PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF NEXT CAMPAIGN PLACE CENTRAL POWERS ON THE OFFENSIVE

GERMANY LIKELY TO MAKE ATTACK ON EAST FRONT

Such a Movement Against Saloniki or Bagdad and Jerusalem Could Be Made at Small Cost.

MEANTIME U. S. PREPARES

If German Peace Bids Fail in 1918, Opening of 1919 Campaign Will Mark German Doom

By Frank H. Simonds

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The campaign of 1918 opens with certain very clearly marked problems in all minds. By reason of the Russian collapse and the Italian disaster, the Germans have regained the offensive, the initiative. Theirs is now the opportunity and the power to strike. For their enemies the riddle is now: Where will the next German blow fall? In the West, in Saloniki, in Asia? In addition, there is the problem of the Italian campaign, which is still proceeding. Will the Germans and their Austrian allies, who are doing most of the work, be able to press their advantage to the extent of compelling the Italians, now supported by the French and the British, to fall back to the line of the Adige, surrendering Venice, Vicenza and Padua?

It is perhaps worth while at the outset to examine for a moment the conditions out of which the present German advantage has grown. At the outset of the last campaign, that of 1917, the German situation was, on the surface, almost desperate. Russia, France, Britain and Italy, with their minor allies, possessed a combined force vastly in excess of the troops of Germany and Austria. The central powers were outnumbered on every front, and, by contrast with their condition in the previous year, they no longer possessed a strategic reserve like that used against Verdun.

Germans on Defensive

Beginning in June, July and August, 1916, when French and British troops at the Somme, Italian troops along the Isonzo and Russian troops in Galicia had developed a concentric and, in a measure, a coordinated offensive, the Germans had been compelled to accept the defensive, and on all fronts they had lost ground, prisoners and advantages, which were not to be concealed or counterbalanced by the successful offensive made against Roumania just as the campaign closed, an offensive which was actually successful because Roumania was sold out by the Russian ruling faction, betrayed, and thus abandoned to destruction.

Germany had found herself hard pressed all through the latter half of 1916, and her enemies might reasonably have expected at this time last year that with the renewal of a concentric attack in 1917 Germany would be forced to shorten her lines east and west, or court the disaster which came to Lee when he endeavored to hold a front too extended for his numbers in the last days of the Confederacy.

Russian Collapse Severe Blow

The concentric attack was resumed, but after a preliminary round of allied successes, French and British, on the west front, Italian on the Isonzo, and Russian in Galicia, Russia suddenly collapsed, and from that moment onward rapidly disappeared as a factor in the situation. With the disappearance of Russia the allies lost their advantages in numbers. Conceivably, they were still more numerous, but they had no longer a decisive advantage. Moreover, since the western front has only a limited extent, Germany at once acquired a reserve to be used on this line when there was need, although she did not make and has not at yet made any large draft upon it.

The failure of the allied offensive in 1917 was assured the moment Russia dropped out, and Germany was henceforth in a position to level a new blow. She had the numbers on the line and behind it to make the security of the western front absolute, despite minor fluctuations. What should she do with her new reserves acquired through Russian defection? She elected to use a portion of them, a small fraction, certainly less than 100,000, in an offensive against Italy, whose Isonzo attack was becoming dangerous to Austrian safety. The result was the Italian disaster and the loss by Italy of 250,000 prisoners, half of all her artillery and more than half of all her military accumulation in stores and munitions.

Then Came Italian Disaster

The Italian disaster completed the ruin of allied prospects which the Russian collapse had begun. Italy now became a liability, and it was necessary to send men and guns at once to save her. At the moment when the Germans were beginning to transfer their troops from the eastern to the western front the allies were obliged to detach two armies from the western front to serve in Italy. And with this action they lost all advantage of numbers on the west. The recent British attack at Cambrai, which might have resulted in one of the decisive battles of the war had Haig been able to support Byng with the corps sent under Plumer to Italy, ended in a bitter disappointment and a dashing of all British hopes.

