

THE SAD TALES of privations in Germany that have appeared from time to time in the Allied press seem to have been based upon the vivid imagination of their writers rather than on facts; such, at any rate, is the impression produced by an article in the *London Times* from the pen of "an observer who reached Switzerland a few days ago, after having lived in Germany and enjoyed special facilities for observation since the beginning of the war." The reliability of the picture painted by this "observer" is the more significant when it is realized that he is a distinctly hostile witness. Instead of the war-weary people the Allied papers have described as clamoring for peace, we find an enthusiastic nation, convinced of ultimate victory, and determined to carry this "war of self-defense" to a successful conclusion. In the *Times* article our observer says:

"Unless I am entirely mistaken—and my experience of life in Germany has been continuous—no essential change in public
(continued)

Germany Seen by a British Visitor

THE LITERARY
DIGEST

July 22, 1916



"SOURCE" HOLLANDAISE.

ROBERT—"Well, nothing has got in through here for months. That fellow inside can't hold out much longer!"

—*Passing Show* (London).

feeling has taken place among the German masses since the beginning of the war; or, if there has been a change, it has not been in the direction of discouragement. The utmost which ordinary Germans can be got to say is that 'it is high time that peace were made'—but they mean, of course, a German peace, one which shall consolidate and correspond to German victories. They not only feel that they are victorious, but they are firmly persuaded that they can not be beaten."

The conviction that this war is one of self-defense—a conviction that the Allied critics find so difficult to understand—is next dealt with, and we are told:

"It must not be supposed that the German people has an uneasy conscience. The Imperial Chancellor's declaration to the Reichstag at the beginning of the war that Germany was 'doing wrong' in invading Belgium was never taken as a confession of guilt. His phrase, that 'necessity knows no law,' meant and still means to Germans that Germany found herself in a condition of what is called *Notwehr*—that is to say, of legitimate self-defense. 'Surrounded by a ring of jealous enemies who had conspired to assail and crush her,' they claimed that her only chance was in breaking through the ring by all possible means and of 'vindicating by the sword her right to free existence.' Statements by people like Harden that Germany wanted war, and made it deliberately, are regarded as heresy. Harden has been badly received by audiences in provincial towns when he has attempted to propound this view.

"As time went on the conviction grew and deepened that Germany was fighting for her very existence. Tho obliged by the necessities of the situation to attack, the view constantly inculcated upon the people was that Germany was and is on the defensive. There are no means of getting this notion out of the public mind."

The testimony of this unfriendly bystander to the belief of the German in the certainty of his country's victory is very striking. It runs:

"Now nothing short of thorough military defeat will convince the German people that they can be beaten. Otherwise there will be no peace except on Germany's own terms. The people are prepared to suffer, much as they may dislike the inconvenience to which the war has put them. This is particularly true of states like Bavaria, where I spent some time before leaving the country. If the Bavarians could be given a smashing blow there might be a rapid end of the war, but they are now as persuaded as they were at the beginning that their generals and their soldiers can not be defeated. Even a Prussian defeat would not make much impression in Bavaria unless the Bavarian armies were defeated at the same time."

An acid and reluctant tribute is paid to the efficiency of the Government's organization:

"The Allies may not have noticed how carefully the Berlin Government plays upon the feelings of the various German 'tribes.' To-day it is the Pomeranians, to-morrow the Brandenburgers, next day the Saxons, and then the Bavarians, who are singled out for special praise in the official bulletins. Everything is so organized in every detail by the Government in order to carry out its policy that the pub-

lie has no opportunity of acquiring views of its own. Popular confidence in official management and in the official accounts of things is still absolute."

On the question of economic pressure and the food-supply our writer considers that it is hopeless for the Allies to expect much in that direction. He writes:

"Economic pressure by itself is unlikely ever to bring Germany to her knees as long as she retains her present sources of supply. But it would be

foolish to underestimate the importance of the economic pressure. Given military defeat or the cutting of the Eastern communications or both, the privations which the German people have endured would hasten the collapse of their resistance.

"The public generally is prepared for the possibility of another winter of war. Almost any German now says, in reply to a question as to how long he thinks that the war will last, 'I am afraid that we shall have to stand another winter.' He almost always puts it just like that—'I am afraid we shall have to.' What sustains the ordinary public is the constant assurance that, however hard life may be, all the difficulties are only temporary.

"At the present moment the worst difficulties are regarded as temporary in an even narrower sense. Everybody, that is to say, is looking for great relief of economic tension as soon as the harvest is got in. As far as the ocular evidence of an ordinary traveler can go, I must confirm the official assurances that the harvest is likely to be a very good one. The crops at present look splendid. In this connection it should be understood that one of the chief objects of the Government in the control of the food-supply is to regulate consumption—not merely to restrict it as much as possible."