

NO CHRISTMAS FAMINE, SAYS AMERICAN TOY TOWN

The Pretty Village of Winchendon, in Massachusetts, Is Working Overtime to Meet the Shortage in European Playthings.

WE cannot get playthings from Nuremberg. The war has laid a dread threat upon the American child's Christmas. The European toy market is closed.

But we shall have toys. Up in Massachusetts, almost overwhelmed these days with insistent orders for Santa Claus, we have our own Toy Town. There are no toys being sent from Nuremberg this year, or from any other town in Germany; but from the village that New Englanders call "The American Nuremberg" come toys by the hundred thousand. We cannot get Christmas toys from Europe, but we can get them from Winchendon.

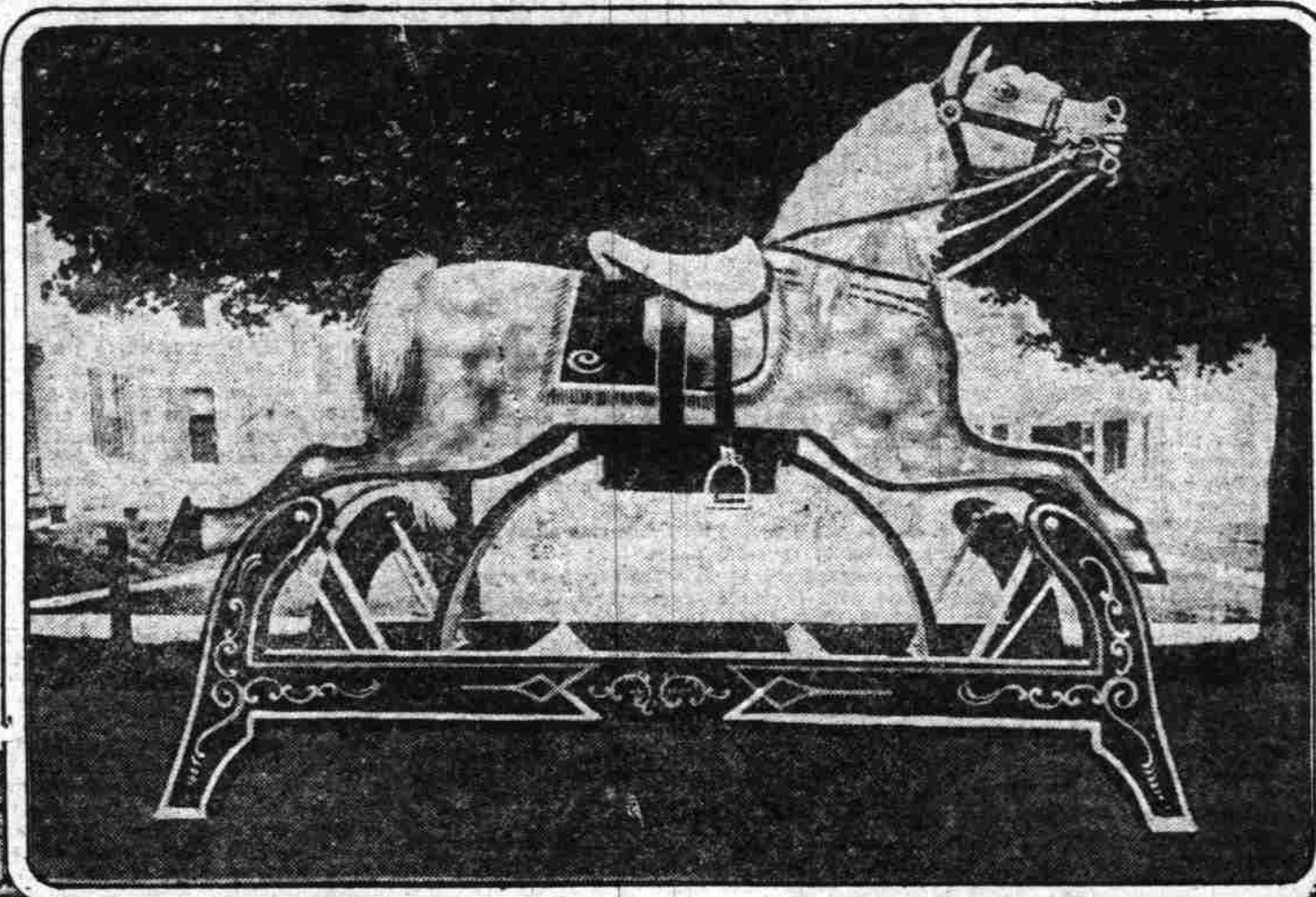
And no child in America, says Winchendon, with the voice of authority, need go without his new playthings this year because there is war in Europe. Toy Town will see to that. They have doubled their office forces in Toy Town to answer the Christmas mail. Every day the toymakers are sending out scores of letters to tell the jobbers, who tell the retailers, who tell the parents, who tell the children, that when the twenty-fifth of December comes the playthings will be there. Winchendon is willing to promise that. And Winchendon knows.

