

The Philosopher

PEACE TALK OF GERMAN ORIGIN.

Nothing could indicate more plainly the fact that Germany has begun to realize things as they are than these skilfully planned outbreaks of peace talk wherever in the world Germany has friends or influence. These startings of discussion are, of course, skilfully directed German campaigns, wholly German in their origin and designed solely to serve German purposes. More than one of these outbreaks of peace talk has occurred in the United States, where there will be, as the war moves irresistibly to its close in German defeat, many more cunning German moves made in the hope of serving German purposes. The New York Tribune says wisely:

"The Allies will do well to ignore any campaign on behalf of peace which has its centre in this country, whether official or unofficial. The German vote will be a factor in the next national campaign. Every German influence will be exerted to put the Administration into the breach to help along the peace movement. Let all the Allied nations remember that peace talk in America is German-procured, save for a little honest pacifism, and let them act accordingly."

The Allies are not talking peace. They are not thinking peace. They are more determined than ever that Germany must be decisively beaten, and the world made secure against another attempt to make the brute force of military despotism the master of human destiny.

THE RENEWAL OF THE YEAR.

What tales will be told of the deep snow and the blocked roads and the general severity of the winter of 1915-16; and how it set in early and tarried late, we can imagine now, and shall hear in winters to come, and occasionally with comfortable zest in the dog days of summer. But every winter comes to its end at last, even if sometimes a disagreeably lingering winter spoils the early spring. The loitering chilliness may fight a rear-guard action against the advancing forces of spring, but spring cannot be kept from coming into her own; and though delaying, always welcome, early or late. How welcome, and how filled with promise! "If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith." And as we pass from spring into summer, the beauty of the world assures us that there is beauty beyond earth, that ideals persist, and that the life of the spirit transcends the limitations of earth's limitations.

GOPHERS AND "NATURE'S BALANCE."

An unusually vigorous campaign against gophers is being carried on this year throughout the Prairie Provinces. It occurs to The Philosopher to note, in this connection, that the latest report of the Biological Survey branch of the United States Government announces that the extermination of prairie dogs throughout large areas of the Western States has practically been completed. "Ninety-nine per cent of the prairie dogs in the national forests of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Oklahoma have been destroyed; and active campaigns are still in progress in Arizona, New Mexico, Montana and South Dakota, and in the Rio Grande forest of Colorado." The prairie dog and the gopher are entirely different creatures, of course. But the scientists who have studied the habits of both animals are agreed that both can be exterminated without any ill results. Certainly in the case of the gopher, which is a grain-eater, there is no reason to believe that its extermination would disturb "the balance of Nature" in any detrimental way, as the destruction of birds does by protecting the bugs and beetles, flies and moths and allowing them to increase and multiply. One of the most striking cases of the disturbance of "the balance of Nature" is afforded by the island of Jamaica, which was formerly infested by snakes. The little animal known as the mongoose was introduced from India to kill of the snakes, and he did it. Then he took an interest in birds' eggs; and, in time, the birds in Jamaica began to decrease materially in number, and the insects began to increase, until now one cannot enter the woods of Jamaica without being covered with wood ticks; and in the fields the insect plagues are no less troublesome both to human beings and to the beasts. Still the snakes had to be got rid of in Jamaica. The gophers, too, must be got rid of in this country; but no other creatures are being brought in to do it. The disappearance of the gophers would only mean the saving of the huge total amount of grain they eat.

USE OF POISON GAS PLOTTED LONG BEFORE-HAND.

Convincing proof that the introduction of blinding and asphyxiating gases into warfare by Germany was not the result of a violent impulse, but was deliberately planned beforehand, in violation of the pledge given at the Hague Conference against barbaric devices (poisonous gases being specifically mentioned in the pledge) is now furnished by certain trade records. Asphyxiating and blinding gases are produced from the highly poisonous seeds of the sabadilla plant, which grows in Venezuela. These seeds are of use in making certain dyes and disinfectants. Previous

to 1913 there were small exports of these seeds from Venezuela to Germany and to the Netherlands, and to no other countries. Never before 1914 were any of these seeds sent to the United States. In 1913, the year before the war began, the exports of sabadilla seeds to Germany increased suddenly to an enormous extent. In 1914 the exportation of them to the United States, unquestionably for re-exportation to Germany, like the increased quantities sent to the Netherlands. All this is set forth in the report of the United States Consul at La Guayra. He mentions in his report that the sabadilla seed is so virulently poisonous to the lungs and eyes that the men who gather the plant and handle the seeds have to wear carefully constructed masks. Sabadilla seeds have now been made absolutely contraband by Great Britain. The facts and figures given to the world in the report of the United States Consul at Guayra uncover the infamy of which Germany was guilty in this deliberate violation not alone of the dictates of humanity but of the explicit, definite pledge given by that professedly civilized and Christian country.

THE WAR AND BRITAIN'S WEALTH.

The statement made by Sir George Paish, the eminent English financial authority, that Great Britain is maintaining her productive power and adding to her wealth in spite of the war, has been the subject of a series of articles in the New York Commercial, which has analyzed the whole matter and arrived at the conclusion that Sir George Paish's statement is an incontrovertible truth. Investigation into the details of the subject brings out the fact, as the New York Commercial makes plain, that the United States is paying toll to Great Britain for shipping facilities at the rate of fully \$600,000,000 a year; and the total increase in the earnings of British shipping was in excess of \$500,000,000 over the year before, more than one half of which came from United States importers and exporters. German commerce and German shipping on the high seas have been wiped out. British ships are now carrying more than one half of the total of the world's overseas trade at shipping rates that are exceedingly profitable for shipowners. The shipping alone of Great Britain is making more than enough profit to pay the interest and provide a sinking fund sufficient to retire the huge aggregate of the British war debt, as it stands now.

