

IN DEFENCE OF THE CENSOR

By THE MONOCLE MAN

LET me say a word for the Censor. Every newspaper man has at his finger-tips a dozen ludicrous or dramatic instances in which—judging after the event—the caution showed by the Censor appeared either exasperating, bad for recruiting or ridiculous—or all three. But it ought to be remembered in all fairness that the staff of censors work at very high pressure—that they must decide quickly on the wisdom or danger of allowing any particular item of news to pass—that there are many of them, and they cannot possibly be all expected to see exactly alike on all questions—and that their business is (not to make the newspapers interesting), but, to make sure that nothing leaks out which will endanger the life of a single soldier or the success of the smallest manoeuvre.

THE chief business before us all is to win the war. It would be better that we should, none of us, know one solitary thing about the progress of the war, and that we should win it as soon as possible, than that we should be fully informed as to its progress, and that we should then lose it because of this widespread information. I will go much further and say that no possible "news story" is worth the life of a company of soldiers. The only way in which it can be worth the life of a single soldier is if it causes recruiting to make up for that loss many hundred times over. And, even then, my own personal opinion is that the life should not be sacrificed. We should depend upon other methods of getting more soldiers than the butchery of one volunteer to make a recruiting meeting cheer.

AND that brings us to the only sensible argument against a severe Censorship—its effect upon recruiting. It is constantly argued that, if our people knew more about the war—more about the danger it implies to our lives and liberties—they would volunteer more rapidly and numerous. That argument may have been good in the opening stages of the war—when, by the way, recruiting constantly kept in advance of the ability of the Government, either here or in Britain, to take care of the recruits. But it is surely an empty argument to-day. If our people do not know to-day that they must fight for their freedom if they are to make sure of it, no lurid newspaper story about desperate charges and personal courage and German brutalities will drive a knowledge of this fact into their heads.

I THINK that there may possibly have been too much public optimism since the war began. That would affect recruiting. Men will not make great sacrifices to go to the front if they think that the war is sure to be won anyway in good time by the men already there, and by those who will go cheerfully in what we may call "a sporting spirit." Our leaders—such men as Lord Kitchener and Mr. Asquith—should be plain with us. They should not content themselves with telling us loosely that "men and more men" are needed. That sounds a bit stereotyped, and suggests only that they desire to keep up the old stream of recruits. They could—it seems to me—be more specific in stating the dangers of the military situation—more plain-spoken—more downright. They should remember that, while a word to the wise may be sufficient—such a "word" as Lord Kitchener included in his last Guildhall speech—it is not sufficient for the superficially informed and the very busy workers who are, of course, the great majority.

BUT that has nothing to do with the Censorship. The most downright warnings could be given, without revealing anything to the enemy of military importance. And that would spur up recruiting at this stage of the struggle far more than any detailed accounts of the always confusing mass of fighting. To tell us just how many British soldiers are in France—just who they are and where they are—just what actions they have each engaged in during the past fortnight—would mean very little to the average man; and it is the average man who must volunteer. But for Lord Kitchener to tell us specifically just what the need is for more men, and what is liable to happen if he does not get them, would make the situation unmistakable to the average man—and need reveal nothing to the enemy which he does not already know.

BUT to come back to the Censor. I am personally prepared to trust him to know better than I can just what it would be dangerous to reveal. He is, I presume, in constant touch with the military

authorities. He knows what they do not want to have made public. And they know why they do not want certain things published. It is quite true that they may make mistakes. Even as you and I might make mistakes if they left it to us. But I think that the Censor should every time give the soldier, who is exposing his life to imminent peril, the benefit of any doubt. That is, unless he is absolutely sure that it cannot endanger the life of one "Tommy" to let the papers print a certain piece of news, he should never dream of permitting them to print it—howl they ever so loudly. It is bound to turn out afterward, under such a policy, that the Censor has kept back items which proved to be harmless. But the best he can do is to use his best judgment at the moment—and to use his "blue pencil" every time when in doubt.

