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Reading the News of the Great German Attack.

We are justified in believing that the tremendous attack begun by the Germans against the British lines on the fifty mile front from the River Scarpe to La Fere on the morning of March 21 is the opening of the long heralded Teutonic offensive in the west; and, that being the case, it is wise to prepare ourselves for intelligent observation of its progress.

In this kind of movement the successes attained by the enemy in any day should not depress us, nor should we be unreasonably encouraged by the advantages gained by the British. Engagements such as that now in progress are not decided in a day, or in a week, or in a month. Their outcome depends on the cumulative effects of numerous correlated combats, occupying days and even weeks for their completion, and in space covering vast areas.

The initial progress made by the assailants in attacks like that we are now witnessing is not to be taken as establishing a rate which will or can be maintained. The original assault is made after long and scientific preparation, involving the establishment of heavy and cumbersome machinery in placements of great stability. Once this has produced its effect—and it has been demonstrated frequently that the concentration of such machinery can render untenable the most strongly fortified positions—it becomes unavailable to blast the way for a further advance until it has been moved forward to new and carefully constructed positions. The mobility of heavy artillery has been greatly increased by modern science, but with all the resources of great industrial and transportation systems it cannot be moved into action without appreciable delays, in which the defense finds its opportunities for effective counter strokes.

The titanic struggle around Verdun began on February 20, 1916. It was not until July that the Crown Prince's army reached its furthest point of advance. In October and December General PETAIN recaptured Forts Douaumont and Vaux. It was not until August 20, 1917, that the French regained the summit of Dead Man's Hill and deprived the Germans of the last ground their attack had won them from which they could see the city of their desire, "the key to eastern France."

The territory about Verdun has since that time been the scene of heavy fighting, but for convenience sake we may put the end of the "battle" at the retaking of Dead Man's Hill, after which the Germans occupied virtually the same positions they did when the grand assault began. Seventeen months had elapsed before this was achieved by Verdun's glorious defenders; and yet those seventeen months of desperate fighting are loosely called a "battle."

The terrific contest now precipitated by the Germans will produce many engagements of great proportions. Victory and defeat, involving men in numbers so great as to astound even students of this unparalleled war, will be incidents of its development. We must endeavor to regard each in its proper perspective, and to govern our emotions by the knowledge we have acquired through contemplation of the strategy that has been displayed in other stupendous military undertakings, not of former wars, but of this struggle.

Unusual Occasion in a Presidential Document.

In his encouraging letter to the reorganized and reunited Democracy of New Jersey the President wrote: "The men in the trenches who have been freed from the economic serfdom to which some of them have been accustomed will, it is likely, return to their homes with a new view and a new impatience of mere political phrases and will demand real thinking and real action."

That the stern discipline of army life and the sterner orders of war itself will open new and wider horizons to our returned veterans and may move them to impatience with

mere political phrase mongering is wholly credible. But from just what economic serfdom were they freed when they joined the colors? It is to be regretted that on this interesting question the President was not more explicit. He is the last man in the world to think, write or speak in terms of demagogic Bolshevism.

When he said that some of our soldiers escaped from economic serfdom when they entered the service he knew precisely whereof he spoke and he must be prepared to cite chapter and verse in substantiation. We cannot but wish he had done so.

The only reference from the front having any bearing, even by remote implication, on any anterior status of economic serfdom on the part of our soldiers at the front is in a recent interview with General PERRIN.

"I would especially mention the work of our engineer troops," said the general. "Many of these men some months ago were fighting at home as union members for shorter hours and higher pay, but since they have enlisted for the war they are glad to feel that they are adding our fighting men at the front."

The Attack on the British Lines.

With its ponderous weight of guns and men the German attack has carried past the outer defenses of the most vulnerable part in the British lines. The Germans have recovered a portion of the devastated land they lost and the British forces have retired to stronger defensive positions. This is the initial result of a German preparation of months, of the accumulation of vast military stores and the mobilization of all the resources of men which could be released from other fronts. It was a shock which the Allied commanders had expected and had foretold, and it came with the fierceness of the Germans' onslaught upon Belgium and their attack upon Verdun. In a measure this early achievement might have been expected. For the sacrifice it entailed the consolation that it brings to the German people is largely what Berlin can give in its reports of success. It brings neither discouragement to the Allies nor a loss of faith in the final outcome.

