

BUSINESS MEN IN CAVALRY TRAINING CAMP



THE EUROPEAN WAR

AS SEEN BY ONE WHO HAS RECENTLY RETURNED FROM ENGLAND—THE FOLLY OF UNPREPAREDNESS SHOWN BY ACTUAL EXISTING CONDITIONS.

By F. T. Bizzell.

At the request of the editor and of several friends, who persist in thinking that my sojourn in a belligerent nation should enable me to throw some light on the present terrible conflict, I have decided to do my best in this article.

If I could unravel, for the readers of the Exchange, the shortest length of the tangled maze of inaccuracies, exaggerations, half truths and whole fabrications, I would consider it well worth any effort on my part.

From the "Angel of Mons" to Constantinople's story of unbroken Turkish "victories"; from the "fatal illness" of the German Emperor to the "certainty" of the fall of Verdun, an opportunity for a fertile imagination has opened that has delighted the heart of the most hardened war correspondent. The individual who could cleave the dividing line of truth and fiction, would be a prophet not without honor at home or abroad. This is a task, however, your humble servant will not attempt.

There are many undisputed facts, which taken severally, are dismissed as side issues of minor importance, but taken jointly, might attain a degree of importance which would entitle them to mature consideration. To these will be devoted the bulk of this article.

Previous to the outbreak of the war, I had spent, at different times, some three years in England. Although one could always discern in the minds of the best informed Englishmen, a throbbing concern over the vast military activities of the Continental powers in general and of Germany in particular, it was impossible to convince the rank and file of the people that the danger was imminent. Nearly every one conceded that the two nations would have to "have it out" sometime, but evidently didn't realize that "sometime" would probably be in their time.

Some few, and Britannia is still thanking God for their paucity of numbers, professed a belief in the permanence of peace. Some of them actually advocated a reduction in the British navy, and God help Britain had their advice been taken. But Britain, foolish as she may have been at times, never listened to so silly a proposition as that.

While saved from the effects of so fatuous a folly, the cry of "Wake up England!" which sounded through the British Empire years before the conflict, fell largely upon ears, which, if not deaf, were at least soundly somnolent.

The warning had been urgent and from responsible quarters. No less a personage than Britain's foremost general, Lord Roberts, in spite of his advancing years, more than eighty, made a personal canvass of the Kingdom urging a greater degree of preparedness for the army.

A great chain of newspapers, known as the Harmsworth press, consisting of The Times, The Daily Mail and other powerful periodicals, both daily and weekly, carried the slogan of National Service at their mastheads for years before the war.

These efforts were seconded in a greater or less degree, by a great number of high-class, reputable and influential newspapers and a large number of well informed individuals.

But the people, largely, were indifferent. The Imperial Parliament was too busy with the Welsh disestablishment and such crucial questions as

the advisability of permitting roller skating on certain London streets, and whether a certain naval cadet stole a five shilling post order, to attend to the matter.

The net result was that the war found the British army nearly as unprepared as ever—somebody else may be.

The lack of preparedness may be exemplified by the fact that the present production of munitions is HUNDREDS of TIMES greater than the pre-war capacity, not pre-war PRODUCTION, but pre-war CAPACITY to PRODUCE. And yet the maximum of production has not been reached and will not be for several weeks and possibly months. With proper foresight all this would have been accomplished many months ago.

But with all this vast increase, production is still behind that of France, a nation of far less industrial capacity generally than Britain and with a majority of her coal and iron mines in the hands of the enemy, but a nation better prepared in the beginning.

Conceive now, if you can, the Herculean task of a nation unprepared. So much for steel and lead, but Britain's strongest fort is the much talked of silver bullet. Her financial resources seem to far outweigh her industrial resources. The normal pre-war revenue was in the neighborhood of one billion dollars. Now it exceeds two and one-half billions, the new tax raising more than a billion and a half, and the tax gathering department is by no means at the end of its tether.

I was in London at the time of every new levy except one, and if anybody seriously protested, I never heard of it. A more cheerfully borne burden could hardly be conceived. There is no financial depression, as yet, resulting from this heavy taxation. Business is brisker and labor better paid than before. The people, of course, realize that, to a great extent, the nation is living on its capital and they will feel the pinch harder at a later date.

