

Polk County Observer

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WAR'S FEARFUL TOLL.

It has been noted that in the report of casualties in the present war the proportion of the killed in action is extraordinarily large. This fact appears in the official statements of the several combatants, regardless of mere estimates, which usually can be dismissed as exaggerations or underestimates. An official showing from the French Relief society places the number of French soldiers killed at 400,000 and the wounded at 700,000, with 300,000 captured or missing. In former great wars the ratio of killed was about one to five among those struck by bullets or other missiles. Now the ratio is little more than one to two, a remarkable increase. Great Britain is reported to have had 61,000 killed, 196,000 wounded; Russia, 735,000 to 1,982,000, and Germany 482,000 killed, 852,000 wounded. Turkey's casualties are given as 45,000 killed, 90,000 wounded. Austria's are footed up as 341,000 to 711,000, and Serbia's 64,000 to 112,000. Belgium has lost 47,000 killed to 160,000 wounded. No return has been made from the Italian army. The grand total to June 1 is put at 2,173,000 killed and 4,303,000 wounded, a proportion of more than one or two.

So far nearly as many have been killed in the European struggle as were enlisted in the union army in the American civil war. In the latter conflict, by the adjutant general's figures, 67,058 union soldiers were killed in action, 43,012 died of wounds, and 40,154 in prisons and from accidents. At Gettysburg 3,070 union soldiers were killed and 14,497 wounded, and at Chickamauga 1,656 were killed to 9,749 wounded. The number of union soldiers who died from disease during the war was 190,720, or more than twice as many as were killed or mortally wounded in battle. How many the European armies have lost from disease has not been stated, but the winter campaign in trenches must have been extremely costly in human life.

The range of arms in the present war, the large number of wounds in the head and intense artillery fire, to say nothing of poisonous shells, are responsible for the augmentation of the number of soldiers killed in all the armies. In naval actions also the mortality has gone far beyond any former record. A growth in the desire for peace cannot be far away.

BUSINESS IMPROVING.

As changes in the volume of railway traffic afford a fairly certain indication of the trend of general business, it is a matter of no little satisfaction to note a steady and continuous improvement in American railroad operations. Signs of this improvement commenced to be visible several months back, but in too many cases the improvement consisted in a smaller monthly or quarterly decrease rather than in an increase in gross or net revenue. In other cases, although an increase in net revenue was reported, a little inquiry disclosed that the improved showing was due chiefly to retrenchment, economy and more scientific management.

In the report of the interstate commerce commission on the operations and finances of leading American railroads for the month of May, however, one finds confirmation of the impression that the companies have at last "turned the corner" and are again commencing to enjoy conditions of real prosperity. In the statement for May, which relates to fifty-seven important railroads in the United States, an increase of nearly \$3,000,000 in net revenue is shown as compared with earnings in the same month of last year. In gross revenue a slight increase is recorded for the total mileage covered. The improvement is attributed to several factors, some of them being industrial and others moral or "psychological." Among the former are the war orders, the heavy shipments of grain and cotton in recent weeks, the gain in the domestic trade during the same period and the favorable crop prospects. On the psychological side may be enumerated the decision of the interstate commerce commission in the eastern rate cases and the marked disposition on the part of the public to frown on dubious anti-railroad legislation.

These two sets of factors act and react on each other. Justice and reason in the treatment of railroad questions beget confidence and courage on the part of the railroad managers. Every order placed by them for new equipment means more employment for labor and capital in the industries that depend largely for their prosperity on railroad patronage. An improvement in the credit of the carriers facilitates needed reorganization and prevents or shortens costly and disturbing receiverships. There is no doubt that recent railroad bond issues negotiated on favorable terms, as well as the recovery and steady progress of the New Haven and other systems, victims of frenzied finance and reck-

less juggling during an era now happily past, are ascribable to the wholesome change in the public's attitude.

MEANING OF WARSAW'S FALL.

