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A YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR

The newspapers of this country, generally, have been indulging, during the last week, in comments upon the history of the great war in Europe for the year since its beginning, and few of them have predicted its speedy end, or its ultimate result. All that lies in the womb of the future. The one great, overmastering thought has been, that never before in the history of the world, have so many millions of men been engaged in a death grapple to secure something about which most of them are ignorant and which the rest of the world does not understand. Men, a few centuries ago, fought for thirty years to make others bow to their religious opinions. But religious wars between followers of Jesus of Nazareth have long since ceased, and religious liberty has, as a rule, been the prevailing principle throughout the Christian world.

What, then lies at the root of this awful strife? Is it a mere haphazard struggle, without definite cause or purpose? That is impossible. The kaiser of Germany avows that he did not seek the conflict and professes himself so thoroughly assured that God is with him and his people, that their triumph is as certain as that God rules the nations. Can that be only a hypocritical pretence on his part to encourage his subjects to cast their all upon this hazard of the die? Who knows? It looks like blasphemy in any man to say that he knows just what God approves in such a contention as that in which the Allies, the Italians, the Teutons and the Turks are engaged. None of the nations engaged in the conflict, except Germany, has claimed to be the especial subject of the Divine favor. It would be better fitting in the kaiser to be praying "Thy will be done," than to be claiming omniscience.

The German emperor is a great man and the head of a great people. He and they have demonstrated that, beyond contradiction, by their achievements during the past year. Opposed by armies more than twice as numerous as their own, they have kept the war almost entirely outside of German soil, and at this time there is not a single armed military organization against them within their borders. It is the boast of the kaiser that that situation will be maintained. The great success of his armies against Russia almost justifies his boast.

But the powers against him are no less determined that he shall be humbled, than he is that he shall triumph. And the end is not yet. Russia is humiliated, but not conquered. The spirit that actuates the Russian people is one of determined persistence in carrying on the war. At least that was the opinion given by the president of the Russian Duma, which began its sessions at Petrograd on the ist inst. He said "the more terrible the war becomes the more Russia is imbued by the firm and unshakable determination to bring it to a successful issue." That too may be only a boast. But Russia has already sacrificed too much to give up the struggle at this stage of it. And, in reality her vast resources have not yet been much more than touched.

Neither France nor Great Britain can dream of abandoning the struggle as long as there is an Englishman or Frenchman alive to stand up against German guns. Their existence as independent nations is at stake and they cannot hesitate to fight to the bitter end if they will not become mere vassals of Germany. They are, too, in better shape to continue the struggle than they were in the beginning. The French have regained the prestige as a fighting people, which they lost in the war with Germany in 1870.

Then Italy has become an important factor in the determination or outcome of the war. As yet Italian operations appear to have had little influence in aiding the cause of the Allies, but they will count in the long run. Perhaps the Turks may be overthrown and thus add another influence towards the ultimate discomfiture of the Teutons. But, at anyrate, their only advantage to the Teutons will be in holding a contingent of the Allies from the front in Central Europe, France and Belgium. The only prediction that can now be made with any reasonable certainty is, that, after a year of the vast slaughter of men on both sides, the prospect of the continuance of the struggle for another year it too apparent not to be deplored by every lover of his kind. Which of the contending nations is most likely to win the victory cannot be foreseen by unprejudiced observers. The boast of the kaiser may be made good, or it may fail utterly. "Let not him that putteth on the harness boast as him who putteth it off."

A PLACE WHERE ECONOMY IS NEEDED AND SHOULD BE ENFORCED

J. W. O., a writer employed by the Baltimore Sun to recommend retrenchment in the cost of public service in this State, points out a number of services in which, according to his views, much money could be saved by the abolition of offices, the existence of which he considers unnecessary. Like as in the case of many reformers, some of the evils against which he wars may be more imaginery than real. Or, in his zeal to accomplish something of importance his judgment may be warped, to some extent, at least, in their consideration. Whether, for instance, it would be wise to abolish the Land Office and transfer its administration to the Clerk of the Court of Appeals, as he suggests, may be questioned by those who have a knowledge of the work it performs. The same thing may be said about his suggestion that the offices of the clerks of the Circuit Courts of the State should be abolished, and the duties now incumbent upon these officers be discharged by deputies. It is true that these offices should not be mere sinecures, nor is it the purpose of the law creating them that they shall be so. The purpose of their existence is that they shall promote the convenience of the public, maintain inviolate the records of the courts, and in every possible manner facilitate their business when sitting on the bench and at other times. The responsibility of the position is something that must also be taken into account in considering the question of its abolition.

