

The Philosopher

THE COMING DAY OF DELIVERANCE

Never before has there been such a turning point in human history. Never before has there been such a colossal struggle as is now being waged. Millions of men have died, millions of women and children have been driven from their homes. Human suffering and misery such as the world has never known before have replaced peace, happiness and orderly life in great areas of the old world. Wherever German armies have passed there has been a harvest of dishonor for women, of cruel death for children and old men, and of unprecedented ravaging and destruction. All that violence, deceit, ruthlessness and "terribleness" could accomplish has been accomplished over no inconsiderable portion of the European continent. For forty years Germany worked at her preparations to seize world dominion. But all her vaunted "efficiency," her savage ruthlessness in action, have failed. Those who will live in the years to come will have a better measure than we can have now of the grandeur and the horror of this present time, and of how much has been won for mankind by the defeat of the German assault upon civilization and freedom. For the defeat is already becoming manifest. The day of deliverance from the German menace to the principles upon which all free countries are built is coming.

WHEN WHITFIELD TURNED THE HOUR GLASS

In reading recently a book about life in England in the eighteenth century, the Philosopher came upon some interesting facts in regard to the marvellous preaching of George Whitfield, whose voice was so clear and powerful that it could reach 20,000 people in the open air, as Benjamin Franklin proved by actually testing the distance at which it could be heard and calculating the number of hearers that could stand within that distance. Of his fervor and dramatic action, with which he held his hearers spell-bound, and of his homely pathos, many extraordinary things are told. It was when he was preaching to the colliers at Bristol, whose "tears plentifully fell down their black cheeks, making white gutters," that his fame began. He made no less than seven evangelizing visits to this continent, and died in Massachusetts in 1770, soon after saying "I had rather wear out than rust out." During the greater part of his life he preached from forty to sixty hours a week. In those days preachers preached literally by the hour, for it was customary to have an hour glass in the pulpit. When Whitfield turned the hour glass over, an indication that he would preach for another hour, his hearers used to shout for joy. He used to draw great congregations to hear him as early as five o'clock in the morning. What preacher in these days could do the like? Is it that there are no Whitfields now, or that the world has changed?

GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE

Nothing has so completely baffled the Germans as the growth and strength of confidence between Great Britain and France. The Germans counted upon the British and French failing to work together in harmony. They left nothing undone in the hope of making the French and the British have doubts of each other. The attack upon Verdun with such stupendous force was, beyond all else, an attempt to convince France that Britain was not ready to help her, and that she must surrender or die. But nothing could shake the Anglo-French union, which has given such superb proof of itself, working with constantly increasing efficiency and success. Out of this alliance of two great peoples, so different in their race history and traditions, has grown a firmly rooted confidence and mutual respect which will be a potent influence in world history.

WHEN A WEED IS NOT A WEED

The Philosopher has a friend who is a botanist and who occasionally delights in praising the commonest weeds and in pointing out that many of them are, in reality, plants which have value. The burdock and the dandelion and many another plant which is despised and rooted out have medicinal properties. Many drugs which, as articles of commerce, are worth a high price per pound are derived from plants which we commonly regard as weeds. "Why, then," says this friend of the Philosopher's, "should you not select some such weed, from which a drug in general demand is extracted, and encourage it to flourish like the green bay tree? It is all very well to say that a silk purse cannot be made out of a sow's ear, but it may be that a silk purse can be well lined with the profits from a weed which you have been accustomed to look upon as scarcely fit for hog food." The botanist, when he says this, is not speaking in entire seriousness; and he is speaking as a botanist, not as a man versed in the facts of supply and demand, and not as a man acquainted practically with the drug manufacturing business. And, moreover, the growing of any such weed for profit would mean work. Only in a lazy man's dream will any sort of plant grow of itself for him and sprout dollars to provide him with a fat bank account. Other plants would have to be weeded out of its way. Cultivating anything means work.

THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH

Fifty years ago French was the recognized medium of discussion at diplomatic conferences. A couple of centuries ago Latin was the language used at such conferences, and in all diplomatic and international correspondence and state papers. But when the high representatives of the Allied Powers held their recent conference in Paris, those present—representing Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Japan and Portugal—did their business in English. A generation ago, as one of the London papers remarks, the British representatives at a diplomatic conference would hardly have ventured to suggest such a thing. A great variety of influences of constantly increasing power are at work making English more and more a world language. To mention only one of the many significant facts that might be mentioned in this connection, English is now taught in the public schools in Japan. Great as has been the spread of the English language throughout the world during the past quarter of a century, it will undoubtedly spread more rapidly during the quarter of a century to come.

AS TO "ENGLISH" AND "BRITON"

In the House of Commons a few months ago Mr. Asquith was corrected for saying "British," when he really meant "English"; and, in apologizing for the slip, he explained that he had only lately broken himself of the opposite error. The old controversy in regard to the use of the word "English" as the designation of not only the United Kingdom but of the whole British Empire has had a revival since the beginning of the war. The title of Mrs. Humphry Ward's book, "England's Effort," for example, has brought forth strong protests—one of the strongest being from an Englishman. "English authors, publishers and journalists," he says in a letter in the London Spectator, "should beware of giving needless offence in this matter. If you ask a Welshman or a Scotchman, or a Canadian, what he thinks about it, probably the reply will not be in words—just a significant shrug of the shoulders, which speaks volumes." Not that the ties which bind the Empire so strongly together in unity can be in the least affected by any such thing as that. There are not a few things in this world for which there are not adequately descriptive and expressive words. The London Spectator vehemently defends the use of the word "English." "No one," it says, "would seriously propose that we should talk of the 'British' language, or 'British' literature." In regard to the further remark made by the Spectator, that the objection to the use of the word "English" comes only from "jealous Scots," we may surely say that it is not highly judicious. The Spectator goes on to say that if we are to say "British," we must also, in logic, say "Briton"—which, the Spectator regards as "an ugly word, suggesting an undesirable ancestor, covered with woad." But what possible reason can be alleged for being ashamed of the ancient Britons, who decorated themselves with that blue pigment? The word "Briton" was proudly used by Nelson. King George III boasted that he "was born a Briton." And does not all the world know the true and glorious refrain, "Britons Never Shall Be Slaves?"

VICTIMS WHO SHOULD HAVE MEMORIALS

It was a fitting and proper thought that prompted the inauguration by the patients in the Canadian Hospital at Ramsgate of a movement for the erection of a monument to the victims of the Zeppelin raid on that town in March last. The idea is worthy of extension in England, and in France and Belgium, to say nothing of monuments to the defenceless men, women and children of the United States murdered on the high seas by German submarines. If the places in Belgium and in France and on the east coast of England, where the Germans have committed cowardly murders, were marked by monuments, great would be the number of these memorials of the greatest crime of all ages. They would be lasting monuments to a colossal infamy, and warnings for all time against the evil spirit that caused this war, in the hope of making ruthless Might the master of human destinies. A Frenchman visiting London can never find anything humiliating in Nelson's column, nor a Russian in the Guards' monument, commemorating the Crimean War; those and other British monuments of British victories by land and sea mean no shame to the vanquished, being memorials of struggles in which both victors and vanquished showed valor and the high spirit of patriotic heroism. Not so with the monument to be erected at Margate in memory of the victims of Zeppelin bombs; not so with any other memorials of defenceless women and children murdered by "supermen" in airships and submarines.

