

Rhode Island electing a Democratic senator, there will soon be only a dozen "national" states left in the union. It is said that the trouble with the West is that it is "provincial." If Mr. Hughes had been elected you can imagine the small-town chortling of the Western editor: "Shadow Lawn has become Eclipse Manor"——"The President of Humanity has been succeeded by the President of the Nation"——"Colonel House's reputation as a Warwick needs reënamelling"——"New Jersey was guilty of Woodrow Wilson but she has done her part to expiate the blunder." It happens, however, that these quotations are all taken from the early Wednesday morning edition of Mr. Munsey's New York Sun.

IN referring last week to a phase of the election THE NEW REPUBLIC suggested that when Governor Whitman can run ahead of Mr. Hughes in New York, and Governor McCall and Senator Lodge outstrip him in Massachusetts, there is no sign that President Wilson's foreign policy has been repudiated decisively, even in the East. In fairness to Mr. Hughes it should be pointed out that while he ran behind Governor McCall he received a larger popular vote than either Governor Whitman or Senator Lodge. The significant fact, however, is that his pluralities both in Massachusetts and in New York were much smaller than those by which Whitman, Lodge and McCall won.

THE affaire Rochette seems likely to set people in France by the ears again. A fugitive from justice since 1912, pursued in vain by the police in all parts of the world, the notorious Rochette, has, it seems, been quietly serving in the army as a motor cyclist since August, 1914. At about that date, M. Hervé, editor of the *Victoire*, had turned his office into a sort of clearing house for the criminal careers of all those who wished to wipe out past offences by joining the army. From his friends and acquaintances he secured honorable discharge papers which he turned over to criminal applicants who wished to enlist. One day Henri Rochette appeared and demanded the same privilege, whereupon M. Hervé begged one of his colleagues to give him his *livret militaire* which he promptly handed over to Rochette. The latter at once enlisted under the name of that gentleman, M. Georges Bienaimé and has since been serving respectably in the automobile reserves at Granville where he was arrested the other day. Now the delicate question arises, whether, as M. Hervé puts it, the government is going to make itself grotesque and odious by proceeding against Rochette in the circumstances, or, as M. Capus and other intellec-

tuals say, whether citizens are no longer to be equal before the law, and condemned criminals are to go scot-free as the combined result of morbid sentimentality over all picturesque scoundrels and popular regard for a sort of heroism that is achieved on very easy terms. Looking at it in as common-sense manner as is possible at this distance, one would think that serving as an automobilist in the French army, instead of dodging the police all around the face of the globe was on the whole too good a bargain to entitle any condemned criminal to exemption on the score of heroism.

Germany and the League of Peace

BECAUSE of the source from which it came the German Chancellor's speech of last week was the most momentous and encouraging utterance which has been made since the beginning of the war by the spokesman of a belligerent government. In memorable words and without the least equivocation von Bethmann-Hollweg proclaimed Germany's willingness to consider participation in a league to enforce peace. His support of the idea went as far as under existing conditions any reasonable pacifist could expect. Not only did he clearly recognize the superiority of the league-to-enforce peace idea over past proposals for international organization, but he gave forcible expression to the increasing horror of war which the bloody havoc of the past two years has wrought in the minds of humane men in all countries. "If at and after the end of the war," he said, "the world will only become fully conscious of the horrifying destruction of life and property, then throughout the whole of humanity there will ring out a cry for peaceful arrangements and understandings which, as far as within human power, will avoid the return of such a monstrous catastrophe. . . . Germany is at all times ready to join a league of nations—yes even to place herself at the head of such a league—to keep in check disturbers of the peace."