The German Emperor in a telegram to the Rhenish Provincial Council, sent apparently at the opening of the attack, said: "We are at the decisive moment of the war and one of the greatest moments in German history." It is a characteristic message of the German ruler. Many other moments of the war, from the time that the sword was "thrust into my hand" and that Belgium was devastated and Serbia, Rumania and western Russia overrun, have in imperial verbiage been equally momentous and decisive. It may or may not mean the beginning of the great German offensive, so long heralded as the movement which was "to overcome the enemy in the west and to clear the way to a general peace." But it does mean the marshalling of a tremendous military force to impress the might of Germany as much upon the German people themselves as upon the Allied nations.

The attack was directed mainly against the British line and extended from the River Scarpe on the north to La Fere on the south. It was an offensive movement directed from what is called the Hindenburg line, to which the Germans retreated at the time they shortened their front and upon which they have since been relying for secure defensive positions. The main attack was directed against perhaps the weakest point in the British front, the salient near Cambrai. This point was attacked by flank movements in two different directions. It was here that the Germans met with the success they have reported in the capture of British positions, men and guns.

A German report is that "this single combat between Germany and England will decide our future position in the world." Plans found by the British on German officers indicate that this was the German purpose. The inference to be drawn is that the Germans were expected to sweep over northern France, seize Dunkirk and other Channel ports, separate England from France, destroy the British resistance, and thus place the whole Allied line in France at their mercy. In fact, the strategy would be much the same as they employed at the beginning of the war in their advance upon Paris. They reached there within cannon shot of their goal, turned and met their defeat in the battle of the Marne.

This movement is the first German attempt for a decision on the western front since the offensive at Verdun. The objective there again was Paris. The offensive was advertised then with much the same methods as in the present attack. The preparations were made under the Crown Prince's directions with such thoroughness of details that failure was considered impossible. The correspondents of neutral nations were invited to witness a triumph of German arms that would result in the end of the war and victory for the Central Powers. The Crown Prince had at his command thirty-three divisions of the best of the German forces. He poured men into the slaughter from February to August until his total losses, estimated at 800,000, exceeded the maximum of Germans in action at any one time. Yet he could not overcome the French resistance that uttered its defiance in "They shall not pass."

Militarism had its greatest exponent, the Kaiser, General Hindenburg and General Ludendorff to witness the launching of its supreme effort. No one can appreciate better than

these German commanders how critical is the situation or how much depends upon the success of this movement. Their victories heretofore have been principally won over small or weak and defenceless nations. Can they meet the demands of the German people and prove that the great machine that militarism has developed will be able to stand up against an equal foe? Will it be able to bring victory and a peace that is lasting? The answer is not in the immediate success of this single dash. It can come only when the whole Allied defenses have crumbled.

Fines on the Instalment Plan.

Most persons of humane feeling will be inclined to hope for the passage in the Legislature of the McLaughlin bill, which provides that poor persons shall be allowed to pay fines on the instalment plan. As Magistrate McAnoo points out, such a law would place the rich and the poor on an equal footing to the extent that the poor man's liberty would not be lost through his having to serve a prison sentence in default of ready cash.

If there is any objection to the bill it must be from psychologists who have observed the fascination of instalment payments. Victims of the habit rise from beds purchased on the instalment plan, breakfast on dishes bought at so much a week, don instalment hats and ride to work in subways built on the instalment plan. In the evening, seated in the instalment mission rocker, they are soothed by the dollar a week phonograph or Dickens on easy payments. Would a misdemeanor priced so low that you don't feel the cost tempt them beyond their strength?

It is easy to imagine the household bored by the sameness of instalment life gazing from the window of the little house which he is buying on the Balance Same as Rent plan, and regarding speculatively the policeman across the street. The Instalment Devil whispers: "Go and soak him on the bean. The Judge will hardly fine you more than \$10, and by signing the clerk's book on the dotted line the payment will be distributed over a period of three or four months. Ten cents a day—that extra cigar you shouldn't smoke—will pay for it, and you will have something to remember the memory of a great adventure."

The wife of an ordinarily mild motorist informs him, while they are out in the car, that she has just made the final payment on the dining room rug and that the following Wednesday will see the last dollar laid down for Professor Buz's "History of the Medieval Future." The husband's hand instinctively seeks the gas control lever; the motorcycle policeman has no more terror for him. Why not forty miles an hour when, for the small sum of 50 cents a week, the penalty is disposed of by the instalment plan?

The household budgets of those who cannot withstand the lure of small payments might read like this: Payments on home, \$10.00. Smoking in subway, .15. Squeakophone, .75. Walking unmuzzled dog, .25. Abolitionist art door mat, .10. Shaking rug from window, .05. Easter suit, .60. Breaking prune store windows, .20. Histories of the war, 8.72. Assaulting pacifist, .01.

