

Current Topics

A Heavy Blow

It is not too much to say that the first feeling awakened by the staggering news of the drowning of Lord Kitchener was one of blank dismay. We had come to lean so heavily upon him that for the moment it seemed as if our one hope and mainstay in the war had been taken away. What Hindenburg is to the Germans, what Joffre is to the French, all that and more Kitchener was to us. Ever since the first thunderclap of the war burst upon us, Kitchener had been a name to conjure with, and that because of the masterful personality behind the name. Clear-brained, firm-willed, a man of action rather than of words, of rare executive and organising capacity and of utter freedom from doctrinaire fads and fancies, he was the one strong man of the British War Office at a time when strong men were never so urgently needed. His work and achievements both before and during the period of the war have received sympathetic and, so far as that was possible, adequate treatment at the hands of the daily press, and it is unnecessary for us to tell once more the familiar story of the great soldier's life-long and imperishable service to the Empire.

After the first stunning effect of the news had passed away, a little reflection served to show that there were considerations that tended materially to soften the blow, and to enable us to face the situation with unshaken hope and courage. (1) As has been commonly pointed out by the press and public men, Lord Kitchener's main work in relation to the war was already accomplished. He was called upon to create not merely a national army but an armed nation, organised, equipped, officered, and ready to take the field, and short though the period allotted to him for this tremendous work, death's hand struck too late to prevent him from accomplishing his mission. (2) The War Office has full knowledge, of course, of all his aims, plans, and ideas for the future, and the machine which he created will be worked along the lines and in the spirit designed by its creator. As Colonel Repington has aptly put it, 'From the general direction he gave to Britain's efforts, the country never swerved, and we will follow them inflexibly to the end.' (3) The immediate and direct effect of the disaster will be to steel the people of Britain to a firmer and stronger resolve to carry the great undertaking which they have in hand to a successful issue. The loss of gallant lives in the recent naval victory, and the calamity which has overtaken the man in whom their hopes were so greatly centred, have brought home to the British people, as perhaps nothing else could do, the life and death nature of the struggle in which they are engaged. Kitchener was ever a man who believed in talking by deeds rather than by words. In the death which overtook him in the execution of his duty he gave his life for his country as really as if he had fallen on the battlefield, and in this respect 'he, being dead, yet speaketh.' The men of Britain, we may be sure, will listen to his call.

A Story with a Moral

Our esteemed Boston contemporary, the *Sacred Heart Review*, relates that a Catholic society recently gave a banquet at which, according to a daily paper's account, 'enthusiasm ran high' and 'the guests pledged themselves to support the Catholic press.' Each ticket to that banquet cost two dollars—the average price of a subscription to a Catholic paper. There was plenty to eat, no doubt; there was music, there was singing, and there was dancing. Also there was speaking; and one impassioned orator dealing with the Catholic press aroused the enthusiasm that the daily paper featured in its headlines. Curious to know how it worked out, our excellent contemporary inquired of the editor of the local Catholic paper if he had received any new subscriptions as a result of the ban-

quet. He had not! On the contrary he had lost one. The man who made the speech stopped his subscription because the editor did not give his remarks as much space as the orator thought they deserved!

The moral of this is obvious, as the hackneyed phrase goes, to the meaneast understanding. Catholic papers appreciate, of course, the ringing resolutions and fine oratorical flights in which their influence and virtues are extolled, but they appreciate still more the admiration and enthusiasm which are expressed in tangible practical support. In this, as in most other matters, actions speak louder than words.

German Press Fictions

If it be true that the British Publicity Department is much too slow and backward in making use of the press of the world as a medium for disseminating British facts and views, it is equally the case that German press agents go to quite the opposite extreme. They appear to act on Carlyle's dictum that 'Gullible, by fit apparatus, all publics are,' and no story is too ridiculous to come within the scope of their idea of 'fit apparatus.' Their latest effort is an attempt to make the world—and especially the neutral world—believe that Britain and Russia were at daggers drawn at the conference held at Paris at the end of March. The news is conveyed per medium of the now somewhat notorious Karl von Wiegand, special staff correspondent of the *New York World*, who, under date Berlin, April 15, sends by wireless to his paper (via Sayville, L.I.) the definite information that serious discord has broken out in the camp of the Allies over differences between Russia and England, and that the Paris conference on March 27 was marked by sharp clashes between British Prime Minister Asquith and General Shilinski, representing the Russian Government, because of Russia's war operations and plans in Asia. The statement is declared to be based on a special despatch from Geneva to the Budapest *Hirlap*, the leading Hungarian newspaper. According to von Wiegand, the *Hirlap* professes that this information comes from well-informed and reliable sources, and gives alleged details of what led to the conference and of the proceedings and discussions thereat. The *Hirlap* is advanced as authority for the following: 'That only with great difficulty was Russia induced to participate in the conference. . . . Russia wanted assurances of full freedom in Asia—in fact, demanded that her Asiatic operations be excluded from the conference. Also that her agreement with Japan be not touched upon. But England, the wishes of her ally having aroused distrust, hoped to persuade or compel Russia at the conference to abandon them. In the preliminary "conversations" between Petrograd and London, England had urged strongly that, in the interest of a general victory for the Allies, Russia ought to subordinate any special aims to the great general and mutual aims and goal, and not hinder the solution of pending questions with special demands. Russia argued that England and France must long ago have come to realise that military victories are not won with diplomatic documents, but with blood and iron; moreover, that advice of a military nature must be declined when it comes from a source which has yet to prove its military superiority; that Russia is not in a position to fight only in front of its own door, like England; and that Russia fights where she can see benefit and achieve something. . . . Receiving a sharp answer from England, Russia declined to take part in the conference. But through France's mediation an agreement was reached which caused Russia to send a delegate. When the conference met, sharp clashes and excited scenes are alleged to have taken place. Premier Asquith insisted that the fate of Europe must be decided in Europe and therefore Russia's armies could be used more advantageously in Europe itself. Thereupon General Shilinski, who is the Czar's Aide-de-Camp, in the name of his sovereign and Government, ironically declared that Russia cannot permit her strategy and operations to be dictated