WESTERN PROVINCES CO-OPERATING.

If the difference between the mankind in the savage state and civilized mankind had to be indicated in one word, what word could better be chosen than "Co-operation"? The beginnings of mutual helpfulness were the beginnings of human progress from barbarism towards civilization. And civilization will not have really begun to realize its possibilities until "the family of nations" becomes an actuality. This is an ideal that seems far ahead as yet. But surely, if there is a Divine purpose in the universe, mankind must be moving towards the time when the only war will be the war that all nations will unite in waging against the enemies of all—namely, disease, ignorance, and the other sources of evil in the world. These reflections may seem somewhat large in their scope in comparison with what has prompted them, that is to say, the announcement which The Philosopher has just read in the newspaper that the Governments of the four Western Provinces have agreed to enter into a partnership arrangement under which Manitoba will carry on the education of the deaf mutes in all the four Provinces, Saskatchewan the education of the blind, Alberta the care of the feeble-minded, and British Columbia the custody of the incurably insane. From such co-operation between Provinces to like co-operation between nations may seem an advance so great as almost to be unthinkable. Many generations may pass away before it is made, but is it not in the logical line of human progress co-operation between nations will begin to attain an approach to the full measure of its possibilities. Who can doubt that in that direction humanity must move?

QUEER WAR SUGGESTIONS.

It was reported in a London paper more than a year ago that the suggestion had been made in all seriousness to the Admiralty by a retired sea captain that large numbers of pigeons and other birds should be trained to regard the warships as their home, and should be fed grain out of funnels of the same shape as periscopes, so placed as to be just out of the water—the idea being that they would flock to any German periscope showing itself, and would so serve as submarine detectors. Needless to say, the suggestion was not taken seriously. There have been countless other suggestions, naval and military, of varying degrees of unpracticability or usefulness. In the Military Gazette, a Canadian publication, the suggestion was put forward a couple of weeks ago apparently in all seriousness, that umbrellas be issued to the Canadian troops. The suggestion is that every

Canadian in khaki be provided with "a combination of swagger-stick and umbrella." The Victoria Colonist is moved to mirth by this proposal, which it hastens to supplement. "Let every soldier's cap be provided with some little arrangement resembling, but not too closely, the spike of a German helmet," says the Colonist. "Into this the swagger-stick-umbrella might be screwed, and thus the arms of the soldier would be left free. It might be possible to so treat the covering of the umbrella as to make it shrapnel-proof." But somehow the only jokes about the war which sound right are the jokes that come from the front, from the men in the trenches—who, amid all the strain and agony, are by no means without the relief afforded by blithe-hearted laughter.

WORLD LANGUAGES OF THE FUTURE.

How the prevalence of the respective languages in the world will be affected by the results of the war is a question which was the interesting theme of an able address given a couple of weeks ago for the public school section of the Ontario Educational Association by Professor Croissant of the University of Kansas. He showed how each of the leading languages—English, French, Spanish, Russian and German—has progressed, by citing the number of the people whose means of communication each has been at various times in history. Statistics prove that the English language is at present spoken in the intercourse of ordinary life and business by a larger number of people than any other tongue, including not merely the whole of the British Empire, but also the United States. The Russian language, by this test, comes second, followed by French, Spanish and German. As to the future, Professor Croissant predicts an increasing lead for English, followed by Russian. He bases this forecast partly on the national character and the commercial enterprise of the British people, with their freedom of intercourse and their immense carrying trade; but partly, also, on the fact, that as a spoken language English is learned by foreigners with comparative ease. If any one language is entitled to be called a "world language" to-day it is English and its claim to be so designated will be strengthened more rapidly after the war than it has ever been in the past. What Professor Croissant says about the use of learning English, however, applies only to it as a spoken language. It is one of the most difficult of languages for a learner to write on account of its erratic spelling, which is, indeed, a formidable obstacle to overcome.

THE DEFECT OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE.

The world at large has had abundant proof that immense numbers of German-Americans are unable to grasp democratic ideas, and in their inner minds still live under the flag of autocratic militarism and personal government—hereditary subservience to which is so deeply implanted in them as to form part of their very nature, of their very flesh and blood. It is not a matter of conscious reasoning with them; it is instinctive. They are the descendants of many generations of Germans, and they have the qualities they have inherited. The lack of what Matthew Arnold called "civic courage" (later writers term it "political instinct") and we may give a more extended definition of it by saying that it means the spirit of independence and self-government and the practical instinct necessary to the securing and the maintenance of self-government) is, in reality, as apparent in these people in the United States, who shape their thinking and feeling according to the will of the Hohenzollern dynasty, as it is apparent in the Germans in Germany, of whom Althoff wrote: "We Germans are the most learned people in the world, and the best soldiers. The greatest philosophers, the greatest poets, the greatest musicians are Germans. We have taken the foremost place in the natural sciences, and in almost all technical spheres, and we have achieved an enormous industrial development. And yet, strange and wonderful thing, we Germans are politically asses. There must be a weak spot somewhere." the much-vaunted "intellectual classes" in Germany are the most subservient tools of the arrogant, Prussianized military system of absolute rule. The university professors and all the teachers in the upper educational institutions are Government employees, holding commissions which carry with them social and class privileges, and they are ardent upholders of everything connected with militarism and autocracy. They howl with the wolves. For years the military caste has been lordling it arrogantly; and in the halls of learning, where truth, humanity, theology and knowledge should reign supreme, the dogs of war have been barking. Materialism, militarism and "mailed fist" have dominated the German mind—the learned Germans as well as the unlearned—and the result has been the increase of that deeply implanted, hereditary defect, the German lack of "civic courage" and of "political instinct"—the instinct of self-government.