As the new year opens the Germans are able to put on the western front substantially as many troops as the British and the French. I do not think that even Austrian aid will give the Germans any decisive advantage in the matter of numbers. They are able to concentrate in the west most of the guns hitherto used against the Russians, all those captured from the Italians, and it is not impossible that some of the Russian artillery will presently find its way to the German lines in the west. In this situation any allied offensive on a large scale becomes, if not impossible, altogether unlikely.

What Allies Face

To attack now would mean for the allies huge losses, with relatively small possibility of a supreme success. It would risk exhaustion without commensurate promise of victory. On the other hand, to wait, to accept the defensive, is to enable the United States to bring up its forces, of which no large portion can be effective in 1918, but perhaps a million will be ready to take part in the campaign of 1919. Hence the allies, since the submarine warfare does not threaten them with famine or defeat in the next 16 months, are bound to accept the defensive and let Germany risk exhaustion by the attack.

Now, as the situation stands today, Germany has the men and the material for an attack. But she cannot wait. No great new ally is getting ready behind her guns, as we are preparing behind the French and British armies. Her prospects next year will certainly be worse than they are now. But far and away beyond the military are the economic questions. Every month the war continues the world is becoming insensibly but unmistakably organized industrially, economically, financially against the German; the hostility to Germany is spreading and the task of regaining the old markets and establishing the old commercial relations is becoming more difficult. Thus, if Germany has the opportunity to strike, she has also the necessity of making prompt efforts to close the war, which is no longer merely a problem of military factors.

Where Will Kaiser Strike?

But where will she strike? This is the question which is filling the press of the world today. Will she strike in Asia Minor to regain Bagdad and Jerusalem, restore her dream of a Berlin-Byzantium-Bagdad railway, regain her old sallyport against British Egypt and the Suez canal which a Turkish Palestine supplied? Will she attack the heterogeneous force now defending Saloniki and offering the sole European obstacle to the completion of Mitteleuropa, walling off this vast Teutonic creation from the Aegean and from the natural outlet of the central empire at the south?

Or will the Germans make one more colossal effort in the west? They failed at the Marne, they failed at the Yser and about Ypres, they failed at Verdun; and in these three attempts they had all the advantages that numbers, preparation, munitions could give them. Can they hope to succeed now? Is it worth the sacrifice, recognizing that if they try and fail they will come to the end of the year facing victorious foes who are assured of a great strategic reserve in the following campaign, when the United States is at last ready?

The Germans have announced their forthcoming attack is to be made in the west. They have heralded it with brass bands and a blare of trumpets, but their attack upon Verdun, upon Russia in April, 1915, upon Italy a few weeks ago, all these were surprises so far as German publicity was concerned. If Germany contemplated an attack in the west, would she talk about it, giving her foes due warning, the chance to make the last preparation and search their own fronts yet once more for some weak point?

It seems to me, and this is the conclusion I find in most of the European journals, that a German offensive in the west is unlikely. It is by no means inconceivable; it may come; it will come if the Germans are actually in possession of information, naturally lacking in our own case, which would lead them to believe that either the British or the French armies are breaking down in morale, as were the Italians before the recent disaster; but, accepting the possibility, it remains plain that the great weight of chance is against such a venture.

A western offensive can come, it seems to me, only if the German situation—I mean economic, not military—is so desperate that the Germans feel that they must risk everything on one more bid for a quick decision. In that case they will attack in the west, because nowhere else can a decision be had. A complete victory in Italy, even a victory which brought Italy to make a separate peace, would not be decisive so far as Britain, France and the United States are concerned. Much less would a complete success at Saloniki or about Bagdad win the war, or even compel peace on terms which would leave Germany any substantial profit for her great sacrifices in men and treasure. Victory in the war, if it is to come on the field of battle, must come somewhere between the North Sea and Switzerland, and if Germany feels that she must risk all on one more bid for a decision under conditions far less advantageous than on the other occasions she will attack in the west and we shall see the greatest conflict of the war unfold within the next two or three months.

A Likely Alternative

On the other hand, if Germany hopes simply to last the war out, if she hopes to win it as Frederick the Great won his most terrible struggle, by wearing out his foes, as Louis XIV saved his territory in the war of the Spanish Succession, she is most likely to seek to break the nerve of her opponents by aiming at victories in indecisive fields, which, despite the fact that they are minor, will impress the world, and because of local circumstances can be won with a minimum of cost to herself. Such an operation was the attack upon Roumania a year ago. The recent Italian affair is an equally good illustration of this strategy.

