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REFLECTIONS ON FIRST YEAR OF GREAT WAR

Noted London Editor Reviews Course of the Struggle. The Pessimist is to be Feared.

(By A. G. Gardiner in The London Daily News and Leader, July 23.)

It was on this Saturday a year ago (the actual date of the anniversary is to-morrow) that the Kaiser put his signature to the declaration of war against Russia and plunged Europe in blood. There is, I believe, strong foundation for the statement that having signed his name he threw down the pen and, turning to the victorious soldiers about him, said: "Gentlemen, you will live to regret this." However that may be, we cannot doubt that the feelings of the authors of the crime to-morrow will have little resemblance to those with which they saw the Kaiser's fingers tracing the fateful letters on August 1, 1914. I am not going to preach an anniversary sermon in the key of the optimist. I dislike the world and I dislike the attitude of mind it defines. The man who insists on seeing only what he wants to see, and believing anything that is impossible because it is agreeable has his uses in small emergencies, but is a nuisance and a danger in time of real peril, when the only things that count are facts.

A Letter From The Front

And if we at the end of a year have to confess that all our hopes have not been realized, what of the enemy? Have they had no disappointments and no failures? Mr. Garvin, whose writings throughout the war have been inspired by a spirit worthy of this unparalleled time, asked in the "Observer" last Sunday what would be lamentations of panic Press in Germany if that country were afflicted by such a burden. In Germany, whose methods "The Times" and the "Daily Mail" seek to impose on this country, Lord Northcliffe would long ago have been dealt with as a public danger.

But were he able to-day to cry "stinking fish" in Germany as he cries it in England, what a basket he would have to offer. History furnishes few parallels to the disillusion that Germany has suffered. When on this Saturday night a year ago the Kaiser's army invaded Luxembourg there was only one thought in the German mind. It was the thought of victory swift and overwhelming—the French armies swept out of the field, Paris captured in a fortnight, a mighty surge eastward for the overthrow of Russia and peace terms dictated to a conquered Europe within six months.

And instead, what do we see? There is not one theatre in which he has so much as approached a decision. It may be that she will complete the year with the capture of Warsaw, but that will be an empty triumph if the Russian army remains intact, for it is only the defeat of the armies in the field that can give her victory; and the prospect of accomplishing that has become negligible. Add to this there is no hope of reaching a decision on the Eastern frontier there is still less room for confidence on the West, where the resources of the Allies increase as those of the enemy decline and where the great army raised by Lord Kitchener steadily approaches the point at which it should be the decisive factor in the struggle. Nor must we overlook the fact that Italy is becoming a powerful element whose influence on the disposition of the enemy will constantly work to the advantage of the Allies.

The Pressure of Sea Power

But behind the military failure of Germany there looms another fact which throws a still darker shadow over the picture. The victory of the British navy has been won with a completeness that we are apt to forget because it has been won so silently. The early expectations as to the immediate economic and financial effect of isolation upon the "Central Powers" have not been fulfilled. Not sufficient allowances were made for the power of adapting the internal resources of the beleaguered countries to a state of war; but the pressure of sea power, though slow to make itself felt, has a deadly and cumulative certainty that is the more irresistible because its operations are so subtle and incalculable. It is this fact that makes time so precious to the enemy. A year has passed without bringing them within sight of that goal which seemed so near last August.

It is, however, the failure of Germany in another sphere which would offer the most fertile field for the panic press if such a thing were permitted by the enemy. What should we say to the policy of a government which had succeeded in mobilizing the opinion of the whole neutral world against its cause, which had allowed the ally of a generation to drift into open hostility, and which by the clumsy misunderstanding of America had

brought that country almost within the orbit of the Allies? What a cry of "betrayed" we should hear, what demands for victims, what lamentations about lack of "leadership"!

Our Own Disappointments

But there is a more pestilent creature even than the optimist, and that is the pessimist, and it is that creature who is the peculiar affliction of this country at this time. He is more to be feared than the enemy himself, for he is the enemy in our midst. He is poisoning the blood of the nation, and still worse, he is poisoning the mind of our Allies against us and filling the enemy's papers with cheerful tidings. I saw this week a letter from an officer at the front. It was a letter enclosing £5 as a contribution to the cost of reprinting an article which he had seen in one of our publications describing the spirit of this country,—not slandering it, but painting it soberly, truly, without panic on the one hand, and with false enthusiasm on the other. Why did he want that article reprinted? "I want to distribute it," he said, "as an antidote to the poisonous effect which 'The Times' and the 'Daily Mail' are having out here. Those papers are doing as much harm as if we were suffering a defeat once a month."

Rugged Paths

Let us leave for the moment the question of the motives of this monstrous policy of blackening the name of the country, and let us ask ourselves whether it has any relation to the real facts. Truth, as Ruskin said, is polygonal. We shall not make any approach to it if we look at only from one aspect, and if we complicate the objective vision by refusing to see any thing that does not square with our preconceptions. We have had disappointments and we have had failures. Was there anyone so fatuous as to suppose last August that we should not have both? Was there ever a war in history in which the path to victory was a path strewn with flowers? We have but to recall the campaign of the two most successful generals this country has produced, the campaigns of Marlborough in Flanders and of Wellington in the Peninsula, to know how rugged is the way to goal, how full of checks and failures, how slow and halting the progress, how heavy the price of victory.

