

# PSYCHOLOGICALLY SPEAKING.

GENERAL VON HINDENBURG committed a military indiscretion, perhaps born of necessity, when he reported to the Emperor that the British offensive had definitely ended in failure. The Emperor committed a similar indiscretion when he repeated that assurance in his manifesto to the German people. For both the General and the Emperor must have known that the British offensive had neither ended nor failed. It had not failed in as much as it had inflicted staggering losses both in territory and in men upon the German defences. It had not ended because the artillery action that presaged a new attack had already begun. That the General should say such a thing and that the Emperor should repeat it to the nation is but another evidence of the desperate need of the German people for consolation, the desperate need of their rulers to find some new plea for patience and endurance.

That the British offensive had by no means ended is now shown by the vigorous attack that has been directed against the German salient that lies immediately to the south-east of Ypres. It was an attack carried out over a front of ten miles, and the meagre reports that have come to hand at the moment of writing show that the Messines ridge has been carried, and that the villages of Messines, Lenfer and Zereiba have fallen into British hands. The preceding artillery attack was of enormous violence, the number of guns employed being twenty per cent. in excess of those used in the battle of Arras. We hear, also, of a mine of one million pounds of high explosive which spread dismay among the German ranks, and that such a mine should have been laid is significant of long preparation and premeditation.

The preparation was also of a strategic kind, as is evident from a glance at the succession of events. The last British attack that ended about a month ago was directed against the Wotan line, which lies about fifteen miles to the south of the present battle line and which connects Drocourt with Queant. This particular attack was distinguished by the fight for Bullecourt, which was eventually wrested from the Germans and firmly held. Indeed, the situation on this line became so threatening for the Germans that enormous reinforcements were brought from Russia and the masses of the German reserves were thrown into the fight and swallowed up for ever in the vortex. Then came a lull, partly due to the German resistance, and partly to the Italian offensive which was intended to lessen the pressure in France. It was this lull that von Hindenburg hailed as a German victory, and that he pronounced to be the end of the British offensive.

IN due time the Italian offensive died away, as all offensives die away eventually. And for this very reason it was evident that the British offensive would now be resumed in order that the fighting might be continuous. But it by no means followed that it would be resumed where it had left off. Indeed, the presumption was that some other area would be chosen. The initiative is with the British and not with the Germans, and since the British had the initiative it was for them to determine where the attack would be renewed. No one knew this better than the Germans themselves, and so we read of their anxiety and nervousness as the artillery fire shifted from point to point, and the strain of expectation was intensified. The immediate defences of the Wotan line around Bullecourt had been so hammered by artillery and infantry, the danger there had become so pressing, and consequently the defence so strong, that it was the part of wisdom to choose some new point for assault that should be more vulnerable, and that should permit the same game to be played over again. For we must remember that this is not the time when some definite territorial gain is the only end in view. Territorial gains are, of course, essential, but the immediate object of the British fighting is—to fight, and to compel the Germans to fight. Fighting means attrition. It means that the Germans are compelled to

*IT'S the road to Bagdad that the Germans want to get. They can't win in the West. All they can do is to produce a deadlock which they hope will scare the Allies into a patched up peace, leaving Germany in control of Serbia over which the war started. Give them their way in the Balkans and their road is open to the Suez, to Egypt, India and the world at large. The Allies will not bite on this hook. The British have the present initiative.*

By SIDNEY CORYN

Written Especially for the Canadian Courier

counter-attack in order to regain every foot of ground lost. They cannot afford to lose any ground at all. The "last ditch" is too perilously close to their rear. And the counter attacks are terribly expensive, and Germany has no men to spare, nor reserves to take the places of those that are lost.

THE attack to the east of Ypres was probably expected by the Germans, but they were not sure. They certainly did not expect that it would come at three o'clock in the morning, or that it would be preceded by the explosion of so tremendous a mine. They were certainly perplexed by the powerful attack upon Lens that had come three days earlier and that was probably intended for this very purpose, and as a feint that would cause uncertainty in the movements of the defending forces. At this moment it is impossible to ascertain the actual extent of the British success, but it is evident from the position of the captured villages that the German salient has been flattened out, and it is by no means unlikely that we may hear of a success still more striking. It need hardly be said that the Germans will counter-attack in great force, but it is significant that the counter-attack should be delayed for so long. The delay means that the new British positions will be strongly consolidated, and that counter-attacks, even if successful, will be immensely costly to the attackers, which is precisely the British plan. But no doubt we shall be told once more in flamboyant

THAT "STRATEGIC" WITHDRAWAL.



Hindenburg: "I positively refuse to stop in that house another moment!"

—From London Opinion.

German bulletins that the attempt to pierce the line has entirely failed.

WE may now make some reasonable attempt to penetrate the German psychology, and to ask ourselves how the situation appears to the German military mind. The German military pronouncements we may dismiss with some contempt as representing no more than an effort to appease the growing suspicions at home, and to postpone the evil day when the facts shall pierce the crust of German credulity. We need have no doubt that the German high command is in despair, and that it has no other thought than to buttress the peace plea that it is certainly now preparing to make. The submarine campaign it knows to be a failure, because it is well aware of the actual figures of losses and escapes. On land it has an almost unbroken succession of reverses. They may not be very large reverses, but they certainly do not point to an ultimate German victory. The American rationing of neutral countries will render the food situation still more grievous, since there will be no more exports from Sweden, Holland, Norway and Denmark. They will have nothing to export. What hope, then, can there be in the inner recesses of the German mind that knows the situation as it actually is and in all its gloom?

Undoubtedly the Germans intend to make a peace proposal on the ground that they cannot be expelled from France and Belgium, and that even though they cannot advance it is within their power to stay where they are indefinitely. They will also allow it to be understood that they will devastate the whole of the country to their rear and that they will lay waste the rich cities of France and Belgium just as they laid waste the hamlets and villages on their retreat from Noyon. They hoped that they would be able to produce a deadlock that would be apparent to all before the approach of winter, and that this deadlock would give validity to their claims. They still hope to produce that deadlock, and so to create a feeling of hopelessness on the part of the Allies that shall dispose them to "listen to reason." They know well that a German victory is inconceivable, but they still hope to snatch something that shall pass for a victory and that shall permit them to maintain a right of way through Serbia and therefore an open road through Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf and to Egypt and to India.

However spectacular may be the events in other fields of war, we may still usefully remember that the Balkans in general and Serbia in particular are actually the centre of the maelstrom that has engulfed the world, and that the disposition of the Balkans is the gage for which the world is fighting. Serbia may be said to lie in the exact middle of the road that leads to Asia Minor, to Egypt, and to India, and therefore to world domination. The subjugation of Serbia has in a very real sense been the keynote of Teuton diplomacy ever since the inception of the Bagdad Railroad first aroused German ambitions to Asiatic empire as well as European.

SERBIA was the one weak link in that railroad chain that was to carry the armies of Germany almost without a change of train from Hamburg and Berlin to the shores of the Persian Gulf. Perhaps other nations would have emphasized the commercial rather than the military capacities of that railroad, but Germany never made any concealment of her aggressive aims. The Bagdad Railroad was to be her path to world conquest, and because that railroad was strategic rather than commercial it was necessary that German influence should be paramount over every foot of territory that it was to traverse in conjunction with the international railroad with which it connected at Constantinople. Turkey had become the warm friend of Germany, and Bulgaria might be relied upon to sustain her aims. Serbia alone stood in the way, and Serbia was irreconcilable and must therefore be crushed.

It was for this reason that Austria broke up the  
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