

The Philosopher

"WHAT GOD THINK THEY THAT THEY SERVE?"

In his proclamation to the German armies in the East last fall, the Kaiser said:

"Remember who you are. The Holy Spirit has descended on me, because I am the Emperor of the Germans. I am the instrument of the Most High in Heaven. I am His sword. Woe and death to those who do not believe in my mission. Let all enemies of the Germans perish. God demands their destruction, God through Me commands you to fulfil His will."

What God can the ruling powers and the obedient masses of the German Empire worship, when they disregard all the higher principles of humanity?

THE GREAT CHARTER OF DEMOCRACY

A little more than a fortnight ago, on June 13th, fell the seven hundredth anniversary of the signing of Magna Charta, upon which the entire fabric of constitutional government throughout the English-speaking world, as the embodiment of liberty under law, was made possible. Magna Charta is the foundation not only of the constitution of Great Britain and of Canada and the other overseas self-governing nations of the Empire, but of the constitution of the United States, as well, and of every individual State in the federal union which makes up the United States. Germany has not yet advanced to the stage of casting off absolutism, which was what was done at Runnymede on June 15, 1215, when King John was compelled to sign the Great Charter.

A PEOPLE CHERISHING THEIR CHAINS

Let us suppose the war ended, and the Allies, the triumphant vindicators of democracy, saying to the German people that they must do away with the militarism and absolutism, and must become self-governing. What will the German people do? The Philosopher has had a letter from an old friend, who is a German by birth, who writes that he finds it "impossible to conceive a Germany in which every man except the Emperor is not looking to somebody above him for orders." The German from whose letter these words are here quoted is opposed to everything that Germany stands for in this war. To quote further from his letter: "You speak of the Hohenzollern dynasty as half crazy. You might add that the Wittelsbach dynasty in Bavaria is wholly crazy. But the Germans, with rare exceptions like myself, who am no longer a German, accept and bow down to the absolute Hohenzollern overlordship, regarding it as an essential part of the established order of the universe, like the daily course of the sun across the sky. Speaking of Germany and the Germans as I knew them, I find it hard to believe otherwise than that neither a republic, like the United States nor France, or a limited, constitutional monarchy is possible in Germany." But the Germans will have to become capable of self-government, abandoning their militaristic ideals of government, their savage belief in their tribal Gott, their War Lord and their religion of force and blind obedience. They cannot turn back the tide of human progress.

A DECLARATION OF SWEDEN'S MIND

One of the most notable utterances from a neutral country since the beginning of the war is the declaration which a large number of Swedes of national prominence and importance, the men in Sweden who represent the best for which Sweden stands, have drawn up and signed their names to and had distributed throughout the United States, feeling it to be a duty they owe to humanity that they should thus place themselves on record to the sinking of the Lusitania and other savage atrocities perpetrated by the Germans on land and on sea. This Swedish declaration, which means that neutral opinion upon the German outrages is the same, irrespective of national boundaries, is as follows:

"The Swedish people are virtually unanimous in supporting the Government in its policy of strict neutrality, yet a large section of them, whether a majority or not we cannot say, are anything but neutral in their feelings over the methods of warfare adopted in this terrible war which culminated in the sinking of the steamer Lusitania. 'The misconception that war suspends all the laws of humanity must prove fatal to the future of civilization and disastrous to that human solidarity which is of such vital importance, particularly to the smaller nations of the world.'"

The signers of this declaration, like all other right-minded people in the world, are amazed at the revelation which the world has had of German savagery and of the German doctrine that whatever Germany does is right and whatever the enemies of Germany do is wrong. The Germans cannot understand how the minds of people who are not Germans work, and they appear actually to believe that the failure of people who are not Germans to think as the Germans do is due to their being wilfully blind through envy and hatred of Germany.

THE CENTENARY OF TROUSERS

One hundred years ago this month a man was mobbed in the streets of London because he had the audacity to appear in public in long trousers, which were then a novelty and indignantly denounced by the upholders of the established order in men's garments. In the same month of July, 1815, the Duke of Wellington discarded knee breeches and went to a Court ball wearing trousers, but was at first refused admission by the men on duty at the gates of Buckingham Palace, who did not recognize the great national hero who turned him away on the ground that he was not properly dressed. Their failure to recognize the great national hero who only the month before had vanquished Napoleon at Waterloo created an immense amount of talk, and Wellington's championing of the new garb for men's legs helped enormously to win the day for trousers against the knee breeches of the old regime. Like most other improvements and reforms, trousers had to make their way in the world against indignant denunciation and strong opposition.

IN REGARD TO BERRY PIES

Summer returns, and pies made of the different berries which bounteous Nature has provided for pie-making return in their due order with each succeeding summer. Pie made with imported strawberries the Philosopher has already enjoyed in moderation this summer; and he is looking forward to pies made with the native wild raspberries that grow in such incalculable abundance throughout the vast territory around the Great Lakes, westward to the prairies and northward many hundreds of miles. What thousands of tons of that delicious fruit go to waste every summer, so far as humanity is concerned, providing feasts only for the birds and the bears? But of all berry pies, there is none can compare with a gooseberry pie of the kind which the Philosopher knew in his youth, and so seldom encounters in these later years. The fond memories he cherishes of the authentic and delicious gooseberry pies of his youth—pies with whole yet tender and succulent gooseberries reposing on a bottom crust rapturously saturated with juice, and delicately covered above with crispy slabs, or cross-belts, of celestial pastry—rise up early every summer, long before gooseberries are ripe. That is why he is here discoursing of gooseberry pie. He is still hoping against hope that this year, perhaps, the fates will be kind and grant it to him a gooseberry pie such as he knew in his youth, not one in which the berries have been mashed into a stodge, and the flavor outraged and destroyed. The ancients had an expression, "worthy of the gods." Well, such a gooseberry pie as the Philosopher has now in mind would have been more than worthy to be served up at a grand banquet of the ancient Greek and Latin divinities on Mount Olympus.

