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IS GERMANY OPTIMISTIC, OR DESPERATE

A report was sent out from Washington, by newspaper reporters, a week ago, that the German government had notified its interned ships, in American ports, that the war would end by the middle of April, through the triumph of Germany, and that they would be free to go to sea without danger of capture. The report was probably a canard and without reasonable foundation. If it contained any truth it would exhibit marvelous optimism on the part of Germany.

A very different impression is held in some quarters, of the purpose of the desperate fighting in which the German forces have been engaged in the region of Verdun, and their efforts to capture the powerful fortification at that point. It was reported a week ago, that the German losses in that desperate struggle had already totaled up 150,000. Since then the fighting has been continued. It is argued by some observers that the terrific onslaught upon the French line indicates the approaching exhaustion of German resources and the necessity of an immediate victory, or the collapse of Germany. But it is not safe for her enemies to put too much confidence in that opinion.

One thing is certain and that is that the fighting has been the most desperate in any modern war, and the campaign against Verdun was apparently begun by the Germans with the determination to capture the great fortification at any cost. For more than a week they pressed forward, gaining many defences of the French, including the Fort Douaumont, about four and a half miles from the main fortification. Then the French stiffened up and began a counter-attack, in which, according to a detailed statement from the war office at Paris, they drove the Germans back beyond Douaumont, and, the first of this week, had cut off the German regiments which had entered the fort from the main force. Regarded from this distance the continuous battle has assumed a hand to hand struggle.

In the German offensive some things have been spoken of which reminds one of the result of the Spartan defence of the Pass of Thermopylae, nearly 2,400 years ago, when the Persian monarch, Xerxes, with a million men, invaded Greece. In that case Leonidas, the Greek commander, found his battle plan at the pass was known to the enemy, and withdrew his army, leaving only 300 Spartans and 700 Thespians to retard the advance of the Persian host. And everyone of the 1000 men stood his ground and died at his post. That which calls to mind this example of human bravery, and devotion to a cause, is a story that a body of Germans, contemplating the advance on Verdun, took a solemn oath to make it successful, or die in the attempt. That may be only a newspaper story, but the desperation with which the Germans have been fighting, in the face of fearful losses, gives it coloring.

If the final success of the German cause is contingent upon such a sacrifice, that of the French is no less so to them, and they are no less courageous and devoted to their country than are its invaders to theirs. There is more reason for the French to lay down their lives for the protection of their homes than there is for the Germans to overrun them. But for this violent effort of the Teutons the struggle on the west war zone might have continued seesawing indefinitely. Now, it is higaly probable that a definite result will be achieved. What will it be? Will the German legions, broken and shattered and well nigh annihilated, be driven out of France or will they march triumphantly on to Paris? Verdun is the key to keep the gateway to Paris locked against its enemies. If the Germans find it by capturing the great fortification, the gate will swing wide open, and then woe to the French republic and its people. The latest report shows the Germans still making gains.

WHAT IS THE LOGIC OF IT?

The American people may back President Wilson in his assumption that they have a right to travel on the high seas in the armed ships of any of the belligerents, without the danger of the loss of their lives and without risk of such a catastrophe through the failure of other belligerents to give such ships warning before attacking them, but this conclusion is not altogether logical. At least it is open to question and is not accepted by all judges of international law. Is there any valid reason that the whole American people should have their peace imperiled by the foolhardy determination of a single one of them to embroil the country in war for a questionable privilege? For the more carefully the subject is considered, the less logical seems such an assumption. The government is permitting more flagrant wrongs without any stronger resentment than a mild protest. Why has Great Britain been permitted to stop and search American ships on the high seas, or to seize and force them into British ports, to be searched, upon the mere suspicion that they might have contained contraband of war, and upon the presumption that such contraband of war, as between belligerents, if found aboard, was destined for a British enemy, although cleared for a neutral port? Why has President Wilson not insisted upon the right of American citizens upon the right of American citizens to ship their goods, to neutral countries, without danger of seizure, upon a determination to sever friendly relyations with Great Britain? The course of that government, on this subject has been more decidedly in violation of international law than is that of Germany's determination to attack armed ships without warning. Logically, armed ships, of any class, are supposed to be prepared to resist attack, whether warned or otherwise. Whether the attack shall be made upon the open seas or by a submarine is not so materially different as to justify the United States in going to war, if some American citizen should take the chance of losing his life by becoming a passenger on a British armed ship At best, it would be a poor exhibition of patriotism on the part of any American to imperil his country's peace for the mere purpose of acting upon a questionable right. It would not be eminently patriotic to do so, if the right were unquestioned by most other countries, but, to the most decided advocate of the maintenance of American honor, there can be no call to put the question to practical test by embarking on an armed ship of either of the belligerents. In this view of the subject the advice of Bryan, and other prominent Democrats, to Americans, to refrain from embarking on armed ships of these belligherents is wise and sensible whatever may be their opinion of the right to do so without incurring danger.

