

## Germany's Failing Food Supplies

By Prof. W. W. SWANSON.

The British Government recently announced its decision to conduct the blockade of Germany, for the immediate future at least, along the lines already laid down. This has quieted the clamor in the British press for a more effective blockade. The figures submitted by Sir Edward Grey appear to furnish conclusive evidence that, while Britain has exerted her full power on the sea, the blockade of Germany is doing deadly work against the enemy, nevertheless. It is important that we should understand what has been accomplished through the blockade; for, in the main, the more spectacular events of the battlefield have loomed so large before us that the silent and relentless pressure of the Fleet upon the enemy has been forgotten or overlooked.

The famous French statistician ventured the assertion, at the outbreak of war, that within nine months' Germany would be practically starved into submission, and would be compelled to sue for peace. We now know that the prediction was far wide of the mark; and in the face of this, and many other similar opinions, we have grown somewhat discouraged with the results of the blockade on Germany's economic life. But, although the enemy has not been forced to his knees through lack of food or materials, the pressure of the Fleet has effected such a profound change in the economic life of Germany that already there are not wanting numerous signs that the Teutonic Powers are heartily sick of the war. Let us, however, endeavor to give a concrete picture of the real situation with respect to food products alone.

At the beginning of war official Germany sneered at the effects of the blockade; but the food riots at Berlin, Hamburg and Frankfurt, as well as many other similar places, has caused an entire change of attitude. Germany may have officially admitted the effects of Britain's starvation policy for ulterior motives — to justify her submarine campaign, for example — but, whatever the motive, the blockade is now admitted to be effective. At the beginning of the war immense quantities of supplies were secured from Holland, Denmark and the Scandinavian countries, as well as from Italy and the United States. It is safe to say that the amount that Germany is now receiving from the northern European countries and the United States is greatly diminished; and Italy has just forbidden the exportation of goods of any description to Germany. In fact, the Teutonic Powers are now forced to part with gold, on a cash basis, for anything they can purchase abroad; and England, in Roumania, in Denmark, and in Scandinavia, has left them comparatively little to buy. More and more, therefore, Germany must depend upon the resources of her own soil to feed her population of sixty-eight millions.

Before the war Germany imported huge supplies of wheat, barley, lard, butter and eggs. She now gets little or none of these food products. The Empire was not self-sustaining, notwithstanding the protective policy that had been deliberately followed since 1870, whereby it was hoped, by bounties and protective duties, to build up an economically self-contained nation, as far as food products were concerned. German agriculture did effect a prodigious increase in output of foods, but the constant and no less remarkable increase of population kept production behind consumption. In the year before the outbreak of war Germany was obliged to export no less than 10,000,000 tons of fodder for its cattle and swine. With imports so largely cut off by the British blockade, the food problem became, in a few months, acute. Fishing in the North Sea became a hazardous enterprise, and food supplies were further circumscribed by that fact. Then, as millions of men were drafted into the army, agriculture was denuded of the necessary labor force. Women and children have always played a large role in German agriculture, but they could not entirely take the place of men called to the colors. In view of these facts, with characteristic German thoroughness, the food problem was placed in the hands of experts, for solution. And the solution was also characteristically German. The experts, after due deliberation, announced that for 68,000,000 persons the agriculture of the country must provide 56,750,000,000 calories of food value! This means little or nothing to the average reader, and it meant about the same to the German. The experts, after due deliberation, announced that the fact that the German people had

been over-eating; and that, per unit of population, food rations could be cut down by two-fifths without impairing the physique of the people. The authorities at once took action, and issued bread-tickets; limiting the consumption of the staff of life, per person, to nine ounces a day. Now, that suffices, undoubtedly, for the well-to-do, who do over-eat; but for the workers it means a tightening of the belt and semi-starvation. This is evident when the reader recalls the fact that bread and potatoes form the main article of diet for the mass of the German people, who rarely have a flesh diet.

Food would still have been plentiful for the masses were it not for the swine problem. At least 70,000,000 bushels of rye and other cereals are annually fed to the hogs and cattle of German peasants, as well as many thousand tons of potatoes. In 1913 the Empire grew 54,000,000 tons of potatoes, which — so the statisticians figured — would give five pounds per day to each person in Germany. But that left out of consideration the fact that potatoes formed a large part of the food given to hogs. An attempt was made to solve the difficulty by government action. A maximum price was fixed for potatoes; but the official price could not be maintained because of the extra demand placed upon that article, which was needed not only as food for the people and for feeding swine, but for the manufacture of alcohol and starch. As the price of potatoes advanced the farmers began to slaughter their hogs; and the price of pork and lard fell sharply. As this process continued the diminution in the supply of hogs caused a rise in price; and the peasants also began to feel that they needed to keep what they had left in order to make the best use of their grain and potatoes. Moreover, the swine were needed, especially in Prussia, where the land is poor, for fertilizing the soil. The Government, however, realized that the potatoes must be kept for the people; and offered the farmers a high price for their pigs intending to sell the meat products to the people at half-price. This was regarded as a war measure; and the authorities determined that a few millions of dollars spent in that way would yield desirable results. Unexpected difficulties were met with, however, in the opposition of both the great land-owners and the peasants to this plan. The agrarians were ready to send their sons to die for the Kaiser, but they insisted upon keeping a certain minimum of swine on the farms; and this, as has been explained, because the pigs are necessary to maintain the fertility of the soil.

