

The Country Homemakers

CONDUCTED BY FRANCIS MARION BEYNON

PEACE NOT POSSIBLE

My Dear Miss Bynon:—In regard to your article in the last issue of *The Guide*, surely the only people who want an early peace are the Germans. We all want peace, but peace now could only be had at the expense of deserting Belgium and Serbia to their oppressors and condemning Poland, Schleswig-Holstein and Alsace-Lorraine to another indefinite period of misery. The German chancellor made this quite plain only a few weeks ago, so that this seems a singularly inappropriate moment for any of us to start talking about an early peace.

Right here I want to protest strongly against your use of the term "militarist." You say that you use the term to distinguish your unnamed speaker from pacifists. But a militarist is a person who habitually exalts war above peace, the soldier above the civilian, and demands that the country shall be organized always on a war basis. The pacifist is the opposite extreme, and the vast body of sane opinion lies between the two.

The expression that "the war must go on 'till Germany is crushed," is one of those catch-phrases that are always in the air in times of excitement, and probably bears different meanings in the mouths of different people. But are we not all agreed that the war must go on until Belgium and Serbia are reinstated and indemnified; Poland, Alsace-Lorraine and Schleswig-Holstein given some form of government satisfactory to the inhabitants and France given some guarantee against another unprovoked assault? And will not Germany need to be "crushed" before she will consent to such terms? The Germans may be mad, but there is method in their madness. They fought three wars in four years—all short, all successful, all immensely profitable financially. Undoubtedly, the war enthusiasm in Germany was largely due to the idea that it would reduce taxation. Probably the Germans will make short work of their war lords when they find out what they have let them in for, but the responsibility lies with the people. They have supported their government in wanton aggression, they responded with enthusiasm to the hate campaign, they have done things in Belgium and in prison camps that make one shudder to think of. This is the obvious distinction between this war and the opium war you refer to. Nowadays, few of us know or care much what our government is doing in China, and in 1820 China was far more remote and newspaper readers far fewer. But every German must take responsibility for this war. Your remark about the shame Englishmen feel regarding the opium war is interesting, but it hardly shows that we are on a level with Germany. How many Germans feel shame for their treatment of Denmark or France?

I cannot quite follow the comparison of Germany to a naughty child. No child is touched by clemency that, as he imagines, springs from weakness, and that is certainly what Germany would think if we stopped the war now. Which of Germany's leaders suggested a peace on the basis of the status quo ante? And when? And would you be willing to make such a peace?

Again, it is very nice to talk about being generous to Germany, but in the first place she feels as yet no need for our generosity and would fling it back in our teeth, and, in the second place, we have no right to be generous with other people's money. After Germany has made amends to Belgium and Serbia, who undoubtedly come first, France and Russia may, if they like, be generous and waive further indemnities. But, in any case, it is no business of ours. We have not been invaded. None of our property has been destroyed or stolen.

GINGHAM GIRL.

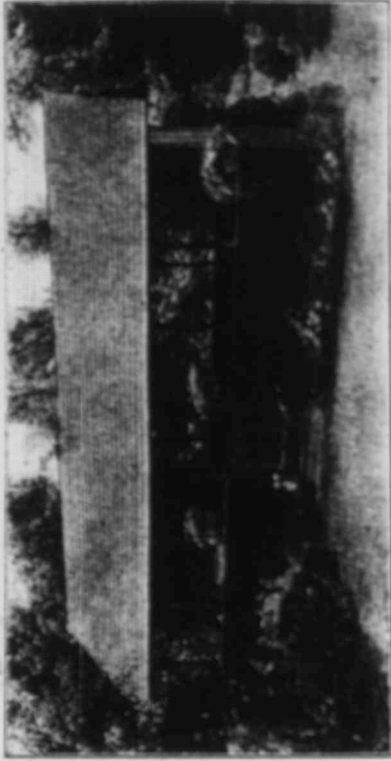
ANSWER

I can't tell you how proud I felt when I received your letter. We women are surely coming on when we can discuss a subject on which we feel strongly and differ radically and yet keep our discussion on the high plane of argument without descending to recrimination or abuse.

I should have been glad to print your letter without comment, as I did the one to which your referred in your friendly little postscript, except that I understood from some of your questions that you would like a reply; that, in fact, you wanted us to have a friendly discussion of the matter and try to understand each other's point of view. Otherwise, I am sure you will believe this, I would not exercise the editorial privilege of having the last word. If all the things which you assume in the first paragraph of your letter are true, then all of your

conclusions follow logically, and peace is out of the question. I grant you that the recent speech of the German chancellor was most objectionable and full of gross misrepresentations, also because one cannot help feeling very strongly on these matters. It made me very angry, as it apparently did you. If I believed, as you do, that that speech represented the last word in German public opinion, I should form exactly the conclusions you have formed, but I do not believe it, and I shall tell you why.

Maximilian Harden, not a Socialist, mind you, but a rather conservative writer, who at the beginning of the war was bombastically militaristic, called the chancellor's speech absurd in an editorial in his paper. He said it was silly to talk of peace on the basis of the war map, and that as Germany had been the aggressor in this war she must take the initiative for peace. His paper was promptly suppressed, but not until the statement had leaked out, and it shows that there is at least some very important public opinion which is not behind the chancellor's speech. Other evidence is found in the fact that a few days later a prominent labor leader attacked the speech from the public platform.



