

to a condition of abject misery; they have little light, almost no heat, their clothing is negligible and rapidly growing less, there is no soap and ample food is an unheard of thing. There are few middle aged persons left, and the death rate among children has increased appallingly, while the birth rate is ominously reduced and the offspring of starving mothers might better be left unborn as far as their potential value to a new Germany is concerned.

These are not theories, but facts coming to me from personal experience and, more recently, from friends who have returned from Germany and adjacent countries. From these last named sources I am informed that the Government is looking forward with the gravest concern to the problem of even partly feeding the people during March, April and May, until the next early crops are harvested.

Failed After Fifty Years Preparation.

With these rather academic statements as a foundation, it will not be difficult to visualize the German army's attempt to accomplish a task it was unable to accomplish when at the height of its power and perfected organization and after an intensive training of nearly half a century for this single issue. On the western front, where the contest will end and where German arms will go down to final defeat, the hordes of Wilhelm are outnumbered nearly two to one by enemies who have been for nearly four years constantly improving themselves, while the German army has stood still at that point of its highest development where it crunched its bloody way through Belgium and into France as far as the Marne and that deathless motto of the French: "On ne passe pas!" England and France have learned from Germany, and now comes young America, learning from all and adding her great power in men and material toward the final crushing of the pitiless monster that has "flooded Europe with blood and tears."

Allies Ammunition Superior.

It is well known on the inside in Germany that the ammunition reserves of the Allies are far superior, which is the answer to the question of why Germany has so long delayed her ultimate offensive. Before Verdun alone at one time, I happen to know from unimpeachable authority, the French guns were packed side by side as closely as they could be operated along a line nine miles in length, and after these guns, most of them the famous and deadly 75s, had hurled against the German human waves and defenses more than two million shells there were more shells waiting for these guns than had been there at the beginning of the bombardment, so marvelously were the batteries served by the munitions transportation system behind the lines. And that was more than a year ago, and the improvement of the French and British in munition manufacture is known to every student on both sides of the conflict.

Therefore, given a preponderance of men and ammunition, added to a fervid patriotism and a determination that not another foot of French territory shall pass to the enemy, the answer to the problem of this much advertised drive is obvious.

Drive Is a Certainty.

And the drive is coming. It is not a case of advertising one thing when another is intended. That is not the way the German mind operates. The Kaiser knows and Hindenburg knows that the ground behind the French and English lines is thick with reserve shells in quantities unlimited and that opposed to four and one-half millions of fighting Germans there will be a full seven millions of implacable enemies of Gallic and Anglo-Saxon blood, backed up by the splendid young manhood of America, chafing at the leash and eager to dash at the throat of mankind's enemy.

I am not taking into account the Italian army, for this vaunted drive that the German people have been told is to carry Hindenburg victoriously to the French capital and a branch of his army to the shores of the English Channel at Calais is expected to begin to the north of Switzerland—for the Germans can hardly be vain enough to believe that they can overwhelm the valiant Swiss army and cross the mountains of that little republic into France—and trend westward toward its goal.

There will be millions of shells to back the gunners, but there will not be enough, and the morale, that deathless determination to win, will not be there as an inspiration to go onward in the face of the withering death that will be the portion of thousands and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of the dumb driven

cattle who are ground under the iron heel of autocratic despotism and sent to eternity to make a bloody holiday for an imperial monster who is desperate in these his last days upon his tottering throne. These statements are made in no false spirit of patriotism, but are the result of a close study and analysis of the situation as it has been presented to me while I lived in Germany and from opinions received from close students of the war more recently there.

It is going to be no picnic for the allied armies to stop the contemplated last desperate rush of Germany's gray hosts, and many a man will fall in defending the line. All this winter there has been an ominous quiet back of the celebrated twenty-four complete lines of fortifications that are expected to protect the line of the Rhine, but this quiet has not included Bertha von Krupp's famous gun shop at Essen, and that great plant, together with the recently built works of enormous scope that have gone up at Munich, has been busier than ever making the deadly missiles and guns that are calculated to do what three years of constant and desperate effort have failed to achieve.

Every Soldier a Specialist.

Millions of shells of all calibres and guns to use them have been made, and you may be sure are now at the front and close at hand to every battery and to every gun that is to take part in the climax. Every available man has been trained for his special work just as carefully as the American troops are being trained behind the lines in France to withstand the coming shock.