A loyal wife might decide to put off for another year the negotiations for a piano in order that the husband might go in for some assault and battery which he has yearned to do but which he has been deterred from committing by the large lump cost. "What is this time for?" the clerk of the court asks his Monday evening caller. "Is it on your Disorderly Conduct No. 2 account?" "No," cheerily replies the citizen, consulting his pocketbook. "It's a nickel toward the fine for causing a crowd to collect and a nickel on the Resisting an Officer Account."

Nebraska's Sedition Crop Sown in Her German Schools.

The strained relations between the large German element in and around the town of Eustis, Frontier county, Nebraska, and the element which happens to be pro-American are causing some uneasiness, not only in the neighborhood directly involved but throughout the State generally and at the State Capitol in Lincoln.

As a result of the all but exclusive teaching of German in the hundreds of Lutheran schools of Nebraska—schools in which the German national anthem is habitually sung and American patriotic songs never—there has grown up, even among the younger generation, a pro-German, anti-American sentiment which seems recently to have become more or less threatening in spots. At Eustis J. M. Hill, a Government exemption board and food officer, was assaulted and badly beaten by one FRITZ BAALHOEN, a rabid German accused of draft evasion. BAALHOEN was arrested, fined \$75 and held for further Federal action. This intensified feeling on both sides. The pro-Germans rallied to BAALHOEN as a martyr to American tyranny. The Americans were equally heated in their expression of the opinion that BAALHOEN had not got half of what was his due. A special despatch to the Omaha Bee says that some of the more timid of the Americans are advising that nothing be said or done to irritate the Germans. On the other hand, the Germans persistently jeer at the American flag, at Americans and at American customs generally. In Americans of the rabid pacifist type this is seemingly inconsequential, but

WITH THE WOODSMEN.

One of those elemental occupations that delight the shy and mysterious soul is that of the woodsman. He dispels a thousand and one adverse influences of civilization, from the days when the world was young, is wood cutting—not the prosaic buckaw and woodbox work that is the bane of the farmer boy, but the fine and elevating business of felling forth into the standing timber a buckaw from the sea, in inexhaustible reservoir enough bottled July sunshine to make the great fireplace roar its huge gales until summer comes again.

"Hewers of wood and drawers of water" is the olden phrase, and if, under a torrid sun, there is keen zest in felling a buckaw into the cool and mossy depths of spring and drawing it forth brimming with crystal, liquid purity, no less is there a subtle spell in the true ring of axe against stout wood that must stir up memories stored within us from forgotten centuries. Something of the same thrill is in drawing a net from the sea, in pitching a tent against the coming of night, in lying in wait for game in the forest or beside the water. Such things our fathers did beside the Sea of Galilee uncounted years before One came to walk beside them.

Now is the time, then, in the wood country, when this fascinating business of wood chopping is going forward. The long, midwinter spell of inactivity, so grateful after the fall rush of work, has begun to pall. A continued fare of buckwheat cakes, sausage, fried cakes, pork chops and similar light edibles has not only failed like striking about a bit and, say, pushing over a mountain or lifting one corner of the house. The woodpile, too, is showing the attrition of the winter campaign. There is yet a good deal of snow in the woods, the air is cold enough to lend energy even to the prime, seasonless stuff when the winds begin to blow chill next autumn.

So one more ambitious than the rest drums up the neighbors, and the party is formed. Past the young hemlocks and spruces that seem to nod their thanks at being spared, the woodmen press on to where the great rock oaks hold their grave and weighty conclave. Axes and crosscut saws gleam in the winter sunshine. The crusted snow crunches underfoot with a merry tinkle. The hearty voices resound against the massed trees.

A spot is selected where the trees are close together, and the woodmen feel like striking about a bit and, say, pushing over a mountain or lifting one corner of the house. The woodpile, too, is showing the attrition of the winter campaign. There is yet a good deal of snow in the woods, the air is cold enough to lend energy even to the prime, seasonless stuff when the winds begin to blow chill next autumn.

Soon a shudder travels the length of the great forest denizen. Its branches clutch with bare fingers against the unfriendly sky, and find naught of aid. The shudder is now a form of music, and the woodmen hear those stanch limbs and that solid trunk tracing drunken lines against the wintry sky, one has the sense of some dread catastrophe tearing at the very vitals of the world.

Meanwhile the others are at work and the crashing down of trees, the ring and thud of axes, the hum of saws, the shouts and laughter fill the woods with a merry din. It is one of the country festivals, like corn huskings and barn raisings. Long before noon, thoughts have been turning to the dinner pails. Finally some one starts a fire and as it blazes high the woodmen flock for their homely warmth. The matter of the cold is heated, bread and meat are toasted over the livid coals. How fine is the savor of it all, with the pungent odor of wood smoke to be the incense and perfume of it!