If Germany desires to take Saloniki, I think the majority of allied military critics are of the opinion that she could do it at a price. She has the interior lines of communication. An attack upon Saloniki would put the allied transport system to a very great strain; it would compel a further shift of French and British troops to the near east, certain to be opposed bitterly in both nations, and it would thus weaken the western front, which remains the decisive front. The Germans could also rely upon Bulgarian troops for the main effort. For Bulgaria Saloniki is the prize that has been sought ever since Bulgaria began to have great aspirations.

In the Balkans

Germany would supply the guns, the generalship, a few chosen troops, perhaps no more than those Buelow is leading in Northern Italy. Certain Austrian units might be added, now that Austria has been saved from immediate anxieties. Such an attack would be directed against a very strange allied army, made up of Italians, Serbs, Greeks, Russians, British, French and contingents drawn from British and French colonies. These forces hold a wide front, with comparatively few good lines of communication behind them, and the people of the districts they occupy are in part hostile, as is a considerable element in all of Greece.

Now, conceive what would be the effect of a sudden and successful push early in the spring which carried the Germans close to Saloniki, if it did not immediately win the town. At the outset of a new campaign the allies would suffer a moral defeat. They would have promptly to decide whether to send troops from the west to the near east at a moment when the German blow in the west would still seem to be hanging over their heads. For, whatever happens, the Germans are going to have the men and the guns to attack in the west if they choose. In fact, if the allies should decide to send men and guns from the west to Saloniki, in addition to the armies which will have to be maintained in Northern Italy, the Germans might decide, rightly or wrongly, that the situation in the west, thus modified, warranted the launching of a real offensive which should aim at a decision.

In a word, a German offensive against Saloniki which would have a real chance of success would, at the opening of the fighting season of 1918, upset all the allied plans and precipitate a real crisis, the crisis incident to making the decision whether to continue to spend men and guns and transport, the most precious element of all, upon a Macedonian sideshow. If the decision was against such dissipation Greece might fall, and the German domination of the Balkans would be complete, the kaiser would reestablish his brother-in-law and confront the world with the accomplished fact.

Now, as to Asia. Just as an attack upon Saloniki would, in the main, be made by Bulgar troops, an offensive against Bagdad and Jerusalem would be chiefly the work of Turkish troops, German led, reinforced by a few German divisions and munitioned and gunned by the Germans. It would cost the Germans little in life and a failure would have no disastrous effects at home. And the same is equally true of the Saloniki enterprise; if it succeeded, the British would have to face the problem of making new sacrifices in the west and withdrawing new divisions or of accepting the loss of Mesopotamia and giving all their attention to the defences of Egypt. Egypt and India would, in a sense, be imperilled, and both have a value in the British mind wholly unappreciated by any other nation save the German.

The last thing in the world I am trying to do is to prophesy that the Germans will make their great effort for 1918 in Macedonia or in Asia, or in both regions. What I am trying to point out is that the weight of evidence points in this direction. I expect to see the Austro-German offensive in Northern Italy reach the Adige either before winter shuts down or in the spring.

The central powers have advanced in the mountains now to the point where they possess most of the necessary ground and the Italian position seems to me untenable. The Italians will naturally hold it as long as possible, to gain time to prepare the line of the Adige, but the line of the Piave, in the judgment of military men, is no longer permanently tenable, in the face of recent Austro-German gains on the Asiago plateau.

Fall of Venice Probable

This means that Venice will fall. It means that a new strain may be put upon allied resources in men if Italy calls for further reinforcements. Add to this a successful offensive in the spring against Saloniki, and what will the result be? Will the allies then send still more troops from the west to save the Balkans? If they do, so much the better opening for a German offensive in the west, so much greater the strain upon allied transport and by so much more the domestic problems of food and power in the allied countries are complicated. Exactly the same circumstances are in the picture if the Saloniki blow is preceded by a winter campaign against Bagdad.

If the Germans can wait six months, if their economic, political and industrial condition enables the high command to pursue a strategy purely concerned with military considerations, then it seems to me they are bound to make their first campaigns in Macedonia and in Asia, with an intensification of pressure upon Italy, if they do not push her behind the Adige before the spring campaign opens.