But the men of the German army are now automatons; they lack the fire, they lack the keen interest of outraged patriotism to urge them on; they have been so many times deceived by the vainglorious boasts and promises of their Kaiser and his satellites that they no longer accept in blind faith the assurances that victory is near at hand and a peace in accordance with Prussian standards a matter of but a brief time and one more effort. But these soldiers will be driven into the mouths of guns just as they have been driven before, and hundreds of thousands of human lives will be brutally sacrificed in order that the pride of a self-styled war partner of the Almighty may be spared of accepting a peace now and without that senseless slaughter, along the humane lines laid down by President Wilson and subscribed to by the allies of the United States.

Germany's Last Great Effort.

Both the Kaiser and his Generals know that the last moment is at hand and that the coming assault will be the last great effort that Germany can ever launch. The armies of Imperial Germany will not fight another great battle when they realize the failure of the one about to break forth. They will rise in a revolt more hideous than anything Russia has experienced when they are driven back defeated, their ranks uselessly thinned by many thousands, a final realization of their vulnerability sinking through the Hun skull and on top of this a certain demand by their masters for still another sacrifice.

Unless the victory of the Allies in the coming assault is complete, such an order is bound to come, and then will follow the deluge which for more than a year now has been muttering and threatening with its premonitory symptoms of anarchy and revolt.

First, the officers will be killed by their men if they urge them to battle or attempt to continue their former brutality, and then will begin the riot of the return home, for these men will not disarm. This wonderful military machine before which the world has stood aghast, this perfection of coordination that Germany built for half a century will tear itself to pieces in insensate and terrible anger because of its defeat.

French Revolution Mere Riot.

The bloody terrors of the French Revolution will have been a casual street riot compared with what Germany's armed millions of broken hearted, disappointed soldiers will create when they return to the places they once knew as homes and find the devastation that disease and starvation have there wrought. They will realize that they have been deceived with cruel deliberation by men who knew that Germany had no chance when her submarines failed of their purpose to starve the Allies and bring England in supplication to her knees and that the lives of millions of their comrades have been sacrificed in order that Wilhelm von Hohenzollern might for a little longer hold the

sceptre of imperial power over 60,000,000 human slaves.

But before that time comes there is going to be a ferocious attempt to break through the western lines, and every ounce of man power and of gun power will be brought into play to promote the rush. It is to be, according to the latest information coming to me, more of a rush than a steady, prolonged drive.

Cannot Prolong the Struggle.

Germany has neither the material nor the morale for a prolongation of this final effort, for if her artillery preparations last a week her army will grow impatient, and it is not a far cry from impatience to nervousness and from that to rout. The men will do their best now, because there is still some little faith left in their hearts for the leaders—their masters—and they have been schooled to believe that victory now is simple and that it means a German made peace and a return to their homes for the remaining millions who have suffered untold tortures for nearly four years.

But the onslaught will have to be vigorous and rapid or the mercury will cool and leave the nerve racked German army at the mercy of the enemy. Thousands of these soldiers have good memories and are resentful. They do not care to be chained to guns, that they may have no opportunity to escape the bayonet of an onrushing Briton or a furious Gaul after they have defended their position to the limit of human capacity, and they have many memories of just this treatment and sometimes worse.

Fights With a Forlorn Hope.

But the Kaiser has assured them that this is their chance to end it all. Hindenburg and Ludendorff have prepared them, with every sort of boastful lying, to believe that the concentrated effort now near at hand cannot fail and that they shall march in victory through the boulevards of Paris, just as did the hosts of the present Kaiser's grandfather nearly half a century ago.

Hindenburg is too wise a military man to believe he can do with a war weary army what he has not been able to do with fresh troops in their moments of greatest strength and limitless ambition, and there are thousands of tacticians among the rank and file of his armies who are quite as well aware of it. The German army is still a powerful force, well equipped and pretty well fed, and it will fight bitterly, but with a forlorn hope, for there is not in it now the mysterious quality we call morale, without which battles are seldom won.

The soldiers, not all of them having completely lost faith, will fight hard and die like plague stricken rats, under the glittering promises of a long deferred victory, but their fight will be like the final spurt of a Marathon runner and cannot be long drawn out, else the whole army will collapse. The leaders know this last drive must be like the rush of a tiger on his prey, to win or lose in a single desperate attack, and every ounce of strength will be employed by the Kaiser's Generals to make good the imperial promise to the army of a splendid victory, and thus reestablish the Hohenzollerns in their waning power.