The Great Disillusion

It is well to recall these things, not as a means of putting our anxieties to sleep, but to correct that false and mischievous view of the position which is doing the cause of the Allies such immeasurable harm. We need the whole truth, and not selected truths if we are to get a just perspective of the field of action. No one will deny that we have been disillusioned too. We have but to recall the prophecies of "The Times" about the arrival of the "steam roller" at Berlin last October to understand the frame of mind of those days. We anticipated a much more decisive movement in the West than has taken place. We had hoped that diplomacy would have secured for us a set off in the Balkans against the intervention of the Turk on the German side. The attack on the Dardanelles has proved a vastly more serious enterprise than anything that had been foreseen. And whatever the truth about the failure of munitions, there can be no doubt that there was serious delay somewhere in understanding what was wanted and how to supply it. Finally the expectation of a speedy conclusion of the war has passed away. The people who used to look for the end of the war before last Christmas on the ground that the conditions of modern society could not survive the strain of a lengthy war, no longer venture on their cheerful vaticinations. We have come slowly, unwillingly, but without fear to the contemplation of a long war.

What We Have Done

But can this record of unfulfilled hopes be put in the balance against the failure of the whole German programme? We did not set out as the enemy did to accomplish an instant victory. The utmost that we were entitled to look for was that we should hold up the Germans until the greater numbers and resources of the Allied Powers could be developed and brought into play and that has been done and more than done. And in the interval this country has swept the enemy from the seas of the world, has fought in Flanders and France, in Africa (East and West) and in Mesopotamia, has borne the brunt of the great struggle for the Dardanelles, has made munitions for France and Russia, has defeated the war, and, over and above all this, has raised an army of three million men.

There is not a demand that has not

been met instantly and completely. Lord Kitchener asked for 500,000 men. They came so readily that a check had to be applied. He asked for 500,000 more and they came; for 500,000 more and still they came, and so on. The government asked for money, the whole nation rushed to it with its savings. It asked for men for the munition factories and the men enrolled themselves in such numbers that to-day only one-fifth of them can be employed.

The Slander of England

And yet we have all this magnificent record travestied and derided in the face of Europe. Russia and France are told by the Morning Post that they cannot be blamed if they make a separate peace because we have done nothing for them except to hold 30 miles of front, and here is a heading I take from a paper which has just reached me and which is published by the Germans to corrupt opinion on the Continent: "Germany Judged by the English"

"Doleful lament of the Times" concerning the unpreparedness of Great Britain for war. Germany seems to suffer no strain or economic exhaustion, says The Thunderer."

Its Motive

That motive is to use the agonies of this time to establish the Prussian military system in this country. It is not that voluntarism has failed. On the contrary, its success has astonished the world and no part of the world more than Russia. What could conscription have given us that free service has not given us? It could not have supplied another man or put another man in the field. And when it is suggested that the wrong men have been enlisted, we may ask how conscription would have prevented that? It has not prevented it in Germany or in France where men have had to be withdrawn in large numbers from the field to serve in the shops. Compulsion, in short, would have given us nothing that we have not had for the asking, but it would have robbed us of that spirit of free service which is the spirit of victory. Compulsion is against the grain of our people and those who scoff at freedom scoff at the essential principle for the defence of which we are fighting this war.

And that is the key to the whole mystery. It is not because compulsion would help us to win the war that we are being invited to split the country in twain by setting up compulsion where freedom has triumphed; it is because it is believed that compulsion is the weapon with which democracy can be kept in subjection. It is a device, not for overthrowing the idol of Prussianism, but for setting up that idol in this country. If that conspiracy against freedom were to succeed we might indeed despair of winning the war, for it would break the arm of England in breaking its solidarity and its spirit of willing service.

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WRONG SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Munich Man Says His Countrymen Taught Irrational Idea of Militarism

Oakland, Cal., Aug. 28.—That Germany was the victim of a wrong system of education, was the declaration made by John Mez, of Munich, Germany, at the closing session here last night of the national educational Association. "Internationalism," was the subject of his address. He said, in part:

"Those in my country, who made war, meant it for the world's gain. They did not mean to destroy. They are the victims of a wrong system of education. They have been taught nothing beyond an irrational conception of militarism."

Grateful to Peace Lovers

"Everyone who lives in the United States and hopes civilization and humanity should be grateful to the man who has kept America out of the war. Education and internationalism," he continued, "mean educating the old men first to change the idea that collective homicide is the proper thing."

First Duty Of Man.

"The first duty of a man is not to defend his country; but not to attack any other country."
"The most gratifying sight in the world is the spectacle of the college presidents of the country talking peace; for education is the one great agency which will wipe out the stupidity of militarism."

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