

A MESSAGE

SINCE the first days of August, 1914, the minds and hearts of the Canadian people have been absorbed in one subject, one subject alone, the terrible War which was then unloosed on the world.

After thirty months of fighting and at the beginning of this New Year, it may not be amiss to cast a retrospective glance upon the varying phases of the contest, since the first awful days, and to measure and define the duties still confronting us.

When in answer to the pressing overtures of Germany, for neutrality in the conflict, Britain declared that though abhorrent of war, she would accept war, and deliberately walked into the furnace, rather than allow the faith of treaties to be contemptuously set aside, and small nations down-trodden with impunity, a thrill of pride passed over this country. The determination was general that Canada must stand behind Britain, and assist with all the strength of her command. General, I have said, unanimous would be a still more appropriate word, for though there were a few discordant voices, those voices became fewer and fewer, as events developed and as the horrors of German warfare made it every day more apparent that the triumph of Germany would be a set back to civilization, a severe and perhaps fatal blow to the freedom of nations.

In this universal determination of the Canadian people, all were not actuated by the same motives.

With many and perhaps the greater number, the cynical disregard of Germany for her own signature on a solemn treaty, the cruel invasion of Belgium, her avowed purpose to crush and again dismember France, and the solemn resolve of Britain to risk all so as to prevent those sinister purposes—these were the impelling motives.

To many the uppermost thought was that in a contest where Germany had expected that the self-governing nations of the British Empire would take occasion where Germany had expected that break off their allegiance, the participation, the voluntary participation of Britain's difficulties to would show a living example to the world, of the potency of freedom as a principle of government.

Nor is this all. We have heard it alleged that Canada should have remained outside a conflict in which she was not immediately interested, since her territory was not actually invaded.

This is the meanest and most selfish view to take of the question. Who is there amongst us, with the long chain of our historic traditions, who would have remained unmoved, indifferent, and passive when Belgium and two Northern Departments of France were subjected to horrors unknown since, and hardly equalled in the days of the barbarian invasions of Europe, and when Britain was coming out from her secure insular position, to help save modern civilization.

Moreover, to say that Canada, though not actually invaded had no interest in this War, is to assert that which is every day demonstrated to be false. In the face of those outrages against nations that the triumph of Germany would mean the unavoidable choice between two alternatives, either submission to German domination, or war with a still more powerful Germany, at no very distant period. The evidence is indeed overwhelming that Germany deliberately provoked this War, believing the moment opportune to strike the blow, with the expectation openly avowed and insolently gloated over, that the campaign would be short, sharp and decisive, so decisive as to make her master of Europe and supreme arbiter of the world.

The Canadian people ranged themselves behind those who held that a contest so waged with such a total disregard of the law of nations, with such an undisguised assumption of ultimate world domination, had to be fought and won now.

After thirty months of warfare, the military situation can be summed up in these two facts. The German plan of a short and triumphant campaign was decisively crushed at the battle of the Marne. The contest has continued ever since with varied successes on either side, until signs are percolating through the serried meshes of German censorship that by mere attrition, the vital forces of the enemy are slowly ebbing away.

The overtures for peace recently made by the German Government seem to be a confirmation of this view, and the answer of the Allied Nations makes it plain that they are ready this day, any day, to negotiate for peace on the basis of the principles for which they are fighting; namely the absolute sacredness of treaties; respect for the integrity of small nations; no annexation of territories without the consent of the people; full indemnity for the wrong done, in so far as indemnity can cover the wrong done, (for outrages were perpetrated by the invading armies of the enemy which are beyond repair or atonement); guarantee against future aggressions.

The arrogant language of the German chancellor, in announcing his peace suggestions against Right, makes it doubtful whether Germany is yet ready to negotiate on any other basis than Might.

Should that unfortunately prove to be the case, there is no alternative for the Allied Nations., but the continuance of the cruel struggle, until force of arms wrings from the foe, that which it will not concede to the claims of human conscience.

And this means further effort on our part. Already the people have nobly responded. If it be said that more could have been done, the obvious answer is that here as elsewhere among