

THINGS AS THEY ARE

BY THE CHAPLAIN OF THE REGIMENT.

A short time ago I was asked to write a Christmas Story for our Battalion Magazine, THE FORTY-NINER. It occurred to me that perhaps the most appropriate material for our perusal at present is the story of Things As They Are.

The whole world paused in genuine apprehension when the Declaration of War was made. Perhaps the first thing that dawned upon us was the stealthy, subtle, systematic means by which the enemy has succeeded in preparing himself for this unparalleled world-struggle, and the next, a sinking sensation resulting from a growing realisation of our own unpreparedness. This, in turn, was followed by a keen and increasing sense of indignation and scorn for the people who, under the cloak of friendship, could be capable of such utter falsity. I have stood on the spot in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, where the Kaiser stood at the funeral of King Edward VII., and professed unbounded loyalty and friendship for England. Everyone knows now the insincerity of his words, and that, behind the mask of friendship, and assisted by the cordial attitude of the British Leaders, he and his General Staff were secretly and swiftly preparing night and day to spring at the nation's throat.

Then, with grim determination, we settled ourselves to the task before us—the task of meeting on a fair field and by fair methods a foe the most unscrupulous, the most diabolical known to history. Heine, the German poet, said some years ago that the day would come when, in his own nation, the cruel qualities of Odin and Thor would recur; the restraints of Christianity would be cast aside; churches would be battered down, and kultur give place to carnage. That day came sooner, perhaps, than he anticipated. By education and active leadership the new Gospel of Force was enunciated. The Bismarckian policy of blood and iron was swiftly and universally adopted. Our task of contending with such a nation, a nation that openly flung all moral considerations and obligations to the winds, was one too great and too terrible to

be realised even by those engaged in its prosecution. The result, after twenty-seven months, is a world in mourning. Not only have millions of the very flower of manhood from all the contending nations been destroyed, with all the anguish of heart and home which that slaughter entails, but in the neutral nations there are also interests and ties related in the most intimate way with these events.

The crisis is over, the menace to all that Christian civilisation holds precious has been met and averted. The modern Attila, in his attempt to sweep away the liberties of the race so hardly won in the long day of its upward struggle, has been effectually stopped. It only remains to complete the task; to render impossible the recurrence or such an unparalleled outrage on humanity.

This brings us face to face with things as they are, present conditions, duties, and prospects. People are constantly asking, "When will the war be over?" The question is usually put with the eager anticipation of the day when this flow of blood shall be stanchd and the carnage of these brutal battlefields be stopped. Myriads of anxious parents throughout the nations concerned are saying the same thing, "Why cannot this wholesale slaughter of the best blood of the world be terminated?" Our sorely-tried opponents are urging the neutral nations to content themselves no longer with the rôle of awed onlookers. Now, the time for these kindly souls to have stopped all this bloodshed and disaster was before it began. They were impelled to begin this most terrible of all human wars, and we are compelled to finish it. Whether on our part we are "only starting to fight," or whether "we are in the third stage of the war," to use the words of Sir Wm. Robertson, to my mind matters little. We have our work to do, and it is a task which should be measured not by time, but by thoroughness. We owe it not only to ourselves and our Allies, but to the world, to finish our task. We shall fail in loyalty to our precious dead if we sheathe the sword before this arch-enemy of the liberties and sanctities of the