Even the Dullards Keyed Up.

There are dullards in every army and Germany has her share, but even these have been, in some measure, keyed up to this final fighting point by the swashbuckling airs of the military tyrants who drive them to destruction and who continue to make them believe, at least partly, that there may be yet hope of victory after months of disappointment. But these soldiers have so many times gone shoulder to shoulder against the death dealing fire of the English and the French, have so many times been driven back over the dead bodies of their comrades, that it is a hard task for a Hindenburg or even a Kaiser to convince them that this is to be the last time, the last effort that will be asked of them, and that it will result in the long promised and long deferred victory.

Hindenburg's talks to his army would seem to indicate a sublime faith in himself, coupled with an unconcern for a contempt of the enemy he asks his army to destroy. The German preparations, as I learn from confidential sources, sound more like arrangements for a vigorous and triumphal parade than a desperate onslaught against what has now become the finest and strongest amalgamated military machine the world has ever known, a machine which, I firmly believe, could have met and promptly conquered those mighty and until then invincible myriads that tramped through Belgium three years ago last August.

This is merely a German form of

camouflage, intended to lend courage to an army which every leader knows needs all the mental bolstering that can be given it if it is expected to make a deep impression on the serried ranks of the millions of British, French and Americans who are now waiting impatiently for the supreme moment when the final test of arms and brain shall come. The enemies of Germany have not been idle while the Kaiser's hosts trained for the climax and while all the mechanical power of the Kaiser's lands was urged to its greatest efforts to prepare; and every shell that Germany will be able to hurl into France will be met by more than its equivalent from the embattled foe. It will be a mighty struggle for world supremacy and democracy must win from autocracy.

Signs of Weakening Are Many.

Signs of the weakening of the Central Powers are seen on every hand. Austria has frankly confessed that she has had enough, but she dares not defy her master in Berlin. And now comes the plea of the Germans for a discontinuance of the use of poison gas, the wail of a naturally cowardly bully when he finds his own weapon turned against him. For the enemies of Germany accepted her gas and improved upon it so vastly that the pupil did more damage than the inventor.

But the use of this hideous weapon will not be discontinued, not even at the request of Geneva, not only because no faith can be placed in the word of a nation that has shown a complete disregard for honor or for the weakness of those in her power, but also because it is the purpose of the Allies to conquer the monster in any fashion and to use their better gas, and when this vaunted Hindenburg drive does come his legions will be met by every deadly weapon at the command of the enemies of the world's military dragon. If gas is discontinued by Germany the defeat of the Kaiser's forces will be all the quicker.

Crown Prince's Vain Boast.

It is two years since the Crown Prince vaingloriously launched his armies against Verdun, with the promise that not more than a month would elapse before the famous fortress fell and he marched through a conquered and terrorized country to its capital. More than a year has passed since von Tirpitz unleashed his U-boats to wage ruthless warfare on all mankind and made the promise that England would be starved and brought to her knees in six months. Time and again have desperate efforts been made to break through the allied lines when they were much weaker than they are now, and all that has ever been done was to bend them in small sections here and there, only to be later driven back by counter attack.

Taken from any angle, judged from a point of efficiency, from my seven years of intimate association with Germans on their native heath, from private information received from officer friends, from the morale of the German soldiers after nearly four years of disappointing battling, from a knowledge of comparative man power and gun power, the Allies have nothing to fear, except a certain proportion of casualties, from this threatened and long prepared assault against their lines.

No Comic Opera Battle.

They will have no comic opera battle to fight but a grim and desperate military machine to hold back, but they will do it and then will come the certain clamor from their beaten foe for such terms of peace as may be offered. And, in order to save himself from certain annihilation, the head of the Hohenzollern family will perforce seek an early peace, in the hope that his humiliation may not be so abject that the people will refuse to accept his explanation that he could not whip the whole world, and that they will not rise in red handed wrath, as did the Russians with their Czar, and tear him from the throne on which he says God placed him.

The armies of Hindenburg are going up against a wall of bristling bayonets and bursting steel so superior to what they will be able to offer that the finale will be certain and not long delayed.

Bismarck's prediction, made more than twenty years ago, that William II. would one day begin a game he was sure to lose is about to be fulfilled and even the hope of the Kaiser to save his throne is probably a vain one. For a misled people has little faith in a fallen leader—and then what?

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[Mr. Roth's article was written several days before the German effort and he had been gathering material for it for weeks.—Ed. Note.]