

the front line and the battlefield. I may be wrong. I think I am right. In the furnace of this affliction I believe character will be formed, on real and not artificial grounds; on which character truth will be engrafted—truth revealed, but supernatural,—to bear fruit a hundred and a thousand fold, to the glory of God and to the salvation of innumerable souls."

CAN-U-BOAT BASE BE CAPTURED?

Mr. Charles H. Grasty, writing from London to the *New York Times*, comments thus:—In France, where one comes into contact with the army chiefly, an impression lodges in the mind that this war might be brought to an end if only the allied navies would "go to it." In London the atmosphere is distinctly naval. I did not get a chance to advance the characteristic land-lubber viewpoint more than about a minute before the argument was taken up in vigorous sailorman fashion. Why don't the English and American ships go in and clean them up? If success or failure right now hinges on the U-boat, why not send naval forces to batter to bits the bases on the Channel coast? Expensive, yes, but what are ships for but to be risked and lost?

The counter-attack was so sudden and sharp that I am afraid I put rather more of the onus upon the absent army critic than was altogether fair, whereat a navy man who doesn't think meanly of his own literary accomplishments, undertook to prepare for my signature a letter stating the case in such simple terms as to leave no room for misunderstanding, and here is what he wrote:

"Since my return from Switzerland a few weeks ago I have been looking into the submarine situation again. You may have seen in *The Times* some of my articles concerning the present shipping situation, which is, you doubtless know, still so serious that no effort should be spared to diminish the loss and increase the amount of tonnage.

"I intend to pound away at this until its significance is more generally understood in America, where the political speeches of Mr. Lloyd George tend to create a dangerous optimism.

"In the meantime there is another feature of this business which exercises no inconsiderable influence upon public opinion, and that is the influence of the inevitable mob strategy that manifests itself in all cases of prolonged and serious war operations.

"Few persons refrain from expressing opinions as to how the enemy could be routed. All respectable newspaper editors must supply their readers with such opinions and with criticism of the responsible military leaders.

"Many suggestions as to how to end the war are published, and thousands are submitted to the authorities. These are variations of schemes implied by various catch-phrases. Of these Winston Churchill's 'Digging the rats out of their holes' is the chief. Another very seductive one is, 'Why not stop up the hole in the nest instead of chasing the wasps after they are out?'

"The influence of these and similar phrases is such that even educated men do not hesitate to criticise the strategy and even the common sense and courage of the allies, and as this tends to diminish efforts already under way, I made up my mind to obtain some facts and authoritative opinions on the subject. These have proved so very illuminating and are so readily comprehended, even by the civilian mind, that I am sure that they will interest you:

"1. In order to dig the rats out, or stop up the hole in the wasps' nest, the German bases of their fleet and submarines must be taken by attack from the sea.

2. This can be done only by reducing by bombardment the fortification protecting the bases.

"3. The guns of modern land defences are not visible from the sea. Many of them are powerful mortars at the bottom of pits. Ships, of course, are clearly visible from shore batteries and their captive balloons and airplanes.

"4. The effective range of these guns is over 23

miles. This has been shown by actual shooting at ships in this war.

"5. No men-of-war's guns have a range of more than 17 miles, and the enemy target is invisible.

"6. It is therefore apparent that a naval attack from the sea would be even more suicidal now than in Nelson's day.

"7. It might be compared to a blind pugilist with arms two feet long, trying to fight one with good eyesight and with arms three feet long.

"8. Coast positions, large areas (like Bruges, Zeebrugge), are bombarded from time to time, but this can be done only at very infrequent intervals when the wind is in the right direction for screens to be laid to mask the bombarding vessels.

"9. Few civilians know the above facts. Many irresponsible officers are equally ignorant, as the essential facts have been developed during this war, but I have yet to meet a single responsible officer who believes that it is possible to reduce land defences by a sea attack. All competent naval historians express the same opinion.

"10. But even assuming that this were possible, a glance at the map will show that the German fleet and submarine bases could not be approached by shipping unless the powerful defences of Heligoland were destroyed and the island captured and held.

"11. But even assuming that this island were turned over to the allies with all its defences intact it could not be held as a base by them because, being but a few miles from the German bases, it could be attacked every night and all night by numerous airplanes carrying bombs of over 200 pounds. Heligoland is one mile long by one-half mile wide.

"12. There is practically no defence against such night raids. In the recent midnight raid on London only two of the numerous anti-aircraft guns ever saw the planes.

"13. Moreover, the island could be successfully bombed by daylight, because the allies could not bring to bear enough fighting planes to resist the overwhelmingly greater number that could be sent from the nearby German bases to protect the bombing planes.

"14. There has been a recent naval conference in London in which all the principal allied countries were represented. Their conclusions have not been published, but there can be no doubt that no member present believed that the rats could be dug out of their holes.

"15. Many schemes have been proposed for building a mine or net barrage, or both, to prevent the German submarines coming out or going in to their bases. Many attempts have been made, but up to the present time it has not been found possible to prevent submarines passing through the narrow strip of water between Calais and Dover, yet it has been seriously proposed by all sorts and conditions to build a barrage from Scotland to Norway, over a distance of about 230 miles, in very deep water and across a strong tide.

"It is, of course, unnecessary to state that the assumptions of sufficient knowledge to decide how the naval war should be conducted on this side presupposes a condition of mind that I cannot well understand. The allied nations have been fighting three years for their very existence. When the civilian sees that his particular idea of the strategy of the situation has not been carried out, ought he not naturally to assume that there must be impelling reasons why this is so?

"But the civilian critic makes the opposite assumption. He is absolutely convinced that his ideas are right. They could only be right on the assumption that the combined military experience of all the allies was not sufficient to comprehend what seems so apparent to him, or else seeing the situation as he does, they lack the energy and courage to carry it out. No other conclusion would appear possible to a man who knows anything about history."

In view of the divergence of opinion between the two services; to say nothing of the irrepressible conflict of theory within the navy, the foregoing statement of the ideas upon which present policy is grounded should be interesting.