Thereafter, if the allies should yield to the obvious temptation and French and British troops are sent to Italy and to Saloniki, if British troops are withdrawn from Flanders for Egypt and Palestine, then the Germans can launch their great western offensive. Meantime they can threaten this great blow, using it as a political rather than a military weapon, holding it over the heads of their western foes and thus possibly contributing to the discussion of peace.

In the West

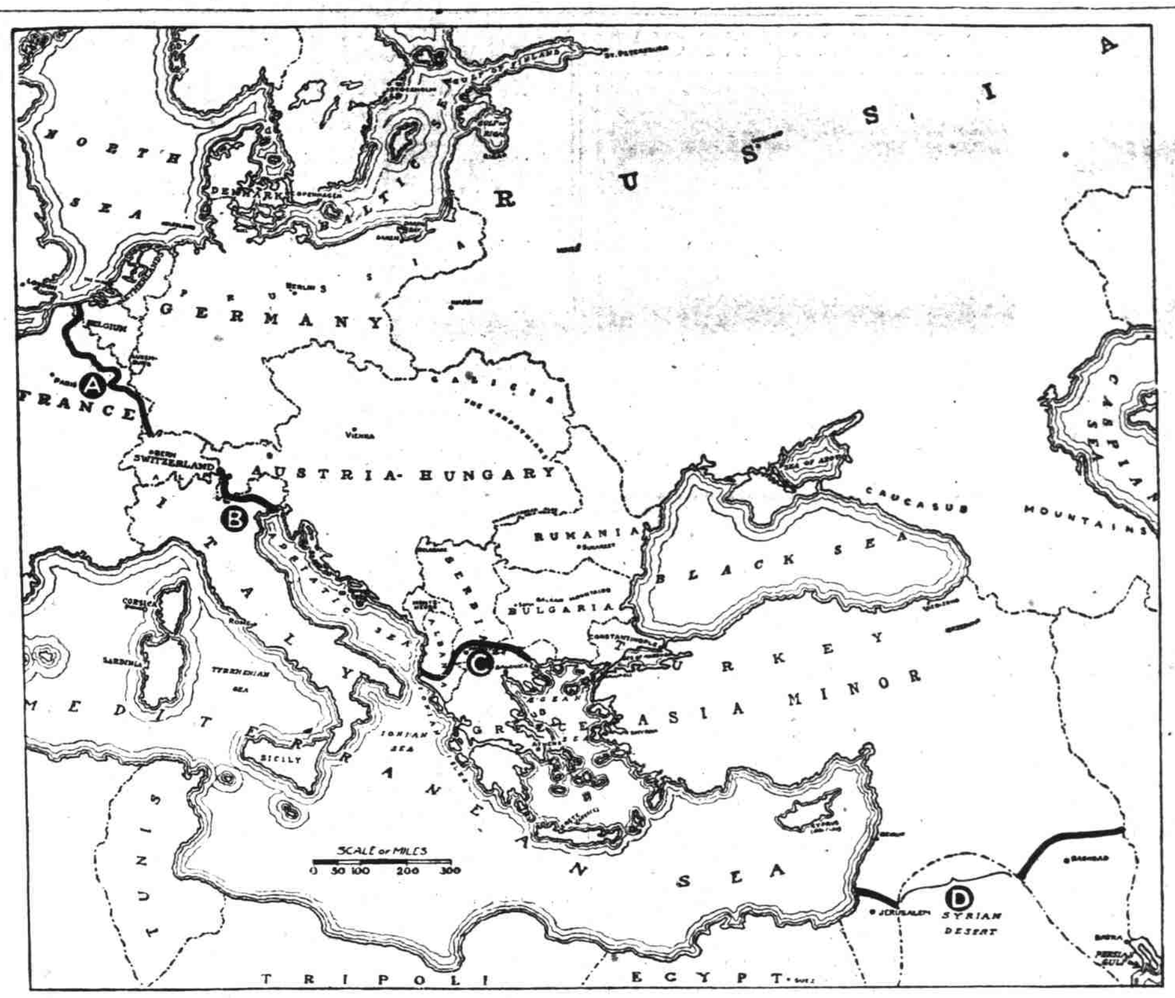
If the allies hold fast to the west and take their losses in the east, Germany, having launched no western offensive, can still seek a peace by negotiation with the coming of the winter, using the successes she may have attained, perhaps at Saloniki, perhaps at Bagdad, probably in Northern Italy, as arguments to prove that she is invincible. And in all this time the allies will hardly be in a position to make a really great offensive in the west, because the United States will not yet be able to supply the troops necessary to insure a decisive advantage in numbers.

