



THE months through which we are now passing are critical for the fate of the British Empire. The war has lasted nearly two years and a half. There is no sign of an end. Our enemies have devastated Belgium and enslaved its people. They have overrun Poland and taken to themselves its vast resources in corn and food. The iron of Lorraine, the salt mines of Galicia, and the oil fields of Roumania are in their hands. They stand firmly entrenched on the western front from the sea to Switzerland. Their own coastline from Holland to Denmark has thus far proved impregnable.

As against this we have done much. German commerce is driven from the sea. The German colonies are conquered. France has placed in the field one-sixth of her population. England has raised an army of five million men. From overseas a steady stream of transports crowded with our troops moves towards the heart of the Empire. The whole of the neutral world is under contribution to our arms. Its factories are turned to arsenals. British wealth—that represented before the war some twenty billion dollars in its foreign investments—is being traded for the munitions of war.

In the moral sense the Allied peoples have done still more. Belgium's defiance of tyranny, the grim devotion of those whom we used to call the light-hearted people of France, and the cheerful gayety of the "stolid" English—the nation that will not retaliate, that still plays fair when murder and piracy are turned against it, that buries with military ceremony even the raiders who have slaughtered its children, that hurls its bombs in Flanders as a new form of cricket, and turns even its dangers and its heroism into a form of sport—these are the things that have called forth the admiration of the world.

As against this the German brow is dark with the shame of the torturer and the murderer. There are cries that echo to us from the wastes of the Atlantic, and that will echo still through centuries of time.

But we only deceive ourselves if we hide the fact that the fate of the war—and with it all that is best in the world—hangs in the balance.

What are we to do?

Our soldiers in the field have done, and are doing, all that heroism can inspire and all that endurance can fulfil. Are we doing our share at home? We go about our tranquil lives scarcely disturbed. Here and there, the swift dart of death, that strikes "somewhere in France," reaches, with its double point, somewhere in Canada, a mother's heart. We pause a moment in our sympathy, and pass on. To and fro we go about our business. We pay our easy taxes, and subscribe to our so-called patriotic loan, so issued that the hungriest money-lender in New York is glad to clamor for a share of it. We eat, drink, and are merry, or, at least, not sad, professing a new philosophy of life as our sympathies grow dull to the pain and suffering that we do not share.