For this little village under Mount Monadnock really is Toy Town. Its citizens claim no privilege from picturequeness when they give it the name. Toy Town steals no license from romance. Winchendon is the

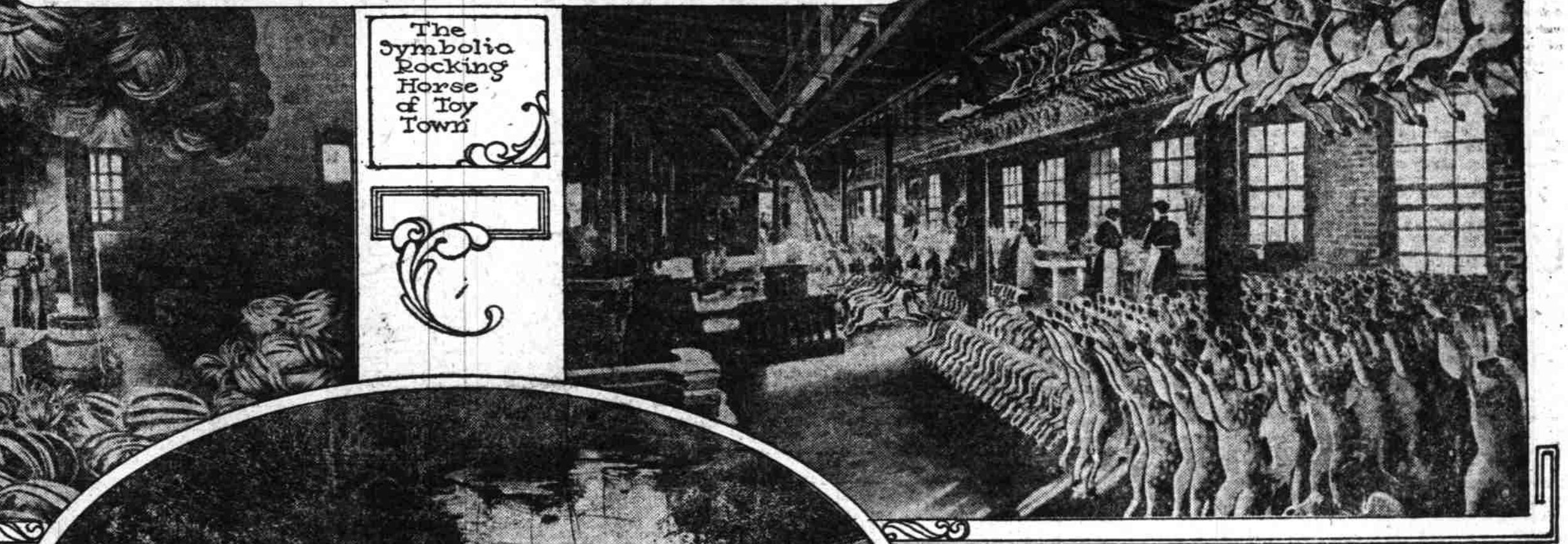
they even have flower gardens. And between them, with its white old time houses, whose doorways are reminiscent of old Salem, its wide New England lawns, and its great arching elms like those on Andover Hill, lies the toy village, as American as Nuremberg is German, and as picturesque as one's wildest dreams of all that a toy village might be.