If this German peace bid fails, then the advantage will pass for all the period of the war to the enemies of Germany, because our reserves of men are well-nigh unlimited, and by the spring of 1919, thanks to a million American troops, Germany will be outmanned on the western front and we and our allies will be in a position to launch and maintain an offensive which will bring Germany to terms.

Prospects for 1918

The campaign for 1918, as I see it, promises, then, to be one in which the Germans will have the offensive, and thus the opportunity to strike where they choose. I believe they will strike, and in the west and immediately, but that, while continuing their pressure upon Italy, they will open their operations with an offensive against the British in Mesopotamia, and possibly in Palestine, using Turkish troops, and when spring comes direct another attack, this time upon Saloniki, employing mainly Bulgarian troops. As the Austrians will supply most of the man power for the Italian campaign, this will leave the Germans with practically all their man power in hand for use on the western front, if they choose; but I do not believe they will use it there unless the economic and industrial situation within Germany is such that they cannot endure another 10 months of war or the allies make such a general dissipation of their forces, thus weakening their western front, that the Germans see a chance for a decision in the west. If they do, they will take it.

In all this discussion I have left out any examination of the domestic political conditions of Britain, France and Italy. If the people of any one of these nations become war weary the Germans will profit. On the other hand, a collapse of the German or Austrian publics would be similarly advantageous to the allies. But these are not, immediately, military considerations, and it is with the military considerations that I have endeavored to deal.



The four fronts—A, west front; B, Italian front; C, Macedonian front; D, Asiatic front.

FRENCH POILUS CROSS PONTOON UNDER FIRE

A remarkable photo made at a great risk showing French infantry crossing a pontoon bridge near Chemin des Dames under the direct fire of the enemy guns.

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EMPEROR WILLIAM LATE FOR DINNER

HIS ENAGEMENT AT VERDUN FAILS TO BE OBSERVED

Kaiser Once Invited His Generals to Dine With Him at Fortress When Captured.

"ON NE PASSE PAS"

Such Was Poilus' Reply, and the Germans Never Did Pass—and They Never Will.

By Dana Burnet

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After Rheims—Verdun! One might almost say: After destruction—death. For whereas in the former city there remains a small parade of civilian life, in the latter exists nothing out of uniform. Streets of Verdun flow only steel and marching men. The sole inhabitants of the place are rugged, mustached beings in anonymous gray-blue clothing, who peer curiously at one from the brink of inconceivable ruin.

It is a grim world, grimly peopled. Yet despite the desolation—a desolation that falls like a bludgeon upon one's consciousness; despite the demolition of established values, there rises from the rubbish heap of this most heroic town a certain preciousness that lifts it permanently above the level of decay. Heaven forbid that I should sentimentalize over the works of war! But if one is human one must breathe, I think, a very solemn exaltation in the air of Verdun. One must perceive, if one has eyes, in the dust of those downfallen walls not destruction merely but also the dim foundations of a new temple of nations. Much has been lost at Verdun; but more has been saved.

The Approaches of Verdun

From Rheims we had driven to C——, a town well behind the frontier of civilization, where we stayed the night. The following morning, after the usual breakfast of coffee and war bread, we started by motor for Verdun. It was a cold, damp, misty day. The road, with its inevitable surfacing of wet mud, gleamed like a copper ribbon behind its screen of protective camouflage. Occasional groups of soldiers swung by, their guns askew, their faces glowing with the good health that is the prime treasure of France. Most of them were puffing cigarettes or pipes with the supreme contentment of men who know the value of momentary happiness. Our officer explained that they had just come out of the trenches.