The attitude of Republican statesmen, generally, is not very pronounced either way. The controversy seems to be confined to the Administration, backed, perhaps, by most of the prominent Democratic leaders. But there is a strong Democratic contingent against the President's policy. The Republicans will probably be divided in sentiment. They are, almost to a man, favorable to a reasonable plan of preparedness but the question of breaking friendly relations with Germany because of its submarine methods is a different proposition. If that should lead to war and a German ship of any class were to approach the American coast with hostile intent, no matter how many neutrals might be aboard of her, she would be promptly fired upon, without giving her warning. Is there any material difference between that proposition and Germany's determination to attack an armed British ship—a merchantman, if you please—regardless of the nationality of her passenger list?

Before the next issue of the Sentinel the situation between this country and Germany may take more definite shape.

In the meantime it may be interesting to inquire what was the practice of other countries in former years, if precedents can be found in their history. Congressman McLemore has unearthed a single British precedent, and that is in opposition to President Wilson's theory. It was a warning issued to British subjects in the far east, from the English consulate at Shanghai, during the war between Russia and Japan, and wss as follows:

"All subjects of the crown are notified that the British government will not undertake to be responsible for the safety of any British subject leaving this port on a ship of either of the belligerent nations."

It is well known that no country is more zealous for the rights of its citizens than is Great Britain. Yet in the instance quoted, British subjects were given to understand clearly that they could only travel on ships of the belligerents at their own personal risk and without involving their country in trouble with a power with which it was in friendly intercourse. And that looks amazingly like the logic that should be applied to American citizens in the European war.

The Sentinel alluded briefly to the subject last week and cannot defer discussing it further until the last minute this week. It has frankly expressed its view of the controversy, to which it will adhere unless it can be shown to be in error by more convincing arguments than have yet been offered in defence of the President's alleged purpose. In fact, it has seen no real argument on that side of the question. His followers have assured him that he is right, without going to the trouble of arguing the matter.

BILLY SUNDAY

Church people and the public generally are divided, in several particulars, concerning that remarkable man, Billy Sunday, and his methods of conducting revival religious services. Many church people, in fact most members of several of the denominations, enthusiastically approve his work in all its phases. They see nothing wrong in his physical antics; his slang language and often his irreverent expressions. All eccentricities, if they may be fairly described by so mild a term, pale into insignificance when contrasted with the wonderful results of his labors, in the professed conversion of many thousands of souls and the reclamation from licentiousness, debauchery and vileness of large numbers of those who have been and are being won by him to better and cleaner lives. Not by a long margin are his converts only of the classes mentioned. Many of them, perhaps most of them are people of hitherto reputable character and moral conduct. Others have been professed Christians and church members. The truth of all this must be conceded.

The churches which hold aloof from his support and condemn his methods, his slangy language and theatrical antics, as well as do many irreligious, but at the same time, reverent people, contrast these objectionable features with the orderly, and to some extent the austere, life of the Son of God whom he preaches. They can find nothing in the life of Christ, in the writings of the Sacred Evangelists, or in any of the books of the Bible in harmony with the language and manner of Mr. Sunday, and so absolutely condemn them.

There are others, however, who are repelled by the stage prformances of the man, who do not join in the opposition to him, while they cannot, in conscience, approve the sensational character of much that he says and does. To these, to denounce the results of his work, would be to condemn what may prove to be a migaty influence in shaping the destiny of many in time and in eternity. They are neither for nor against him, but concede that, though much that appears to them objectionable in his services and sermons, there is an element of power that reaches the hearts of sinners and brings them to repentance. And these critics of the man have perhaps the right view of his work. The permanent effect of the work yet remains to be demonstrated. Sam Jones, who followed much the same line as Billy Sunday, counted his converts by thousands. But to a large extent the effect was evanescent, and it is doubtful whether the world is any the better at this time for what he did as an evangelist, though doubtless it had a salutary influence on many lives for a time and that influence may have gone with them into eternity. Unsparing denunciation, or even lack of faith in Billy Sunday's work may, therefore, be an error for which those who resist it may have to give account to a higher power than man. It can be recalled that Gamailiel warned the leaders of the Jews against the persecution of St. Paul, lest, peradventure, they should fight against God.