The German people, then, are on half rations today; and even if the official classes are inflexibly determined on the prosecution of the war, there must be a growing body of opinion within the Empire opposed to the war. A hungry people cannot continue, indefinitely, to be a determined people. That the food situation is difficult is evidenced by the fact that the Russian Minister of the Interior, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, have been forced to make speeches in public dealing with the problem. Nevertheless, pamphlets and leaflets have been distributed among the people, instructing them how to prepare various savory dishes with a minimum of food, and with coarse materials. And the coming year holds no brighter prospects for the German nation as far as food is concerned. There is an ever-diminishing labor supply; the land will not be as well fertilized as in the past, and hence must yield less. The occupied territory of the enemy cannot be depended upon, to any extent, to furnish additional food supplies. Belgium, even when it was most efficiently cultivated before the war, did not suffice to feed its own people; Northern France is a manufacturing and mining, and not a food-producing region; and the farms of Russian Poland have been laid waste. Roumania's wheat crop has been bought by Great Britain; and the 1916 crop will not be allowed to go to the Teutonic Powers. Serbia is to-day a wilderness, and European Turkey cannot feed itself. Whatever resources of men and material, therefore, that Germany may have acquired up to the present by force of arms will not suffice to balance her losses in the production of food supplies.

It may be admitted that Germany has accomplished almost miracles of organization since the outbreak of war; but organization has rather to do with distribution, than production, as far as food is concerned. More and more, therefore, will the silent but inexorable pressure of the British Fleet be felt in Germany. If Germany was not slowly starving

when she instituted her submarine policy, she is slowly starving now. From day to day the question of feeding her people will grow more difficult; and hunger riots will become more numerous and more violent. Already, there are scores of signs pointing to the fact that Germany longs for peace. She no longer talks of indemnities; although but six months ago the German Secretary of Finance Helfferich, insisted that Germany's enemies must pay the cost of the war. Germany, in fact, now proposes to surrender her African colonies to Britain, as the price of peace; to evacuate and indemnify Belgium; to withdraw from France; and to retain only Russian Courland. She is ready to set up an autonomous Polish Kingdom, under a German Prince, and to demand only a Protectorate over Asiatic Turkey. Her demands and terms will not be granted; but at any rate they show how far she has travelled on the downward path in the last few months.

We are dealing, however, in this article only with the German food problem. Germany boasts that she has depended upon her own resources, and that she has found them to suffice. That holds true—for the present, and for the immediate future. But the end comes, Germany's resources will have largely disappeared. Both in men and material she will have suffered almost irreparable losses. And for years to come she will be forced to bend all her energies toward repairing those losses; and only by overcoming almost insuperable obstacles will she regain her old place among the nations of the world.

### A LONG DISTANCE TALK.

A new link was forged a few days ago between Eastern and Western Canada, when telephone communication was carried on between Montreal and Vancouver. At a largely attended gathering of Montreal's leading business and professional men, the Bell Telephone Company arranged for a long distance talk between Montreal and Vancouver. Lord Shaughnessy, Sir Frederick Williams-Taylor, Mr. C. F. Sise, Jr., Alderman Boyd and L. B. MacFarlane, President of the Bell Telephone Company, talked with representative citizens of Vancouver.

The wire extended from Montreal through Buffalo, Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City, and Portland to Vancouver, a distance of 4,227 miles. The voices were distinctly heard in the various conversations carried on between the East and the West. Later Montreal was connected with San Francisco and a musical programme rendered in the latter city was distinctly heard at the Ritz-Carlton.

In his address, Mr. MacFarlane stated that he was present and took part in the first long distance telephone conversation ever carried on in Canada. That was thirty-eight years ago, when Dr. Alexander Graham Bell and others talked from Brantford to Paris, a distance of seven miles. Now conversations are carried on over a stretch of country nearly 4,300 miles in extent. The demonstration was a success in every particular, and marked a new epoch in the life of the nation. It has called fresh attention to the wonderful part played by the telephone in the modern commercial, social and industrial life of the people.

### NEW MARKETS FOR ASBESTOS.

The effects of the war are being revealed in some surprising situations. Before the outbreak of hostilities, over 50 per cent of Canada's asbestos found its way into Germany and Austria and as a result when war broke out the two big asbestos corporations doing business in Canada found matters almost at a standstill. In a surprisingly short time they found a new and larger market for their entire output with a result that the Asbestos Corporation of Canada has shown an increase of 12½ per cent over its sales for 1914, while the Black Lake Asbestos Company turned a deficit of \$32,000 in 1914 into a profit of \$20,000 in 1915.

Previous to the war, asbestos was used very largely for industrial purposes, such as the making of shingles, fireproof boards, fireproof curtains for theatres, covering for machinery, etc., etc. To-day Canadian asbestos is finding a market in Great Britain where it is being used as packing in guns, for the covering of boilers and piping in the many new ships which are being built as well as for other purposes associated with war. After practically closing up at the outbreak of war, our asbestos companies are now working overtime in an effort to supply the demand, but so far have not been able to produce enough to overtake the market requirements from Great Britain. It is somewhat significant of German tactics that shortly after the outbreak of war, one of the companies operating in Canada was requested by its former German customer to ship large supplies to a firm in Holland. Needless to say, the order was not filled.