

# CONSIDER THE WHOLE CASE

A VALUED but despondent correspondent thinks that the optimistic tone maintained in this column must place somewhat of a strain upon the writer. Observe, he says, the progress of the war week by week, and the minute gains that are credited to the Allied armies. Is there any reason, he asks, why the struggle should not continue until either France or England is compelled to succumb? Can we suppose that the end is anywhere in sight?

It has not been my intention to be either optimistic or pessimistic. Optimism and pessimism, as those terms are colloquially used, imply a biased interpretation of events according to one's predilections or hopes. Now my interpretation of events may have been biased. Errare humanum est. But it has not been consciously biased. My aim has been to apply the test of commonsense to the happenings in the field of war and to indicate their tendencies and their probable destination. I venture to think that if the correspondent in question had tried to acquire something more than what may be called a "newspaper headline" vision of the war, if he had actually visualized its operations instead of glancing vaguely at the nebulous mental pictures with which most people are content, he might find that he also had acquired the view that he calls optimistic. And to this end he might rid himself of a certain gloomy and unreasoning conviction that German military power is invincible and that to resist it is merely to struggle against a malign fate. It is a conviction that has already been referred to in this column as the "German myth." It is a sort of hypnotic suggestion that Germans themselves have imposed upon the credulous by a simple combination of repetition and noise.

Personally I have always been of the conviction, still unshaken, that the Germans had already lost the war when they invaded France through Belgium. Theirs was already a beaten army before they had crossed the Meuse, and they knew it. They invaded Belgium, not because it was the easiest way into France—it is obviously the most difficult—but because they expected that the French armies would hurry north to meet them, and would then find themselves trapped between the German armies in Belgium and the other German armies that would be poured over the frontiers to their rear. It was an expectation that was falsified by Joffre's determination not to walk into the snare. The Germans had lost the initiative when they finally left Belgium and began their march southward. They were not advancing upon Paris, as a glance at the map of their advance would conclusively show. They were not then thinking of Paris. Nor was it a triumphant "drive." They were following the French army, and they had to go wherever they were led. They were led to the Marne, and there they were soundly beaten. They have never recovered the initiative that they then lost. They were pinned to their lines for nearly three years while the Allies were acquiring the necessary strength to drive them out. They have now been driven out from a large part of those lines and they are still being driven. Indeed at the moment of writing we are told that the German lines throughout Belgium are "crumbling," as indeed they are. My correspondent is guilty of a confusion of thought. Because the Germans have not yet been fully driven out of France and Belgium he assumes that they will presently be able still further to invade those countries—a glaring non sequitur. The German invasion has obviously failed to achieve its aim, and it is equally obvious that its aim is still receding. In what way this can be supposed to presage a German victory it is not easy to see.

The right way to estimate the status of the war is to place ourselves in the position, not of the Allied commanders, but of the German commanders, seeing that they were the invaders and the aggressors, and therefore it is their aims that we have to consider. Do they suppose that those aims are still attainable? It is not conceivable that they suppose any such thing, at least so far as the western field is concerned. For many months past they have

**C**ORYN answers a correspondent who gets pessimistic about the war. In so doing he reviews the whole progress of the war as tersely as only a man can who has been following the game from the start. As a focussed, summed-up statement of the whole case against Germany the article should be of some use to both optimists and pessimists in Canada—if there are any pessimists, after 50 years of United Canada.

By **SIDNEY CORYN**  
Written Especially for the Canadian Courier

been meeting an almost uninterrupted series of reverses. They were compelled to abandon a line of the strongest fortifications that were ever constructed, and to fall back upon another line that was much less advantageous. They are now preparing to repeat the same procedure and will do so within a few days. This second line has been so hacked and dented that it was saved only by a dangerous weakening of the eastern field. When the British transferred their attack to the vicinity of Ypres they instantly won a striking victory and overwhelmed the Messines lines, although these lines belonged to the old system and were as strong as human skill could make them. Since then the British have won other and smaller successes in the same area, and as a result of this continuous hammering we are told that the German lines are crumbling. Even if this is an exaggeration, we still have the German official reports admitting the reverse that has befallen their arms, and announcing a retirement to "other positions in the rear." If the Germans still believe that they can win—and of course they believe nothing of the sort—we may ask by what new departures or expedients they believe that this end can be attained. They cannot strengthen their armies, seeing that they have no reserves, and that they can bring no more men from the eastern field. They are enormously outnumbered and out-gunned. They can make no move that has not been foreseen and guarded against. The fortunes and accidents of war are, of course, incalculable, and chance may always give an opportunity that is denied to skill and strategy, but without the interposition of chance it is hard to see any means whatsoever by which the Germans can retrieve their losses or turn the tide of war. The only hope that Germany can now entertain intelligently is to produce some sort of a deadlock from which she may snatch a peace agreement that shall not be too clearly labelled as a defeat. And that is why she holds so desperately to her western lines in spite of the conviction that to advance is almost beyond the bounds of possibility. But even the chances of a deadlock are waning day by day.

