of the front as the Allies progressed. It has proceeded in this fashion up to December, since when the weather has checked it temporarily. The capture of Courcellette, Thiepval and Combles mark the succeeding stages of the offensive, which may be said to have for its first great object the taking of Baume and Peronne. They have not yet been taken but the way has been prepared. The Allies now command virtually all the high ground in their neighbourhood. The French threaten Chaulnes, south of Peronne, and the British quite recently made an important advance on the Ancre. It is clear that only unfavourable weather prevents a resumption of the fighting and a repetition of these successes. But it is not territory that matters so much. Though the Somme fighting has been tremendously costly to the two Allies it has won for them compensations far outweighing them. It has demonstrated their superiority over the Germans in artillery, in morale, in personnel and in their air service, a superiority which is certain to increase with time and gives them perfect confidence in the future. It has been greatly costly to Germany also, it relieved Verdun, it ate up many German reserves and it tested and triumphantly vindicated the great new armies that Kitchener called into being. Most of all it has demonstrated the ability of the Allies to break through the strongest defences Germany can construct and oppose to them. During the winter the work of preparation will go on with increasing energy, and it is known that Britain will be able to put into the field three guns to Germany's one and a much greater output of shells. There is no reason to believe that the attack that is certain to come in the West next spring and summer will be confined to the Somme district; in fact it is most probable that several points will be selected, if an advance is not indeed attempted along the whole line.

THE BALKAN AND ROUMANIAN CAMPAIGNS.

On August 27th the expected and welcome declaration of war by Roumania against Germany was announced, coincidentally with that of Italy upon Germany. Undoubtedly Roumania was impelled to her decision by the Allies' victories in the West and at Gorizia but most particularly by the Russian successes at her very borders in Bukovina. It is greatly to be deplored that her first rush of enthusiasm led her into a disastrous mistake in strategy, which seems to have been made against the wishes and advice of the other Allies. Her proper course was to attack Bulgaria simultaneously with an advance by Sarraill's troops in Macedonia. Instead she went after Transylvania, which she justly coveted and which lay temptingly open, but of which the complete conquest would only have shortened the Austrian front and not benefited the Allies' position as a whole. But she had some excuses for her error. She could not have known the tremendous concentration that was already prepared against her; the Allies at

Salonika, owing to the unfriendly and even threatening attitude of Greece and to other causes which are still a mystery, was not able to strike with force enough to help her materially; and there is evidence that Bulgaria treacherously gave her to understand that she would not make war on her but would shortly retire from the contest or even change sides. What ever the reason, however, she struck at Transylvania with nearly her whole force, leaving her left flank, the province of Dobruja, virtually unprotected. At first she had her way. Hermannstadt, Kronstadt and Orsova fell to her arms without offering any real resistance. But this was not for long. The resistance soon stiffened and she was held. Mackensen, the genius of the campaign, struck in the Dobruja, took Turtukal and Silistria on the Danube, soon after Tchernavoda and Constanza, cutting off an important railway communication with Bucharest, and then pushed north as far as Hirsova. Here he appeared to be held, but in reality was only waiting for the armies in the west to achieve their objectives. There a great army under Falkenhayn, who had been deposed from the high command by popular clamour and replaced by Hindenburg, was slowly but surely bearing the Roumanians back through the passes of the Carpathians. The fluctuations of the battle, which raged all along the west border, gave the Roumanians the appearance of more strength than they possessed. The Teutonic campaign proceeded with the regularity of clockwork. Held for a time in the north and centre, they broke through the defence in the South, and captured Craiova, cutting off the small garrison that remained at Orsova. Mackensen had meantime moved great part of his troops southward from Dobruja and effected first a crossing of the Danube at Simintia and then a junction with Falkenhayn south of Bucharest. Menaced at the same time in the north, west and south and with a large force in the east separated from them only by the Danube, and hopelessly out-ranged and short of shells, the Roumanians saw that an attempt to make a stand would only be disastrous. They evacuated Bucharest almost without a shot fired, and retreated steadily northward. The unparalleled speed of the German advance is to be attributed more to this fact than to their superiority in arms or tactics. It is now claimed that the Roumanian army, which is what counts, is safe behind the Russian lines, prepared in advance and probably based either on the Sereth or on the Pruth. The advance still continues, and even if it is soon brought to a stop, two-thirds of Roumania will have fallen into German and Bulgarian hands and the richest of her grain lands and oil wells. In addition the Roumanians have probably lost heavily, though the losses incurred on the other side are a considerable gain to the Allies as a whole through Roumania's intervention.