Vast numbers of those who have found changed lives under Sunday's preaching have united with Christian churches and are thus brought under influences that will hold many of them to the faith. The editor of the Sentinel received a letter from his granddaughter, Mrs. Glenn Chesbro, of Syracuse, N. Y., a few days ago, in which she stated that many of the churches in that city had received large numbers of those converted in Sunday's meetings there. One Presbyterian Church added about 350 to its membership.

So while the editor of the Sentinel is not attracted by the peculiar performances of this noted evangelist, and cannot class himself as an enthusiastic admirer of the man, he cannot condemn him and ignore the results of his work.

The Baltimore papers are devoting much space to descriptions of Mr. Sunday and his family, and to accounts of his peculiar services and their effect upon his hearers. They are showing bad taste, however, in the cartoons they have been publishing about his fighting the devil. Whether so intended or not, the effect of these cartoons is to turn the advent of the evangelist in Baltimore, into ridicule. To thoughtful Christian people, not only of Mr. Sunday's warm supporters, but those who are holding aloof from him, these cartoons must be offensive. No religious question should be made a subject of ridicule.

MAY BE A BIG THING FOR BALTIMORE AND MARYLAND

The Bethlehem Steel Company has acquired the Sparrows Point steel plant and proposes, it is said, to spend twenty millions of dollars, or more, in its development and enlargement. The president of the Bethlehem company is quoted as making a statement to that effect. If this is reliable and the purpose proposed shall be carried out, it will cause the employment of 5,000 more workmen than at present. That will mean, of course, the establishment of many more homes and a large addition to the permanent population of the Point. But it will also cause the expenditure of large sums of money with the retail business houses of the city. The pay-roll of 5,000 men, many of whom will necessarily be skilled mechanics, will mount up probably to $75,000, and possibly more, per week, or say $300,000 per month. That will put in circulation three and a half to four millions of dollars per annum, at a very moderate estimate. All this may be only on paper, but the Sparrows Point Works have been thus far a decided success and, under the direction of such men as Schwab, there would seem to be no reason for doubting their proposed growth. The location is an ideal one, accessible by land and water, and for years the trade of the company with European and other nations must be extensive and lucrative. At present the steel companies are largely dependent upon war orders; but the end of the war will not materially diminish the demand for the products of steel factories, although they will be required for a very different purpose than the manufacture of death dealing projectiles. There seems to be, therefore, reasonable cause for supposing that the enlargement of the Sparrows Point works is neither chimerical, nor a vain boast of their purchasers.

And Baltimore will not be the only beneficiary of the enterprise. Even some remote sections of the State may profit by it, and such nearby counties as Carroll will share more fully in its benefits. It will give a market for many of the products of the farms and provide employment for many who might otherwise be idle a considerable portion of their time. This may not be entirely desirable to local employers of labor, but will certainly add to the general welfare.

Another advantage of the creation of such an extensive industry will be its share in adding to the revenue of the State government, and so saving the taxpayers something, however little, of the taxation under which they are now burdened.

All this is, of course, contingent upon the real purpose of the purchasers of the works, but it may not be a mistake to be optimistic on the subject.

Possibly, too, as an adjunct, if not the primary purpose of the purchasers of the plant, it may develop a great ship yard. The Sparrows Point Company has built quite a number of passenger and freight steamers, and constructed the great floating dry dock that was successfully taken to Manila several years ago. It is possible that the purchasers of the plant may be looking forward to the construction of submarines, war cruisers and other ships for the government. That has not been mentioned as one of their purposes, but the thought may not be mere speculation. The country people of Maryland may well share with those of Baltimore, in the possible great future of Sparrows Point under the direction of its new owners.

THE FIGHT ON STATE WIDE PROHIBITION

The State wide Prohibition bill was the order of the day in the legislature, on Tuesday, and a lengthy discussion of the measure occurred, but no vote was taken, either on the bill or pending amendments, a number of which had been submitted by the Committee on Temperance. The discussion was resumed on Wednesday. It is possible that a vote will not have been reached when the Sentinel goes to press this week, as much speaking was anticipated when this was written.

The purpose of this article is, in the first place, to call attention to the active interest of Senator Warfield, of this county, in the bill. He may be said to be the leader of its friends in the Senate and is making a strenuous fight, as this is being written, in favor of its passage. He did the cause a signal service by eliciting an argument in its favor from Mr. Joseph D. Baker. Readers of the Sentinel may remember that two weeks ago it stated, in an editorial, that the counties and city should stand or fall together on this State wide proposition. In a long letter to Senator Warfield in answer to a request from that gentleman, Mr. Baker gave a summary of reasons why the interests of the counties and the city are identical, not only on this question of prohibition, but in general. His argument was, practically, unanswerable. The letter was published as an advertisement in Baltimore morning dailies, and was thus given wide circulation. It should have been, and probably was, read by thousands of the people of the State.