But the purpose of this article is not to criticise or antagonize the recommendations of Mr. J. W. O., but rather to call attention to one of the sources of wastefulness to which he has not yet alluded—the political graft of which the Maryland Legislature has been guilty, during these many years past, in maintaining a retinue of officers many times greater than necessary, for the purpose of rewarding, for political services, henchmen of the party in power. This, as everybody knows, has been condemned by the Governors of the State for a dozen years, and their opposition to it has been unavailing. Public sentiment has been against it, but without effect, and there is no assurance that it will not be again repeated, at the next session of the Legislature, unless the ascendency of the party now in power shall be overthrown. J. W. O. can do the State a valuable service by successfully fulminating his opposition to the evil, in his articles in The Sun, and by recommending a change in parties in the law-making branch of the State Government. It is worthy of comment that the practice has only prevailed with the Democratic party in power. Back in 1896 and 1898, when the Republicans had a controlling voice in the General Assembly, there was none of it.

But the full intent of this article would not be stated without a suggestion by which, if it can be carried into effect, this glaring wrong upon the taxpayers, could be permanently corrected. The people should demand of their representatives in the Legislature, the submission of an amendment to the Constitution by which the legislative expenses shall be limited to a specified sum, say $125,000, at a regular session. Perhaps $100,000 would be sufficient, but the State should not be niggardly in the matter, and the larger sum named might not be considered excessive. But that should be the limit and it would save the people $50,000 to $75,000 at every regular session.

It is possible that at the session of the legislature next year a Constitutional Convention may be called, by which the matter should be taken up and its adoption be demanded by the people. But, failing a convention law, an amendment embodying the idea suggested should be submitted to the voters of the State. As the members of the legislature are to be chosen at the election in November, this is a convenient time to agitate the subject and ascertain the views of candidates upon it.

THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT

"Evil communications corrupt good manners." How true, how very true, is this declaration of inspiration. Many a man has gone wrong, who intended to go right, because of an evil environment. Many another has overcome the common tendency of the race to evil, through the influences for good by which he was surrounded.

The influence of environment was most forcibly illustrated in the case of Lieut. Becker, of the New York Police, who suffered the extreme penalty of the law last Friday, for instigating a murder. Nature seems to have intended him to have been a model of integrity as he was of courage and daring. But the best elements of his nature were perverted by his associations. He became the victim of his environment. It is impossible to read the outline of the story of his long struggle for life and liberty, without feeling a certain amount of admiration for his strong will and indomitable determination. How sad it is, that the influence of his home life did not counteract the evil by which he was surrounded in his daily contact with the vices of a great city, and with the men higher up in its government than himself. His wife, who loved him, living, and is devoted to his memory, is a woman of exceptionally noble character. And he died protesting his innocence and with a lie upon his lips that he might, as far as in him lay, leave her the comfort of believing that he was not guilty of the atrocious crime for which he suffered the loss of life. For that he instigated the murder of Herman Rosenthal there can be no doubt, thus committing the highest crime known to the law, to escape the consequences of his less wrongdoing, in being a party to the graft by which the police department and the heads of a political organization were honeycombed.

If Becker had made as vigorous a fight for purity in official station, as he did to escape punishment for his crime, and had shown in that work the same high qualities that marked his home life, he would have been a power for good and would have been worthy of all honor, instead of lying in the grave of a criminal and murderer. But he was not proof against the evil influences of his official environment.

But it is no doubt true that his fall cannot be justly attributed entirely to those influences, powerful as they were. There was something in him, as there probably is in most men, something that responded to the call of evil, and he followed its lead, going deeper and deeper into its toils, until it landed him in the chair of the executioner. The voice of wisdom cries, "Go not in the way of evil men," and the fate of Charles Becker should be a warning to all to avoid their company. "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

STABILITY OR INSTABILITY

Secretary of Commerce Redfield, who went out to Chicago to look into the cause of the disaster by which 1200 to 1500 people lost their lives in the overturning of the steamer Eastland, is reported to have said, in relation to the stability of the vessel, that the inspection of steamers and skyscrapers, to test their stability, is unnecessary and no part of the duty of inspectors. To the general public it must appear that the Secretary was misquoted. It seems impossible that he can really entertain an opinion so utterly remarkable, illogical and false. If he does so it is very evident that he is unfit to hold a position of responsibility to which people must look for protection from such disasters as citizens of Chicago and adjacent towns are now bewailing.

There is an impression prevalent, and the coroner's jury which sat in the Eastland case has given it as its opinion, that the government steamboat inspectors had failed to consider the instability of that vessel, and had certified her seaworthiness without knowledge which should have been obtained by her proper inspection. Mr. Redfield may have some pride in preventing a knowledge of the inefficiency exhibited by the inspectors in this case from becoming public, but he shows exceedingly bad judgment in the matter.