The long-expected drive of Sarraill from Salonika can even now scarcely be said to have come off. So openly threatening was King Constantine's Roumanian campaign that the Allies presented demand after demand until on December 1st open fighting occurred at Athens between the Greek Royalists and marines of the Allies. An ultimatum to Greece followed, resulting at last in the demobilization of the Greek army, which is now proceeding satisfactorily. With this danger behind his lines and doubtless from other causes as well, General Sarraill was unable to launch a general offensive of sufficient proportions materially to aid Roumania. Notwithstanding, much has been done that will be of future value. The British forces have made progress in the Struma region, at the east end of the line, while the way has been begun for an invasion of Serbia in the recapture, on November 19th, of Monastir. This was effected after long operations in which the French, Russian and Serbian forces co-operated brilliantly, the chief honours going to the Serbs, who are now established on their own soil again. All the Allies seem now bent upon devoting their greatest energies to the problem of the Balkans, and the return of the warm weather will probably witness a large concerted attack by the Allies based on Monastir and Salonika and directed up the Vardar and Struma Valleys.

THE JUTLAND SEA FIGHT.

This year, for the first time since the war began, British supremacy at sea was seriously challenged, with the result that it was more firmly established than ever. On the afternoon of May 31st was fought the Jutland Battle, or the Battle of Horn

Reef as it is alternately called. The enemy's object was evidently to overwhelm Admiral Beatty's battle-cruiser squadron on one of its customary scouting cruises off the coast of Denmark. They chose a favorable place and time, the engagement not beginning until four in the afternoon. Beatty's squadron was first engaged in a running fight with the enemy's battle-cruiser squadron, when the latter was soon after strongly reinforced by the arrival of the German battle fleet. Thus a much inferior British force was subjected to the concentrated fire of nearly the whole German fleet. Admiral Beatty turned northwest towards the British battle fleet under Admiral Jellicoe, which did not, however, arrive on the scene of battle until the day was well advanced. From that moment the issue of the fight was never in doubt. Only the falling light and their own clever manoeuvring under cover of darkness saved the German fleet from entire destruction. The losses of the British in this titanic engagement were three battle cruisers, three armoured cruisers and eight destroyers; those of the enemy were estimated by Admiral Jellicoe at a minimum of three battleships, five light cruisers, six destroyers, one battle cruiser and one submarine, in addition to which many others of all classes were known to be seriously damaged. Thus it will be seen that absolutely the German losses were probably higher than the British, relatively much more so. The test of victory, however, is not in losses but in the result, and that was conclusive. The German fleet, or what remained of it, limped home to port, not attempting even to attack a squadron of older British battleships that hung around the coast the following day. Russia was at once released from the menace of an attack upon her right flank by land and sea, which Germany was now far too weak to attempt. That this has had a great effect upon the summer's operations cannot be denied. Despite Germany's boasts of a victory, the confidence of the British in their fleet was confirmed immensely by the battle and the enemy was taught a lesson from which she will probably profit for the rest of the war. Our navy is still supreme and controls the seas of the world.

DEATH OF LORD KITCHENER.

