

Current Topics

Pasteur: A Contrast

H. Houston Peckham contributes to the *Survey* some lines which finely bring out the contrast between the 'gospel of frightfulness' and the gospel of helpfulness, between the raucous roarings of materialistic 'culture' of our Nietzschean 'supermen' and the quiet tones and gentle and beneficent work of true science. They are dedicated to that greatest of our scientists and humble follower of Christ—Pasteur.

He led no legions forth to maim and kill;
He burned no city, scarred no fertile farm
With trampling. Nay, he never knew the thrill
Of throbbing drum, of fife, of trump's alarm.

In finding how to lengthen our short days,
In easing human pain, he spent his time
Therefore, proud Clio gives him feeble praise,
And bards neglect him as a theme for rhyme.

But God, Who smiles with scornful pity down
On all our foolish ways, knew well his worth,
And crowned him with a brightlier shining crown
Than all the regal diadems of earth.
Bonaparte! Charlemagne!—Oh, what were these
Beside this doughty conqueror of disease?

How the Secret Was Kept

The surprise of the war, so far, in the matter of armament has of course been the appearance of the 42 centimetre or 16½-inch siege howitzer, nicknamed the 'Jack Johnson,' which wrought such havoc at Liege and Namur; and Germany has gained considerable kudos for her success in keeping the great secret. The achievement, however, was not so great as might at first sight be imagined. The matter is briefly referred to by Mr A. Hilliard Atteridge in his recent volume, *The German Army in War*; and he gives us the comforting explanation that the main reason why the secret has been so successfully kept is that Germany has so very few of the monsters. Says Mr Atteridge: 'In the same way there can be little secrecy about armaments. The Germans managed to keep secret the fact that they possessed an exceptionally powerful weapon in the new 16½-inch howitzer. But such secrets are very rare. The mere fact that most improvements in armaments are at least alluded to in the army estimates of the country, and become the subject of discussion in the technical press, generally gives an early clue to any change that is being made. The French tried to keep secret the details of the Lebel rifle and of the new quick-firing gun, but any weapon that has to be multiplied by hundreds and thousands in actual use is soon known to multitudes of people, and even casual talk about it soon gives any practical mechanic an idea of what its construction must be. The Germans were able to keep the secret of their big howitzer because they had very few of them. If the peace had been prolonged for a couple of years more it probably would have been fully described in half the military reviews in Europe.' According to Mr Atteridge's authorities, there are not altogether more than eight of these guns with the German army.

To Break the Stalemate

'Situation unchanged' has, in effect, been the report from most portions of the Western front for a long time, and both sides have obviously been doing little more than mark time. Neither side is making any really notable progress. How is this condition of stalemate to be broken? Most people anticipate that a general advance will be the means employed; but if reliance is to be placed on this move alone it is manifest that a general advance along a fortified front nearly three hundred and fifty miles long will involve enormous sacrifices. A writer in the London *Spectator* hints very

plainly that by a judicious use of the British command of the sea a new determining factor will be introduced—presumably in the shape of a landing of British troops on enemy soil. If the *Spectator* is semi-inspired or well informed, and such a move is really in contemplation, the statement opens up an extremely interesting situation. Here is how the London paper outlines the possibilities and probabilities of the position: 'One has only to look at the German coastline from Memel to Flensburg in the Baltic, or from Ribe to Emden on the North Sea, to realise how great are the opportunities offered to those who not only command the sea, but also have plenty of transports and plenty of men to put into them. We shall be betraying no secret to the enemy when we note that within a comparatively short time our new army, not counting our Territorials, will approach a million trained men, that France has notoriously not used anything like her whole army in the trenches between Belfort and Nieuport, and that Russia, again, has more men than she can employ upon her battle front, enormous as it is. If we once secure complete command of the sea owing to the Germans having played their invasion card and lost, it is obvious that we and our allies shall be able to afford the world some very interesting examples of how great a military and land weapon lies implicit in sea power. . . . This, however, we admit, is dreaming. The German Battle Fleet has not yet been destroyed, and perhaps will not be, for it may be that, in spite of the German desire for invasion, more conservative counsels will prevail. But even if they do, and if we are still hampered by the Fleet in being at Wilhelmshaven and Kiel, it must be remembered that we shall still possess, though not in so great a degree, a power of introducing a new factor into the war which will put an end to the condition of stalemate. By the spring we and the French alone shall have ready a force of two million men of first-rate quality not immediately required elsewhere—that is, not immediately required in the great defensive line from the Alps to the mouth of the Schelde. If we cannot contrive a use for these men which will break down the condition of stalemate, our strategy will indeed be bankrupt, and we shall deserve to become a race of permanent troglodytes. That our troops can and will be quite willing to "stick it out" in the trenches till June we do not doubt, but by the time the water-lilies are springing up in the ditches in Flanders we ought to be able to give them the opportunity to stretch their legs once more, and to reconvert fortress troops into marching units.'

The Faithful Horse

A new Church of England Litany, for special use during the war, has recently been prepared; and it contains a prayer for the animals and speaks of them as 'offering their guileless lives.' Some of the bishops—notably Dr. Gore, Bishop of Oxford—have objected, on the ground that it has never been the custom of Christians to pray for any other beings than those whom we think of as rational. We have not the exact terms of the Litany before us, and are therefore unable to express an opinion as to the propriety of this particular petition; but we are safe in saying that the horses and dogs being used in the war are as brave, faithful, and devoted as any soldiers, and that no Christian need feel ashamed of asking the Father of All to have them in His keeping. Many touching instances of animal fidelity are being recorded in the war columns of the English press. Here are a couple of specimen narratives. 'One man of the —th Lancers I found lying on his back with his eyes staring at the skies. He was dead, without doubt. Standing over him was his horse, without a wound. It was looking into his face every few minutes, and then neighing in a pitiful way that sounded just like a human being in an excess of grief. To hear that poor animal was enough to bring tears to the eyes of the most hardened of men,' writes Lance-Corporal J. Stilton.

*

A Welshman, a driver in the Royal Field Artillery, told the following simple story about his horses in the