For days the work continues, until the cords rise as breastworks through the woods. Then the trees come crashing through the underbrush winding their tortuous way past fences and between trees.

The Morning Prayer. To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN:—While reading the letter entitled "Abiding Faith" in today's SUN it occurred to me to inquire through your columns whether you had any morning prayers. There is a large number of Christian people in the various sects who seem to know nothing of offering to God the first fruits of the day. From the time they arise till they are about to retire money is their god; and having been devoted to the love of money, they devote five minutes to the Almighty, expecting in return to gain His protection during the "still and solemn hours" of sleep. They are like the little boy who explained why he never said any prayer, except when he was about to retire, viz., that he was able to take care of "his own self" in the day time. While the evening prayer should not be omitted, the morning is the more appropriate time to bow in adoration to the Supreme Being and give Him our first thoughts. Then may we confidently expect His blessing on our labors of the day before us. J. E. B. New York, March 22.

THE WORLD IS DOOMED.

It May Take Centuries, but Malthus Will Be Avenged. To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN:—Sir, Dr. Malthus did not say that the population of England in 1800 would increase from 11,000,000 to 175,000,000 in 1900. What he did say was that if the power of population were to go on unchecked it would double every twenty-five years; that because of these checks the population of Europe doubled only every two or three hundred years.

You say that the fertility of the land is what man makes it, and that the scientific farmer is able to put back into earth, at a cost less than the value of the crop, the fertility of which he robbed it. Any well informed farmer will deny that statement. You may put back some of the fertility, but you can never get back the fertility that the ground once possessed, even if you spend twice the value of any crop you can raise on it. As time goes on the ground grows poorer and poorer until it will not pay to work it. This may take centuries, but it is what will happen to the land ultimately.

Malthus was right when he said the world is doomed to starvation. New York, March 23. O. D. S.

WHAT IS AN ARTIST?

Louis, Supreme Spirit of the Spheres, Defines Art and Genius. To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN:—Sir, I have discovered the cause of the New York critics' failure in properly labeling an artist. It is simply the fact that they are ignorant of the just meaning of the words they use, especially the words, genius and artist. Of course they cannot, since only a man with those attributes is capable of defining them. I will be magnanimous and infuse into their minds new illumination.

Before starting, it is well to be perfectly unanimous as to what an artist must be. We shall confine ourselves to painting. An artist must be a master of color perspective, objective and atmospheric; of drawing; of values; of textures; of several techniques to suit the subject matter, and other minor details. A genius is master of most of these at nine years of age. At fifteen he excels in most of these the work of artists of mature years. At twenty-two he produces paintings of superior quality that are the despair and wonder of artists. After that age he continues to enrich his productivity to such an extent that he is left to himself, alone upon the Larnassus of painting.

Now I mention. There are two kinds. One is the ability to illustrate the imaginative work of a writer. This kind is rather common. The other, pure imagination, is rare and is in possession of a genius alone. This kind is not inspired from reading a poem or a Shakespearean drama. No; it is wrought deep within the mind. Think of Beethoven; he produces a painting not to be found anywhere in the entire wealth of pictures in the world. A creation, new, inimitable, supreme in the annals of art.

I forgot to mention another absolute index to a work of a genius. A genius is lightning fast in his master work; no genius can take ten years time to execute a small painting. The most intricate large composition with ten figures, temples, beauty landscape and wonder clouded sky; why, a genius executes this in four to six hours time; not even an artist can do this. Mr. Critic, next time you read of a masterpiece, if it is direct in execution, with every detail put in perfect, no painting over of objects, clouds, etc., then a genius was the master of it. If the painter fussed over his color, composition, drawing, why, Mr. Editor, it is logical to say he did not know his "metier"; then how can he be called a genius? Think of Beethoven; a fine ten years to write his Ninth Symphony. It would be a jumble of inharmonious notes—just as the painter's unorganized picture must be, as you can see at the Museum.

Instead of criticizing the works of an artist, whose work the critics hysterically place on a pedestal of mastery, imagination and genius, I beg of them to read my definitions, as above written down, and then again gauge the works of their idol.

It is sad to note this state of semi-learned criticism. I shall refrain from voicing my opinion; it would not be to the detriment, in order to defend many of our ablest artists and myself, who is America's greatest pure imaginative genius, and the entire world's most versatile master genius. I will place the painter on his right chair—a pedestal is not necessary. Deficient as a master artist, why did he not learn from his could not do better. Then let him laugh at his childish works, so few; could be imagine subjects for 1,500 self-created pictures. LOUIS M. ELSHWARTZ, Supreme Spirit of the Spheres. New York, March 23.