An event deserving separate notice occurred on June 5th, before the news of the Jutland Battle had been fully assimilated, when Lord Kitchener and his staff were lost in the armoured cruiser Hampshire off the Orkneys at the outset of her voyage to Russia. Though claims have been made that the tragedy, which happened suddenly and in a heavy sea, was the work of a submarine, it is almost certain that it was due to a floating mine. The blow to Britain and her Allies was a very heavy one, but it struck them when the greater work of this very great man, the foremost figure in Britain if not of the whole war, was already completed. He had called into being with amazing rapidity, and organized and trained with a thoroughness that is only now showing its value, an army of some four millions. He lived to see few of them in action, but their wonderful work on the Somme has been proof of what we owe to his energy and genius. The ill-fated Hampshire carried with her also a brave Newfoundland, Fleet-Surgeon Harold Chaplin, the brilliant son of Mr. Mark Chaplin of this city.

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS.

Next in importance to the military and naval operations, and vitally necessary to them, is the matter of finances. At the end of two and a half years of war the Allies can look with pride to the stability of their financial position, which has admirably withstood the colossal and undreamt of strain. Britain has continued her task of lending great financial assistance to her Allies, amounting, if we include the Colonies, to about £400,000,000 for the year. Her national debt at the end of this year will stand at the enormous figure of about £3,000,000,000. As an interesting comparison, though it is quite impossible to obtain authoritative figures, that of Germany is computed roughly at £4,200,000,000, with nothing like the same or as sound securities behind it. In the general economic attitude of all the Allies, and in particular of Great Britain, marked changes and developments have been noted. First among them is the work of preparation for the economic struggle that is bound to follow the war. The outcome of a growing feeling in favor of united action in the matter was a great Conference at Paris in June, at which representatives of the Allies

made certain recommendations for a procedure to be followed both during the remaining period of the war and in the succeeding peace, which, if they are indeed followed even in modified form, will have a far-reaching effect. They regard measures for reciprocal favors between the Allies themselves and for the better development and exploitation of their resources, and also discriminating measures against the Central Empires, supplemented by Customs duties, subsidies and similar methods tending to the greater independence of the Allies. So far these sweeping recommendations have merely been generally outlined and in some details have been sharply criticized by many among the Allies themselves; but there will be abundant and valuable fruits of the new energy and direction of their enterprise. It is recognized everywhere that a new commercial era has dawned. In Britain one eloquent sign of the times is the projected establishment of a great British Trading Bank, designed, somewhat on lines familiar in Germany, directly in many ways to create, foster and assist commercial expansion. But these large economic ideals were certain to affect the Colonies very materially, and we shall be certain to see them not merely consulted in the lack of making them materialise, but themselves playing a large part in it. Already an indication of this is given in the announcement of the great Imperial Conference to be held next spring in London.

Political spheres have just witnessed, in France, Russia and Great Britain, what can only be termed a revolution. The underlying cause in each case has been the general and popular dissatisfaction with the manner in which the war was being conducted, and the demand for a more vigorous prosecution of it and a greater unity and rapidity of decision. This feeling was encouraged in England by the Northcliffe Press and became so strong a month ago that it was plain that a change had to come. The break occurred when Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, the minister whose record and known abilities marked him out as the most fitting leader of the movement, fell out. Mr. Lloyd George demanded of the Prime Minister the establishment of a War Council which should have supreme control of all decisions and large operations and of which the Prime Minister himself should not be a member. Mr. Asquith was unable to accede, and under threat of his ministers' resignation tendered to the King his own. Mr. Bonar Law, called upon as a matter of form to form a ministry, declined and the great task was left to Mr. Lloyd George. He rose to it well. Misgivings were allayed and confidence raised to enthusiasm when the personnel of the Cabinet was made known. The War Council, presided over by the Prime Minister, who is represented in the House by another minister, consists only of five members, and is vested with the supreme powers which the course of the war has shown to be absolutely essential to it. More important even than the ministerial changes is the programme of the new Government recently announced by the Prime Minister. It includes a great scheme for the mobilisation of the whole country's resources, the enlistment of labor on a scale and conditions unapproached before, a state control of shipping and food, and many other matters subsidiary to these. Though it is too soon justly to appraise the work of the new Government, it has already given evidence of a directness and rapidity of action that is refreshing and encouraging.

PEACE TALK AND 1917 PROSPECTS.