These wheat beams are already built without sleeping berths as really required a pleasant summer sleeping room for the host.

Then there is that wonderful man Dr. Karl Liebknecht—some day there will be international monuments raised in his memory—the only prominent man in the whole world who from the first day has stood out fearlessly against this war, the in every one of the warring nations there are millions of professed followers of Christ and of Karl Marx. At first he stood alone. In season and out of season he arose in the German Reichstag and protested against this war. If we pause to consider what it would have meant to take such a stand in our own parliament, where we have comparative freedom of speech, we will understand more perfectly the greatness of the action of this German Socialist. Early in the war he was expelled by the Socialist party, but last spring a large body of Socialists went over and joined him, and have since consistently refused to vote war supplies.

On May 1, Dr. Liebknecht led a peace demonstration in the city of Berlin, and was arrested and sent to prison on a charge of high treason. A vote was taken in the Reichstag as to whether or not he should be released, and the vote was 117 for and 229 against his release. These 111 votes for the release of Liebknecht are very significant, representing nearly a third of the vote in his favor.

To continue the story, on June 28, Dr. Liebknecht was sentenced to thirty months penal servitude and expelled from the army, a remarkably light sentence considering the seriousness of the offense of high treason in Germany. Why this leniency? There is only one explanation—because the government did not dare to impose a more severe sentence. Even at that there was a demonstration on the part of the people in which at least twenty were arrested, a fact which did not reach this country thru cables from irresponsible newspaper men, but which appeared in four German newspapers. I am inclined to the opinion that a country which could produce a Liebknecht and support him with so much public opinion that the military authorities do not dare to seriously harm him, is not as lost to honor and decency as our papers would have us believe.

But apart from this significant circumstance, we have evidence in that very speech of the chancellor, to which we have already referred, that there is not the complete unanimity of opinion in Germany that the German rulers would like us to believe. The chancellor said that they were going to try to lighten the censorship because it had given rise to the publication of a large number of pamphlets, some of them signed, criticizing himself and the government. When people go to the expense of

publishing pamphlets which may get them into trouble with the military authorities, it is pretty safe to assume that there is considerable warmth of opinion behind it.

Message from German Women

Lastly, some women suffragists in Germany the other day sent greetings to the French women. The dispatch reads: The Hague, June 27.—The *Zeitschrift Für Frauenstimmrecht*, the German Woman suffrage organ, has sent the following greeting to the women of France:

"We feel, think and suffer like you, and swear that after this war the women of all nations shall work unitedly to prevent forever its recurrence." Coming at the height of a furious war when each side is supposed to be singing songs of hate, this message, even supposing it represents the opinions of only a handful of women, is astounding.

From all of these facts it is evident that there is a considerable body of intelligent public opinion in Germany that is opposed to the war and opposed to the tone of the chancellor's speech. Probably the majority is on the other side, as the majority of people in any country are pretty certain to take their opinions ready made, but it is the thinking people in any country who finally decide all great questions.

Instead of helping Liebknecht and the group of people he represents to show the people of Germany the stupidity and futility of this war and make them keen for peace, every time the word is mentioned some of our statesmen make a statement about "crushing Germany," and thereby deal the German pacifists a slap in the face and bolster up Prussianism, just exactly as the chancellor's speech dealt the pacifists in this country a hard blow. It doesn't matter in the least that it is a catch phrase and means many different things on different lips. The fact remains that it is on the lips of about eighty per cent. of our people, and translated into the Teutonic language it means just one thing, that we want to wipe them out of existence as a world-power. All the kaiser's gold could not buy as good a prop for his military system as these jingoistic utterances of our statesmen.

Lack of space forbids a very exhaustive answer to the rest of your letter, but some of it requires an answer if only a very brief one. I couldn't quite understand your point about England being responsible for the opium war than Germany is for this war, because we have more newspapers today than there were in 1839. The point is, were the German people consulted about this war any more than the people of England were about the opium war with China? As a matter of fact the governments of countries first plunge the country into war and then tell the people it must be fought to a finish. The German man and woman in the work shop and office had even less voice in their country's decision to go to war than we had. It is true that since she is in it they have supported her, but her people have supported England in every unjust war she has undertaken, and there have been several in her history. As I said in that editorial, it is only after the passion of war has died out that people are capable of forming a calm judgment as to the rights and wrongs of any situation.

Finally, I differ widely from you in feeling that, in suggesting a generous treatment of Germany, we are dealing with something that is none of our business. In settling this war we, in common with all the participants, are making the bed upon which posterity will have to lie. And I, frankly, do not consider the territory that has been lost by our allies as important as the lives that have been lost by them and us. I feel very strongly that the long pages of casualties which all our papers do give us some claim to a voice in this matter. However, no sane person suggests a peace which shall leave Germany in possession of Belgium, Serbia and Poland. As long ago as last spring a newspaper in Berlin, which has always been considered to be inspired by the government, began to put out peace feelers, suggesting a peace on the basis of the status quo before the war. It may or may not have represented what the German people would have accepted, but we did not stop to inquire. We simply scoffed at the idea of peace.

All the pacifist asks is that our government shall stop playing into the hands of Prussianism by talking about "crushing Germany," and shall not forth about it considers would be a satisfactory peace, so that the German war lords may not be able to fill their people up with lies to the effect that nothing will satisfy them but a complete extermination of them.

FRANCIS MARION BEYNON.