THE TWO-SIDEDNESS OF THE TURK

Ever since Gladstone's burning denunciation of the atrocities committed in Bulgaria, and Carlyle's fastening of the epithet "unspeakable" upon the perpetrators of those atrocities, the civilized world has regarded the Turk as a human devil. During the past two years the Turk has eclipsed all his previous atrocities by the massacres of Christians in Armenia, which he has carried out without any disapproval on the part of his guide, patron and ally, the Kaiser. They have been the most appalling massacres in modern times.

and yet the Turk has shown himself "chivalrous and humane" in his treatment of General Townsend and the garrison of Kut el Amara. The War Office has made acknowledgment in an official statement of the humanity shown by the Turks to the wounded, their scrupulousness in returning kits of wounded British soldiers, and their observance of the decencies of warfare. Men returned from Gallipoli tell the same tale. They say the Turks would not fire upon the Red Cross, and in other ways behaved more honorably than their Teuton allies. Is there a more amazing problem in human psychology than is presented by the contrast between all this and the Turkish massacres of entire Armenian villages, the sinking of shiploads of Armenian women and children, the deliberate wiping out of the Christians in Armenia, with a fiendish relentlessness which has drenched that land with blood?

UPLIFTING THE POTATO

We do not hear so many tales now about how the wonder-working chemists of Germany can make bread from birch-bark, and beefsteaks from pine planks, and sausages from saw-dust, and so forth. But from both sides of the Atlantic, at not infrequent intervals, come stories of wonderful inventions; and every few weeks we read in the newspapers about some extraordinary novelty in scientific discovery. The latest thing of this sort which the Philosopher has noticed is the announcement that Professor Howard Dean, of a Missouri college, is on the point of discovering a method by which potatoes can be made to change their starch into sugar, as they grow. If so, who knows but that the potato may be uplifted from its lowly estate in the ground and given a place in the sun on the branch of a tree, like an apple, or an orange? Is it not high time that somebody did something for the uplift of the potato? Too long has it hidden humbly in the earth, till somebody ate it, with never a thank you. But, alas, it may be that we shall never hear anything more of the wonder discovery which Professor Howard Dean was announced to be just on the verge of.

A DEBASING STATE SYSTEM

The world has overmuch of the wonderfulness of German "system" and "thoroughness," and of the "efficiency," so called, of the German subordination of the individual to the State. It is said not infrequently that in these respects the world has something to learn from Germany. The thing of overwhelmingly vital importance which the world has to learn from Germany is the poisoning and brutalizing effect of such a State system. The exponents of Kultur seek to glorify the eager obedience of Germans to their rulers as a finer and nobler thing than the freedom which we British people and the French people rightly regard as the very breath of life. But the submissive obedience which has been drilled into the fibre of the German people is not merely destructive of true individuality. It brings out the lower nature, the basely animal nature, which only the development of individual responsibility and self-control can hold in subjection. The countless cruelties and atrocities committed by German officers and soldiers are the inevitable outcome of a system which teaches the wearers of the Kaiser's uniform on land and sea to look at things from a point of view which is anti-human and profoundly criminal. Thus it is that foul and atrocious deeds are done on land and sea, and their perpetrators regard themselves as heroes; and are regarded by Germany, from the Kaiser down, as heroes. Thus it is that such achievements as the torpedoing of the Lusitania, and the murder of Edith Cavell, and the dropping of Zeppelin bombs on women and children, have produced rejoicings in Germany. The spread of the principles and doctrines from which such results grow would mean that civilization would go backward, not forward.

THE SLAVS AND THE FUTURE

Dr. Charles Mayo, the famous surgeon of Rochester, Minn., in his address on being elected president of the American Medical Association a few weeks ago, gave expression to his belief that the Slavs are destined to play a great part in the coming decades of this century. That Russia will have a greater influence on Western civilization than ever before seems inevitable. We may well believe that not many of Dr. Mayo's fellow-countrymen will be pleased with his prediction that the Russians will surpass the Americans. Dr. Mayo says that the greatest danger to the American people arises from the fact that they are so generally blind to everything but materialism and money, whereas the Russians are more intellectual and far more devoted to the things of the spirit—a comparison which assuredly will not give pleasure in the United States, and will be found all the more distasteful by reason of the fact that it is made by one of the most distinguished of Americans. But whatever may be thought of Dr. Mayo's opinion, even those of his fellow-countrymen most disposed to make little of it must admit that it is undeniable that in the time to come the Slav will have to be taken account of more than ever before.