The moral effect of the capture of a great city in war is large, no matter whether such city is fortified or not. When Brussels fell all Belgians, at once almost, became tributary to Germany. And since the capitulation of the Flemish capital no event in the present war has so stirred the souls of men as the prospective capture of the ancient Polish capital, around which the determined Germans are steadily drawing their cordoned tighter.

Of course it may be said that the capital of Russian Poland is not a strategic center in any way, and that its fall already has been discounted. But Russia's failure to hold its most important city in the empire, if the two capitals be excepted, is as distinct an advantage to the German cause as was the fall of Brussels. Warsaw is a city of 900,000 people. It is of more commercial importance than Moscow, and more replete with historic associations than Petrograd. German occupation of the city means the end of the great Russian drive, which a few months ago threatened Breslau and even Berlin itself.

But still more important, Warsaw is the capital of a kingdom nominally subject to Russia, but in which allegiance is tempered by sedition. The Polish nation, divided and severed two centuries ago, looks to the present war, to unite its scattered fragments.

Perhaps the world will witness as a result of the conflict the re-establishment of the only kingdom known to civilization, whose ruler was elected.

A MINIATURE FAIR.

The undertaking by one of Dallas' foremost business establishments to induce greater co-operation between city and country by holding monthly exhibits and sales days is worthy of careful consideration by our rural friends. According to the statement of the promoter, mercenary motives are not attached to the project, the sole purpose being to further education along agricultural, horticultural and other similar lines of endeavor. If the undertaking is successful, depending wholly upon the interest manifested by the farmers of the surrounding country, the exhibits will afford opportunity for comparison, and hence cannot fail to prove valuable to the grower. It will be, in a sense, a miniature county fair, prizes being offered for displays of certain crops at seasonable times, while the sales end of the proposed institution may be made the means of disposing of those things for which the farmer has no further use.

The plan appears to have genuine merit, and should have the hearty co-operation of the farmers of Polk county. Other towns in the Willamette valley are holding monthly sales days, but Mr. Davis purposes going a step further by introducing the exhibit feature.

HARD TIMES TALK.

Prophecies based on facts and figures say that the trade balance in favor of the United States for the present fiscal year will probably reach \$2,000,000,000, and may exceed that figure by many millions. The facts are significant since the excess of exports over imports in June 1915 was \$110,800,000, as compared to the corresponding month of 1914 when exports were less than imports by \$5,500,000. In only one June in ten years had exports exceeded imports by as much as \$20,000,000.

Reports have been issued on about 90 per cent of the world's commerce for the week ending July 24, and show a balance in favor of the United States of \$22,900,000, bringing the balance for the month, up to July 24, to \$57,000,000. Few crops are moving in June and July and there is so little activity in exports that these are considered very quiet months. What, then, may we reasonably expect when the cotton crop of the south and the wheat crop of the United States, estimated at 400,000,000 bushels, begins to move in the fall? The only dubious phase of the bright outlook is the possibility of a shortage of ships, though that is not expected.

By Fall the shipment of war munitions will be going steadily forward, wheat, cotton and other crops will be in shipment, and the United States will celebrate the reaping of the war's great harvest.

WOMEN LETTER CARRIERS?

Five young women in Illinois have applied for positions as letter carriers and it is stated they will be permitted to take the regular examinations which precede appointment to this service. There is nothing in the rules and regulations governing the postal service, it is claimed, to prevent the employment of women as letter carriers, unless the women happen to be married. And these young women evidently have been reading of the quite general practice in Europe, since the commencement of war, of employing women as letter carriers, and they see no reason why the same practice should not be followed in this country. Anyhow, they are bound to make a "try" for it, and so they have formally filed their applications and will take the required examinations, and then it will be up to the civil service commission to determine whether they are to get the positions which they seek.

No doubt the letter carriers will be ready with prompt and vigorous objections to the starting of any such innovation as the employment of wo-

men carriers, and no doubt there will be others to protest against this new threat of encroachment in an employment field heretofore monopolized by the men. At the same time, is there any valid reason why this work should be retained for men alone, when it really is as well adapted for the women as it is for members of the other sex, and when our system of industrial employment has reached a stage where it is popularly supposed there is no discrimination on the grounds of sex?

