

# The Death of Com. Klara Zetkin

The death of Klara Zetkin removes from the revolutionary labor movement one of that diminishing handful of true founders of the Communist International still left in its ranks. More than half a century of undivided devotion to the cause of working class freedom lay behind the great militant whose last public act was her appearance a few months ago in Berlin to preside, as senior member, over the last session of the Weimar Reichstag before its dissolution by those same snarling brutes in brown shirts whom she compelled to listen to the eloquent defiance of a tongue which proclaimed the inevitable revolution in Germany.

Born more than seventy-five years ago, on July 5, 1857, Klara Zetkin became a socialist at the time the Iron Chancellor launched the notorious Exceptional Laws against the social democratic movement. Her activity in the party not only began with its heroic period, but unlike most of her contemporaries, she carried forward the best of the traditions of those days throughout the rest of her life.

## Klara Zetkin—Women's Leader

For more than a quarter of a century, her name was prominently associated throughout the Socialist world with the movement to win the working class woman to the standard of revolution. To her more than to any other single force goes the credit for the rich educational and cultural work among proletarian women which was carried on for decades in Germany. Virtually by her own efforts, she founded the socialist women's periodical Gleichheit (Equality) and edited it uninterruptedly from 1892 to 1917, when the social patriots summarily removed her from the journal which had become synonymous with her own name. If a socialist woman's movement came into existence in Germany, distinct and separate from the feminist and other bourgeois movements, it was in no small measure due to the unremitting labors of her brain, her pen, her tongue. Little wonder then that the Executive Committee of the Communist International, after its foundation, conferred to her the direction of Communist activity among the working women throughout the world.

Her activities, however, were not confined to this specific field. Klara Zetkin was a party woman, above everything. And in the party, she stood unwaveringly on the side of that small band of warriors who constituted the Marxian group from the very outset of the internal struggle. She stood elbow to elbow with the Left wing of Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring in their fight, made in common with Kautsky, up to a certain point, against the revisionist program of Bernstein, David and Co. which finally devoured Bebel's grain. And even when Parvus turned grain and munitions agent for the House of Hohenzollern during the war, and Kautsky effected his touching conciliation with Bernstein, Klara Zetkin remained with the now reduced group of Marxists who defended proletarian internationalism by deeds, while others were drawing it in fratricidal blood or else giving it sufficient formal acknowledgment to enable them to more easily to continue attacking Spartacus.

## Opposed the Social Patriots

The solemn decisions on the question of imperialism war adopted by the Congresses of the Socialist International and of the German Party retained their significance for her even after August 4, 1914. Standing at the head of the Wuerttemberg party organization, together with Crispian and Westmeyer, she vehemently opposed the treacherous action of the Reichstag fraction in voting for war credits, and demanded that it adhere to the decisions of the International. Nor did she rest content with a formal gesture. When Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring issued the first number of Die Internationale in April 1915, delivering those crushing blows at chauvinists and Kautskyan alike, the name of Klara Zetkin was to be found on this roll of honor together with Karski, Jogsches, Thalheimer and the other internationalists who subsequently founded the Spartakusbund. Like Rosa and countless others, she was thrown into prison during the war, to the great relief of the Kaiser's socialists. An illegally distributed Spartacus leaflet of that time commemorated the contrast between the two camps in the social democracy by showing three pictures: Rosa Luxemburg and Klara Zetkin, each in her prison cell for anti-war activity, and Scheidemann, Noske, David and other social imperialists photographed at a discreet distance behind the front, fraternizing with army officers in front of their quarters; the pictures were eloquent enough without comment—nor did the leaflet supply them with any.

To Klara Zetkin falls the distinction of having initiated the first successful International socialist conference after the outbreak of the war and the collapse of the Second International. Upon her own responsibility, the international socialist women's conference was convened in Berne, Switzerland, in March 1915, with representatives from all the important belligerents on both sides. There were not many in those black days of treach-

## A Historical Appreciation of the Great Woman Revolutionist

ery and reaction who were ready to speak and act for internationalism, but among them was to be found the already aging but tireless German revolutionist. At that time, it is true, she did not yet stand on the side of the Bolsheviks. The latter's delegates to the Berne Conference, Inessa Armand and N. K. Krupskaya, were the isolated extreme Left wing, whose resolution, to the Conference, edited by Lenin, was overwhelmingly rejected because it put the question of the break with all patriots and Centrists, in the sharpest and most unmistakable manner. Not even Zetkin was at that time prepared to consummate the rupture. But even though Lenin submitted the ambiguous and hesitant decisions of Berne to an acrid criticism, the Conference was nevertheless the first European milestone along that road, marked later on by Zimmerwald and Kienthal, which led directly to the founding of the Communist International in Moscow in April 1919.