THE MEDICAL CORPS AND MEDICAL RANK IN THE ARMY.

General Gorgas's Proposal Discussed by an Officer of the Line. A SUN reader of long standing, one who is a keen admirer of our editorial pages, questions the wisdom of our stand and the logic of our argument as set forth in "General Gorgas's Proposal." Let it be said here that my opinions in regard to the proposed additional promotion in the Medical Corps have nothing to do with my appreciation of General Gorgas's standing and ability as a medical officer and sanitarian of worldwide reputation.

Impressio, THE SUN makes several statements which invite comment. "Under present conditions there is no rank higher than Colonel in the regular Medical Corps." True enough, except for the fact that General Gorgas himself is a General in the regular Medical Corps! The regular Medical Corps, like the Regular Army, is a peace time organization, and the instant cannot see the camouflage, unobscured on your part, of course, in your statement. The fact is that in Washington alone there are, in addition to General Gorgas, no less than three regular medical officers who are Brigadier-Generals of the Medical Corps, National Army. Incidentally, in all branches of the army all general officers over the number authorized by the national defense act of 1916 are commissioned in the National Army regardless of the force with which they may be serving.

I have been in the army for a good many years, and I have not yet observed that the Medical Corps suffers from lack of sufficient rank, particularly when compared with their brothers of the line, and more especially with their comrades of the infantry and cavalry, and, except in those rare instances where the personal equation of the medical officer himself is prohibited, I have always seen marked deference paid to their medical and sanitary opinions and recommendations, even by the cranks of superior line officers. And let us not forget that where troops are concerned the ultimate responsibility is upon their commander, unless the medical rank of the officer attached to the medical corps, and whether their recommendations be approved or disapproved. Sometimes, of course, their recommendations are not approved, but would an increase of a grade or two in the rank of the medical officer have altered the decision of the commander, unless the medical rank of the officer, experience and age were commensurate with his rank? Beyond doubt line officers make mistakes, many of them, in their relations with medical officers, and disapprove the medical recommendations when they should approve them, and on occasion approve when, possibly, they should disapprove. It is the duty of medical officers to make mistakes when dealing with line officers and with each other. Both are human and therefore prone to err.

Now I believe that if men of the calibre of Dr. Mayo, Dr. Critt, et al., are suffering from lack of sufficient rank, it is not because of the medical rank, but because they are asking for higher rank, and are given some promotion, though not necessarily the grade of General officer. But I may doubt whether General Mayo's performance of duty would be any better than would Major Mayo's, or that General Bland of the line would place any more confidence in the medical opinion of General Mayo than he would in that of Major Mayo. After all, Dr. Mayo's value to his country in the critical time is to be found in his medical ability and in his example of patriotic self-sacrifice; it will not be found in his relative position in a military hierarchy. But, as was said before, if Dr. Mayo is in the service, we want and need higher rank than he has. Another but—how many of these proposed Generals will be officers of the Medical Reserve Corps? Others, verona.

This discussion (a proper discussion of this important subject would require a full page of THE SUN) has grown to great length. Bear with me yet a little longer, even if an unaccustomed writer should reiterate. No matter what the relative rank of the two, the medical officer cannot command the line officer or the latter troops; he can only recommend. The weight given, the confidence placed in an opinion or recommendation of a medical officer by a line officer depends almost most altogether upon the greater command and experience, and of course, upon that indefinable and intangible thing we call faith, hardly at all upon his rank. As going to confer this assertion let us take a concrete case, even if it be a somewhat extreme one. In whose medical opinion would the editor of THE SUN place the greater confidence, in that of Major Mayo or in that of Colonel N. of the regular Medical Corps, who had been an army doctor for some ten or twelve years? Per contra, a doctor, frequently prefer a younger doctor to an older one, not because of their comparative age, but because of their comparative rank, a greater command of a station and experience, and of course, upon that indefinable and intangible thing we call faith, hardly at all upon his rank. As going to confer this assertion let us take a concrete case, even if it be a somewhat extreme one. In whose medical opinion would the editor of THE SUN place the greater confidence, in that of Major Mayo or in that of Colonel N. of the regular Medical Corps, who had been an army doctor for some ten or twelve years? Per contra, a doctor, frequently prefer a younger doctor to an older one, not because of their comparative age, but because of their comparative rank, a greater command of a station and experience, and of course, upon that indefinable and intangible thing we call faith, hardly at all upon his rank. 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