The people who have set up a rocking horse at their railroad station do not like their village to be called simply Winchendon. They themselves call it Toy Town and they frankly want visitors to do the same. The banners that are ready to fly from passing motor cars as the tourists pause in Winchendon bear in great white letters "Toy Town" on a scarlet field. The community's summer hotel has no other name than "Toy Town Tavern." And the semi-public landscape gardens of the head of the largest toy firm are known as "The Toy Makers' Gardens" of Winchendon. Winchendon is very proud of its industry, and it is proud, too, that the village can live up to the suggestion of the industry's charm.

It must be remembered, of course—and no one in Winchendon is in any danger of forgetting it nowadays—that the charm is but a somewhat remote side issue. Toy Town looks, and sounds, romantic. But behind the romance there is the prosaic, systematic exacting demand of the making of toys. That means, this fall, that the factories of Toy Towns have been running 20 to 24 hours a day, and that the entire toy industry must in-



The Symbolic Rocking Horse of Toy Town



Making the Rims for Toy Drums

cradle of the toymaking industry in America. Half the toys sold in the United States are made in our own country, and of many different kinds of staple playthings half or more of the American product comes from Winchendon. Already Winchendon has flung no inconsiderable challenge in the face of Nuremberg.

Winchendon boasts the most extensive toy factory in the world. And it is a community of toymakers. The town does practically nothing else. It is, as every one of its inhabitants will proudly tell you, the "toymakers' village" of America. Here come, naturally, all questions as to that dreaded shortage in Christmas toys. And all Toy Town joins in the answer.

Which is, again, with emphasis, that we shall have our playthings for the Christmas stockings.

The reporter, going up to Winchendon to find out about the factories' answer to the questions of shortage this year, approached Toy Town, it must be admitted, in some trepidation of spirit. It has, to be sure, such a charming sound. But the vision of a community devoted to the making of playthings is as German a picture as the castled crag of Drachenfels. It does not seem possible outside of Germany. Furthermore, a factory town is a factory town. The making of toys is in itself no earnest that such making shall not be hideous. We must not ask in these days and in America too much of the picturesque. The thought of Winchendon as it ought to be began to be quite obliterated by a doleful expectation of Winchendon as it probably was. Then the train stopped.

And outside, inevitably, the first thing to catch the visitor's eye in Toy Town was a rocking horse. A huge creature, a real rocking horse of heroic size, it guards, with waving mane and head flung back, the gates of Winchendon. In other words, it stands on the bit of greenward beside the railroad station. It is the town's symbol. Outside the borders of Massachusetts and New Hampshire and the ranks of the toy dealers not many people know much about our American Toy Town. But no one getting off the train at Winchendon station could doubt the village's chief industry. The rocking horse is too obviously a toy. Nothing else could be at once so quaint and so ridiculous, and nothing else could so warm the stranger's heart toward Toy Town.

Charming Toy Village.

After the sight of the rocking horse there is no real surprise in finding that Toy Town is just as charming as a village of plaything makers ought to be. No ugly "working-men's houses" cluster about the factories; no hideous mill chimneys blacken the sky. With its gay gardens and its pretty white cottages, Winchendon is a really beautiful little town. Its three great factories are just outside the village, one on each of three sides. They are not ugly;

crease its capacity between 35 and 50 per cent.

Boom Days.

Toy Town is building additions to its mills, installing new machinery, taking on new men, doubling its working hours. It is scouring the country for materials to take the place of those that formerly came from France and England and Belgium and Germany. It is inventing substitutes for those things that cannot, at this time, be obtained. It is constructing American Noah's arks to house consignments already received of German animals, and it is turning out thousands of the building blocks that used to come from England. Its manufacturers are ready now to state that, with a few possible exceptions and one marked and inevitable omission, the American toy market will be supplied. The omission is cheap mechanical toys; only Germany can send us those, and only those few will be on sale that have already come from Germany. But for the cheap mechanical playthings—of which, to tell the truth, they are a bit scornful—the American manufacturers promise to offer quite satisfactory American substitutes.