THE STYLES IN WOMEN'S CLOTHES

The Philosopher has received a letter asking him to "condemn the feminine fashions of the time." But, speaking generally, the Philosopher cannot condemn them, because they are beautiful and graceful. On the whole, if he may be allowed to express an opinion, the prevailing styles in feminine attire must be commended, because they follow the lines of the figure and permit freedom of movement, and are, in fact, better than the preceding fashions for a good many years back. The fashions prevailing at present are better than the fashions preceding them during a succession of generations of humanity, for the reason that they have abolished the excrescence, the protuberance, the hump, which for fully a century (ever since the Directoire styles of the French revolution went out) was regarded as a necessary feature of women's dress. People now living and still active can remember several kinds of calculated monstrosity, of artificial protuberance, that have characterized feminine costumes. There was the crinoline, or hoop skirts, which made women look as though they had mushroomed out. Next came the bustle, which, with its eventual accompaniment of a tied-back skirt in front and the "Grecian bend," so called, was uglier than the hoop skirt. The bustle passed away in time, but the protuberance immediately reappeared in the great puffs of the sleeves at the shoulders, making women look as if they had balloons inside their sleeves. This fashion was not so ugly and deplorable as the bustle; it was more ridiculous and laughable. In due time the swollen sleeves began to wane, and observers wondered where the hump would appear next. Lo, it appeared at the hips. Next it came in front, in "the blouse effect." But at last, let us hope, the protuberance has been chased away altogether, for a long time. Those fluffy layers of skirts (if that is the right way to describe them) one above another, look like the old protuberance all gone to pieces.

EQUAL SUFFRAGE IN DENMARK

Through the adoption of a new constitutional provision the women of Denmark now vote on equal terms with the men. The new constitution abolishes not only sex discrimination in regard to the ballot, but also the previously existing special property rights. It was so recently as 1849 that Denmark passed from a despotism to a free constitution. It has now gone farther than any other European country in granting suffrage to women. Not only may they vote and be elected to office just like men, but the conditions are more liberal than in the other Scandinavian countries and in Finland, where there are varying degrees of woman suffrage. It is noteworthy that woman suffrage in Europe has not yet spread far from the shores of the Baltic. But in all the European countries the claim of votes for women has been voiced. That issue, along with so many others, has been swept aside by the supreme issue in all the countries involved in the war, but in all those lands the women are proving their political and economic value in so many ways that the suffrage issue is bound to come forward again once the great conflict is ended.

AS TO NEW PUBLIC SCHEMES AND PROJECTS

In reading over recently the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, the Philosopher noted many shrewdly wise reflections of that great and remarkable man, who originated so many useful things that he deserves to be called the Edison of the eighteenth century. One proof of his knowledge of human nature is that he never at first proposed any of his reforms or new projects of public betterment as originating with himself alone, but always as the joint recommendations or suggestions of a number of a few friends. "In any public scheme or project," wrote Franklin, "it is advisable that proposer or projector should not at first present himself to the public as the sole mover in the affair. His neighbors will not like his egotism, if he be at all ambitious, nor will they willingly co-operate in anything that may place an equal single step above their heads." While there is undoubtedly a great measure of truth in these words of Franklin's, do they not, perhaps, lay too much stress on an unworthy aspect of human nature, and not enough upon that common sense, as we call it, which is a necessary safeguard against the impractical schemes of visionaries as well as the projects of self-seekers?

THE PROBLEM OF THE GERMAN IN THE STATES

The great problem of the United States, as of our own country, has been to absorb and assimilate immigrants of different racial origins, so that they will think and feel like natives of the new lands in which they have made new homes for themselves and their families—in a word, that they will in spirit and in actual truth what they declare themselves willing and anxious to be when they take the oath of allegiance. The people of the United States have had a startling awakening in regard to a very large proportion of the people of German origin in their midst who had become naturalized American citizens. They were believed to be Americans in heart and mind, but they have shown themselves to be Germans in America for German purposes. The United States has in the past been credited with an amazing and unprecedented success in absorbing and assimilating immigration from many lands across the sea; but it is plain now that with the German immigration there has not been such a success, not through any fault of the United States, but because the German does not recognize any country but Germany. There are great numbers of Germans in the United States who owe allegiance to that country, but who take their orders from Berlin, and whose dominating motive is to serve the purposes of the Hohenzollern autocracy, regardless of any duty they owe to the United States. In a word, they are Germans, like the millions in Germany whose sole allegiance is to the Kaiser, and to nobody and nothing else in heaven or on earth. The Americans have millions among them who always seemed to them to be good citizens; and now they discover that these Germans approve with a fanatic zeal of anything and everything that Germany does, and would in a moment sacrifice the United States and the whole world to the Hohenzollern-ridden German system of militarism. It is as if they were Mohammedans in a Christian country suddenly proclaiming their faith when a holy war is proclaimed by the head of Islam. This problem in the United States is one which we have, in a greatly less measure and degree, in Canada. The right-thinking people in both countries have to give it serious thought.