The first years of the Russian revolution and the Communist International undoubtedly marked the high water mark of Klara Zetkin's development and activity. The great period of stormy revolution, a flood brought out all that was best and most positive in the Communist leaders of the time. Despite her years, she put at the disposal of the German and international movements those talents which distinguished her. A fervid temperament, a sincerity of devotion, kept alive in her a luminous flame which dimmed only towards the last. An abyss lay between her and that legion of others, fawning careerists and stock-market revolutionists, who came to the Comintern in its early years like so many tourists and soon left it to write apologies for their momentary aberration.

## The Legend of the 'Red Nazi'

Of late there have been numerous reports of the arrests of oppositional Nazis—in Frankfurt a. M. several hundred mutinied and are supposed to have sung the "International" in the course of the fight; in Bautzen 72 Nazis had to be transferred and in Berlin-Charlottenburg 20 men were interned in the barracks on General Pape Street, etc. The latest report speaks of the arrest of the 4 high Nazi officers in Berlin and of their transfer to a concentration camp.

In the ranks of those who are prophesying the immediate collapse of Fascism in Germany, both in the Comintern and its sections as well as in the social democracy, these incidents of rebellion among the Nazis are interpreted as symptoms of impending disintegration. After all their hopes had fled, after the labor organizations had been destroyed, the trade unions—even those under the Christian firm shield—"equalized", the Stahlhelm, the National Front, the Center proscribed—after all this, all bureaucrats who still cannot realize what has happened or why, set all their hopes on a rebellion among the mercenary troops of Fascism.

## Conflict in S. A. Ranks Expected

That, after the seizure of power, there would be and had to be conflicts between Hitler and the lower layers of his following—this was predicted long in advance and is only to be expected. For certain groups the seizure of power by Hitler was very profitable, namely, to all those who were placed in the state and administrative apparatus and in other functions and posts. Despite all anti-Jewish and anti-Marxist incitement, despite discharging and "equalization", there are nevertheless strata in the Fascist camp who cannot be satisfied, above all, those lower rank S. A. (Storm Troop) men who in the past number of months lived from purely criminal theft and plunder at house raids and in the course of making arrests. But pillaging cannot be carried on indefinitely and even the anti-Jewish boycott does not suffice to satiate all the hungry peasant sons and petty bourgeois.

For a period of time they can be used as auxiliary police or auxiliary border guards, etc., but only for a definite period of time and only in a limited capacity. The rest of the S. A. men, on the other hand are subjected to daily drill and to the drab life of the barracks court. But they do not fail to see how their upper "party comrades" feed on fat little posts, ride through the streets gloriously in elegant autos—and they want their share of the booty.

Therein lies the elementary explanation for the S. A. mutinies today: they are the wage strikes of employed retainers and could be overcome for a period of time, if the mutinous hordes were once again let loose on expropriation activities against Jews and Marxists. But even in this respect only the least meat remains, the fat has been chewed off long ago, for the most part.

## Mussolini Also Shot Adherents

At any rate the phenomenon is not unknown. Mussolini also had his adherents shot upon after his seizure of power, had them arrested and put into jail. And even before the seizure of power by Hit-

ler gift of oratory, warm with a rich inspiring prose, was not always combined with the quality of profound and original political thinking. In this respect, she had learned very heavily upon the sturdier and surer Rosa Luxemburg throughout the years before and during the world war. The political firmness and strength which she gained from this heavy association did not, unfortunately, grow in the years that followed.