In 1913 the entire importation of toys from Germany was valued at \$3,850,000. The factories of the United States produced playthings worth about \$3,264,000. Eliminating such articles as sleds, velocipedes, etc., the American output of what the makers call "real toys" reached a figure not much more than \$4,000,000. When war broke out about one-fourth of the usual consignment of toys had been received from Germany; the other three-fourths of the Christmas supply was to have been sent between the end of July and the holiday time. It is the contemplation of these startling figures that has brought panic to the minds of hundreds of retail toy dealers and terror to the souls of thousands of young "consumers." This is no more permanent gain to the toy business in America, the manufacturers might wonder whether all this strenuousness was worth while. But the American toymakers, as a matter of fact, do not have to increase their product by anything like \$6,000,000 for this year. And the new toy demand, sudden and clamorous as it is, is only beginning.

In the first place, some German goods have actually been received since war broke out. The quantity was not much in itself, and there is practically no hope of appreciable further importations, but added to what has already come, the shipments meant something. The number of Ger-

The Toy-Makers' Gardens

man toys in this country of the 1914 supply is nearer one third than one fourth of the average annual receipts. And this is the great point of hope for the consumer—there are always toys held over.

The toy dealer does not sell out his stock in one year. The coming of the Christmas rush finds him always with thousands of dollars' worth of toys held from the Christmas before. This is one of the principles of his business. And to it he makes obeisance of thankfulness now. To the extra supply of toys that can be made by increased factory room and new men and night shifts, this stock held over last year is enough to save the situation for the Christmas of 1914. The extra work, of course, was necessary; there were busy days, 24 hours long, for all toymakers in these past months; and there is but the scantiest possibility that the passing of Christmas will not leave every toy warehouse empty of stock. But a large percentage of this tremendous extra effort, this pressing demand for a double supply of toys, will go to the Christmas that is 15 months away. And in fifteen months how many millions of mannikins can be made. Ordinarily the toy factories do little or no work in the summer. Next year there will be no closing down.

If the war in Europe ended today, the manufacturers say, there would scarcely be a chance of any toys from Germany for three years at least. The devastation in these first few weeks has been too terrible, the expense too great. If war ended now a crippled Germany must face an immense war tax, and the toy industry would suffer. The longer the war lasts the longer Nuremberg and the other towns must postpone the toy exportations to America. And by the time the longer Nuremberg and the other towns are ready to send playthings again to America the toymakers of Winchendon and the whole United States will have become accustomed to meeting completely an American demand which, in its turn, will by that time have become habitual. That is what the manufacturers say. And they sum it up succinctly: it is very doubtful that we shall ever again buy toys in great quantities from Europe.

Of the toys that are at present made in America, Winchendon produces about two thirds of the toy drums and more than one half the musical chimes, rocking-horses, blackboards,

and dolls' trunks. It also turns out a large percentage of the American dolls' furniture, mechanical toys and pianos. It makes huge quantities of tool chests and blocks. It has created a modern American animal stock car that may well put to shame the ancient German Noah's arks, although it must be added that Winchendon makes Noah's arks, too. It manufactures in immense numbers dolls' houses, washing machines, toy boats, and such games as topkins, ringtops, and bowls. From the Converse factory alone the output of 10-cent drums is 7000 a day, and each day the Converse mills turn out enough doll trunks to fill seven freight cars.

The three toy factories of Winchendon are the house of Morton E. Converse & Son, the pioneer toy manufacturing firm in America, and the most extensive toy factory in the world; the New England Lock & Hinge Co., a subsidiary of the Converse Co., a manufacturer of high grade mechanical toys; and the Mason & Parker Co., whose manager, Asahel Spare, has increased his space and his working force 50 per cent since war began.

"Just as soon as Germany got into this, I ordered work to begin on an addition to the factory," said Mr. Spare.

"We have had men working day and night on that, and now it is ready for occupancy. We have also increased our working force by one half, and our working day is now 24 hours long. Every toy man realizes that it must be at least three or four years before the German toy business is normal again. When the war ends there is sure to be a great war tax on toys. The price of the German toys—which are bought in such great quantities now because they are cheap—will have to be greatly increased, and they are almost sure to be too expensive for importation into this country. Meanwhile our Yankee ingenuity will have set itself to making all kinds of toys, even the mechanical ones.