It is said that the proceedings of the Federal Government, in the case, will estop all action by the authorities of Chicago to institute prosecutions against the owners of the Eastland, her officers and the inspectors. The whole matter of such prosecutions must be left to the Federal courts and they must be instituted, if at all, by the Department of Commerce. If that be true, it is of primary importance that there should be no appearance of whitewashing in the proceedings. Carelessness on the part of government officials should meet prompt and just condemnation and punishment.

There must be no lack of evidence that the Eastland was unseaworthy; that her tendency to careen was well known to those by whom she was operated, and that it could easily have been ascertained by the government officials if she had been properly inspected. Did not public safety demand that that should have been done and does it not demand that it shall be done in the case of every steamboat afloat. To confine that inspection to the boilers and machinery of vessels omits a most important part of such duty. If the law permits the ommission of such inspection, and does not require the whole vessel to come under the knowledge of officials, the only thing to be said about it is that the law is defective and should be promptly amended.

There is no charge that the boilers and engines of the Eastland were out of order. They had been properly inspected and certified. But did the duty of the inspectors end there? The public will be slow to believe it. In view of the opinion attributed to Secretary Redfield, that the inspection of the stability of such craft and of skyscraping buildings is unnecessary, it is in order for that gentleman to rise to an explanation. The question is one of vital importance to the people of the United States.

HAS HIS HANDS FULL

Secretary Lansing must find his duties as head of the State Department onerous and trying. Just now he is confronted with three notes from the British and one from the Germans. The British notes all seem to be of the same purport, the main questions contained in them being Great Britain's contention in favor of her right to do about what she pleases with American shipping, and to maintain the blockade of German ports as the British government sees proper. The German note is in relation to the sinking of the American ship Wm. P. Frye, by a German cruiser. Germany acknowledges responsibility for the cargo of the ship and will pay for it, according to treaty stipulations; but denies any obligation for the loss of the ship. Her contention is that the Frye was properly destroyed. The problem she puts up to this country is a knotty one, but the Washington governmetn is firmly of the opinion that Germany is wrong in her contention. About the only thing that Secretary Lansing can do, however, is to tell her so and demand that the owners of the Frye shall be reimbursed for the loss of the ship. And there the matter will stand as this country has more serious matters to consider in her relations with Germany.

A much more decided stand is required in the attitude of this country towards Great Britain. The British Government may adhere with dogged pertinacity to its unfriendly and unfair attitude towards this country, but it should be warned that the American government may be driven to abandon its friendly relations and suspend diplomatic intercourse with that country, as it threatens to do with Germany. In that case, while American manufacturers of war material would suffer, the British would be cut off from an important source of supply. These are, to be sure, rather improbable emergencies, but they are not entirely impossible. The American government needs as stiff a vertebrae in dealing with Great Britain as it needs in its relations with Germany.

IS THIS A NEW DEPARTURE

Apparently at his wit's end concerning Mexican affairs, President Wilson has either taken a new departure, or has revived an old one. He called a conference of diplomatic representatives of the South and Central American Republics, to be held in Washington yesterday. The A., B., C. mediators, whose effort a year or more ago, to restore peace in Mexico, proved a fizzle, were included in the request for this conference. The proceedings of the conference were confidential and it may not be possible to report them on the page on which this article appears, as the page will be printed before any report can be received. If any important action has been taken by the conference, however, it will be told elsewhere in this issue of the Sentinel.

The main thought in connection with the matter, is that President Wilson has been at sea concerning the course this country should pursue in relation to the Mexican problem, and that much that he has said and done upon the subject has been idle vaporing. Whether this conference will be fruitful of better results remains to be seen. Washington correspondents allege that recognition of Carranza as the head of a Provisional Mexican government is one of the things contemplated. Just how that is to solve the problem, unless it shall be sustained by the joint intervention of this country and these South and Central American governments, by force, cannot well be seen. And the probability is that such intervention would drive all the fighting elements in Mexico to the support of Villa. These Mexicans are supposed to be bitterly hostile to any sort of outside intervention. But what is to result from this new departure cannot be predicted. We can only wait and see.

THEIR DESIGN PERVERTED

The party organizations of this day were designed to promote legitimate party work, such as enrolling voters, providing the necessary funds for a careful canvass of party strength, seeing to urging all voters out and cast their ballots on election day, and the like. In many instances, however, their design has been and is still being badly perverted. "The Organization" too often goes out of the way of its legitimate sphere by becoming the dictator of party nominations or since the primary election law was placed on the statute books, by becoming the partizan of some individual as a candidate for nomination. A glaring instance of this is to be seen in the course of the Democratic organization in Baltimore, in espousing the nomination of Blair Lee for Governor, against Mr. Harrington. It isn't a question of what the voters, improperly influenced, may want, but what, in great measure, the organization, or the one man who controls it, wants. And that man is John J. Mahon. Instead of leaving the voters to exercise an untrammeled choice, they are exhorted to obey the will of the chief boss.

