

## CORRESPONDENCE

## Alsace-Lorraine

SIR: Permit me to thank you for publishing in your issue of September 28th the very cogent letter of Mr. Arthur O. Lovejoy apropos of the Alsace-Lorraine issue as a factor in making peace. It has been my fortune to turn over a great mass of recent literature written with the object of promoting a "peace by conciliation." It is very hard to praise the courage and effectiveness of the larger part of these writings, in view of their almost studied effort to evade one of the main questions in the great debate between Germany and a nation to which Americans are incalculably beholden.

Is it really possible to end this war, considering the fearful acts of physical iniquity committed, on terms that will imply "general content" for the Teutons as well as for their adversaries? How many absolutely just verdicts by civil tribunals leave the defeated litigant praising the decision of the jury? Are we advancing the cause of lasting peace by deliberately shunting aside the very specific Alsace-Lorraine issue, in favor of general discussions as to a new system of international relationships? And if we are to "content" Germany, pray, in the name of all that is honest, are we not under somewhat greater obligations to "content" France?

No cause was ever advanced by wilfully ignoring a cardinal issue. Until certain clever friends of the schemes for a new world order will come forward manfully, shake hands with this specific question, and offer a definite solution which offers justice to France which will be entirely satisfying to the French people, with whom we are today joined in a great blood sacrament, they will find that their other arguments leave some of us very cold.

WILLIAM STEARNS DAVIS.

Minneapolis, Minnesota.

## The Impious Mr. Wells

SIR: I am instructed to say that the attention of this Order [Imperial Order, Sons of the Empire] has been directed to an advertisement appearing in a recent issue of your journal in which announcement Mr. H. G. Wells sees fit to express his approval of the new publication by *damning all empires including the British.*

One would have thought that Mr. Wells would have shown more discretion and better taste, and if he wished to earn the thanks of the proprietors of the New Journal, express his appreciation of it without denouncing the British Empire.

We have been informed that a reply to this senseless outburst of Mr. Wells's was sent you by Mr. Bernard Rose of this city. His letter was returned on the plea that though you would like to publish it you were prevented by want of space.

I presume that you are anxious to earn the good opinion of readers in this country, the number of which you would doubtless like to increase. If my assumption is correct I trust, speaking in the name of this Order, that when communications are sent you in matters of this kind that you will give them the consideration they deserve.

The United States and Great Britain are drawing closer together. They have too much in common both present

and future to quarrel. When some individual of the Wells type seeks, without any provocation or justice, to attack the land and empire that has done so much for him, it is incumbent upon those who are proud of being Britishers and appreciate the privilege of living within the confines of the empire promptly and indignantly to repudiate the foolish and uncalled-for opinions expressed by Mr. Wells and others.

J. McNAUGHTON.

Montreal, Canada.

## Wardrobes and Wages

SIR: I have been recently asked, along with several other social workers, to make out a budget for a working girl. This occupation is one of the regular avocations of almost every branch of our profession, so there was nothing unexpected about the request, except the source of it. We were ordered to be very specific and to give the exact number of every wearable needed for a year. We inquired what this was to shed light upon and were told that the intention was to establish a scale of wages for the women workers in the munition factory. The women, it was said, had replaced the men at the same wages, and this arrangement was to be changed.

The reason for the change is one of those reasonless survivals of devotion to precedent that are so difficult to combat, because, like superstition, they are founded on the beliefs of our ancestors, and so are exempt from the claims of reason. The agreement was that women should do the same work for the same pay. The work was all piece work. Did the women receive a higher rate per piece? No. Was the labor turn-over greater? No, much less. Was the women's output less so that the overhead was increased? No; shift for shift, the women generally excelled the men. Were men's wages to be similarly scaled? Of course not; the idea was that women were not to be paid the same as men. Why? But the member of the logical sex only answered me, "Why should they be?" and, like Pilate of old, did not stay for answer.