We passed huge guns, fearsomely striped and daubed, that rumbled along with their noses in the air; lumbering field kitchens, motor lorries drunkenly decorated, weary ambulances demanding the right of way—all the casual traffic of war as it is manifested in times of comparative calm. Twenty months before that road had flowed and thundered with a monstrous endless chain of motor trucks, running day and night to the relief of Verdun. Now it rested, like the belt of a great machine fallen idle, until necessity should set it whirring again.

Verdun!

The automobile slowed down, turned in beneath a high arched porte, and stopped in the shadow of the impressive old citadel. We descended into the mud and our officer disappeared in search of the commandant. Near by half a dozen poilus were gathered about a bread cart filled with fresh loaves. I walked over and joined the group. One never knows what precious tale will come out of chance acquaintanceship.

Verdun's Newest Wonder

The poilus were most friendly and polite. Monsieur had come to visit Verdun; perhaps to write his impressions? Ah, then, Monsieur must taste the wonderful white bread of which the city was so proud! Eagerly they seized a loaf from the cart and presented it to me. I broke off a piece and consumed it with appreciative murmurs. Then I attempted to question them concerning matters more historic. They answered indifferently and with shrugs: Yes, they had been in Verdun since the beginning. They had seen the German tide sweep over Douaumont; had helped to thrust it back again. But all the world knew that story. What the world did not know, what the world did not appreciate was that in Verdun one obtained the most wonderful white bread!

At that moment our conducting officer, Captain B—, returned in company with a French colonel who proved to be not only commander of the citadel but governor of Verdun as well. The colonel—a fine, vigorous man with ruddy face and white mustache—generously took charge of the party, and ordering us back into the cars, proceeded at once to Fort X, which constitutes one of the important defenses of Verdun.

As we climbed the long slopes leading out of the city the fog settled about us, shrouding in a sort of weird, mysterious light the scene of one of earth's greatest tragedies. Overhead burned a round red sun which cast a peculiar glow upon the tossed crests of the shell craters. A tiny forest of wooden crosses whirled by upon our right hand. * * * Six thousand graves upon the hillside of Verdun! Six thousand nameless ones asleep! Men of ordinary clay, and more divine for that reason, they have given their utmost, and have gained oblivion! It remains for us who survive to see that the fruits of their sacrifice shall descend to the rightful heirs, to the common clay of all races, to the nameless of all nations!

Barren as Lunar Wastes

The road lay coiled in glistening folds about the body of the hill. Ragged trenches went zigzagging in all directions. Fragments of barbed wire appeared. The naked yellow earth lay spread before us in motionless surges. We left the cars and following the colonel single file climbed to the summit of the ridge.

It was as though we had blundered into another world; as though we had been transported suddenly to some dead planet; a planet hideously disfigured and swimming perennially in cold mist. I could think of nothing but those unpleasant photographs which astronomers take of the surface of the moon.

We wandered about like so many lost souls, skirting the edges of the craters, avoiding in so far as was possible the unexploded shells, great and small, which bestrewed our path. There was a continuous rumble of artillery in the air.

Only the colonel seemed familiar with his surroundings. He stood upon a bit of high ground and pointed out with his stick the various points that historians will some day wrangle over. * * * Here the Boche came in his most furious endeavor; struggling up the slope in field gray waves of desperation, only to be met by such a fire as the mind shudders to conceive. There, upon that rusty snarl of barbed wire, the German effort died, and with it the highest hopes of Junkerdom.

We went down a brief twisting path to a door apparently cut in the side of the hill. Two dead rats, couchant, guarded the entrance to this subterranean passage. We entered—and straightway found ourselves in one of the most modern of fortresses. It reminded me more of a West Virginia coal mine than of anything else. Constructed entirely underground, it was as different from the romantic conception of a fort as a groundhog's burrow is different from a Roman watch tower.

Another Imperial Meal Upset

We returned to the citadel, where, in a little room many meters below the surface of the earth, a room filled with flags and trophies and bearing upon its wall shields the words "On ne passe pas" (They shall not pass), we had luncheon with the colonel. Afterward, we made a tour of the town. I had been told that there was not a house in Verdun left undemolished, and before the day was out I believed it. Even then, the Germans were still dropping a few especially selected shells into the ravaged city. Among other things, they had contrived to destroy the old Roman wall, and the precious bastion erected in the Middle Ages. At one point where we stopped, just 12 hours earlier a dozen French soldiers had been killed.

