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**T**HE replacement of Michaelis by Count von Hertling appears to be a step toward the democratization of Germany, although not a long step. Something is gained through the transfer of the chancellorship from Prussian to Bavarian hands. Von Hertling is conservative, opposed to parliamentary control of the administration, but his reasons are not Prussian reasons. Von Hertling's opposition to constitutional reform arises out of the fear that all imperial legislation would be manipulated in the interest of the Prussian state, if the Reichstag, in which Prussian representations would have a large majority, became the supreme organ of government. The recent peace agitation was conducted under Bavarian leadership, and it is possible that Von Hertling was in closer sympathy with it than Michaelis. It is further not without significance that Michaelis was ousted, not on account of a breakdown in the administrative service, but on account of his failure to win and retain the confidence of the Reichstag majority. The Kaiser, to be sure, was careful to avoid any appearance of consulting the Reichstag in reference to Michaelis's

successor, but an extreme solicitude for the preservation of forms of the prerogative is a confession that the prerogative is not so securely established as formerly.

**“A**MERICA against Europe: this is gradually becoming the character of the war, through the Entente's fault.” This is the grave charge brought against the Allies by Count von Hertling. The outrage of dragging America into a European squabble must appear in German eyes as of a piece with the employment of African and Asiatic troops. In spite of the present superficial appearance of discord, Europe, viewed in the light of German philosophy, is fundamentally an organic community of nations, with common interests against the rest of the world to which all internal conflicts of interest ought to be subordinated. In the same light, the great war is simply a civil war, in which the enemies of Germany are only rebels, so long as they do their own fighting, but traitors as well when they call in black or brown or yellow or American men. One of the benefits the Germans may be expected to gain from the failure of their project of conquest will be the shattering of a provincialism that refuses to recognize that the community of civilized nations transcends the limits of the European continent, and even transcends the limits of the white race.

**B**RAZIL'S declaration of war against Germany emphasizes the international character of the Allied enterprise. All the greater nations of the world except Germany and Austria-Hungary are now associated in a league held together by a common international purpose. Americans have especial reason for welcoming the accession of Brazil to the league of the Allies. Other Latin American states may be expected to follow Brazil's example, with the result that pan-Americanism stands a chance of becoming an accomplished fact instead of an aspiration. The German military party will no doubt make light of Brazil's belli-

gerency. Not so the German merchants and manufacturers who are looking beyond the war to the work of reconstruction. If Brazil had remained neutral through the war, they might have counted upon at least one market of great potentiality, one immense storehouse of raw materials, in which they might have traded on equal terms with England, France and the United States. In this one state, they might have preserved intact their commercial organization and their propertied interests. The dream of Brazil as a settlement colony was still vivid in the minds of many Germans. With Brazil in the war, German interests in the country must inevitably decay; and after the war, Brazil, in common with the other nations leagued against Germany, will find means to prevent any recrudescence of the policy of "peaceful penetration."

**J**APAN, so it is reported, is to receive from the United States the steel she so urgently requires for her shipyards, and in return is to lend the use of some hundreds of thousands of tons of shipping. Thus little by little are the differences of interest within the Allied camp negotiated away. Ever since the enactment of our embargo measures, the Japanese shipyards have suffered under a steel famine. The world's greatest need was ships, and in Japan were shipyards half closed down, skilled workmen idle. We were in a position to turn out ship plates beyond the requirements of our own shipyards, but only at the cost of neglecting other demands for steel, also urgent. We could afford to furnish Japan with steel only in return for an immediate contribution to the merchant fleets in occidental waters. Japan appears to have accepted the bargain, which we need not suppose was an easy one from her national point of view. Her tonnage was in excessive demand on the Pacific in consequence of the depletion of the fleets of the western nations. She was building up her trade, and if she could have kept most of her existing ships out of harm's way, at the same time proceeding uninterruptedly with the construction of new ones, her commercial position in the Pacific would have been securely established at the end of the war.

**O**NE million and three quarters subscribed to the Second Liberty Loan by the Officers Training Camp at Plattsburgh is a record to shame the civilians who have held back on account of their unwillingness to sacrifice present means of enjoyment to their country's need. The men at Plattsburgh might well have considered that in offering their lives, if the fortune of war should demand them, they have given enough. Officers in training are not a class that can easily dispense with

their modest stipends. As a matter of fact, most of the Plattsburgh subscriptions represented heavy personal sacrifices, at least as sacrifices are reckoned in civil life. They were made not out of considerations of ultimate personal benefit—although our soldiers if they adopt the habit of thrift will return from their campaigns better prepared to take a fresh start in civil life than any body of veterans in our history. The Plattsburgh men subscribed because, more than their civilian fellows, they had a realization of the future needs of their country, and desired to set an example worth following. A similar spirit has been evinced by our soldiers, both volunteer and conscripts, in the training camps, and by Pershing's men in France, who, one might suppose, would not now be much inclined to take upon their shoulders a part of what is properly the civilian's burden.