"But there is no question that the market in low priced mechanical toys must come to a standstill. We cannot compete in this country with the cheap German goods. I do not mean the really good mechanical toys; those we can and shall make here in America. I mean the kind you buy on the street for 5 and 10 cents. Of those

there will be a definite shortage this year.

"And yet I don't believe that they will be really missed. To a very great extent such playthings as mechanical toys are bought because people see them. That is a queer psychological fact, perhaps, but it is a fact; boys and girls making out their Christmas list, for instance, don't often think of wanting mechanical jumping jacks and loop-the-loops, and things like that; they are much more apt to think of dolls and blocks and games and toy pianos and rocking horses. It is the people who go into the shops, or walk along the streets, without any definite idea of what the children do want, or the children themselves who are attracted by the toys' noise and motion, who get the mechanical playthings because they chance to have noticed them. Well, if they aren't there people won't be apt to think of them. And the things they do think of—the games and rocking horses, and things like that—those things the American manufacturers will be able to supply."

The first toy-making in Winchendon, the pioneer manufacture of toys in America, was begun by Morton E. Converse, 33 years ago. The true story of the toy village beginning is like the true or fancied story of many an invention—it occurred to a man to whittle something out of a stick. Morton Converse was in the woodwren business, the first industry of Winchendon, when the fashion of paper collars had established an interest and a rivalry in the creation of collar boxes. He made a collar box with a centerboard toy table in it, and he added a set of toy dishes to make his plaything complete. He set up a factory at once with 25 men, and of the 500 odd workmen at the Converse mills last year 11 belonged to that first band of 25. The Converse toy business grew, and Winchendon grew with it; the village had 500 inhabitants 38 years ago; its census records 6000 now.

Morton Converse's son, Atherton D. Converse, is acting head of the Converse factory. Among the rocking horses and drums and doll trunks of Toy Town's biggest mill he explained the effect of the European war upon the toy markets of America.

"Except in mechanical toys of the cheapest sort, we shall have no real shortage in the quantity of our Christmas toys," Mr. Converse said. "Here and there, in certain small things in which we cannot gauge the deficit now, it is, of course, possible that there may not be quite enough material to meet the demand. But in general it is entirely safe, by this time, to assure every one that there is no real danger of running short on Christmas playthings, with the one notable exception of those low-priced mechanical knick-knacks."

Dolls' Trunks Wanted.

"On the other hand we shall, in the toy factories, have to economize on time as well as to increase our plant and our force and our working hours. That means, that we shall have to keep down the variety of some kinds of goods so as to be able to turn out more articles in the time that we have."

"In our mills, for instance, we make a great many dolls' trunks—more than half of all that are made in America. And we have a great many varieties. Now, of course, there is an immense increase in the demand for dolls' trunks. The closing of the European markets forces a tremendous pressure on the American manufacturers. We have no doubt that we are going to meet that demand. But we shall not be able this year to turn out so many separate kinds of trunks. We shall have to economize on designs, and it is possible that we shall have to stick to plainer patterns and cut down on the manufacture of some of the more elaborate kinds. That is the only way

we can meet the demand for extra supplies of dolls' trunks this year. The assortment will not be so large. The quantity will be immensely larger. So that while we may not be able to meet the specific order of a man who wants some special kind of trunk, we shall be able to send him a trunk of the approximate size, kind, quality, and price that he wants. It is the same in drums and other things."

"There is a big demand for drums from the American factories this year. We make tin drums, paper-head drums, and drums with heads of sheepskin and calfskin. Of course, we are having a hard time getting the skins. Those usually come from Germany. But we have been able to lay in a sufficient supply for this year, although we had to pay a good deal more for them, and I believe that there is no danger of our not being able to get enough. The demand for metal drums from America has especially increased since war began.

"Again, the burlap that we use to cover one kind of trunk that we make has always come from Dundee. That market is closed. We have had to get some kind of cloth in America to take its place. Our zinc has come from Antwerp, but that, too, we can get in the country. But the vesting of zinc are having more trouble, and also about the inks for the lithographing and the materials for our various paints. But in the toy business it is interesting. And they are very American indeed. With the failure of French and German dollies to travel overseas these very American persons must take their places."