The young Communist Party of Germany was cruelly deprived of its central staff immediately after the war. Left without the gifted brain of Luxemburg, the popular and tireless revolutionary spirit of Liebknecht, the organizing talents of Zetkin, the leadership of the party slipped by default into the hands of an inferior stratum of the Spartacists, whose qualities were not exactly enhanced by the accession of the motley Left wing that joined it after the splitting of the Independent Socialists at Halle. She who had once drawn her strength from the wells of a Luxemburg, now turned to Paul Levi, who proved to be more skilled in the collection of rare pottery than in the leadership of a revolutionary party. In the party crisis that followed the luckless "March Action" in 1921, Zetkin marched at Levi's heels together with the group of Daemig, Brass and the others who finally went back with Levi to the social democracy. With Levi, too, she balked at Lenin's struggle against G. Serrati, whose fatal attitude in the Italian Socialist party impeded so markedly the development of a mass Communist party for the sake of unity with a coterie of shrewd opportunists. Still, unlike both Levi and Serrati, she never broke with the International and after each crisis, with her position increasing compromised, she was to be found in its ranks.

In taking her position in the intricate internal disputes of the Comintern, Klara Zetkin did not, alas! always distinguish between the revolutionary Left wing and the adventurist or infantile ultra-Left.

ler, one S. A. rebellion followed another, so that the C. P. G. and the S. P. G. for years never stopped shouting about the "increasing integration of the Nazis." And at that, these rebellions were never really more than scandals and tiffs between "criminals" and "loyalists" who came into the S. A. in bands and were often lured by Hitler on salary bases. This accumulation of anti-social and lumpen-proletarian elements was confronted with the S. S. (Schutz-Staffel, defensive corps) as the socially and politically reliable, picked guard—which did not contribute to raising the morale among the S. A. (Storm Troops, offensive corps). Today the S. S. is a sort of military police and is rigorously utilized against Storm Troops.

Naturally the disillusionment of the Nazis who rebel today is much stronger than heretofore when it was still possible to find consolation and cause for self-justification in all sorts of promises. But in the meantime the Hitler dictatorship has become more and more entrenched.

All opposition parties and organizations have been liquidated and the rebellions of the dissatisfied Nazis simply have to evaporate into empty space for the time being. Or else—crash down in the face of resistance from the satiated strata in the Fascist camp, in whose hands the means of power are concentrated.

## No Faith in S. A. Mutinies

It would be an error, with disastrous consequences to follow, to put great hopes and expectations today upon the S. A. mutinies or even to see in these elements trustworthy allies. The proletariat is faced today with a different question, namely, that of a new gathering of forces and the formation of new revolutionary cadres from the various camps of the working class.

This process of clarification and regroupment must in no case be hampered by a revival of the old Stalinist legend of the "revolutionary S. A. man" and of the "brotherly hand" (to the "Nazi proletarian"). Even today the C. P. G. is publishing a little sheet, "The Revolutionary S. A. Man," by the distribution of which the safety of active Communist members is endangered in an irresponsible manner, while at the same time the Otto Strasser and "Black Front" people, long, endorsed and nurtured by the C. P. G., today once again repose under Hitler's and Goering's kindly wing. And the well-known "Police Lieutenant Giesecke," who was dragged around from mass meeting to mass meeting and got a good insight into the military apparatus of the party—works today in the emigration centers for the construction of a Fascist stool-pigeon and provocateur apparatus.

Of course, the existing proletarian and the existing cadres and groups observe and pursue with attention all the processes in the camp of the bourgeoisie and of Fascism, in order at fit occasions to utilize these processes according to the possibilities. But the prerequisite for this is the existence of revolutionary Marxist cadres, for the formation of which all forces must be strained.

(From Unser Wort)

In her defense of Levi against Bela Kun, Pepper and Froelich, as in her defense of Serrati against Bordiga, there was a noticeable distinction between her position and the position, let us say, of the Lenin who so demonstratively proclaimed himself a member of the "Right wing" at the Third Congress of the International. As became even more apparent in later years, Zetkin was unable to adjust herself to the requirements of the revolutionary epoch. Her interventions against ultra-Leftism were essentially actuated by a distinct leaning to the Right.