But their financial resources are so vast that it would take many years of war, expensive as it is, to seriously impair it.

As an illustration of the strength of their financial institutions, the following comparative statement of the world's leading banks, published this month, is appended.

The World's Richest Banks.
(From Commerce and Finance.)
The following table shows the relative strength of the six largest New York and six largest London banks—in matter of deposits:

| Bank | Deposits |
|---------------------|---------------|
| New York Banks: | |
| National City | \$544,582,000 |
| Guaranty Trust | 430,912,000 |
| Bankers' Trust | 269,330,000 |
| Chase | 255,877,000 |
| Commerce | 250,682,000 |
| First | 204,882,000 |
| London Banks: | |
| City & Midland | \$701,815,835 |
| Lloyds | 617,582,590 |
| County & West | 518,416,038 |
| National Provincial | 387,550,605 |
| Barclay | 348,039,948 |
| Parrs | 260,541,395 |

The above does not include the Bank of England, which is the greatest in the world.

British foreign investments aggregate a total of twenty billion dollars. Her shipping interests are almost half that of the entire world and are probably earning more, as a result of high freight rates, than ever before.

If as a British statesman declared, the last millions of money will decide the war, his nation will stand more than a fighting chance of being in at the finish.

Probably you have heard most all this before and would like to know more of what came directly under my own observation. In this, too, I fear I can relate little that is really new. I can testify to the practical unanimity of the British people in supporting their country and to this confidence in their final victory, though they realize that it will take a long time.

I have seen them under circumstances which try men's souls. I was with them when the news arrived that three of their finest cruisers had been sunk at one fell swoop. I have watched their demeanor while the monster Zeppelins were cruising overhead, strewn death and destruction in their wake. I have clasped the hand of a British father a few moments after receiving the news of the death of his only son.

None of these things have had the effect of disheartening the people. More than ninety-five per cent are declaring "never mind us and our troubles, get on with the war." They are intent on such a thorough job now that a repetition will be impossible. They are not even asking for peace at the present time, knowing that any peace terms possible now would be unacceptable to them. The very few, who are advocating a makeshift peace, are the most unpopular people in all Britain.

I do not mean that in giving their government their individual support that it is not without some form of complaint. That would be incompatible with the British temperament. Your true Briton is a born grumbler and in the conduct of the war has found much legitimate material upon which to exercise his fault-finding disposition. He does not hesitate to speak out "in court," but nevertheless, he is for a fight to a finish.

I have frequently been asked "What is Britain's opinion of the U. S.?" Frankly, this a difficult question to answer. There was some criticism of our not protesting against the invasion of Belgium, and some surprise at the mild manner in which we handled the Lusitania affair. But, on the whole, there seems to be a desire on the part of the reputable press to withhold all comment on America's position. Whether this is due to a bona fide desire not to interfere, to a studied indifference or to a silent contempt, I leave the reader to decide.

The enumeration of certain qualities on the part of the British is not intended to disparage the same qualities of the other belligerent nations.

I cannot close this article without a reference to the Belgian refugees whom I met in great numbers in London. Their position has been one of the saddest features of the war. They arrived almost in all stages and conditions of life. The one thing in common was the hurried flight from a common enemy. Some were in the greatest of destitution, others were plentifully supplied with money, but were compelled to leave some of their loved ones behind. All had their full measure of sorrow. But they too, have not lost heart, for they are one of the greatest hearted people I have ever met. Their gratitude to England, America and all who have aided their stricken country is as refreshing as it is uncommon. They are scrupulously honest and strictly fair. Fair to a hair's breadth even in their comments on their invaders. Whatever the outcome of the war, may God speed the day when they are restored to their own country.

I fear this article will be quite a disappointment to many who expected me to have a more copious fund of information, but there are very few people who know anything of import-

ance, not already published, which they could reveal without violation of confidence.

Trusting that our country will be spared the horrors of war and that we may be truly appreciative of such immunity, is the wish of the writer.

(The above was written several weeks ago, which of course accounts for the fact that late happenings have not been mentioned by Mr. Bizzell in this article.—Editor.)

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