**T**HE probabilities of an advance from Saloniki against the Bulgarians are measurably strengthened by the concurrent bulletins to the effect that King Constantine of Greece has been deposed, and that French reinforcements have been sent to the army of General Sarrail. We know also that Italians have been arriving in large numbers, and that the Allied battle line is now continuous from the Adriatic Sea eastward. It is hard to understand why so much patience has been shown to a King who not only openly defied his treaty obligations to Serbia, but who was hardly at any pains to conceal his pro-German sympathies. The situation in Greece was doubtless a delicate one. The King was once something of a national hero, and there may have been much uncertainty as to the extent of his popularity, and as to the measure of resentment that would follow his deposition. It was obviously difficult for the Allied armies to advance northward so long as a hostile king was lurking in the rear, and eager to give the stab in the back that would be fatal to an

offensive. But inopportune action might have created a still more difficult situation by an irritation of the national spirit and an affront to the national pride. But this danger seems to have been avoided, if we can trust the bulletins that describe Athens as being unaffected by the change, and hospitable to a young monarch who will of course submit to the direction of Venizelos who seems now to command the popular loyalty that the King has forfeited. That the Saloniki army would be allowed permanently to rust was unthinkable, nor can we attribute its inactivity wholly to the uncertainties of Greek politics. The story in its entirety has yet to be told, but no doubt this force is now about to take the field, nor must we forget that its functions are of an unsurpassed importance. However spectacular may be the events in other parts of the continent it is well to insist upon the fact that Serbia is now and always the gauge of the war, and that the war will have been fought in vain if one inch of Serbian territory is allowed to remain under the political domination of the Central Powers. In this connection we may note the reiterated insistence of Austria that Serbian independence must not be resumed, and although Austria is not in a position to insist upon anything we may still note her demands as an indication of ambitions that at any and every cost must be frustrated.

## Appreciated by a Political Foe

**A**LTHOUGH known to have been a political opponent of Sir John A. Macdonald, says one who with his father had a long experience in opposing the chief father of confederation, I have been asked as one who had pleasant personal associations with him to give a brief appreciation of his fascinating personality. Such appreciation must be somewhat qualified in my case though time has mellowed the ferocity of opposition—for it was mostly opposition—of boyhood years. I can still recall the feelings of those who were engaged in wrestling with his elusive ingenuity, the forces of whose magic we were then wont to attribute to no very angelic source. I believe that Sir John A. has left us a legacy of evil in the means which he adopted to attain his ends, which heritage both parties have in turn made their own. If they had only with an equal will but cherished his broad outlook and gift of wise diplomacy our confidence in Canada's future would be more assured. Sir John A. was certainly not lacking in courage or audacity. His reliance on that courage and the charm of personality was justified by success so far as success can be a sufficient justification.

I remember after the Gerrymander Act how, smarting under what we felt to be an injustice, several young Liberals, of whom I was one, ventured to heckle Sir John at a meeting in North Toronto. Our only satisfaction was a cheerful smile and a wave in our direction and then the pronouncement: "I said I would hive the Grits and I have hived them." There was no argument, explanation, no propitiation, no room for comment or dispute in this and the cheers of the meeting served to dampen our youthful exuberance. I regret to have to confess that after he had left the platform the meeting broke up in disorder and I am afraid I must plead guilty to having been a violent participant in a row which was no doubt quite unjustifiable.

What keeps Sir John A.'s memory green is the recollection of his broad patriotic outlook. He saw Canada as a whole and sought to weld her into a consistent unit. He drove with consummate skill in double harness or in tandem such discordant quadrupeds as the Orange Lodge and the Catholic Hierarchy. His sense for what was expedient and his genius for compromise, coupled with his human sympathy and magnetism—for even his faults appeared to endear him to the people—enabled him to attain his ends without obscuring, or at any rate obliterating, the main public purpose of his career, which was the creation and upbuilding of a Canadian National Life.