

children imagine the home life of clowns to be continuously merry and whimsical. They will picture him hurling recalcitrant Austrians who refused to surrender over his head down mountain-sides, or catching on the fly and tossing back into the foe's rock-burrows with immense effect their own Skoda shells, or carrying off the field a dozen or more of his wounded countrymen tucked away on his back and in his huge arms. He, on the rock-strewn battlefield, and D'Annunzio circling above in his plane, symbolize the dual personality of the Italian people.

## Dummheit

**I**T is a good German word, and it is a word which Germans themselves have freely applied to their own rulers. After the revelations of the past few days, they will be inclined to apply it with more freedom and bitterness than ever. In the way of criminal proceedings the German Government has lost the power to give the world anything novel. The worst is now easily believed. But in displays of stupidity German officials seem to be able to go on surpassing even themselves. What most strikes one in von Bernstorff's attempt to corrupt Congress and in all the plotting and violation of the law in which the German Embassy and its agents and dupes engaged is not so much the wickedness of the whole as its crass folly. These astute super-men of diplomacy were imposed upon right and left. They were veritable "easy marks" for adventurers and fakers. The money they poured out was largely wasted. They bought men for thousands who were notoriously not worth a nickel. And their miscalculations throughout were simply ludicrous. They had more blundering conceptions of the real forces that sway this country than were ever before entertained by a single set of incompetents. A child in the kindergarten would have had a better idea of means and ends than that they acted upon. They were credulous beyond belief; they were led through the nose by all sorts of impostors; they neither understood their job nor how to go about it. Of boasted German efficiency in government, they made a screaming farce.

With all the outside world now aware of this, how long will it be before the German people understand it? That they have long been awake to the poor capacity of their ruling classes there is much evidence. In their military leaders they appear still to have confidence, but their civilian officials they have come thoroughly to distrust. Interesting evidence on this point is given in the September number of the *Nineteenth Century* by Prof. F. Sefton Delmer. He, Australian-born, had lived for twenty years past in Germany, during the latter part of the time being a professor in the University of Berlin. From the outbreak of the war until May of this year, he was a civil prisoner in Berlin. He was able, however, to go about under restrictions, and to see something of his university friends. What he writes of their change of opinion is instructive. He declares:

Before the war the intellectual classes of Germany were almost to a man on the side of the Kaiser. But many of these people, who in August, 1914, lauded their ruler to the skies as a new Charlemagne, now shrug their shoulders at him and his House. They put the disaster which has come over them in consequence of this war, and the still worse disasters with which they see themselves threatened in the near future, down to the Kaiser's clumsy diplomatic preparation of the war, and his autocratic system. His everlasting pose, his wish to delude himself and them into the belief that he is a second Frederick the Great, his fickleness and impulsiveness as a pilot of German policy,

have all come home to them. "He dismissed Bismarck," I have heard people say, "but just look at the statesmen he has chosen as his Chancellors since—first Caprivi, a mere soldier; then Hohenlohe, the courtier; then the selfish fox von Bülow, and after him the pliable and weak-kneed philosopher Bethmann, but never a really strong man or great statesman among them all."

The widespread desire for political reform in Germany is strongly testified to by Professor Delmer. Liberals and Socialists are hot for it, and so are many Conservatives. "I have heard moderate Conservatives say that the Hohenzollerns did an evil thing for Germany when they arrogated to themselves the hereditary right to the title of Kaiser." The future Kaiser, they contend, "must be chosen according to merit." And in countless ways is the belief manifest in Germany that the Empire is in danger of being ruined by incapable rulers. "Do you really suppose," Professor Delmer heard a man ask Karl Liebknecht, "our Government reckoned with England's coming into the war?" "Goodness knows!" he replied; "they are stupid enough for anything." And the plaint is common that there has been no open career for talent in the German Government. Discussing this question with Professor Delmer, one German said: "Somehow or other, Germany must in future be governed by its first-rate, and not, as is now the case, by its *third-rate minds*."

Events are daily piling up proof of the fatuous control of German foreign policy. What will proud Germans think of their Foreign Office meekly lying down before an ultimatum from Argentina? With what composure will they read of the alienation of Sweden by official deceit? How will they feel about their Zimmermanns and their Luxburgs and their Bernstorffs, when the full evidence of their incredible follies is laid before the German public? With the shame there will surely be resentment—resentment that Germany has been put in such a bad light by the acts of her rulers, so that her Government to-day is distrusted or hated everywhere, and no one can be found to place faith in its pledges, or to be anything but nauseated when it talks about morality and good faith among nations. President Wilson does not need to go outside of Germany to find powerful support for his contention that the existing German Government has made itself impossible. To have been guilty of such gigantic stupidities is a condemnation from which there can be no appeal. Ferocious lawlessness might have been pardoned if it had been successful; but failure heaped on mistake makes up an undeniable *Dummheit* upon which the German people, in sheer self-defence, will soon be compelled to lay violent hands.

## Abusing Mr. Hoover

**W**HEN Mr. Hoover accepted his post, he understood that he was accepting a prospect of endless fault-finding. A month after their final vote against the Food bill, certain Senators were already berating him. Proudly recalling his opposition, on September 8 Senator Sherman called attention to the fact that the price of bread had not decreased "to a single family":

Pork has gone to \$20. Beef has risen to more than \$18 on the hoof. Sheep have gone up accordingly. Every animal producing meat to feed mankind has reached unprecedented figures. Eggs are 60 cents a dozen in Washington, and still the Government lives and the Food Controller is in the full operation of his appointed powers. Every broken egg means a nickel. I looked

at my bill this morning from the grocery, and eggs are 60 cents a dozen. Where is Hoover?