The third calendar year of the war closes amid much talk of peace. Having achieved almost the utmost possible in the field, having suffered also severe reverses there which pleasantly surprised them, feeling the pinch of hunger and distress and economic straits, Germany and her Allies put out, at the beginning of the present month, a feeler for peace. Through neutral channels Berlin and Vienna proposed to the Allies no definite terms but the holding of a conference at which they might be discussed. It was a palpably transparent trick, designed for the purpose of drawing the Allies from the military into the diplomatic arena. The spokesmen of Russia, France and Britain have emphatically rejected the proposal. Though the formal replies of their Governments have not yet gone forward, there is no doubt that they will in the same categorical tone reject it. Whether or not, for the sake of clinching the matter, they will state their own

terms we cannot say. Following upon the transmission of the enemy's notes, President Wilson addressed to all the belligerents a note of his own which may be termed a general invitation to both sides to state the terms. It aroused much resentment and indignation among the Allies, whom it was perhaps, from its unfortunate timing, slightly misunderstood, as was to be expected, it greatly displeased the Central Powers. But it may be said already to have failed to object as signally as the other Allies. Germany has replied in friendly fashion, but without in the least acceding to the President's request; possibly the Allies may, but it can serve no good purpose either way.

Thus the position stands to-day. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that 1917, while it may bring us victory, will reveal to us the bloodiest and interest part of the journey the least to it. The world can be saved, but Germany will realise to-day the inevitable and surrender upon the Allies' terms, but of that there is little likelihood. The war will go on. The Allies realise the nature and necessities of their task, the sooner will they accomplish it. They are longer than the enemy, but they are still mighty. Germany has lately mobilised her whole manhood and will realize it with all her genius of organization. She has trained and mobilised also Bulgaria and Turkey, and mired them far more formidable than we may perhaps imagine. She has won in Roumania some measure of relief from the gnawing pain of the blockade, though it may not be much. She holds Serbia, Poland, Belgium, Wallachia and Northern France, and can exact a terrible price if she decides to let them slip. All these things the Allies can counter and outweigh. They outnumber the enemy greatly in men, but they are separated and handicapped by their geographical position. Russia and Great Britain have, on paper, great reserves of men they may be mobilised and equipped, but through her the other Allies, must face a submarine campaign that may be as formidable as it is ruthless. There are many other difficulties and disadvantages to be met, but the more grateful evidence that they are fully recognized. At the Allies have set their house in order and are ready to begin the last act of the terrible drama. In their superior resources will lie their victory, but still more in their will to conquer at their steadfast faith in the righteousness of their cause.

NEWFOUNDLAND IN 1916.

In our brief reference to local events of the year first place must be given to the splendid performance of the Newfoundland Regiment, though they occurred without her boundaries. When the time had come for the Dardanelles adventure to be abandoned, our lads had won so high a name for themselves that they were accorded the honour of acting as the rear-guard the last to leave, at Suvla Bay. They had played a heroic part though it belongs mostly to the year before, and had suffered terribly from sickness. Their next experience of actual fighting came with the opening of the Somme offensive on July 1st. There is no need to recount the glorious and tragic history of that day. Our boys did what mortal man could do, but could not achieve the impossible. They advanced to the assault of the now famous Beaumont Hamel, with two British battalions had utterly failed to take it. Of some nine hundred odd infantry less than a hundred returned unscathed. A score or more of our best and bravest of ficers were killed and, it is to be feared, over two hundred privates many of whom could only be reported as missing. Among numberless deeds of heroism the great gallantry of our Regiment received conspicuous notice in the British press. Its revenge did not come until October, when it was exalted in the fullest measure available. Our men had the distinction of October 11th-13th of scoring the only real success of the army, when they reached their objective, occupied and held a position outside of its scope and accounted for very many of the enemy in killed, wounded and prisoners. A heavy price was again paid for this brilliant achievement, levied with especial heaviness upon the officers. Elsewhere we print a resume of their performances and casualties. Nothing in the history of Newfoundland has been more glorious than the record of its little Regiment in this war and it will be a source of pride to the colony for generations to come.

OBITUARY.

Several persons prominent in the life of the Colony passed away dur-