It seems to some of us that a government that is fighting for world democracy might set an example by applying the democratic principle to the women it employs to make the ammunition for that fight. There is no justice in the family wage for men and the individual wage for women. The bachelor's pay is not reduced because he has no family to support, and anyone who has studied the wage-earning family knows that it is the daughter who assumes the responsibility of household expenses, three times out of five. Recently we read with pleasure that three men working at the shipyards received \$128 for a single day's pay. There was no mention of a committee's waiting on them to ask how many pairs of socks they bought each year. They were paid for the work they did, and its value, not their wardrobe, determined their wages. Does our government, pledged to uphold the rights of the small nations, intend to say to half its workers: "If you earn more than a bare living I will take it from you. I expect you to buy bonds and support the Red Cross in the same proportion as working men, but you must not expect to be paid according to your work, but according to your sex." Women have not devised the industrial and economic system which requires them to be wage-earners, but men seem to feel that they

should be penalized for having to support themselves, and often the children that men have begotten. Is the federal government to sponsor this subversion of justice?

Davenport, Iowa.

MARY BURD.

### Mr. Ransome's Letter

**S**IR: I have read with great interest Professor Harper's letter in the New Republic of September 7th regarding the correspondence of Mr. Ransome. Professor Harper accuses Mr. Ransome of an incorrect presentation of facts, but at the same time he makes substantial mistakes himself.

The procedure of the elections to the Soviets is rather a difficult matter to argue about; we do not possess the necessary facts. Can we take seriously newspaper reports which inform us of the execution of Maria Spiridonova when after a considerable lapse of time, during which the news had gained belief, we learn that she is still alive? Nor would I undertake to read the minds of the members of the Provisional Government as to what their object was in postponing the elections to the Constituent Assembly; it is a matter of their own conscience. I will only draw Prof. Harper's attention to facts which are easily verified. He says: "The idea of the Constituent Assembly has been the fundamental idea of the Cadets, for example, since 1906." This is absolutely incorrect. If he will take the trouble to look up in any library the Constitution of "The Party of People's Liberty" (Cadets) and the reports of their conventions, he will find no mention there of a Constituent Assembly until 1917. At the same time the demand for a Constituent Assembly has figured in the platforms of the Russian Social Democratic and the Social Revolutionary parties for more than twenty years.

In the elections to the first two Dumas, in which I participated, in Ukraine, the difference of political ideas between the so-called Cadets and the bloc of all the parties more radical than the Cadets was clearly shown. The ideal of the Cadets was a constitution granted by the Tsar. The ideal of the radical bloc was the abdication of the Tsar, a Constituent Assembly and a Democratic Republic.

Moreover, on the 2 (15) and 3 (16) of March, 1917, when fate had again thrown me into the whirlpool of political events, the Cadets and majority of the Duma Committee insisted upon the abdication of Nicholas II and the ascendancy to the throne of Michael II, with his oath to establish a constitutional monarchy and a parliament. The soldiers and workmen and their newly organized Soviets insisted upon the abdication of Nicholas, the establishment of a Provisional Government and the election of a Constituent Assembly. The result was the following compromise: Abdication—Provisional Government—Constituent Assembly.

At the same time in the evening of March 3 (16), before the Provisional Government held its first meeting, I had a heated debate with Professor Miliukoff, who insisted that Emperor Michael II held the throne half a day and therefore his abdication should commence "We, by grace of God, Michael II, Emperor of all Russia. . . ."

The ideal of a Constituent Assembly was forced upon the Cadets by the political upheaval; this ideal was nursed in the bosom of the Russian democracy and was incorporated in the platforms of all Socialist parties from the People's Socialist Party, the most moderate Socialists, to the "Bolsheviks" inclusive.

Why did the last disperse it then? How this was accomplished was explained at length in Mr. Ransome's correspondence and by Misses Beatrice King and B. Beaty.

But if my opinion is wanted as to why they could ac-

complish it, I will say that to a great extent it was due to the "ideal" system of elections, the working out of which greatly delayed the convening of the Constituent Assembly.