Senator Gronna sarcastically interrupted that no one must lose sight of the fact that Hoover had reduced the price of wheat to the producer 33 per cent. without affecting that to the consumer. La Follette chimed in with, "I do not see how it is possible for Mr. Hoover or the President to escape responsibility for the prices that prevail with regard to any product." Every one knows how to allow for the petty animus of these men; but is not a wider dissatisfaction being felt? Are there not murmurs that, while the press is full of predictions of lower costs of food, they are not being realized? Are not the prices of meat and bread in England being discontentedly compared with ours?

If this shortsighted attitude gains ground, it will be most unfortunate. The rejoinders in the Senate constituted a reminder that Congress fell far short of making Hoover a real "food dictator." Senator La Follette himself pointed out that "for some reason" no power was given to regulate the prices of retail dealers doing a business of less than \$100,000 a year. Gronna's jibe recalls to us that the stipulation for \$2 wheat in 1918 which he and others insisted on was a potent factor in the decision to place wheat this short year at \$2.20; and, of course, the high price of wheat is the basic reason for high bread, the elevators and millers being under Government power. Mr. Hoover has at no time dealt in rash promises, or overestimated his strength as against the mighty world-forces in this time of abnormal economic conditions. Nothing that he can do will remove the blockade upon Russian or Australian grain, or increase South American exports, or otherwise lessen the urgency of Europe's demands upon our limited supplies. He has contented himself with waiting until he could point to definite achievements, and nothing could be a greater error than the assertion that none of these are yet in sight. The price of sugar, for example, is perceptibly lower to every housewife; the price of bread, *pace* Sherman, will almost certainly be slightly lower. The organization at Washington cannot be brought to the highest pitch of efficiency without the lapse of time, but already it is counting heavily for increased production and for conservation, and with at least some weight for the steady elimination of profiteering. The increasing of production and of household economy is a prime object.

A deal of fault-finding would be checked by realizing that we cannot expect to win the war without immediate sacrifice by every individual; that we have been thrown into an economic as well as military association with the Allies; and that Mr. Hoover's duty is to envisage his problem as international as well as national, and to improve production and distribution, not only for America, but for the nations beside which we are fighting. So far as the pressure of high prices was reason for it, we might have had a Food Controller any time these three years; but he was appointed following the declaration of war with the distinct idea of helping us and others to wage it. The price of wheat has had to be fixed with a liberality which will encourage bumper production next year for shipment abroad in case the war is still raging, with a million or more Americans in France. The Food Controller has constantly preached the necessity of shipping food abroad in increasing quantities, of economizing here so that more may go. If we could set up partial barriers to its export, it would be possible to lower prices accordingly; but the barriers must go down.

Prices of food are moving towards a fairly uniform international level, which, of course, is at an unheard-of mark; the amount the English and French farmers are paid for wheat is approximately the amount the American farmer is paid. With all the resources of America cast into the balance, we have a right to complain of profiteering where it exists, but no right to chafe under a common burden which must be great with all profiteering ended. For the abnormality is irremovable; and at the bottom is the farmer who is no profiteer, though he makes thrice as much as formerly, but must be spurred to greater effort.

Americans who think that we are assuming an unjust share of the burden are little acquainted with conditions abroad. In England, where the eight commissions inquiring into industrial unrest have agreed that the chief cause is the high cost of living and unequal distribution of food, bread is indeed cheaper than here. But it is war bread of coarser ingredients, and the state makes good the loss to the seller at the fixed price. In isolated Australia it might be supposed that food would not be high; yet the *Survey* contains a long account of how soaring prices forced the Government to embark in its distribution and even production, and of how unsatisfactory much of the result has seemed. The housewife's anxiety is world wide, and Americans are on the whole in a favored position. As for needless abuses in distribution and selling, they doubtless exist; they date far back, and States and cities have been indifferent to them; it would be folly to think that a Federal administrator could eliminate them in two months.

## Treatment of Prisoners in Germany

THREE books just published by persons who have been prisoners in Germany typify excellently the various kinds of experience gone through by men of Entente nationalities unfortunate enough to fall into German hands. This question of the treatment of prisoners, since we have entered the war and have our own young men on the western front, has become a matter of the most vital interest to all of us. Ambassador Gerard has spoken anything but reassuringly on the subject. And most returning captives, exchanged usually for Germans, tell very gruesome tales of their captivity. The three books in question are the story of "A Hostage in Germany," by M. Desson, a civilian who was incarcerated as a measure of reprisal for alleged French maltreatment of Germans in Morocco; "On the Right of the British Line," by Gilbert Nobbs, an English officer who lost his eyesight in battle and was taken, first to a German hospital and then to an internment camp, and "In German Hands," by Charles Hennebois, a French soldier out of the ranks, severely wounded in the leg, which was amputated by the Germans. He, after long sufferings, finally was exchanged and sent back to his beloved France. These three books tell typical stories because the first describes the treatment the Germans meted out to civilian prisoners, the second tells how captive officers are taken care of, and the last narrates the terrible story of a mere private soldier in the hands of his enemies.

Naturally, this matter of the civilian internes interests Americans less because there seem to be only about a hundred or so of their own fellow-countrymen in Germany, and these remained behind, when Mr. Gerard left, largely of