This overture on the part of Germany will immediately be condemned as insincere and as intended to mislead the sympathy of neutrals. The Germans have failed, and they are pretending interest in a peace league in order to escape the consequences of their own misdeeds. Such a criticism is not in our opinion either true or important. The Germans have suffered from the ravages of the war as much as France and Russia and more than Italy and Great Britain. No matter how much they may still consider isolated local wars useful instruments of national policy, they must understand the suicidal futility of wars which involve the

whole of Europe and raise issues of national life and death rather than specific conflicts of national interest. Germany has, moreover, strong reasons to welcome a league of peace whose organization would subordinate questions concerning territorial readjustments to the overwhelming need of organizing international security. The Germans are situated in the center of Europe with possible enemies on every frontier. They have become exceptionally powerful because their situation makes them exceptionally vulnerable. When they cry out for some kind of an organization of peace which may help to prevent the repetition of the "monstrous catastrophe" of a general war, they are not only giving expression to the lesson of their own bitter experience of the past two years, but to a true interpretation of the facts of their political geography and history.

In any event suspicions as to motives should not be allowed to prevent the making of a serious attempt to capitalize the German Chancellor's speech. If every overture in the direction of organizing international security is to be considered suspect, because its proposer may be using it to accomplish other than its ostensible purpose, then any attempt to get away from the organized insecurity of the past might as well be abandoned. The course of subsequent negotiations will develop abundant opportunities of testing German sincerity. It is enough for the present that the official exponent of German foreign policy has published the following statement of German purposes. "Germany will honestly coöperate in the examination of every endeavor to find a practical solution and will collaborate for its possible realization," the object being in part to "create political conditions that do full justice to the free development of all nations small as well as great." This is a moderate, compliant and apparently candid definition of the steps which Germany will take in order to help the organization of a league of peace. It commits her government to nothing but an experimental negotiation, but it raises no questions or barriers which need make negotiation fruitless. On the basis of such an overture a series of specific proposals could be submitted to Germany, the discussion of which would immediately expose any lack of good faith.

The German Chancellor does, indeed, suggest a condition in the absence of which Germany would refuse to discuss the organization of international security. The Allies must enter the negotiations in a state of mind as experimental and as non-committal as that in which Germany enters it. If Germany does not impose conditions which would make the negotiations fruitless, neither must the Allies, and that is precisely what, according to their spokesmen, they may intend to do. The French,

English, and Russian statesmen have already devised a method of preventing the repetition of this "monstrous catastrophe." They propose to alter the balance of power in Europe by taking away the Slavic subjects of the Central Empires and so deprive Germany of any sufficient means of future aggression. While they are willing to enter a league of peace, they seek to draw a sharp distinction between what the treaty of peace may do to promote their own security and what an international organization may do to promote general security. But surely the German Chancellor is right in insisting that a policy of this kind, should the Allies possess the power to carry it out, would prevent German participation in a league to enforce peace. If all the essential controversies of the war are to be decided, willy-nilly, against Germany, and a league of peace subsequently organized, the league would become nothing but a device to underwrite a victory for the Allies and a defeat for Germany. It would be a league to prevent Germany from protesting against the consequences of her defeat, and as such would keep alive all the old animosities and apprehensions.

In order to convert the league to enforce peace into a fruitful experiment in international organization the accession of Germany is as desirable for one set of reasons as the accession of the United States is for another. The strategic situation of the Germans in the very center of Europe makes them of necessity either the most serviceable bulwark of international security or its most dangerous enemy. In the long run they would certainly succeed in dividing and destroying any league which ignored German interests and the need of German participation. Allied with Russia they would be impregnable and could easily overrun the continent of Europe. Allied with the western Powers, the alliance could make liberalism triumphant in Europe and prevent possible Russian insurgency from becoming dangerous. The concert of Europe could become a growing and a sufficiently stable organization without either Russia or France, because these two countries if isolated might be powerless. But it would be a futile organization without both Germany and Great Britain. The cost of isolating Germany is great enough to strain any alliance which undertakes it as a permanent policy; and Great Britain commands the highway of the world. Germany is indispensable to the league of peace and the fact of her indispensability should persuade the Allied governments to force nothing into the settlement after the war which would prevent her participation in a peace league. By so doing they will be taking the first decisive step to substitute the principle of a Concert of Europe in place of a Balance.