It is significant that leading Harrington men have appealed to Mayor Preston to announce, to city employes under his control, that they are at liberty to follow their own inclination in their preferences for a candidate, and can exercise that privilege without the apprehension that they will lose their places by acting with independence. The mayor, who is one of the bosses of the organization, makes no response to the appeal. This is not a case where silence gives consent. It is just the other way. Every mother's son holding a city office, or employed as a laborer by the city, is expected to vote and work for the nomination of Mr. Lee. It isn't, in the first place, party success for which they are to hustle, but for the perpetuation of boss rule. And that is the story, in brief, of how the proper design of an organization is perverted in Baltimore.

The same condition prevails to some extent, in some of the counties, but nowhere, perhaps, is it so glaring as it is in Baltimore. It is not, of course, everywhere confined to the Democratic party, but that has well nigh a monopoly of the business in the great city.

The system is a pernicious one and should be suppressed wherever it appears. The real purpose for which political organizations were created is to carry the will of the voters into effect, not to coerce or improperly influence them in their choice of candidates. The Independent Democrats of Baltimore should say to the bosses of the organization, "Hand's off, gentlemen, or take the consequences in the defeat of your man, if he shall be nominated by such methods."

A Montgomery county Democrat, in a letter to the editor of the Baltimore Sun, criticises Mr. Blair Lee for selecting a Washington attorney. Mr. Wm. H. Lamar, as his campaign manager. But Mr. Lee's interests seem to lie in Washington, to a considerable extent, and his association with Mr. Lamar is intimate, at least in a friendly way. Mr. Wm. H. Anderson, former superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League, persisted in alleging that Lee was completely under Lamar's domination and had to consult, or at least did consult, him about certain matters relating to his duties when he was a State senator from Montgomery county. And now comes this Montgomery county Democrat, and objects to Lamar as Lee's campaign manager because the Senator should not go out of the State to make such a selection. It doesn't concern the Republicans, however, at this stage of the game. But Mr. Lee is most likely to be the successful candidate for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, and it is well to bear in mind the protests of the Montgomery man, and, during the campaign succeeding the primary, call the attention of Democrats, who are all and only for Maryland, to it. The occupant of the executive office of the State should not be under the influence of a Washington lawyer to the least degree.

From National Republican Congresional Committee.

THE NATION'S TIMBER SUPPLY JEOPARDIZED

Washington, D. C., August 4.—The safety of millions of dollars worth of the nation's timber supply has been jeopardized by Democratic neglect.

An authorized appropriation of three million dollars for preventing forest fires and kindred purposes, provided for in what is known as the "Weeks law," was allowed to lapse because of the careless failure of the last Democratic Congress to carry out the mandate of a former law.

The Weeks law was enacted to enable the federal government to cooperate with the states to secure protection from forest fires. It authorized appropriations up to eleven millions to carry its purpose into effect. Based upon carefully drawn plans, it provided for the purchase of lands at the head waters of navigable streams, to aid navigation and the regulation of stream flow, and thereby promote forest protection.

"Fire destroys the soil covering in a forest," says the forestry report on the plan of the Weeks law. "This causes rapid run off on steep slopes and erosion results. The soil thus washed out is the chief source of sediment in the channels of navigable streams. Forest fires, therefore, cause irregularity of stream flow and loss of navigability. This calls for active assistance from the federal government, and section 2 of the Weeks law is designed to authorize this assistance."

The necessity for forest fire protection is shown by the official reports of the vast destruction such fires cause.

"An average of 10,000,000 acres is burned over annually in the United States, with a money loss of about $25,000,000," says the Forestry Bureau report. "The danger threatens both northern and southern forests. In the coniferious forests of the north the destruction of merchantable timber is frequent. In the pine or hard wood forests of the south, the chief damage is the repeated killing of young growth. This is severe, because the young growth has a very great future value, and upon it depends the permanency of the lumber industry in the region."

The attention of Democratic members of Congress was repeatedly called to the necessity of giving formal approval to the law formerly enacted and that without that approval the appropriation would lapse and be no longer available for forest fire protection. In spite of this warning however, the Democrats neglected to include the necessary provision in the law this year.

The result is that during the next fall and winter, when the danger from forest fires is at the maxium, the protection that would have been afforded under the Weeks law will either be lost or must be provided for in some other way.

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