COLONEL HARVEY ANALYZES THE VERDICT AT THE POLLS

(Continued From Page One)

In keeping within the strict letter of the law and refraining from interference. But even a commission which plumes itself upon being on a plane with the supreme court is no greater than the source of its creation, and he can do no more popular thing than to ask a willing congress to legislate it out of existence.

The President's Message.

More definitely than at any previous time President Wilson is the man of the hour. His party still retains full authority and he continues to be its undisputed leader. The certainty that his recommendations will be heeded lends a very vital significance to the policy which he will outline in his forthcoming message to congress, which necessarily becomes at this critical period a far more momentous declaration than was contained in his inaugural address.

That its tone will evince full realization of existing conditions and breathe the spirit of sober hope is foreshadowed by his letter to the secretary of the treasury. May we not also anticipate with confidence that it will not lack definiteness? The wish no

certain amount of trouble, and set us to thinking pretty hard just now. But we are not by any means going to be held back by these closed markets in Europe.

"One thing that we are having a greatly increased demand for is wooden blocks. Those usually come from England, but we have been making them here for a good while, and, of course, now we have to increase our output. That department is working 20 hours a day. So are the drum, trunk and rocking horse departments."

"There will have to be a great many rocking horses made in America this year. But, as a matter of fact, the American rocking horse is a great deal better than the German animal. The American horse is made of solid blocks of wood, instead of being just a little bit of wood and the rest stuffed skin, like the European kind. The German rocking horses don't last, and they are not sanitary. The American kind has always been better, and the business of making them was increasing, anyway."

"At the same time, only one third of the entire number of rocking horses sold in this country has heretofore been made in America. And there is one other thing that makes them. So you can imagine what a lot of extra work just that one toy is making for Toy Town."

"We took on 75 new men September 1, and we have an addition to the plant that was opened recently. Our general increase is about 35 per cent. We have had practically to double the office force, too, to answer the mail. So many retail dealers and jobbers seemed to be almost in a panic for fear they won't get their toys. We had countless letters from men whose orders had been placed with us and were to have been delivered in November, asking us to send their goods in September. We

have been facing a difficult and unprecedented situation, and the way to make the best of it is not to be confused or try to do too much at once. That deficit is going to be met."

An interesting feature of the shortage in European toys is the change it is likely to effect in the character of the dolls in our nurseries. As both Atherton Converse and Asahel Spare point out, the American toy market is practically certain to be pretty thoroughly Americanized before the European market becomes normal again. And in nothing will an actual alteration be more noticeable than in the sort of dolls that little American girls will play with. We do make dolls in America; we import them by the hundreds of thousands, of course, but nevertheless we have been making them here for the past five years.

Our Dolls Have Character.

And they are not like the European dolls—not a bit. The dolls from France and Germany are large-headed, round-faced, vacant-eyed creatures that have made "doll-like prettiness" the synonym for complete insipidity. The American dolls are in many cases not pretty at all. They are what dealers call "character dolls." They have expression. They remind one of the little girl in the story who told an overcritical grown-up that she might not be p-r-e-t-t-y, but she could s-p-e-l-l. Few of them are beautiful, but all of them are interesting. And they are very American indeed. With the failure of French and German dollies to travel overseas these very American persons must take their places."

less than the need of the country is plain: rigid economy in appropriations; no yielding to the fostered war spirit which demands great expansion of armaments on sea and land at a time when the rapid exhaustion of common advantage—advantage freer from danger than ever before; no river and harbor squandering; no new legislation of any kind except such as may help to reopen the channels of trade and commerce or to facilitate the successful operation of the banking act; no financing of one section or one industry at the expense of others in plain contravention of sound public policy; no consideration of proposals which might tend to make necessary an extra session of congress; no encouragement of sheer radicalism bearing the specious label of progress; no attention whatever to the partisan harangues of political opponents who can discredit only themselves by seeking advantage from distressing conditions forced upon us by foreign powers.

This is the straight and true course. Plain announcement of it and firm adherence to it are the sole requisites of common advancement—advancement, in the president's own inspiring words, "with a new spirit, a new enthusiasm, a new cordiality of cooperation." To the end that the whole country may, indeed, and at no distant day, "look back upon the past as upon a bad dream."