

arouse the martial spirit. Lloyd George without a quail fastened the last fetters on the limbs of the workmen; he hardly needed the velvet of old-age pensions to cover the cold iron. He labelled the slave, made him keep his own record, and even made him help to pay for it.

With a pace stately and fast  
Over English land he past,  
Trampling to a mine of blood  
The adoring multitude.

And now there comes a real war. One might have expected the whole nation to flame into arms. Not a bit of it! The piteous posters, idly watched by cigarette loungers, or read dully by the stolid, contemptuous, hopeless eyes of the men-slaves to whom toil had become the only thing in life, pleaded and still plead like bedraggled charity beggars. The press set the trumpet to its lips and blew; all we heard was a squeak like a rag doll's. The fact is that the people did not want the war. Even the violent anti-German "John Bull," the weekly with the largest circulation in England, came out at the time of the Austrian ultimatum with the placard "To Hell with Serbia." Its editor, Horatio Bottomley, is probably the most popular man in the country among the lower middle and working classes and of all politicians most sure and quick to apprehend and to express the silent thought of the average man. Once the die was cast, he shouted with the biggest crowd, like Mr. Pickwick, and roared to beat Bottom himself. But his first mood was the genuine thought.

The idea of fighting on behalf of the miserable assassins of Serajevo seemed to everybody the last word in madness. But even when the tale of the invasion of Belgium came to London, when rape, mutilation, cannibalism and torture filled the columns of the papers, did the people turn a hair? They cared exactly nothing. They probably believed the lies of the press; but did not see how it concerned them. They were very annoyed because it interfered with the traditional holiday season; but all they felt was just the dull resentment of a sleeping man in a railway carriage when a jolt half wakes him. Now this was all wrong. It showed nervous exhaustion, the last stage before mania. For, believing those press lies, the healthy reaction should have been a giant rage to avenge humanity, and crush the "barbarous Huns." The spirit of manhood should have flamed up like that of Peter when they came to arrest his Master. Instead, the idea of the man in the street was to let France and Russia do the fighting. The sending of the little expeditionary force (to its inevitable annihilation) was regarded as a work of supererogation, a particularly sporting thing to do. The navy of course would take the necessary police measures. At a chosen spot on the North Sea the German fleet would be surrounded and blown out of the water. Jolly old Jellicoe would go into battle with the signal "To-day's the day" and die in the arms of Lord Charles Beresford at the moment of victory with the remark, "Dear old Charlie."

But fight ourselves? Not much. Bad enough having to pay three times the usual price for Potassium Bichromate to color "Tomato Soup" with; fighting be damned! Hence the passionate, almost Evangelical, belief in the one and a half million Russians who were being transported through the country, with the secrecy and dispatch of the telegraph service! I used to point out that Archangel is served by a single line of railway, and that to move even 10,000 troops would take six weeks at least. I might have saved my breath. The name Archangel suggested Michael, I suppose, and everybody knows the Grand Duke Michael.

The White Feather campaign, the hogwash of Harold Begbie, Wells, Bennett, and the Waterloo Bridge Road school of literature in general, the crazily hysterical appeals of the war posters, the sexual inducements, all fell flat. (In the meanwhile France and Germany were methodically, silently, adequately organized for war with no more discord than exists in a well-trained football team.)

The practical men gave up the voluntary idea. England would not wake up; it must be kicked up. (Of course, it was the fault of previous governments. They had deliberately set themselves to break the manhood of the people; and it is stupid to curse one's bullock for his failure at stud.) So Mr. Lloyd George put on his shooting boots, and prepared to kick. Senator Beveridge describes the situation in language which I cannot hope to better.

So acutely was the government embarrassed in conducting the war because of shortage of material and equipment, that toward the middle of March the most drastic and autocratic law ever passed by any legislative body in British history was enacted. Broadly speaking, this law gave the government absolute power to take over and conduct the whole or any part of the industry of Great Britain.

The factories were not turning out proper quantities of munitions. Ship-building firms were working on private contracts. There had been no general voluntary adjustment of manufacturing to changed conditions, as in Germany and France.

But, while employers were blamed for selfishness and profit hunger, the weightiest blows of censure fell upon the heads of British laborers. Thus the government armed itself with Czar-like powers of compulsion over British industry.

The government considered this revolutionary statute so necessary that Mr. Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, assured the House of Commons that "the success of the war depends upon it." Lord Kitchener, from his place in the House of Lords, told Parliament and the nation that military operations had "been seriously hampered by the failure to obtain skillful labor and by delays in the production of the necessary plants"; and, complaining of labor indifference and trade-union restrictions, he grimly declared that the Commandeering bill, as this extreme socialistic measure was popularly called, was "imperatively necessary."

The newspapers were swift to see and frank to state the profound change which this law wrought in British conditions; and justified it only upon the ground of deadly emergency. The *Daily Mail* said that the law established "a sort of industrial dictatorship."

The *Daily Express* asserted that "The new bill is, of course, State Socialism. That must be accepted."

The *Daily Express*, in discussing another subject announced that: "Parliamentary government has temporarily come to an end in Great Britain."

That was in March. At the end of July the situation is nothing bettered but is rather grown worse. It really never occurred to people that this was going to be anything but a toy war, with corpses complete, in box, five shillings and sixpence. So the nation drifted to a point where even its powdered and plumed lackeys in the American press could not conceal the whole truth. Here is part of an editorial from the Licksittle New York Times.

### The English Labor Crisis

"The British Government has served its ultimatum on English labor. To the utmost limit of their capacity the factories producing war munitions must have efficient workmen, willing to do full time and no 'slacking.' The leaders of organized labor have undertaken in seven days to raise a volunteer army of workmen sufficient to supply the Government's demands. If they fail, the Government will have to consider compulsion.

"That is the ultimatum delivered by David Lloyd George in the speech with which he introduced in the House of Commons the so-called War Munitions Bill, a measure which in effect imposes martial law upon so much of British industry as the needs of war require. Besides providing for a volunteer army of workmen to man the factories, who shall enlist like soldiers but wear no uniforms, the bill makes strikes and lockouts illegal, and creates local boards, composed of employers and employees, half and half, presided over by Government Chairmen, which shall sit as final courts, almost like courts-martial, to settle all disputes as to wages, hours and profits, and suspend any trade-union rules that tend to limit output. That is the crux of the whole matter. Nothing shall be tolerated that limits output.

"Thus comes at last to a head a situation which has occasioned profound chagrin in England.

"Military men are for dressing labor in khaki by force and making it subject to discipline, as soldiers are. To this Arnold Bennett acutely retorts: 'You won't change the nature of Clyde men by calling them conscripts. Supposing a shopful of conscripts down tools, what are you going to do? Shoot them? Try it. The dream of getting skilled labor and continuous industry by compulsion is full of nothing but the gravest social danger.'

"The sense of that is obvious. You can compel a capitalist to operate his plant on Government orders at full capacity merely by threat of taking possession of it; but you cannot compel a skilled workman to work his best, to work full time, to work for certain wages, or to work at all. If you threaten to shoot him—why, that is no compulsion. He is not in the Congo. He is in England. The threat will not be executed. So, in one breath the Government threatens compulsion and exhorts him to do his duty. There is still hope that he will respond. There is very grave doubt as to whether he can be requisitioned."

Of course it is not difficult to foresee the course of events. They will not shoot the workman; they will keep on nagging at him. He will suddenly come to the end of his patience, run amuck, and burn the rags of the British flag, and as the British Constitution, on the altar, of Anarchy.