This weakness she revealed most tragically throughout the struggle in Germany. Trotsky's arguments in the October 1923 struggle in Germany. Trotsky's arguments that it was possible and necessary to set a date for the insurrection and to orient the strategy and tactics of the party towards it—that is, his application of the experiences gained in the Russian October to the German situation—she regarded as a species of Blanquist heresy. The wings of the militant and Left wing sections of the party policy of the dilatory and headless policy of the Brandler Central Committee always encountered her ardent resistance. Even after the catastrophe, she came to the defense of Brandler, Thalheimer and Radek, not in the spirit of placing the responsibility on the international leadership, where it belonged, but as an apology for the calamitous course of the Right wing combined with a bitter attack upon the Left.

She was linked with Brandler from the earliest days of the Spartakusbund, and the Left wing socialist movement before it. And those bonds were strengthened by her violent reaction against those whom Zinoviev, Stalin and Bucharin helped to impose upon the German party as its leadership in place of the discredited Right wing Central Committee. The characterless ultra-Leftists of the type of Ruth Fischer, A. Maslow, Katz, Schwartz and the camarilla around them, aroused her contempt and deepest mistrust. If she reconciled herself somewhat to the post-1923 leadership, it was not due to the change of heart on her side. Rather, the contrary. After the removal of ultra-Leftist leadership in 1925, the party and the International engaged upon that protracted course towards opportunism in which Klara Zetkin felt herself far more at ease than during the period of the dry sectarian ponderosity of Maslow's literary effusions and the wind and fury of Fischer's clamorous oratory. Brandler and Thalheimer, virtually marooned in Moscow up to that time, commenced a bolder factional activity inside the party and for a time it appeared that the pitiful Thaelmann leadership was to be "solidified" by the rehabilitation in the party of the Right wing exiles. The latter counted on Zetkin's support, nor was it withheld.

It was only when the dawn of the "third period" sealed the fate of the Right wing for a second, and apparently last time, and the expulsion of Brandler, Thalheimer and their supporters was consummated, that all hope was abandoned. The ultra-Leftist wrecking crew, considerably inferior to the group of Maslow and Fischer, which was given the helm of party leadership, practically completed the elimination of Klara Zetkin from all active participation in it. It cannot be said that it was an event entirely distasteful to her. She had after all once worked by the side of a Rosa Luxemburg, a Franz Mehring, a Karl Liebknecht. Even in later years, her party had at least been under the leadership of a Paul Levi who, no matter how much his defects impeded and finally put a stop to his political growth, nevertheless had a head on his shoulders, as Lenin said. How could she now subordinate herself voluntarily to the direction of such shoddy, even if internationally advertised, products (the artificial campaign must have revolted her) as were put at the head of the party, of a Helms Neumann, whom she never ceased to regard as an irresponsible adventurer and a sinister figure in the party? But by this time the regime in the International had reached a point where she could no longer speak her mind openly. The old militant no longer appeared on the tribune of the party or the International. Her bitter protests against the treatment of Brandler and his friends, against the abominations

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# Whither the Y.P.S.L. Insurgents?

Several months ago, a few circles of the Young Peoples Socialist League of Chicago, were expelled. The immediate issue which caused the expulsion, was the united front, concretized at the time around the national Mooney Congress and the question of the participation of the Socialist party. The change in line of the Stalinists, driven by the events in Germany, offered the possibilities for a genuine united front and the creation of a mass movement for the freedom of Tom Mooney. But the despicable role of the Stalinists and their "Socialist" agents in the labor movement, prevented the enlargement of this movement to a mass character. The manner in which the movement for Mooney's freedom was finally organized, established the treacherous role of the Stalinists and enabled the Left wing and "progressive" socialists to wage a struggle within their organization for participation in this movement. Because of this, and their eventual breaking of party discipline by entering the united front conferences prior to and including the national congress, these circles by the Y. P. S. L. were expelled. (The bureaucracy of the S. P. maintain that no expulsions took place—only the charters were taken from these circles.)

It would be wrong to assume that the leftward turn of the expelled elements was a sudden development. This particular group has for some time now, carried on an agitation within the adult and youth organization of a Left character. They issued an internal bulletin, The Class Struggle, in which a Left wing and militant point of view was expressed and an effort made to force a change in the reformist line followed by the S. P. leadership. The intent of the group was to assemble all Left included members in the S. P., into a solid faction in order thus to wage such a fight. The tendency was distinctly a movement drifting towards Communism. The Left Opposition of Chicago, tried, in a modest way, to help the growth of this group both ideologically and organization-

## On the Expulsion of Wollenberg

Moscow, USSR.—In spite of all the attempts on part of the Comintern bureaucracy to suppress it, the discussion around the expulsions of comrades Wolf and Wollenberg will not cease. It is nothing new for defeated, incapable leaders to turn with redoubled wrath against their critics. In the Wollenberg-Wolf case, their wrath is all the more painful since the majority of the German and Russian middle layer functionaries admit the justification of the criticism against the complete failure of the C. P. G. and the Comintern in personal conversations.

