

THE PHILOSOPHER

Current Events under Review.

A WAR FOR HUMAN PROGRESS

Never since history began to be made has mankind witnessed such a marshalling of armaments in war as Europe now presents. This greatest war in history has been forced on Europe by the arrogant lust of the German Emperor for power and yet more power, and for wider areas of territory than the German Empire over which to rule autocratically, making the world tremble at the thought of the might of his "mailed fist." Constantly he has been like a prowling wolf, watching for his chance to leap upon France. For years successive Governments in Great Britain and the whole British people have been the targets for the studied arrogance and insolence of Berlin. For years Great Britain endured at Germany's hands a policy of irritation in small things and a policy to brag and bluster in big things. But with the outrageous violation of treaty obligations and of the rights of the people of Belgium, who were inoffensively attending to their own affairs, the die was cast. Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria and Belgium were the powers bound by the treaty which guaranteed the independence and neutrality of Belgium. In deliberate violation of that treaty Germany precipitated war, with all the horrors and tragedies and mockery of Christian teaching that war entails. It will ever stand to the honor of Great Britain that she did not wantonly seek the dread arbitrament of war. With a clear conscience, the British Empire and its allies can face the verdict of posterity, knowing that theirs is not the bloodguiltiness. The whole British Empire is solidly united in this most righteous war, which is a war for honor and justice and good faith and the welfare of humanity, a war for the preservation of the cause of civilization and true progress against the barbarism of autocracy and grinding militarism.

CANADA'S RESPONSE

Throughout the whole Dominion the determination that Canada will do her part worthily is as impressive as it is inspiring. We are all one in the ties of loyalty and devotion which unite the Empire. We are all one in the consciousness of the justice of the cause for which the Empire and its allies are fighting, the cause of freedom and progress and the dawn of an ampler day for the masses of the people of the nations against the black night of autocracy and oppression and feudalism, personified in the War Lord of Berlin. All the world knows that the Canadian people, united in a deep spirit of fervent patriotism and determination to do their duty to the full, will acquit themselves in a manner worthy of Canada's position as the foremost self-governing Dominion of the Empire and worthy of that devotion to liberty and justice which is so enduring a bond of the Empire.

THE PURPOSE OF THE AGES

To all who believe in an over-ruling Providence, which shapes the ends of men and nations, this war will mark another page in the advance of civilization. From the beginning of history, nations have sought to build a durable fabric of empire upon a foundation of might and injustice, and have failed. Some have endured for a time, but in the end have perished. The great lesson throughout the centuries is that no empire based on force alone can subsist. Germany has not learned that lesson from history, and is now learning it at a cost that may well be said to stagger humanity. Beneath the surface of this last and greatest of European wars lies the eternal conflict between the forces making for progress and the forces that are resisting progress.

WOMEN'S PART IN WAR

It has been used as an argument against woman suffrage that women cannot serve as soldiers. As a statement of fact, it is undeniable that women are debarred by laws of nature from military service—though there are not a few instances in history to the contrary, and not the least notable that of the Belgian women in Liege who took active part in resisting the German invaders. But, without stopping to discuss this argument against woman suffrage, there is another fact to be noted, and it is that in war women have work to do that is of great importance, though it is not active military service. In Paris in the first week of last month, when there was a general departure of the active male population to the mobilization centres, the women took up a great many of the jobs thus left vacant. Later on the President of the Republic called upon the women of France to "complete the work of gathering the crops left unfinished by the men who have been called to arms." The wheat and grapes of France will be harvested by the women, as if every fighting man of the country were not with the colors. This call made by the President of France upon the women of the nation is but one of a thousand incidents that show the far-reaching touch of war. The men,

fighting at the front, are the conspicuous actors on the stage. In fixing our eyes on them, we must not forget the women suffering anguish at home, and toiling at the work which war takes the men from. The heaviest hardship and suffering entailed by war fall on the women.

PAST AND PRESENT

The time will come—to doubt it is to doubt in God and in the moral purpose of the universe—when human beings will look back upon the destruction of thousands of lives in the war now in progress with feelings of horror such as overcome us now when we read of the burning of poor, helpless old women accused of witchcraft a couple of centuries ago, and the torturing of witnesses in state trials, and such incidents (by no means infrequent in past centuries) as the punishment inflicted upon the Chevalier de la Barre, a young man nineteen years of age, referred to by Dickens in the opening chapters of "A Tale of Two Cities." For refusing to make a declaration of belief which he could not make in conscience, he was sentenced to have his tongue torn out with red hot pincers, to have his right hand cut off, and then to have his body broken upon the wheel. The thing was done in the public square at Abbeville. Such things were done in many public squares, and all the time ordinary human life went on, and children played their games, and housewives attended to their housekeeping, and young men and maidens made love and the whole human drama, the same in all essentials as it is today, was transacted every day. There are romantic writers who would have us believe that that was the Golden Age of the world, before the modern dullness of life settled down over everything. It is ever the way of human nature to be dissatisfied with present day existence and long for the rare old times, when there were wondrous doings in the world. In centuries to come there will doubtless be romantic dreamers who will look back to this time, as romantic dreamers of today look back to the times of the Crusades. And there will be thoughtful people who will shudder to think of the carnage that is now reddening fields in Europe with human blood and will wonder how ordinary human life went on at all, in this year of grace 1914—just as we wonder now how people managed to live their lives in the times when it was no uncommon occurrence to have some young man in the prime of life, or some poor, innocent old woman, tortured and burned to death in the public square.

