Is Germany Ready for Peace?

For two months, the greatest battle of history has continued in thrusts of varying intensity along the western front. The grand assault of Germany that was launched not to take towns or territory but to utterly destroy the British army, has been stopped and held after the most heroic sacrifices. What the striking power of that mighty force still is, no one can tell, but though it is undoubtedly tremendous there seems little doubt that its objective cannot be reached, that it must break down as an offensive weapon, and that the German people, long sustained by the promises of certain victory, must be disappointed. What will be the full effect of a realization of this position on the Central powers!

The German casualties in the prolonged offensive of the past two months were estimated recently at 500,000 men. Food is very scarce. It is said, that, just previous to the opening of the second attack in Flanders mail to the attacking army was held up for a week and then the trenches were flooded with letters of the most pitiful character describing the sufferings of those at home due to the British blockade. This may have maddened an army to attack. How will it affect the same army when defeated? The possibility of the Central powers securing any great amount of food from the utterly disorganized East seems highly improbable. Russia, Poland and the Ukraine are seething. There are many evidences that Austria is becoming seriously infected, and eruption seems imminent.

The so-called strikes in Germany early in February afforded ample evidence that the German people are not a unit behind their military rulers. According to Carl Ackerman, a very reliable writer of strong Allied sympathies, in the Saturday Evening Post, these strikes were really street parliaments designed to last three days, and to express the desire of the German workers for a demoératic peace without annexations or indemnities. They embraced all the principal cities of the German Empire, and over 500,000, or about 12½ per cent. of the German workers, according to German official figures, took part in them. The agitation even spread to the army, and it was then that General Ludendorf, by the severest measures, forced capitulation. But the demonstrations had a profound effect upon the government, and Ackerman states that German statesmen fear these may have been but the dress rehearsal for the revolution.

The consistent policy of President Wilson in attempting to drive a wedge between the German government and the German people appears to have been adopted also in England where Mr. Balfour, the British secretary of Foreign Affairs, has just said:—

"We are willing to listen to fair and honorable peace proposals." Recent exposures by Prince Lichnowsky, the former German Ambassador to London, of the duplicity of German diplomacy, at the commencement of the war, has not only strengthened the Allied Unity, but must have a serious effect in undermining German morale. What then will be the feeling of the German people when the full realization of a failure on the western front breaks upon them? The seriousness of that feeling is apt to express itself in a much stronger drive for peace than has been yet seen, and one which the Prussian military party will have difficulty in withstanding.

Killing Patronage

Purely political appointments in the civil service of Canada are to be abolished according to the provisions of an "Act respecting Civil Service in Canada," now before the federal parliament. It was thought to be a wonderful accomplishment when the inside Civil Service, employing some 5,000 people, most of whom were engaged at Ottawa, was placed under the authority of the Civil Service Commission. But according to this new act, an army of 35,000 employees belonging to the outside Civil Service, and scattered from one end of Canada to the other, is to be brought under the control of the same commission that directs the inside service.

This is the greatest revolution in the administration of the country's affairs that has occurred since this country was formed into a Dominion. For 50 years the old patronage system which enabled members of parliament in their own constituencies, or their political bosses, to dispense the public funds at their own pleasure, and to wield the "big stick" of party influence like autocrats, has held sway, and has done more to bedevil the political mind of Canada, and give the country a notorious reputation for bad government the world over, than any other institution in the land. To that pernicious system may be attributed many of the very difficult problems which confront the nation today, such as those affecting railway transportation, the relationship of Quebec with the other provinces, education, and the whole question of taxation and revenue. In brief, political patronage has been the running sore in the body politic of Canada, absolutely preventing any such thing as efficiency in the direction of national affairs. The remedying of this evil has been undertaken by the government in its recent act, but the real cure can only be provided by the people, who will set themselves with determination to approve of Civil Service Reform by their words and actions.

Quebec's Response

The increasing feeling of friendly warmth and kindness which is being manifested towards the people of Quebec by the people in the other provinces these days, is about the most encouraging and hopeful indication of national spirit which Canada has witnessed since Confederation. It has all arisen as the result of the reports from Quebec that the young men of that province are responding readily and even enthusiastically to the call of their country for service overseas. The following excerpt from Le Pays, one of the most influential of Quebec's newspapers, is typical of the changed attitude expressed by the French Canadian press towards the policy of the Dominion in the war:—

The hour of recriminations is passed. The country demands the sacrifice, and although we fought conscription the situation is changed. What we deplore the most, however, is the fact that our province is drifting on the rocks without a leader, without a compass, and without aspirations, while in this war the liberty of all civilized people and our own future is at stake. We believe that in spite of the errors of the past and the injustice we complain of, the Legislature of Quebec should assemble in secret session in order to ratify the appeal to arms which has just been made by the central authority at Ottawa, to the cry of Vive la France! Vive England!

The work of maintaining the morale of the food producer is an important factor in the task of supporting food production.

The western members of the House of Commons were a solid unit behind the act to abolish the patronage system, and thereby earns the warm commendation of The Globe, of Toronto, which touches the point in saying: "They are very closely in touch with the spirit and sentiment of the people."

THE SILENT WITNESS