I would ask you to recollect that as a result of the dispersal of the first Duma came the "Viborg Manifesto" and the Sveaborg Mutiny. The dispersal of the second Duma brought about the assassination of von Launetz and political strikes in various parts of Russia. Now, the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, the institution to which passed the Supreme Power of the Russian Tsars, passed unnoticed and without protests. Why? It seems to me because the elections to this body were carried out not by counties but by party nominees. The peasant was voting by advice of the politician for some persons unknown to him, and when these were dispersed they could not appeal to their constituents as there were no real bonds between them. To the masses the representatives were strangers and therefore indifferent to their fate. For instance, a man residing in Petrograd could be elected as representative for Vladivostok, seven thousand miles away, although he had never been in that city, and was therefore totally unknown to his constituency. The procedure of the Soviets, on the other hand, to which the peasant elects individuals well known to him and of his own kind, is much more simple and comprehensible to him than the complicated elections to the Constituent Assembly. Essentially, the Soviet is formed on the principle of the old "village communal council" (Skhod), which has been existing for the last thousand years. "The old familiar forms are better than the new unknown," and here his own is simple and easy of understanding, while the new unknown is complicated and incomprehensible to the peasant's mind.

A few more words: Professor Harper says that the fourth Duma represented the wishes of the country. Is that so? Back in 1916 not only the working people but also the masses of peasantry were clamoring for peace, and he knows that very well. He and I ascribed this to their political undevelopment; but facts remain facts.

G. LOMONOSSOFF.

New York City.

### Undemocratic Secret Societies

**S**IR: When I was in college (Goucher College, Baltimore, 1908) I belonged to a national society and appreciated many of the features of fraternity life, which are always held up as justifying the system. But, because I could not reconcile certain inherent characteristics of the system with my understanding of what Christian democracy required, I felt obliged finally to withdraw. Jessie Woodrow Wilson, now Mrs. Frances B. Sayre, and I acted together in this matter, and, while forming our judgments independently, it is rather interesting now for me to look back and realize that President Wilson stood by us in the action to which our conclusions led us. I might say here in fairness to our fellow-members that, although many, especially among the alumnae, were bitterly opposed to us then, they have without exception later taken pains to express their belief in us, if not in our opinions.

I believe the time is ripe for inter-collegiate action on the whole question, and hope that it may be entered into in a spirit worthy of the times. Though serving as a missionary in India, I have kept in close touch with students in America, and during my stay here I would like to see this whole matter put to the test of "the ideals we are fighting for."

FLORA L. ROBINSON.

Chicago, Illinois.

## After the Play

SOMETHING may be urged against *Redemption* at the Plymouth Theatre in New York on the score of minor acting and dramatic arrangement. It is not a perfect performance. But so much is to be said for it as a thing of beauty and truth that the petty details are swept out of memory. *Redemption*, or *The Living Corpse*, is not only a play full of Tolstoi's genius. It is a production full of the joint genius of John Barrymore and Robert Edmond Jones, with a great deal to be said for Arthur Hopkins. It is visually beautiful. It is powerful dramatically. It is sorrowful and piteous and terrible. It is a master's handful of life. And the wealth that Tolstoi has strewn through it is gathered up and nobly spent by an actor of skill and instinct, unusual skill and perfect instinct, John Barrymore. The palmy days of acting may or may not have existed in the age of the horse-car. They are here, at any rate, in the age of Edison. Mr. Barrymore has created a Fedya that can be ranked with the best acting of our generation. A more robust and sonorous style might be demanded for the palmy or palm-oily tradition. Since Mr. Winter stopped writing it is hard to recall what the tradition is. But with a left foot that seems desperately anxious to turn in and a leg that Sir Willoughby Patterne would disown and a figure that might dismay a recruiting officer and an enunciation that has shell-holes in it, Mr. Barrymore simply soars out of all his limitations and gives a performance that is the performance of genius, from the inside out. It is this, plus the settings of Mr. Jones, that makes the ten scenes of *Redemption* accumulate into one of the rare triumphs of the American stage.

The play itself is an astonishing revelation of Tolstoi. It is, or seems to me to be, a free and unidealistic comment on the sacrament of marriage. It is the sacrament of marriage seen with a cruelly ironic eye. Liza is a sweet girl who has the misfortune to be wedded to a bad man, Fedor. Fedor, or Fedya, is not a "bad" man in the sense that he is repulsive to her. He is bad in the sense that he breaks the ten commandments. I do not know which commandment it is that forbids carousing with gypsies and drinking champagne and staying out nights and gazing deep into the eyes of gypsy singers and floating in a sea of gypsy song. But that commandment Fedya breaks with all the wickedness of which Tolstoi can think. He is not objectionably wicked, like a banker. He is not a sniveller or a cheese-parer or a grafter or a hypocrite. He is, if the truth must be told, a Byronic weakling who is exceedingly dear to his young wife. But his mother-in-law is dead against him. No ambivalence seems to come in between himself and his mother-in-law. Another young man, Victor, has always adored Liza at a distance, and it is to the prosperous Victor that the mother-in-law turns with yearning approval when word comes that Fedya is off with the gypsies again.