It must be admitted by any unprejudiced observer that a prohibitory bill for the counties would be shorn of half of its effect, or more, with Baltimore in the license column. Every dry county in the State, at this time, finds its law less effective than it should be because of liquor traffic by number of its citizens with Baltimore. Baltimore should, therefore, be included in the pending measure for the protection of the counties alone. And when, to that is added the deliverance of its own citizens from the saloon evil, the arguments of the opponents of State wide prohibition are without force. On this and other questions the interests of county and city ARE identical and they should stand together.

An amendment was submitted to the bill in the Senate, on Wednesday, to exclude the city from the referendum, but it was voted down by the decisive vote of 20 to 7.

RACE-TRACK GAMBLING

The attention of the Sentinel has been called to what has become a monstrous and growing evil in this State, namely, race-track gambling. Maryland law at present permits this evil, but an effort is being made to correct it in some measure by bills now pending in the General Assembly. Attention is being called to it in a pamphlet which somebody is sending out and in which the principal statement is contained in an article from a publication called "Whip and Spur." The object of this article seems to be to expose the methods of the proprietors of the four race tracks in this State and to protect the "weaklings and fools" who bet on horse races. Yet it does not wholly condemn horse racing if properly controlled by law as clean sport.

Some of the things it does condemn are the long periods, devoted to the game in Maryland, in contrast with the period permitted in New York; the percentage of profit reaped by the proprietors from the bookmaking, and the extortion upon visitors to the grounds for the things sold for their convenience. It figures up that racing is permitted at the four parks, in the aggregate, 106 days in the year, while in New York only 74 days are devoted to it. Baltimore with a population of 583,000, is named as the centre of the racing district in Maryland, 26 days being given to it at Bowie, 28 at Havre de Grace, 26 at Pimlico and 26 at Laurel, while in New York, with a city of 5,625,000, Belmont Park is open 39 days, Aqueduct 21 days and Jamaica 14 days. The 39 days at Belmont Park include the meeting of the Empire city Racing Association.

Whip and Spur estimates that the profits of the owners of the four tracks in Maryland aggregate $1,500,000 annually. If that be true, what must be the sum of which the "suckers," as it calls them, must be mulcted by the book makers.

This resume from Whip and Spur is given for the purpose of joining with other journals, in calling attention to the monstrous evil and urging the legislature to apply an effective corrective to it. Maryland law against ordinary gambling is emphatic. Card tables, where betting is permitted, are in violation of law, and indulgence in shooting craps is punishable by fine and, it may be, by imprisonment. Is betting on horse races any more morally better than cards and craps. The legislature would act logically by enacting a drastic law against it, and by maintaining a sufficient detective and police force to prevent it.

The development of speed in horses may be very desirable, but it is probable that it is no greater today, among running horses, than it was with the best of them 100 years ago. It was wildly said, nearly that length of time past, that the English horse Eclipse could cover a mile a minute. In those days 1.41 was regarded as the best time really recognized. Has that time been lessened by more than two seconds? Still human beings must have their diversions and there is nothing much more attractive than maintaining a high standard in horse flesh, by proper trials of speed. But away, by law, with the gambling feature of the sport.

FIFTY YEARS WORK FOR GIRLS

The 50 years' work of the Young Women's Christian Association has just been recognized by anniversary doings. Social work for girls has has not been as expensive as that for men and boys. The latter, to succeed on any large scale, takes very large sums of money. It has to compete with a hundred dazzling resorts and amusements. There must be gyms, swimming pools, usually billiards, pool and other games. The location must be strategic and expensive.

Boys and young men are lords of creation. They feel that they are conferring a favor when they use quarters provided for them by philanthropy, which must compare with any social club to suit their high mightiness.

Girls and young women do not demand so much. The majority of Young Women's Christian Associations and girls clubs have succeeded without large expense for athletic equipment.

Modern industrial life brings many a lonely girl into towns and cities. Drawn by some opportunity of self support, her only relation to the community is through her office ties. These may convey no suitable social invitation. She needs a place where she can engage in recreating diversions, join classes for mental and professional improvement, and make friends.

Every community ought to have a Young Women's Christian Association, a Girls' Club, or some work to meet these needs. In small places the same idea can be carried out as a department of church work. The Young Women's Christian Association started in a time when women were supposed to remain at home cooking and baking, and not seek either work or diversion away from home. In spite of many prejudices it has built up a splendid organization. It has made a home for many a lonely tenant of boarding houses and hall bed rooms. And it has given an active outlet to many girls who have become restless and dissatisfied in the routine of home lives.

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