No doubt the increase of German military power has upset the balance as it did formerly exist; but in so far as the upset involves a danger, the danger should be guarded against by enlisting the assistance of neutrals rather than by emasculating Germany. It has become literally true, as it was not in the days of Canning, that the New World can be called in to redress the balance in the Old. Europe has the opportunity, if it only will, to move in the direction of a concert. The United States can be called in to redress a balance against the Allies. It cannot fairly be called in to confirm a balance which has been deliberately manufactured against Germany.

Honor and Election Returns

TOWARDS ten-thirty on election night many prominent people began to issue statements about the defeat of Mr. Wilson. Not content with registering their pleasure in the victory which seemed to be theirs, they stamped violently and joyfully on the prostrate loser. It was wretched sportsmanship. It was a sin against that spirit of live and let live without which a democracy like ours is unworkable. And it was unintelligent. It was unintelligent not because the later returns reversed the result, but because all the talk about yellow streaks, too proud to fight, and national honor has now become feeble political melodrama.

Eighteen million men and women voted in the election. They were certain to divide more or less evenly. No one in his senses ever supposed there would be a difference of two million votes between the candidates. The less popular was sure to poll many more votes than there were human beings in the United States when the nation was founded. And yet prominent Republican newspapers and ex-Presidents talked for months as if Americanism and national honor could be won or lost in a few pivotal states. The reason those premature rhapsodies sound so queer now is that we have had a demonstration of what it means to make simple spiritual values depend on the complex movement of a diversified people. If on Tuesday night we had cast off the motto "too proud to fight," are we to assume that by Thursday night we had adopted it? If by midnight we had erased the yellow streak, did we paint it in by daybreak?

Obviously not. No one who knows politics thinks that the votes of eighteen million people are determined by any such single reason as Mr. Roosevelt assumed. He knows perfectly well that if there are 8,508,000 Wilson votes and 8,090,000 Hughes votes, it does not follow that there are 8,508,000 people too proud to fight and 8,090,000

red-blooded heroes. Anyone who watched the Republican campaign knows that the methods used to win votes entitled no one to conclude that they fitted the neat formulae announced on election night. The last ten days of the Republican campaign were an effort to create a stampede by threatening the ignorant with the danger of a panic. Suppose this had been even more successful than it was. Just how would this result indicate that the American people wanted intervention in Mexico or less vacillation as against Germany?

Or consider the talk about the fibre of our people having been weakened. Has Ohio less fibre than Indiana or Pennsylvania? Is Vermont the home of heroes and New Hampshire a poltroon by sixty-three votes? Is North Dakota fat and materialistic, South Dakota lean, athletic and the soul of honor? Why do Arizona and New Mexico, why does the town of Columbus itself, find Wilson's Mexican policy less intolerable than certain northern newspapers? Why do so many polls of militia regiments on the border show a majority for Wilson? Now it would be just as much out of order for one of Mr. Wilson's supporters to say that the result was "national" approval of all he has done. The winner has the votes to elect him. How he got them all no human being can say with certainty. The point is that the motives which go to the making of majorities or minorities in a republic the size of ours are infinitely more complicated than any partisan will admit.

It is a sign of political immaturity to treat a nation as if it were an individual with a conscience, a sense of honor, a single financial interest, a single head, a single heart, and a single life. Actually a nation is a mass of communities and classes and groups tied together for some purposes, antagonistic for others, indifferent to many. It consists of people growing up, growing old, passing on in the business of life. To make fixed entities out of Britain, Germany, America, and talk as if they were changeless as pieces on a chess board is to live among those fictions which obscure the necessities and the true costs of politics. Mr. Lloyd-George was guilty of such a fiction in the famous interview when he compared Britain to a prize-fighter and said it did not matter how long the war lasted. Because he thought of his country as a single immortal person and lost sight of the mortal agonies of every-day life in the trenches, he uttered a remark that was revolting to every humane person.

It is a dangerous thing to forget that a nation consists of a large number of people, and that men may disagree without becoming villains. Whoever forgets it is certain sooner or later to feel a little silly.