

The British Cotton Policy

THE German bid of fifteen cents a pound for a million bales of American cotton delivered in a German port is obviously mere strategy. The Germans might as well have specified delivery in the moon. It was none the less good strategy, if American opinion counts for anything in the present crisis. For the difference between ten-cent cotton, the best that may be expected with that staple on the contraband list, and fifteen-cent cotton, a price that might be attained if shipment to Germany were unimpeded, represents the difference between prosperity and distress to our whole agricultural South.

Hundreds of thousands of our cotton growers will be thrust deeper into the mire of economic dependence by ten-cent cotton. The German offer gives definite arithmetical expression to the effect of the British policy. Assuming that the cotton crop will amount to 12,000,000 bales, the difference between fifteen cents a pound and ten cents is \$300,000,000. And the bitterness in the mind of the cotton producer is not assuaged by the reflection that this \$300,000,000 is not an absolute loss to the world, like the values destroyed in the field of military operations, but is in large part recovered by the manufacturers and consumers of cotton, over one-half of whom are foreigners. Ten-cent American cotton means a saving of \$75,000,000 to the British cotton trade. This is one of our contributions to the cost of the European war, virtually a tax, in the levying of which we had no voice.

"We expected something more from our American cousins," say the apologists of the British policy whenever we raise a question like this. "We are engaged in a life and death struggle, and we have a right to American sympathy, if not support. And now you would hamper us for the sake of a few dirty dollars." The British nation does indeed command the sympathy of the greater part of the American public. In no part of the country was sympathy with the British cause more certainly assured than in the South, where there is practically no German admixture in the population, and where the memory of British friendliness at the time of the Civil War is by no means extinct. Like any other section of the United States, the South would be willing to incur sacrifices to assure ultimate success to British arms in the present conflict. But this does not mean that the South is ready to admit without question the soundness of British judgment as to the expediency of the exclusion of cotton from Germany. It is hardly possible to take seriously the contention that the production of ammunition in Germany can be curtailed by cutting off cotton

imports. So far-sighted a government has undoubtedly made provision for all prospective needs of the ammunition manufacturers. And suppose that the war drags on long enough to exhaust the German cotton stocks; who would have the hardihood to maintain that German inventiveness is not quite competent to provide a satisfactory substitute for cotton?

It has never been made clear that the placing of cotton on the contraband list is anything more than a part of the general economic war that England is conducting against Germany. It appears to be part and parcel of the policy that holds up at Rotterdam over \$150,000,000 worth of German and Austrian goods destined for American consumption. In the one case England is striking at German industry through depriving it of raw materials; in the other case through depriving it of a market. But this is a policy that injures neutrals and belligerents in equal measure. We may possibly sympathize with England's endeavor to wreak a few hundred millions of damage upon German civilians, but our sympathy is put to a severe test when this is done through measures that wreak an equivalent injury upon us.

But even so, we might accept our losses without murmuring if we believed that the economic war would attain its purpose of wearing Germany down. German foreign trade before the war amounted to five billion dollars, exports and imports combined. Absolutely considered, this is a huge sum, and the effect of the war in cutting off foreign markets and supplies must have been to impair in some degree German economic power. Nevertheless, three-fourths of the production of Germany was directed to the supplying of the home market. The closing of foreign markets can have had no effect upon this part of German production. Moreover, most of the production for export was capable of diversion to home consumption—at somewhat lower prices, no doubt. The utmost economic injury that the Allies inflicted upon Germany through destruction of her trade can hardly have amounted to so much as a ten-per cent reduction in average incomes. But it was possible to overcome such a reduction through increased thrift, a virtue the more easily exercised at present in consequence of the exclusion of foreign luxuries by the Allies, and the restriction upon the production of domestic luxuries resulting from shortage of labor.

We cannot believe that the economic war on Germany will wear her down, in any reasonable time, to such a degree that her military power will

crumble. We must therefore regard it as one of those ill-advised policies, adopted rather in a spirit of belligerent bitterness than in a spirit of calculating reason, that are characteristic of all the nations at war. Like the German submarine policy, the British economic war is a futility. It is true that both Germany and England regard it as an impertinence for outsiders to criticize their respective policies. And it would indeed be an impertinence, if we were not expected to help bear the cost of these futilities.

The abandonment of the submarine war on British commerce and the blockade on German, would doubtless reduce somewhat the hardships under which the civilian populations of the warring nations labor. The German housewife would replenish her depleted stock of household cottons, and the British workman would get his food at a slightly lower cost. So much to the bad, say the adherents of the doctrine of "frightfulness." But the chances are that this war will come to an end neither through the military collapse nor the economic exhaustion of either side. It will come to an end when weariness with the costs and miseries of the war overcomes the hatred of the enemy in the popular consciousness of the several belligerent nations. And any policy that is essentially futile con-

tributes more to the hostility on which the war lives than to the disgust that will eventually bring it to a close.

We are universally charged with being a utilitarian people. And this we are in fact, like any other people. We hold to the view that it is our right and duty to defend our economic interests—interests that were securely guaranteed by international law until Anglo-German "frightfulness" wrecked that laboriously constructed edifice. We should none the less willingly forfeit our interests if thereby we might aid in establishing an early and just peace. But we see no reason for believing that the British policy of economic war will bring peace; rather we are convinced that the advent of peace will be delayed by it. And we can hardly be expected to surrender our view of the matter to the British, however strongly we may sympathize with Great Britain in her struggle against autocratic militarism. The British cannot afford to dismiss our contentions with a contemptuous allusion to "dirty dollars." For such an attitude will give impetus to the movement, already under way, to bring pressure upon our government to take steps toward enforcing our right to free commerce upon the seas.

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The Chances of Being Married

BY common consent a woman's matrimonial chances are properly to be treated humorously, statistically, or "broadly." I am without sense of humor, I abhor statistics, and I am clean-minded; yet I feel there is something I have a right to say on the subject. Yes, as you infer, I am a woman. And as I am still alive, I have been compelled to take extreme precautions to preserve my anonymity, lest my friends presume to a sympathy over-personal. Who the writer is no other woman knows, and only one man. And he is a sociologist, a living machine, in which mountainous heaps of statistics have been milled—statistics of births and deaths, of poverty and riches, of crime, insanity and suicide. These last are most to his taste. He gloats upon bleak conclusions, deductions of despair. I call him my friend; and when life runs too utterly gray, I go to him, as the Indian woman bereft of her child went to the medicine man for bitter roots to gnaw. And that no trace of myself may appear in this paper, I have had him revise and rearrange, expand and delete, as seemed good to him, to the profit of its logic, perhaps, and certainly to the prejudice of its meaning.

I am twenty-nine, and I aver myself to be of

sound body and mind. I spring from one of the oldest and best of American families; my forbears, through several generations, have been cultivated men and women, acquitting themselves well and resolutely in the world. I was graduated from one of the better women's colleges, and trained myself for a profession, through which I win a fair income. My professional standing is good, and in the reunions of my class I am spoken of as a woman who has achieved success. I have been thrown into contact with a great number of men, young, middle-aged and old. But my life has yielded not one single proposal of marriage, not one sentimental advance. No, this is not quite the truth, and why should I not be truthful, under the impenetrable veil of my anonymity? There have been advances, with obvious purpose of shallow adventure, repelled at first with burning indignation, later with disgust, finally only with weariness. Here, you suspect, is a clue? Not at all; your own sisters and daughters could recount to you similar experiences of their own.

"She's probably very homely; she hasn't any magnetism," you say with air of finality. I shall make no extravagant claims to personal charm; you