RUSSIA AND PROGRESS

Between the close of the Crimean War sixty years ago and the beginning of last month Great Britain was never at war with a European power. In the Crimean War the British and the Russian troops fought against each other; in this war they are fighting on the same side. It is one of the anomalies of history that Russia, the land where autocratic rule has been guilty of so many terrible crimes against liberty, should be one of the alliance of free nations that are fighting autocracy in this war. Austria is responsible for this. Austria's rulers have never stood for an ideal, for justice, for liberty, or for any other good cause. This is not to say that there are not in Austria, and in Hungary, many good friends of liberty and justice. It is not a race that is at fault. It is a system, a despotic, aristocratic, feudal, military system. Such a system exists also in Russia. But it is Germany and Austria that have taken the responsibility of leading the forces of despotism against the forces of freedom. They have arrayed against them the enlightened public opinion of the world, which is a thing that counts for something in this Twentieth Century.

TWO WISE MEN

The fact is finding recognition in Great Britain now that there were two great Englishmen in the last generation who foresaw what was coming. They were (to put them in chronological order) William T. Stead and King Edward. During the greater part of the nineteenth century the European nation that was regarded with special favor in quarters in England, and in a large measure throughout Great Britain generally, was Germany. Russia was hated. Rudyard Kipling's famous poem, "The Bear that Walks Like a Man," gave expression to the feeling held towards Russia. Stead, divining the inwardness of German policy, set himself to the unpopular task of speaking well of Russia. He labored to create a good feeling towards Russia. To him more than to any other man is due the present good feeling that exists between the two countries. King Edward ascended the throne with distrust of Germany in his mind, and with a guiding vision of an alliance with France, which he was happy to see made into an accomplished fact.

A HISTORY-MAKING TIME

What person of middle age is there who, looking back to his or her schooldays, does not recall how in learning about the great battles that formed so large a part of their history lessons, there was the underlying thought that never again would there be such battles fought. We felt sure that never in our lifetime would there be war. Those of us who were schoolboys a third of a century ago used to regret that destiny had condemned us to live our lives in such a prosaic, workaday era, with no glorious fighting and adventure going on, no Spanish Armada being sunk, no Battle of Waertloo being fought. Well, the greatest war in all history is now in progress, and we cannot realize its true proportions. One battleship of today could blow the Spanish Armada out of the water with the greatest ease. The Battle of Waterloo was fought in a space not as large as the city of Winnipeg; a modern line of battle would stretch across the province of Manitoba. The first astounding, unbelievable shock we experienced on learning that war was begun has passed away, and we are all now doing our best to realize the vastness of the operations, the millions of armed men engaged, the terrible losses and the whole scope of this greatest tragedy that has ever befallen the civilized world. But we fail to realize it all in its true proportions, in its full meaning. We cannot visualize in our minds and really understand the terrible events which, as these words are written, are staining the map of Europe crimson. Who among us on this side of the Atlantic, is capable of vividly imagining the war as an actuality? Does any one in the shadow of a great event feel its true weight and meaning?

THE AUTOCRATIC KAISER

No critic of the German Emperor will ever point out his defects better than he did it himself when he said in his famous Königsberg speech in August, 1910: "Considering myself as the instrument of the Lord, without heeding the views and opinions of the day, I go my way." He has not heeded the spirit of the time. Surrounded by subservient agents of his will and by flatterers, he has become more and more hardened in his egotism and in his belief in his "divine right" to rule autocratically. He is a figure from the Middle Ages, living in this Twentieth Century. The ability and personal force which he possesses are the outgrowths of his narrowness and concentration. The men with whom he has surrounded himself are men whose subservience is so great that he absolutely dominates them. He wants no men of strong character near him; Bismarck's fate showed that. The Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, is nothing more than the Kaiser's mouthpiece. When the Radical members of the Reichstag have become troublesome, it has been his business to still the clamor, not by compromise, but by hinting at the power of the regiments. In no other country have the Radicals and Socialists been as active and numerous as in Germany, and in no other country has the voice of the people had so little influence on the Government, that is to say, on the Kaiser.

HOMESTEADS FOR WOMEN

Men outnumber women in Canada by half a million, according to the Dominion census of 1911. This is a considerable difference in a total population of seven and a half millions; but it is entirely in accordance with the conditions in a new country. The young, the strong, the adventurous seek out new countries; the old and the timid stay at home. The single man emigrates. The young married man may come without his wife and children and without the grandparents, who follow him later on, when he has established himself. Women are apt to be in a majority of those left in the older lands. But while this disparity between the number of men and the number of women in this country is thus to be regarded as natural enough, there is no reason why it should be artificially increased. There are strong arguments against restriction of homesteads to men. It is pointed out, among other things, that the difference in physical strength constitutes no valid objection to women homesteaders. A physically weak man may take up a homestead and have somebody else do the work. A woman ought to be allowed to do the same.

THE BRITISH WAY

The momentous decision was not reached in hidden agreement by the sovereign and a few scheming statesmen; it was delivered in open parliament, by the elected representatives of a free people, after the fullest discussion of the needs and perils of the nation and after the utmost resources of diplomacy had been exhausted. And when the solemn declaration of war went forth, it went from the hearts and consciences of the whole British people.—New York Tribune.