**I**N the demonology of the agrarian democracy from which Speaker Clark derived his political creeds, financiers, stock gamblers and usurers are all one malignant group, adepts at conspiracy against working humanity and their country. Accordingly when some one, no doubt of the same school of economics as Speaker Clark, gave him the tip that a financial conspiracy had been organized in New York against the Second Liberty Loan, he accepted it at its face value as something natural enough to be believed even without inside information. Is it not the object in life of the financial group to increase the breed of barren money? Would not this group like to see a four per cent loan fail, in order that we might have a five per cent issue? The enormous subscriptions of financial New York to the loan in its last days are cited by the press as a sufficient refutation of the Speaker's charge, and they appear to be accepted as such by Speaker Clark himself. But there is a still more conclusive refutation. Financial New York does not want the interest on government loans to go up. If United States bonds yielded five per cent, what would happen to the value of the vast mass of state and municipal bonds yielding four per cent, of corporation bonds yielding four or four and one half per cent, to long term mortgages yielding five per cent? Inevitably such values would fall below par. The individual holders of such investments could not possibly secure adequate compensation, through the higher rate on their new investments, for the impairment of the capital value of their existing investments. As for the corporate bondholders, such as the savings banks, the trust companies and the life insurance companies, the fall of capital values would seriously endanger their solvency. There may have been "financial conspiracies" in New York

concerning the Second Liberty Loan, but their object must have been to make it so great a success that the government might have no occasion to raise the rate of interest.

**W**HATEVER the result of the election in New York City on Tuesday, there is one thing that it will not tell, namely, what kind of government a majority of the voters really want. Mayor Mitchel's reelection will ensure New York four years more of as good a government as it has ever had. There is every sort of reason for believing that Judge Hylan's election will give the city as wretched a specimen of inefficient and corrupt government as it had when Van Wyck was mayor. That is the issue as it would have been presented to the voters if they had been shut up to a choice between Tammany government and good government. Of course it is not the single issue at this election. The issues are even more numerous and even more confused than usual. The German victories in Italy, which have no direct bearing upon municipal policy or administration, will beyond doubt have an influence upon the New York returns. These victories, with their portentous military and political possibilities, may keep Mr. Hillquit's vote from being as large as it would have been had the election taken place before Mackensen began his drive. They show, with sinister and menacing clearness, the meaning of Mr. Hillquit's attitude toward the war, of his perfect willingness to have America's part in the war an absolute failure. He would be glad to have the United States fail to put and supply and keep an army in the field. The results of such a failure may be foreseen by anybody who reads the news from Italy.

**N**EVERTHELESS, because the time was too short to make every voter understand these things, many men will vote for Hillquit who have neither part nor lot in his desire to see America fail, and who utterly abhor the notion of German victory. They will vote for him, as we said last week, because they wish to protest as democrats against the tide of intolerance which always threatens to submerge a nation just beginning a war, and which no one in authority is publicly making an attempt to check. By few will the votes these men cast be distinguished from the other Hillquit votes. Every enemy of the United States, in Germany and here at home, will interpret the total as a declaration against American participation in and prosecution of the war. There is, however, no reason why those whose business it is both to interpret and to form public opinion should see the Hillquit vote exactly as the enemies of this country

see it. Our leaders at Washington can understand it, if they will, as in part a sign that some men who are heart and soul for the war, and for a secure instead of a German peace after the war, are also convinced that the war can and must be carried on without the abolition of free discussion in the United States.

**G**AS companies, like all other public utility concerns, are face to face with serious financial problems arising out of conditions of increasing costs. They cannot be blamed if they seek authority to raise rates, even if in case of success they simply shoulder their perplexities upon a public consisting largely of persons who are also confronted with rising prices mercilessly sapping away at incomes that refuse to rise. The gas companies may be in exceptionally difficult circumstances; at all events, their case ought to be heard on its merits. But the companies seem to be courting prejudice against them in their stand on the toluol question. This by-product the government needs in immense quantities. The gas companies can produce a large part of the government's requirements, provided that they are permitted to change from a candle power unit to a thermal unit. The standard they propose would apparently give the consumer less light per cubic foot, but a reduction in price is no part of the companies' program. As it appears to the layman, the companies propose to take toluol out of the consumer and sell it to the government at the very generous price the government pays. What else can one infer from the argument of the Consolidated Gas Company in its request for a rehearing on the New York Public Service Commission's order permitting the necessary change in standards, on condition that if the consumers must use more gas to obtain a given result, they shall be entitled to a rebate? The company complains that it "is facing conditions unparalleled in the history of the lighting industry and is operating under a rate fixed by statute that borders on confiscation." What has this to do with toluol? The statute is not one of the Medes and Persians, forever unchangeable. Let the companies change it if they can, instead of grasping at the subterfuge of reducing the standard in the interest of the nation and to their own profit.