The reasons for the expulsion are, in brief, the following: Both comrades voted against the resolution of the E. C. C. I., on the situation in Germany. They declared that not only the C. P. G. but also the Comintern had collapsed and that the C. P. G. and the Comintern had to be rebuilt on a new basis. The criticism of both comrades did not refer only to the events of the last few months but went even farther back. For comrade Wolf, the Russian questions also played a big role. He linked these up with the behavior of the Comintern bureaucracy in his exposure of the collapse.

## Great Indignation over Expulsion

The expulsion of comrade Wollenberg aroused great indignation among the critically inclined functionaries in Germany and especially among former members of the Red Front Fighters League. It will take an even greater amplitude when the comrades find out the reasons for the expulsion. (This much we know from letters coming out of Germany and from comrades who have recently arrived from there.)

Comrade Wollenberg joined the party as an active army officer in Munich in the beginning of 1919. During the existence of the Soviet Republic he was local commander of the Red Army of Bavaria, in charge of the main front at Dachau in the course of the struggle for Munich. He distinguished himself at that time as well as on later occasions by his extraordinary personal bravery. After his capture, he had to spend several years in jail and after his release he became party editor in the Ruhr district and in East Prussia. In 1923 he was put in charge of the military direction of one of the biggest German districts and was one of the few comrades who wanted to strike out in the fall of the year, against the will of the Central Committee. After the defeat of the party in 1923 he had to flee to the Soviet Union, because secret servicemen had been shot down in a police raid on the military direction.

In the Soviet Union Wollenberg entered the Red Army and soon received the rank of captain. He took a prominent part in the erection of the Museum of the Red Army, among other things.

Conflict with Thaelmann The repeated requests of Wollenberg to be returned to Germany were continually denied up to 1932. In the summer of 1932 he became the editor of the Rote Fahne in Berlin. At the same time he was taken into the leadership of the League of Struggle against Fascism

## The Expelled Chicago S.P. Youth and the Three Communist Currents

ally. It pointed out the need of an immediate national organization, and a campaign of education, because expulsion was inevitable—the bureaucracy awaiting only an appropriate moment to carry through such an expulsion. In the writer's opinion these elementary steps were not well taken, and because of this the movement remains to a large degree localized and stifled.

Were these the only weaknesses of the expelled yipsels, they could, by intense labor be overcome to a large extent. But more important than the indecision and lack of a correct political outlook, or rather, the false political outlook and perspective of the leadership of this group (Larks and Smirkins), is responsible for its weaknesses and confusion. What is the tactic of the group? The tactic is, to maintain the expelled group together until the conventions of the S. P. and Y. P. S. L. and wage the struggle in the conventions. And what kind of struggle will this be? Will it be for readmission to the S. P. and the Y. P. S. L.? This can hardly be considered a step forward by a group that is developing distinctly towards Communism. The struggle must be waged in the direction of winning greater numbers away from the reformist Socialist Party and towards Communism. Obviously a discussion of organizational tactics to be pursued in this connection, cannot be taken up in this article. But the broad general political questions as raised above can and must be put squarely so that no confusion can exist. It is in the above question that the real essence of the whole future of this movement lies.

