

## CAN GERMANY BE BEATEN?

*(From THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW for September, 1914)*

What basis of reason is there in the common assumption that this will be a short war? It is inconceivable that Germany shall triumph, and it is no less incredible that she will hasten her own discomfiture. Never before in the history of the world has a nation so fully equipped technically and so strong in ultimate resource engaged in a struggle for existence. The reverses reported to date are slight at best, and in their sobering effect are probably working to advantage among the German people. Once let them realize to the full that their fight is less for the throne than for the Fatherland and their homes and families, and no limit can be placed upon their capacity for courage, endurance, and sacrifice. Our own revolutionists, the Boers, and the Belgians have left no room for doubt that one patriot defending his country is the equal of three members of an attacking force. Surely the Emperor and his advisers need no information on this score, and to anticipate that they will not shape a policy to put their antagonists in the light of aggressors is to question their intelligence. Hence we regard the heralded prospective great and decisive battle as a mirage. It may not take place in a year or in three years. Since meeting with unexpected resistance in Belgium the German army seemingly has settled down to cautious but insistent and scientific campaigning and, according even to prejudiced reports, is slowly but surely forcing its way forward in pursuance of a well-designed plan which contemplates protracted conflict. The French and Russian forces are proceeding along the same lines, and the British navy can do only patrol work till the Kaiser gives the word for battle. Even though the present total cost of the war does exceed twenty millions a day, there exists no certainty and, to our mind, little probability, that it will not continue for many months.

TEN months have elapsed since these words were written, and the situation is substantially unchanged. Millions of

lives have been sacrificed and billions of money have been squandered, but no invading foe has placed foot upon German soil, and no reversal at arms has served to temper the German spirit. The anticipated disaffection of Socialists and peace-seekers has failed to materialize. The mighty military machine seems only to have hardened into a yet greater efficiency. Prussia still dominates the empire, and the certainty of quick triumph which at first possessed the minds of her people has been supplanted by a determination never to be beaten which is even more formidable. There is no lack of money or munitions of war; new submarines are being built in greater numbers and more rapidly than by the Allies; despite pretenses to the contrary for political effect, food is plentiful and exceptional harvests seem assured; briefly, the possibility of conquering Germany is more remote to-day than it was at the beginning of the war. To feign the contrary is to ignore the facts.

The bitter truth is that in all large essentials the hopes of the Allies have been dissipated one after another. France was to occupy her lost provinces forthwith; she is still fighting defensively upon her own soil. Unprepared Britain was to raise and train an immense army for service in Flanders. Time was "fighting for the Allies." The real war was to begin in May. In point of fact, it began earlier at Neuve Chapelle, where apparent victory was made appallingly disastrous by incompetent British generalship, and June finds Germany a steady gainer in the past six weeks.

At last—and in this there may lie a gleam of hope—England is beginning to realize that she cannot reasonably expect to "muddle through." Hateful conscription seems to have become an inevitable necessity. The lower classes are far from enthusiastic; thousands are reconciled to the betterment of their hard lot through the war-time increases in wages; workmen are either scarce or unwilling to perform their part. The Government is trying to hold itself up by its boot-straps.

"Though I admire the ability of both Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George," said Lord Derby, bluntly, "I almost wish they had taken a different line and had been not quite so optimistic as they were. Mr. Asquith's speech gave one the impression that, so far as munitions of war were concerned, all was well. I say emphatically that all is not well, and the best commentary on the Prime Minister's speech is that when he visited the Elswick works of Messrs. Armstrong, Whitworth, & Company next day it is reported that he went through

the shops fitted with machinery ready to turn out munitions of war, but that those shops were standing idle because there were not men available in sufficient numbers to work them."

To Lloyd George's assurance that little further anxiety need be felt regarding high explosives, the *Spectator* says, warningly:

Probably he meant to use this expression in its strict and narrow sense, but it has been taken to refer to artillery ammunition generally. The result is that people have been asking why the Government at one and the same time ask for a tremendous effort and use optimistic terms such as those employed by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We have ourselves no doubt that the true position is that a much greater and much more sustained effort is required than that we have yet made, and that if we do not organize ourselves for that effort we may at any moment find ourselves in deadly peril.