There is little question that the work of a letter carrier can be performed quite as efficiently and as satisfactorily by a woman as by a man, and if the women want to invade this branch of service, why should they be prevented from doing so? It would appear that the women have a perfect right to demand equality of privilege in this respect, and if they do demand it who shall saw them nay?

YANKEE INGENUITY.

Yankee ingenuity is powerful, and already it is being applied to the solution of some of the military problems which have been forced to attention by the present great war. Trench fighting on a scale practiced in the present war, for instance, is one of the novelties of this great conflict. The trench itself is not modern. Since firearms came into general use earthworks have been the refuge of fighting infantry in all campaigns. But in the older days the trench was a temporary affair, meant to hold for a day or two at the most, while the army back of it made other dispositions. In modern war it is the soldiers' dwelling place; his bedroom, his kitchen, and when the rain is profuse, and the soil not too porous, his bathroom. German and French soldiers lived in trenches within half a mile of each other all last winter. The earthworks that protect Warsaw from three German armies operating against that beleaguered city, are caves in which modern engineering has rivaled the activities of a mole-hill.

Obviously, this method of warfare has come to stay, and the natural law in military science is that no obstacles are unsurmountable. Shrapnel is ineffective against the modern trench. The German machine shells are, no doubt, the last word in the present war. They, however, are not all-conquering, for if they were, Von Kluck would not have been driven back from before Paris. But American genius has found a way. An explosive shell has been invented here, and so carefully is the formula of construction guarded that its constituent elements are unknown. But it has the capacity to destroy not only the elaborate trenches set up in modern warfare, but to reach and kill their inhabitants. American ingenuity, too, has so improved the modern field gun-carriage that trench warfare will, in the future, be as hazardous as maneuvers in the open field.

This government can always rely on the mechanical inventiveness of our people to overcome any military obstacle, and Secretary Daniels' mobilization of our scientists has already demonstrated its success.

Now that the community sing has proved more than acceptable, why not the community dance—with the band accompaniment? Or, why not have both during the summer months? The folk dance has received the Dallas brand of approval, and is being adopted in the rural settlements by granges and other societies working for the advancement of mankind. A reader suggests the community dance, and The Observer is willing to second the motion.

Although the Germans are continuing their submarine warfare and sinking a good many vessels, they are taking the precaution to first take off the crews and passengers. And it is possible this is Germany's real response to the last American note.

You scarcely can blame the farmers of this county for hoping that war prices will hold until after they can harvest and market their crops.

In these days when the number of automobiles is legion, it behooves every driver of a car to be on his guard to prevent accidents and take every possible precaution, no matter whether it is stipulated in the city ordinances or not.

The auto driver who "hogs" all the road for miles and refuses to let anyone pass him has no cause to complain when somebody else takes the ditch, drives around him and then makes him eat dust for miles. A little courtesy would have saved him a dust bath if he had only appreciated that fact.

The Little Want Ad Pays.
"Stop that thrashing machine ad," she said," said Fred Wagner to The Observer yesterday morning. Mr. Wagner offered the machine for sale in the cent-a-word column, and the ad. found him a customer. The little, inexpensive "want ads" are getting similar results every day of the week. In Tuesday's issue Mr. E. L. Anderson advertised a house that had been unoccupied for months for rent. Before sunset she had leased the dwelling for a year. Just another instance: Mr. Riehl had five acres of land in Salt Creek for sale, and he put an ad. costing 30 cents in The Observer. The following day he sold the tract to one of his neighbors who had not known Riehl wanted to sell.

Frank Lane of Independence, former merchant of Dallas, was in the city Saturday on business.

Miss Mildred Shepherd of Independence was a guest last week of her grandmother, Mrs. Polly Siefarth.

Madam, Allow Me To Introduce the New Post Toasties

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