What is the attitude of the expelled comrades to the burning questions of dispute in the Communist movement? Do the members and leaders of this group recognize that the Communist move-

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ment is split in over three different sections over questions that are far too important and fundamental to be overlooked? Such questions as: Socialism in one country, Bureaucratic Centrism, the role and significance of the Stalinist leadership of the Communist International as the organizer of defeats, the question of the united front, the strategy and tactics of the international revolution (expressed now in the events in Germany), the role of the International Left Opposition—these questions are decisive and in determining one's position in the revolutionary movement, he must needs take a position on each one of these. He must be clarified and know precisely why he takes one position or another. At independent existence for any group standing between Socialism and Communism is impossible, unless it is extremely temporary and as a tactic for struggle. But even then it cannot carried through unless the entire organization is aware of this and understands what should be its political direction. The history of all similar movements is a proof of this statement. Post-war events have established conclusively the inefficacy and inability of reformism to play a progressive role. It has sunk in the mire of reaction with a record as black as the proverbial darkness. The fundamental questions of revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat have been vindicated a thousand times by these very betrayals of international social democracy, and more recently by Stalinism, which rests upon a fundamental revision of Marxism and lives under the cloak of national-socialism. Thus the question presents itself: what is the perspective of the expelled yipsels and how do they propose to realize this? It would not be correct to say that the questions of Stalinism and the Left Opposition have not been discussed by this group. They were discussed but not as a result of a systematic effort of serious revolutionaries attempting to educate themselves in order thereby to be able to decide where they belong. These questions, when they are discussed, as a result of a certain pressure of the members who desire to know what is to be done. In the course of such informal discussions a certain attitude is expressed by the leadership which is indicative of a false tendency.

## A CORRECTION

In the article of L. D. Trotsky, Historical Objectiveness translated by Max Eastman and reprinted in the last issue of the Militant from the magazine Contempo, a typographical error was responsible for the following sentence, "But the last thing that the author had in mind was to interpret in his book the verdict of the historical process itself." Obviously this is a mistake. Trotsky could never make such a statement. In fact he wrote just the contrary. The error originates in the proofreader's mixing up two sentences of the original article, which reads as follows, "But the last thing the author had in mind was to console anybody. He merely wished to interpret in his book the verdict of the historical process itself."

Undue liberties were by the way, taken in the translation of the "bureaucratic stratum" (in the Russian mss.) as "the bureaucratic class." We call the attention of the translator to the fact that in Marxist literature a fundamental distinction is made between "class" and "stratum" (or "layer"—the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is not a class. —J. G. W.)

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The leadership puts the question very bluntly and crudely. After all, they say, the Stalinists have a big party and there is the possibility of doing a lot of "mass" work. The Trotskyites are not too small! This argument is not new, and it is as false as it is old. It is not numbers that determines the strength or course of the revolutionary movement. Political policy is the determining factor. What greater lesson is needed than the defeat of the German working class at the hands of Fascism. One must admit that insofar as numbers are concerned, both the social democracy and the Stalinists had sufficient not only to defeat Fascism, but also to soothe the dispositions of those who relish in arithmetical quantities and not Marxism. In spite of its numbers the German Communist Party not only could not defeat Fascism but did everything in its power through its false political policies, to help this victory. The consciousness or unconsciousness of this aid is not important. Objectively its policies led in this direction. When the Left Opposition demands an inventory on the situation in Germany, it does not request this of the Stalinists alone, but it is demanded of every revolutionary worker and those who would be revolutionaries.

Coincident with the expulsion of the Larks-Smirkin group from the S. P. and Y. P. S. L., because of its struggle on the united front, Albert Goldman, and Lydia Bydel were expelled from the party and five members of the Young Communist League were expelled, for their struggle on the united front question, Germany and related issues. The struggle of the expelled Yipsels against bureaucracy finds a similar struggle against a similar bureaucracy in the Communist party. Are not these facts of decisive importance to a Y. P. S. L. group which is slowly wending its way to Communism? Most certainly they are.

We believe that this group must recognize the extremely temporary character of its independent existence. Upon a recognition of this fact, it must begin at once, without delay, to probe the problems confronting the revolutionary movement in general and the Communist movement particularly. It must be prepared to take a clear and decisive position on these fundamental questions. The question of Socialism in One Country, the united front, Social Fascism, the Communist International, are as important for it as for the member of the Communist Party and the Communist sympathizer. The German situation is as significant for the social democratic worker as for the Communist worker. The organization of a systematic campaign of education should be instituted at once. The group should invite representatives of all the currents in the revolutionary movement for joint discussions, debates, etc., as a step in the direction toward a solution of these questions. Unless this is done, unless the group immediately develops a concrete perspective of its tasks and what it is to do, disintegration is inevitable, and the splendid beginning will be lost. —G. M. ALBERT.