

Social Reformers and the War

By THE MONOCLE MAN

I NOTICE a tendency in some thoughtful quarters to regard the creation of a Coalition Ministry in Britain as a "black eye" for social reform. For the life of me, I cannot see it. No one is more interested in social reform than I am. That is why I am so great an admirer of Lloyd George. But I cannot see that our cause has suffered through the strengthening of a Government whose sole business for the time is to "beat the Boches." Nor can I follow the mental processes which make a wide distinction between social reform policies and national defence policies. To me, they are one and the same thing. When I talk of national defence, I mean the defence of the nation as a comfortable and happy place for the people of the nation to dwell in; and when I talk of social reform, I mean precisely the same thing—that is, the making and maintenance of the nation as a comfortable and happy place for the people of the nation to dwell in.

OF course, in this day of specialization and division of labour, we do not expect one man to take on both tasks—or even all varieties of either task. A statesman who specializes in social reform will probably not know as much about the foreign situation as his colleague who makes a business of international politics. We can sub-divide it further. A financial social reformer, like Lloyd George, will not know as much about educational reform as Macnamara, or of labour reform as Arthur Henderson. A diplomatic expert like Sir Edward Grey will not know as much about the army as Lord Kitchener, or vice versa. But they all have the same ends in view—the highest condition of happiness for the British people.

THIS is in time of peace. When the overwhelming calamity of war comes, the social reform expert is like a householder, who should be "a dab" at plumbing, let us say. Imagine him fixing up a leak in the bath-room when they come rushing in with the startling news that the house is on fire. He has been patching up the plumbing with a view to making his family healthier, happier and safer. But now the house is a-fire; and the whole structure, plumbing and all, may be destroyed in an hour. So he drops his plumbing tools and makes a race for a bucket of water. We should judge him insane if he insisted on going ahead with his plumbing job, regardless of the fact that the house was burning. We do not accuse him of belittling the value of good plumbing because he temporarily abandons his effort to mend the leak. He will be back on the plumbing job when the fire is out. But plumbing is, after all, only a means to an end—the happiness and comfort

of the household. And that end can now best be served by fighting the fire.

SO when war comes—when an outside nation proposes to over-run and destroy the free institutions of our nation—the first duty of every patriot is to win the war. The position is something like this: The free institutions of Britain are instruments by which the people of Britain can better their material and social condition. If those free institutions did not exist, the people of Britain could do nothing for themselves. The first great and resounding victories of the reform elements throughout British history were precisely the establishment by great effort of these free institutions, such as a broad franchise, a dominant House of Commons, responsible government, the ballot, etc. In winning these victories, the reformers were not really bettering the condition of the people, but were only putting weapons in the hands of the people with which they could win their own betterment. You cannot eat the ballot; but you can use the ballot to make bread easier to get. So the existence of these free institutions is a necessary antecedent condition to all social reform.

VERY well. Along comes an enemy which proposes to over-run and destroy the free institutions of our nation. Obviously, to rally at once to the defence of the free institutions which alone make his reform work possible. A German victory would mean the substitution of German institutions for British institutions, not only in Britain, but throughout the world. They would be the institutions which had proven themselves the fittest to survive. If the German army could have accomplished the ambitions of the Kaiser, we must have all had German armies. If a free Commons could not make head against a close-corporation German Government, we must have fallen back to the times of the Tudors and gone in for a close-corporation Government. Liberty can only survive so long as it is prepared to defend itself against despotism. When despotism challenges liberty, every lover of liberty must be too proud NOT to fight.

IT is quite true that the work of social reform in Britain is temporarily suspended. The work of the plumbing-householder is temporarily suspended on the outbreak of fire. But is the social reformer to take holiday? Certainly not. He is to fight the fire. And that is precisely what Lloyd George and his fellow social reformers have been doing. If, moreover, it looks as if a Coalition Government could fight the fire more effectively, then it becomes the duty of the social reformer to wel-

come and join such a Government. The more effectively the fire is fought, the sooner will it be out; and the sooner will the social reformer get back to the tasks which mean further progress and not merely defence of progress already made. So we may say that the formation of a strong Government in Britain actually brings social reform nearer to the British people.

THIS war will, I hope, teach my fellow reformers one needed lesson; and that is that they must never again anticipate the actual arrival of the Millennium. They must be ready to accept the judgment of their colleagues in the public service who specialize on international relations, as to the state of those relations. If their foreign policy colleagues declare that the nation needs certain armaments to make sure of its defence against reactionary enemies, the social reformers ought to rely on this judgment precisely as they rely on other expert opinion. They ought never again to permit themselves to be regarded by the nation as not quite sound on foreign policy questions. I do not ask them to accept the "say so" of men whom they suspect of using foreign policy excitements to draw a herring across the scent of social reform. But I do ask that they accept the verdict of their own friends who have given their lives or even much of their attention to foreign relations; such men as Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Asquith. They cannot all hope to be as alert as Lloyd George, who waked up in time to make the big speech over Agadir—or as Clemenceau, who supported the three-year law in France—so they must trust to trusted experts.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

Those Alien Enemies

A MONTREAL subscriber recently asked the editor a question—"Why should any German, Austrian or Turk make a dollar out of Canadians while the best blood of Canada is being spilt for the Empire?" A reply was published week before last. The following letter is a further communication on the subject:

Montreal, May 28th, 1915.

Editor Courier:

Sir,—Alien enemies in internment camps must be clothed and fed and the twenty-five cents per day that the Government pays them can hardly be called made money. The official report on Kueperle, the spy, showed that innocent looking business letters contained valuable information locating British ships. Other information shows that bonds and stocks of German institutions were loaded to the extent of five hundred million pounds sterling on British investors, who thereby enabled the enemy to finance to that extent. Petty persecution of helpless enemies has always been contrary to British tradition, but allowing enemies to fatten and prosper and remit to Germany a portion of the proceeds made under a flag that their nation is doing everything it can to destroy is another and very different thing, and even England herself is waking up at last to the folly of it.

I quite agree that neither German, Austrian nor Turkish goods should be handled by any merchant in Canada during this war.

Yours truly,

SAM J. MATHEWSON.

FIRST PHOTOGRAPH OF AUSTRALIANS LANDING AT DARDANELLES



The great feat performed by the Allies in landing three divisions at different points in the Dardanelles is one of the best incidents of the war. There were no docks and there was a heavy fire from the enemy on the cliffs. The Australian division had better luck than the British division and smaller losses. Since then the Australians and New Zealanders have had much heavy fighting with tremendous losses, but they have won a reputation equal to that of the Canadian division in Flanders. Photograph by Underwood & Underwood.