Perhaps it is the gypsies who take away the suggestion of squalor from Fedya. With that irony so characteristic of persons beloved, Liza selects Victor to beg her husband to return. Fedya, his argosy floating in wine, declines to return, declines to leave his gypsy Masha for the pearl-gray correctness of his wife. In the haunt of the gypsies, stretched on a couch that carries him to scarlet sin like a garlanded Cleopatra barge, Fedya waves farewell to Victor with loose and bitter gaiety. He spends himself lavishly, a lost soul, and cuts adrift forever. The memory of his wife fades from him like the pale melancholy of a moon.

It is only when an ambassador comes to the broken

Fedya, in a cheap rooming house, some weeks later, to ask him tactfully to arrange an adultery so that a divorce can be legalized, that his status as an incumbrance, a living corpse, dawns in acid sharpness on his mind. It is a swift transition from his receipt of this request (which comes from Victor's side) to his Byronic decision to kill himself. And then, he can't kill himself. The gypsy Masha arrives just at the moment when he finds he can't pay that real price. She says, Why kill yourself? Leave evidence that you have drowned yourself, it will do fully as well. Fedya is satisfied. He carries out his "suicide" without the loss of a single life.

Great as is the work of Robert Edmond Jones in compelling the mood of a Christian lady's drawing-room, on one hand, and a gypsy's nook, on the other, he excels these creations in the splashing blacks and gaunt whites of that outcast den to which Fedya descends in his downward journey after the "suicide." In that wretched drinking-joint we find a broken yet purified Fedya, telling a gentle old confidant the far-away story of his manipulated disappearance and the subsequent happy marriage of his widow, Liza, and the good, honest Victor. It is a wonderful narrative, garrulous yet sober and sedate, and there is a humorous mingling of genuine spirituality, and that homely inglorious candor of which Tolstoi was so singular a master. Into the spirit of this narrative Mr. Barrymore pours a perfect understanding. He gives the measure of time and social space to every accent he employs. It is the talk of a man sweetly and equably disillusioned, a man who has spelt the full word failure and kept his head. But Fedya's self-possession is destined to be destroyed. A scoundrel overhears Fedya's chuckling boast that he is a "living corpse." He proposes blackmail to Fedya, and when Fedya attacks him, bawls the whole story to the police that break in. Liza and Victor are bigamists. They are soon traced by the police, happy and comfortable dwellers in the very town to which Fedya has returned. At once they are arrested and confronted with the majestic outraged law.

The steps by which Tolstoi brings Victor and Liza and Fedya together are hewn out of probability. It is with a corresponding volume of emotion that one is swept into the great final scene. Liza had really loved Fedya. When she sent Victor to find him she loved him, and when the news of his death came she called to him from her heart. Fedya, on the contrary, had no serious feeling for her. The woman who had charmed his imagination was the gypsy Masha, the woman whom he loved too well to seduce. But in the last scene, in the office of the examining magistrate, it is no longer an explicable passion that arises in Victor and Liza and Fedya. What arises is the wild wraith of a dead yesterday, a naked claw from the tomb. But Fedya speaks. Out of his shaken frame, his lousy garments clinging to him, his matted hair hanging over his eyes, he raises the voice of all the idealism that led him to choose "suicide" rather than the legal filth of an arranged adultery, and in a few burning and terrible sentences he reveals the sublime motives that the law cannot stoop to comprehend. The magisterial sphinx is unmoved by Fedya's appeal. No tears of stone course down the magisterial cheek. But before the law is enabled to complete the shattering of Victor and Liza, the ignorant beneficiaries, Fedya gives them the dreadful gift of his life.

It would be easy to mar such a play by poor acting. In the hands of Mr. Barrymore (with Mr. Russ Whytall and others to support him) it becomes a deep legend of man and society. It is a quivering representation of the truth and beauty that inspired Tolstoi, one of the lucid intervals of the American theatre.

F. H.