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POSSIBLE RESULTS OF THE EUROPEAN WAR

By WALTER LICHTENSTEIN, *Librarian, Northwestern University*

He is a bold man who will undertake to prophesy as to the outcome of the war and its effect upon the commercial and social organizations of the world. I need only point out how many fallacies have already been exploded. The greatest experts of the financial world were certain that the war could not last beyond a few months on account of the fact that all the countries involved would be bankrupt if it lasted any length of time. Likewise, many military experts were of the opinion that the loss of life would be so great as to preclude the possibility of a war lasting several years. And so, probably the experts will be found wrong as regards what will happen after the war. I need only mention a question which deeply affects our own country, the question of immigration after the war. I have heard statements to the effect that on account of the poverty-stricken condition of Europe, we should be swamped with immigrants, coming from all the belligerent countries. And, on the other hand, I have heard maintained with equally good reason the thesis that our immigration would be almost nil after the war, because there would be room for everyone in Europe when the present holocaust was over. So, in regard to the book market, I hardly venture to give any definite expression of opinion. All I should like to do is to point out a few possibilities, based upon what I know of the European book market.

In the first place, something will depend upon who wins. If Germany were to be hopelessly defeated, it would probably mean the end of that strong central organization situated at Leipzig which directly and indirectly has been able to control prices of books, not only in Germany, but also in many other parts of Europe by acting as a kind of a clearing house. Should Germany win an overwhelming victory, the power of Leipzig would probably

be extended. You understand, of course, that I am dealing with the class of books that chiefly interests American libraries in their purchases abroad, namely the large number of scientific publications long out of print. I am not speaking about current publications.

In France, England, Spain, Italy and other smaller countries the book trade is not nearly as centralized as it is in Germany, and the greater part of that book trade of which I am speaking in these countries was more or less in German hands before the war. If, therefore, the present war is practically a drawn battle, or if Germany wins, probably the German bookdealers will flock back into the countries out of which they have been temporarily driven, and, as far as the organized book trade is concerned, there may not be much change. If the Germans are unable to maintain this lead in the European book market, disorganization may result for a time, and, until matters are adjusted, prices may fall. If such disorganization does not result, it does not seem to me that we are likely to see a very sharp fall in the price of books. I know that this is not in accordance with the opinion of most of my friends, but the fact is that the more important dealers who own large stocks of books are most of them people of considerable means who, while at the present moment they would be glad to sell cheaply rather than have much of their capital lying dormant, at the end of the war will probably feel that, having been able to withstand business depression for so long a time, there is no need for them to make sacrifices when immediate improvement may reasonably be expected. These large dealers have not been suffering as much from the war as you may suppose. The ones that have been suffering most have been those whose chief business has been to supply us and

other countries beyond the seas with our current needs, but these library agents are not the people who possess the large stocks of books and are not the ones who influence prices. The dealers with the large stocks have been somewhat protected by the fact that in spite of the war the German government and some of the other governments also have not cut down their budget for the support of libraries and art museums materially. At least, in Germany it was felt that the amount that could be saved by any sudden cessation of the purchase of works of art and books would be more than offset by the losses occurring thereby to the business enterprises involved. My German friends have informed me that they have been doing a fair business in Germany, Austria-Hungary and in neutral countries such as Holland and the Scandinavian kingdoms in spite of the war. All of these dealers have had vastly more than the Biblical seven prosperous years and are quite able to withstand the pressure of seven lean years. Thus I do not anticipate a sudden fall in the price of the books that we ordinarily order.

You ask: Will there be then no result? Yes, I do anticipate some results, but not in the case of books bought through the usual channels. In England, in France, in Germany, in Austria-Hungary large collections of art and libraries have been handed down for generations in certain families. Especially in England, but also in the other countries, those families are paying very heavily the price of blood in this war. They are losing the bread earner. Oh, I do not mean the man who keeps them from starvation, but the man who can enable them to afford the luxury of maintaining a large library and a large collection of art. In many cases the whole male relationship of such families may be wiped out of existence, and the widows will be left perhaps not poverty-stricken but severely hampered. What is perhaps more important, the people who were the ones to be interested in these family collections will have disappeared. The ones left, women and small children, will regard the