**O**CTOBER, 1917, will be remembered as the month when soldiers of the United States took for the first time their place among the other fighters on a European battlefield. They were there, for the moment, only to finish their training, and not for any immediate help they could bring to the common cause. Yet their appearance in the French trenches will



appeal to the imagination of after ages, as it appeals to all our imaginations today. The first edge of our power has touched the enemy of all liberal nations. Some German soldier has perhaps seen these small beginnings of a movement which will grow and grow until German armies can feel the blows struck by an opponent that German statesmen have created and called across the seas.

## The Italian Disaster

**A**FTER the Rumanian collapse, after the Russian débacle, everybody supposed that the Allied cause had faced out its worst discouragements. What has happened on the Italian front is a ghastly surprise. At the lowest estimate of the results of German victory, the whole gains of the Italians since their entry into the war are at the point of being swept away. But the disaster may be much more far-reaching. The forces under Mackensen's command are obviously tremendous. If they could sweep the late Italian offensive before them like chaff, their momentum can hardly be checked at the frontier. The northern provinces of Italy may well be overrun, and it is not to be forgotten that these are the provinces in which the war spirit was most rife. It is decidedly possible that Italy may be placed in a position where she can no longer count as a serious factor in the war.

And were Italy thus reduced to impotence—though not suing for peace, for in this war nations lose all, but not their self-respect, as witness Belgium, Serbia, Rumania—nothing could be expected in the way of an offensive from the Greeks and the Allied forces at Saloniki. Italian co-operation was essential to effective operations on the Saloniki front. And this would mean that the Central Empires would be freed from any serious menace except on the western front.

The moral consequences of an overwhelming Italian defeat would be no less grave. Such terrible punishment inflicted upon an enemy state, formerly a member of the Dreibund, could not fail to strengthen the fighting spirit of the German people. Nor could it fail to consolidate the position of the autocracy and the military party. For the time, at any rate, Austrian disintegration would have been arrested. If Bulgaria had actually been coquetting with the Allies, we might be quite certain that she would return to her old undivided allegiance. The German party in Turkey could be expected to avail itself to the utmost of this new exhibition of Teutonic power. Turkey, we may recall, cherished an especial grudge against Italy.

This, to be sure, is assuming the worst. It is assuming that the Germans will not be checked before they have deeply penetrated Italian territory.

This is going beyond the probabilities in the case. But it is a wholesome thing to assume the worst. The great defect of Allied opinion hitherto has been the tendency to excessive optimism; to over-estimation of the forces on our side and to under-estimation of the power that remains in the Germans. How brief is the time since our newspaper strategists were heralding the Italian offensive as a probably decisive operation in the war. The Italians were within forty miles of Laibach, and from Laibach the road lay open to Vienna and Buda-Pesth. Open, yes, except for the Austrians and the Germans, certain to appear whenever Austria should be seriously menaced. Germans, who had served their apprenticeship in the trenches in France, facing enemies incomparably better equipped with the materials of war than any Italian force descending into Austria from the Adriatic highlands could possibly be.

If the worst is actually happening, and Italy is practically out of the fight, how does the general case of the Allies stand? There will be no short cut to victory, through prosperous ventures in subsidiary fields. The Germans will have to be beaten on the western front. And this, in the opinion of the most competent military critics, was bound to be the case in any event. The main body of the forces of the Central Empires is holding that front. Successes elsewhere could be but transient, so long as this main body remained undefeated.

And the military situation on the western front remains practically unchanged. Whatever befalls Italy, the flanks of the French-British-Belgium army are protected by the Swiss mountains and the sea. Even if the Germans conquered all northern Italy, they could not afford to detach men from the main front to attempt an invasion of France from the south. Lines of communication would work against them. As before, the seas remain open for supplying the armies in France and for conveying American reinforcements. As before, the weight of men and metal runs against the Germans. If the Germans and Austrians establish new lines on Italian soil, they will require at least as many men to hold them as faced the Italians in the mountainous terrain where the fighting of the last two years has taken place. Thus no new German forces are likely to be released for the west.

The defeat of the Germans on the western front remains, as before, difficult, but not impossible. The defeat of the Germans on this front is now the only thing that matters. And while the difficulty of achieving a victory over Germany remains the same, the necessity of victory has become much more imperative. Were the war to end on terms the Germans would now demand, the whole of Europe, east of the French boundary, would