"Ministers may say what they please," curtly adds the military correspondent of the *Times*, "but the offensive of our army in France has been hampered for want of artillery ammunition in the sense that continuous operations have not been practicable until now, and there is not a man in the army who is not aware of the fact. So far as we are concerned, the main issues of the war will be fought out in the principal theater where our main armies now stand. The more troops we have in this principal theater, the longer the line that our troops can hold, and the larger the number of French troops that we shall free for an offensive elsewhere. It is altogether a fallacy to suppose that the French do not need, and will not welcome, every man that we can send. The period of great and decisive operations in the principal theater is close at hand. It finds us with six other campaigns on our hands, all needing men and ammunition. Some reputations may suffer when we are able to examine the conduct of this campaign by the Cabinet, but reputations will suffer most if our armies in the principal theater prove unequal to their mission, and if it is proved that, after fully satisfying all the claims of home defense, we are withholding from Sir John French armies which might be sent to him. There is scarcely a man in our armies in France who does not ask daily when the new armies are coming out, and there is no one who is able to give a satisfactory reply. England is literally crammed with troops at the moment when decisive operations in the Western theater are imminent, and if our operations are not successful the blame will lie with the Cabinet and nowhere else." In other words, Time fought not for the

Allies, but for Germany, which availed herself of the opportunity afforded by the passing of six months of comparative inaction.

Where the great British fleet is or what it is doing except to bury itself in barnacles nobody knows. It is now generally conceded that adequate preparation for the futile attack upon the forts of the Dardanelles had not been made and the ships lost were sacrificed to no purpose. The deadly German wasps circumnavigate the British Isles without let or hindrance. Already ninety-one merchantmen and trawlers have been sent to the bottom, and, despite official warnings from the German Government, there could not be or at any rate there was not spared from the great number of warships a single convoy for the doomed *Lusitania*. Is it to be wondered at that the *Westliche Post* should declare that "never before has the futility of the British navy been exposed so pitifully," and that Dr. Eugene Kuhnemann, one of our "Exchange German Professors," should add, exultingly, that "the torpedoing of the *Lusitania* proves two things: First, that Germany is determined and has the power to crush any nation that tries to starve her out; second, that the prestige of the English navy is gone for ever"?

England owes the long continuance of her pre-eminence as a world Power to a proficiency in diplomacy which is without parallel in history. "From early times down to the present day," in the oddly naïve words of the *Times*, she "has constantly proclaimed and taken as the basis of her foreign policy the political dogma of the balance of power, and she has always succeeded ultimately in attaining her object by forming coalitions of the various States whose independence was threatened by the ambitious aggressor." It was in pursuance of this far-seeing scheme of self-protection that King Edward effected the *entente cordiale* with France and subsequently, as a natural sequence, established a basis of understanding, so far as Germany was concerned, with the formerly distrusted Romanoffs. The prudence of this arrangement was manifested immediately upon Germany's invasion of Belgium, when it became evident, again quoting the *Times*, that "never was the necessity of such a defensive coalition more necessary than at the present moment, when a German Napoleon has appeared on the stage, clad in shining armor, brandishing his mailed fist, and claiming for himself, as by right divine, the trident which has been so long in the hand of Britannia." Whether or not England would have felt constrained to enter the conflict but for this anchor

to windward, there can be no question that her statesmen anticipated immeasurable benefits from the diversion of German troops by Russia. Whenever doubts arose respecting the progress of the Western campaign there remained satisfactory contemplation of the onrush of hordes from the colossus of the North, and for a time the hopeful expectation seemed likely to be realized. One by one the Austrian armies were overwhelmed, and the climax came with the fall of Przemsyl, compared with which, remarked the *Times* with obvious relief, "no event since the battle of the Marne has caused so much and universal rejoicing in this country, because it was seen that Russia's pathway in Galicia was cleared at last and that with the coming of spring her victorious armies would be enabled to move onward." But gradually "it was understood, at first somewhat vaguely, that in many respects Russia was unprepared and that she was suffering from a shortage of munitions of war hardly less serious than our own," and that consequently her progress "must inevitably be slow." The fact is that the coming of spring marked a sudden revivification of the Austrian army, sharp and successful drives by the Germans in Poland, and general defeat of the Russians, accompanied by great losses of men, at all points. That a full year will be required to equip the army of the Czar with supplies essential to substantial advancement into German territory is now believed by those familiar with existing conditions.

But it was only a question of time when Italy would "come in" and, following, Rumania and perhaps other Balkan States—then Germany surely would be "crushed." Suffice it to say that the event so earnestly desired continues to rest upon rumor alone and seems to be further and further removed.

It is still, as we said ten months ago, "inconceivable that Germany shall triumph," but it is no less certain, from the standpoint of the Allies, that the prospect is laden with gloom and foreboding and that the end is afar off.