possession of the books and treasures of art, which prevent them from moving into smaller quarters and thus husbanding their resources, as simply a burden, and they will be glad to sell for cash to almost the first comer. Formerly, the large book-dealers would have been the ones to buy, and they would have driven up the price rather than allow an outsider to obtain possession. But while, as I have pointed out in the first part of my paper, I do not believe these dealers will be so hard pressed financially as to be compelled to unload what they already own, they will probably not desire to load up with a large number of collections until they are pretty well aware how things are going to go. Before they are able to readjust themselves and to take action, we here in America will have the opportunity to acquire some of the choicest treasures of books and of objects of art that are now in private hands. We shall, moreover, be doing a service to the widows and orphans by being able to offer them cash for their treasures, cash which many of them will need badly, and which they will regard as a Godsend. From my personal experience, I can tell of a somewhat analogous case. This was the purchase of the Ehrenburg collection for the John Crerar Library. This collection had been the prized possession of Dr. Ehrenburg of the University of Würzburg. When he died rather suddenly he left a widow and a small child in very comfortable circumstances. I heard of this collection accidentally, visited Mrs. Ehrenburg and found that on account of the library she had to have much larger apartments than she wanted, and that she much preferred to let an American library have her collection, thus keeping it more or less together, than to turn it over to an European dealer. I bought the collection, as Dr. Andrews can testify, for about \$500. I could have turned around and sold it to any dealer for about double that sum. It is of situations like this that I am thinking when I say that perhaps as a result of the war the research facilities in American libraries may be increased. The

Hohenzollern Collection of German History at Harvard has nearly everything that it can obtain in the ordinary way and through ordinary trade channels. What it lacks are those older publications that are entirely in the possession of public institutions and in the hands of a few families who have held the material for generations. It is only as a result of a cataclysm such as has been taking place in Europe that America can hope to obtain any of this material and thus strengthen collections for scholastic research in this country and make us less and less dependent upon European libraries. I think that measures ought to be taken by the library world analogous to those taken by the commercial world in order to be prepared for action as soon as the war is over. We ought not to wait to plan until the war is over, because recuperation may be quicker than we expect—let us hope that it may be.

If we are wise, we may be able to make our libraries along many lines as

great as the greatest collections in Europe. What research facilities our libraries now offer and wherein they are lacking, others after me are to discuss. Only, this much is certain, that for practically all fields of history and literature except those immediately pertaining to this country, we are still far behind even many of the minor libraries of Europe. It has not been our fault, much has been done in recent years, but we have been handicapped by the fact that most of these European libraries have had centuries in which to develop and have often acquired material for an infinitesimal proportion of the expense which we should have to undergo now. This war may give us the opportunity to make up the loss of these centuries, and perhaps the old adage will be found to be correct:

“Yet true it is as cow chews cud,
And trees at spring do yield forth bud,
Except wind stands as never it stood
It is an ill wind turns none to good.”

LIBRARY PREPAREDNESS IN THE FIELDS OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIOLOGY

BY ADELAIDE R. HASSE, *Chief of Documents Division, New York Public Library*

In my most serious appeals about documents I never was as serious as I am about my present subject. Whatever I have said about the failure of librarians to get at the crux of the document question I see now is only part of the general failure of librarians to value the essentials of their whole business. Don't think I am knocking. I'm in the same business with you. I have no intention of going into another business. I think at the present time it's the finest business in the world. You remember Ben Franklin's "Mind your business"? Well, my friends, that is what we've not been doing. We've been letting our business mind itself—muddle along any old way. And now, last year, this year, to-day, to-morrow, we are face to face with the greatest opportunity that will come to us—and we are making mudpies in the back yard.

Every interest in this country which is essential to the economic and social well-being of our people has had, within the last two years, a prod to be up and doing. Manufacturers, engineers, scientists, throughout the country are arrested by the sense of an impending revolution in the existing order of things. You cannot pick up a single number of any technical journal without finding there some appeal for greater appreciation of this fact. The industrialists say: we must pull together, not apart. The technologists say: We must pay more attention to research. They all say in effect: We must look around more, we must extend our knowledge and intensify its application. Last autumn I sent out a questionnaire to engineers, manufacturers, and economists which read:

“There is every reason to believe that