AND I think we ought to be patient with him. We can far better afford not to know what is going on than to have it go on to our ultimate ruin. The French have always said that they lost the decisive Battle of Sedan because of too much publicity. It never does to assume that the enemy

knows anything which he may possibly not know. The German spy system is super-excellent; but even Homer sometimes nods. The difficulties of communication must hamper it considerably in this war. That being so, we should not help it overcome this handicap by printing dangerous news in our papers.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

Now the Munitionettes

WHEN Lloyd George smilingly received that deputation of women munitionettes last week, did he remember that a year or so ago he was digging himself in to keep out of the way of the suffragettes? Mrs. Pankhurst told him that the suffragettes had forgotten votes for women; what they wanted now was a chance for the munitionettes to help the nation win the war. But she knows very well that votes for women will be as easy as rolling off a log after the women have helped the nation to beat the Germans.

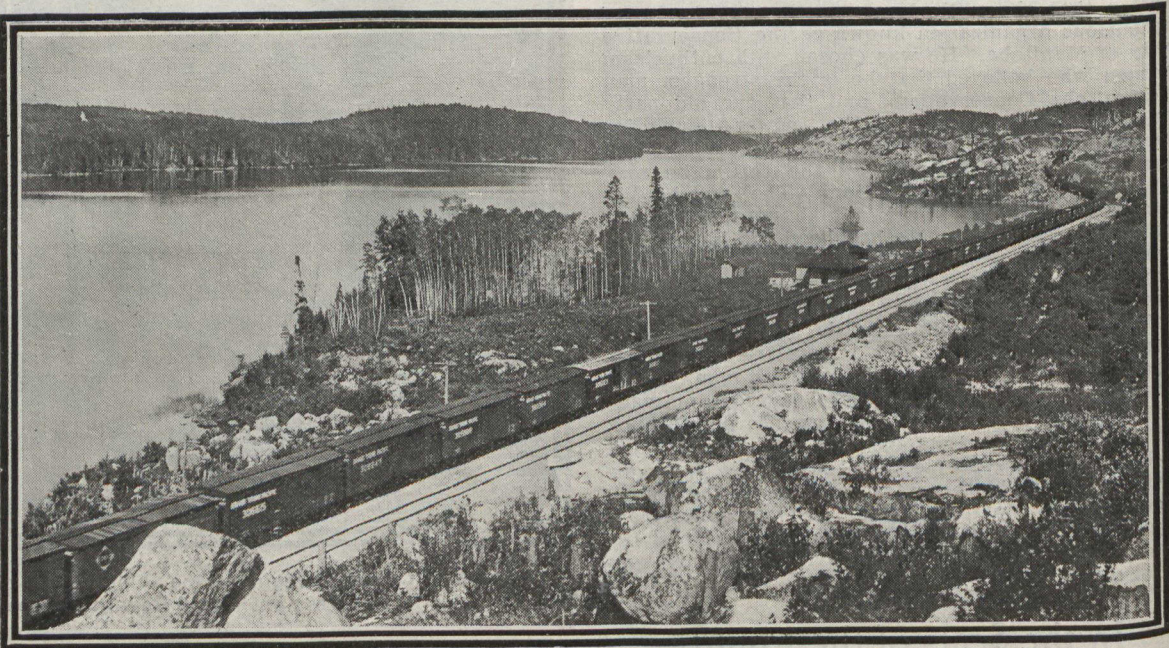
German women, who have always been denied even the common dignities due to their sex, are, as Mrs. Pankhurst says, making munitions for the German army. English women propose to do as much, if not more; not by compulsion, but as members of a democracy in which they claim co-equality with men. In this democracy, the suffragette had her troubles getting recognition. The munitionette may be more successful. Making munitions is not necessarily a man's job. In fact, when the war is over it will be hard to tell where man's work leaves off and woman's work begins.

OUR NEW GOVERNMENT RAILWAY



THE FIRST "NATIONAL" AT COCHRANE.

This photograph of the first Transcontinental train from Toronto to Winnipeg was taken by D. Kerrigan, landscape gardener of the Timiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, at Cochrane, at 4.30 p.m. on July 14th. At this point the Ontario Government Railway (T. & N. O.) joins the Canadian Government Railways.



A GREAT HIGHWAY FOR FREIGHT.

A train of 65 box cars on the National Transcontinental Railway passing Canyon Station on the edge of a lake in Northern Ontario. This is one of the sections of the road where curves were unavoidable.