The cathedral at Verdun has suffered much the same treatment as its sister of Rheims, though not to so vast an extent. The guardian of the battered old pile, however, showed us two new shell holes which had "arrived since yesterday." There is still an excellent chance that this particular house of worship will receive its full baptism of kultur.

Leaving the cathedral, we entered the famous Bishops' hall, whose sightless ruined windows commanded a wonderful view of the city and of the distant valley of the Meuse. It was here, said the colonel with a droll twinkle in his eye, that the German kaiser had invited his generals to dine with him upon the occasion of the capture of Verdun.

"His majesty," added the colonel, "is a little late for his dinner!"

Few things are certain in this war, but one of the most certain is that William of Prussia will never dine upon the white bread of Verdun.

PIGEONS BIG HELP IN WINNING WAR; ALSO THEY MAKE GOOD PIE

Jimmy Dunn Says Few People Understand What the Birds Are Doing for the Allies.

Raise a pigeon and win the war. If they don't make good message carriers they will at least make tasty pot pie and reduce the cost of living by Hooverization of meat.

Despite the great advance of science, the homing pigeon is still a big factor in the carrying on of war. Authoritative figures state that about 8000 homing pigeons are used as message carriers by the British navy.

Homers are used most extensively by the patrol fleets off the European coast. The wireless of the vessels in the patrol division is easily drowned out by the overhead air message and the pigeons are relied on greatly.

"Few people seem to understand the great work the pigeon is doing for the allies," said Jimmy Dunn, Portland clothier and pigeon breeder.

Services Offered Government

"On the other hand, many do not know a homer's limitation. While they will fly for 1000 miles with a message, the message must be sent to a place where their home is. All of the little pigeon roosts in France are painted the same color and built alike, so that the message will reach a place where it can at least be found and sent on its way again if the carrier should become lost.

"The best known pigeon breeders in America and England have given their services to their governments during the war. Lieutenant D. C. Buscall recently left for France with American birds to establish lofts for American birds at the front. Captain Osman, editor of the Racing Pigeon, a well known magazine devoted to pigeon breeding in the world, has offered his services for further development of message carrying by homing pigeons."

Examples of the worth of pigeons as message carriers may be recalled by two historic facts.

Fly Out of Range of Guns

During the siege of Paris in 1870 the service of pigeons in transmitting messages over the heads of the enemy was well known, and in 1815 Rothschild was informed of the result of the battle of Waterloo three days before the British government and was able to make his famous coup on the bourse.

Bird soldiers are said to be better than wireless, for they fly so high that they are rarely shot down, and there is little danger of the enemy getting the information.

"One Born Every Minute"

Beloit, Jan. 12.—"One is born every minute." At least the police of this city think so, since three Forest City residents engaged in the "pleasant pastime" of buying gold bricks, which netted the sellers $2000. It was the same old story of three smooth strangers, three hunks of gold-plated brass and the usual hard luck tale. Forest City bit and bit hard.

Italian Vegetables for Germans

Amsterdam, Jan. 12.—The official organ of the German department for vegetables and fruit holds out the prospect of the immediate utilization of the conquered Italian districts in regard to vegetables and potatoes for the last weeks of the winter, and states that a conference will shortly take place at Vienna for the creation of an economic board for these regions.

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It's just fine. Don't stay stuffed-up with a cold or nasty catarrh.—Adv.

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Don't stay stuffed-up!

Quit blowing and snuffling! A dose of "Pape's Cold Compound" taken every two hours until three doses are taken will end grippe misery and break up a severe cold either in the head, chest, body or limbs.

It promptly opens clogged-up nostrils and air passages; stops nasty discharge or nose running; relieves sick headache, dullness, feverishness, sore throat, sneezing, soreness and stiffness.

"Pape's Cold Compound" is the quickest, surest relief known and costs only a few cents at drug stores. It acts without assistance, tastes nice, and causes no inconvenience. Don't accept a substitute. Insist on "Pape's"—nothing else. (Adv.)