

Editorial Comment

How Goes the War?

When one attempts to recall the doings of the past year he is unable to remember dates and names. One series of happenings has crowded out the remembrance of a previous series. Even such names as Kuroki, Lemberg, Dresden, Von Kluck seem to have a far-away sound, because other names for the time being are before us compelling our attention. What we can recall, however, with great definiteness is the series of emotions experienced during the year of warfare. We have gone from grief to joy and from joy to grief; from hope to despair and from despair back to a hope which is equivalent to assurance of victory. The happenings on the western front, the eastern front and on the seas are recorded in our emotional experience, and even yet we live daily in expectation of some new thrill. As I write, I can but wonder what effect upon my "pathometer" will be produced by the next news from the Balkans or from the trenches at Lens and in the Argonne.

What a succession of feeling is connected with the struggle in Flanders! Deep anger and resentment at a nation which lost her honor and disregarded her promises; admiration for the bravery of a people and a king whose name and deeds will be fondly remembered throughout the centuries; depression when there came news of the fall of Liege and the retreat from Brussels; resentment and holy anger as the news of German atrocities became known to an unbelieving world; fear and doubt as the allied armies moved backward mile by mile towards Paris; joy and praise as step by step the invaders retreated towards their own borders; patient waiting day by day and month by month as two giant forces played with death across the narrow slaughter-zone; pride and admiration mingled with sorrow as there came tidings of the glorious victory at Ypres.

The story of the eastern front has likewise had its thrills; variety was added from week to week by news of victories in Africa, Asia and the islands of the sea. Above all reports of losses and gains at sea have kept our nerves a-tingling, and it is only now, when we are assured of the annihilation of the enemy's submarines, that we can breathe freely—for Britain still is mistress of the seas.

The Balance Sheet

It is a good thing that success or failure does not depend upon one's feelings. Humanly speaking, the issue of the war depends upon men, money, munitions. A glance at the balance sheet indicates that though there is much to cause regret, there is also much to inspire confidence in the outcome. Confidence, however, cannot be placed in human instruments alone.

The Fleets

When the war began the Allies had thirty-nine dreadnaughts and the enemy twenty-two. At present the Allies have seventy dreadnaughts and the enemy thirty—a gain of 100 per cent advantage in a single year. During the year the loss of first and second class battleships has been inconsiderable. At present the Allies possess 86 and the Teutons only 34.

At the beginning of the war the proportion of British cruisers to German was two to one. Since then the Allies have lost thirty-four and Germany has lost fifty-four, so that at the present time the preponderance is more than four to one.

It is difficult to estimate the strength in submarines and destroyers. The initial relative strength of the opposing sides was not far from three to one in destroyers, and five to one in submarines against the Teutons. Owing to the enormous losses of submarines by the Germans in their endeavors to wreck British commerce, the present ratio in submarines must be even more in favor of the Allies.

Since the beginning of the war, England has taken over about twenty-five ocean going steamships of the merchant marine to serve the fleet or the army and, of course, Germany is out of the field completely.

Altogether Germany is in a worse state of naval strength than she was in the beginning of the war, but strategically she is not so badly placed. She dominates the Black Sea and the Baltic, and renders the fleet of Russia useless. The numerical superiority of the Allies has more than doubled since the war began, and in all classes of ships, taken together, she is outnumbered about three to one.

The superiority of the Allies will be strengthened as the days go on. There is no doubt of that. Germany will never be able to reach the British Isles or the British possessions. She must stake all upon success on the land.

Economic Conditions

Economic conditions in Germany must grow immediately worse. England continues to be freely supplied from the markets of the world. Her trade and manufactures flourish. She is becoming wealthy, while her enemies are suffering impoverishment. Even if Germany were to win over Russia and Italy she might still be forced to terms because of her inability to trade with foreign nations

The Losses

At the beginning of the war France had 4,000,000 men, Germany 4,000,000 men, Austria-Hungary 600,000 men, Russia 6,000,000 men, Italy little over 1,000,000 men, England a mere handful.

The population of France was 39,000,000, Germany 70,000,000, Austria-Hungary 50,000,000, Russia 174,000,000.

During the year it has been estimated that the actual casualties were: Russia 5,000,000 men, France 1,800,000 men, England 400,000 men, Italy 200,000 men, Serbia 2,000,000 men, Belgium 150,000 men, Germany (over) 2,000,000 men, Austria (nearly) 2,000,000, Turkey 250,000 men.

The Reserves

The total reserves for the Allies have been placed at 38,000,000 men, that of the enemy at 20,000,000 men. Of course, it is not expected that all of these reserves will ever be brought into action. Germany's annual contingent of 600,000 will more than make up for her killed and prisoners. Austria is not so fortunate. Turkey can as yet supply all losses incurred. Russia can supply every year about 2,000,000 men, but has already lost many in prisoners, and an additional 1,000,000 in battle. France likewise will be able to replace those she has lost. Italy can supply almost 400,000 men a year, and up to date she has lost very few men. Serbia has lost more than she can replace. Britain, on the other hand, has not yet found her strength. A few thousands to begin with, she has already mustered between three and

four million, and her mustering has only just begun. Taking it all in all, if the Allies can combine their forces they can wear out the enemy in a war of attrition. The economic pressure which will force either party to sue for peace will not necessarily be felt seriously for a couple of years. It does not seem as if the crumbling process would begin very soon. It is very certain that Britain is not going to crumble, but it may be that the prediction made at the beginning of the war was not so far from the truth: "The war will be settled when the masses in Germany revolt against the ruling powers."

The Civil Service

It is a veritable relief to turn from the war to matters that more immediately concern us. One of these is the composition and efficiency of the civil service.

There is no reason why those who are in the service of the Dominion or any of the provinces should not be as well fitted for their duties as men and women in the private offices and factories throughout the land. Moreover, they should give their services to the public rather than to the political parties to whom they owe appointment. It will readily be conceded that we are far from this ideal. In many cases men are appointed to office for political services they have rendered, or they are denied promotion because of political services they have not rendered. More frequently still they are employed because of the service they may possibly render in approaching political contests.

The only way to end this wrong is to put appointments and dismissals under charge of a small non-partizan commission. It should not be difficult to get a good man for the post of chief commissioner, and it should be equally easy to surround him with capable advisers.

The method of operating such a commission would be very simple. If a complete register were prepared showing all positions and the qualifications necessary in each case, and if in another index were kept the names of all applicants with their certificates, their testimonials as to health, efficiency, integrity and the like, there should be no difficulty in selecting the most worthy. There would be few square pegs in round holes. Similarly if every quarter there were presented by the head of each department on the service a statement as to the character of the work of all under his charge, the necessary dismissals and promotions could be made. The most important consideration would be to get competent heads for departments.

If it be argued that under such a plan the ministry would have no power, it may be said that the duties of a ministry should be centred in public service, rather than in securing offices for political friends. It should be a first principle of politics—and the sooner it is recognized the better—that when a man enters the ministry his service should be for his country rather than for his party.

There are some worthy illustrations of cabinet ministers who have risen to their opportunity. If it were not for the pressure of office-seekers, most ministers might do fairly competent work.

A civil service appointed as suggested would make for efficiency and would strike a hard blow at political debauchery. Can any one doubt it?