

Possibilities of European Immigration After the War

By F. W. GRAY

A year or more ago there appeared in various Canadian newspapers a suggestion that Canadians should prepare for a renewal of the tide of European immigration which has been interrupted by the war. It was intimated that the cost of the war would result in such increase of taxation in European countries as would drive the peasantry and artisans to seek less onerous conditions of living and the greater political freedom of the United States and Canada. The preponderating movement of population forecasted was from Europe westward, or an accelerated continuation of that great migration which was a distinguishing characteristic of the Nineteenth Century, and out of which have arisen forces that are profoundly influencing current events. Is this forecast a correct one? There have been significant occurrences within the past few months which would indicate that it is not. The statement has been so often made that the present war is a conflict of two ideals, a conflict between autocracy and democracy, that the statement has become hackneyed and outworn, maybe, and as a writer in the October "Atlantic" states, "The original watchwords of the conflict are in danger of losing their potency as incentives after years of conflict"—but they are none the less true.

To-day we are justified in believing that the triumph of democracy is imminent, but few have realized how tremendous and world shaking are the events which will follow the actual consummation of the triumph. They may be such as even to eclipse the preliminary cataclysm and in countries such as compose the Teutonic League the birth-pangs of rule by the people through truly representative institutions may be as terrible as those which are at the present time agonizing the peoples of Russia. For, to quote again from the writer just mentioned, "When the end shall come, it will be in reality a great beginning."

That may well be, but nevertheless, nothing is more certain than the speedy replacement in Europe of all forms of autocracy and feudal survivals by representative parliamentary governments, accompanied or not—and this is really not important—by the forms of limited monarchy. While it may be hoped and prayed that Europe may be spared the extravagances and wickedness of Bolshevism, and the absurd ideas concerning property which this particular form of lunacy is attempting to propagate, it may be anticipated that the large estates of the Prussian and Magyar Junkers will be divided up amongst the peasantry, that conscription for military purposes will disappear in the consummation of a League of Nations, and that the vote will really mean something to those European peoples to whom as yet it has been nothing but a mocking of their legitimate aspirations.

All these things would seem to be the reasonable accompaniments of truly triumphant democracy, and if, and when they come to pass will not Europe be as good a country to live in as North America? And will not the main incentives to emigration from Europe have largely disappeared, at least so far as the undeveloped countries of South-Eastern Europe are concerned? This reasoning may not hold good in the case of Italy and some other countries where emigration has been forced by actual surplus population, and the lack of the basic minerals, in particular by the lack of coal, but for Russia and Siberia, for the Balkans, Poland, Hungary and Rumania, it will most certainly hold good.

There are many millions in North America who were born in the belligerent countries of Europe, and their homes, their relatives and friends have been involved in the wastage of war. For years some of these people have heard nothing of their own people, and curiosity alone,

not to mention stronger impulses will draw them to the land of their birth so soon as ocean travel on a normal scale becomes possible and permissible. The alien enemies among these present residents of North America have in most cases been enabled to earn large wages, but they have been precluded from sending to Europe the remittances that they were accustomed to send before the war. Enquiry from the large steamship companies will probably disclose the fact that steamer tickets have already been spoken for by thousands of natives of Europe now in North America who for one reason or another wish to revisit the scenes of their youth, or what remains of them. The money these people have is currency which has suffered no depreciation in value, nor is likely to, and it is evident that Europe, purged of its militaristic wrongs and restored to the rule of the people, with years of assured peace ahead, will offer many attractions to the returned emigrant with good money in his pocket.

The great wastage of life caused by the war must also exercise a deterrent effect on emigration from Europe, at least for a time, but probably this will be one of the least important of the factors in the long run.

Summarising the foregoing possibilities, does it not seem that there is a fair probability that the tide of migration may for a period set eastwards, from North America to Europe? That is to say so far as the countries are concerned with which we are to-day at war.

But when one comes to consider the question of British emigration, a different aspect is presented.

The war has unified and compacted the British Empire in a wonderful manner. The Australian has met, and in many cases married, his English cousin; the Canadian has visited and been joyfully received by his relatives in Scotland, maybe. The average Englishman whose foreign travel was limited to a Cook's tour to Switzerland has seen the Pyramids and travelled the Euphrates from the Persian Gulf to ancient Bagdad. No more can the present generation of the British be regarded as stay-at-homes, and the vision of the British people to-day in every place where the flag floats,—and they were never so many nor so scattered—is as wide and as keenly adventurous as it was in the heyday of the Elizabethan age. Many hundred of thousands of British young men, when demobilization takes place, will once again tread the familiar decks of a transport, her camouflage changed for peace-paint, bound for Canada, Australia, New Zealand, for augmented British Africa, and for the thousand and one places where our soldiers will resume the work of peace times. The complexities of the interchange of population which will take place between the British Isles and the rest of the Empire cannot be foreseen, or even guessed at, but there can be little doubt that here in Canada we shall receive an influx of British immigrants of large proportions.

If then there should occur simultaneously an efflux of the more distinctly "foreign" nationalities from Canada and the United States and an influx of British born, will it not radically, and permanently maybe, change the labor situation, and have far-reaching effects on rates of wages, hours of labor and labor politics generally? It would appear quite probable.

The effect on the mining industry will be very considerable. In the past the mining industry has depended very largely for labor supply on the newly arrived European immigrant, particularly for the more arduous and less highly paid occupations. This is probably more true of the great mining centres of the United States than it is of Canada, but we also were heading in the same direction before the war.