

## Prominent Topics.

### Motor Ships.

Lord Pirrie anticipates the very general use of motor vessels in ocean navigation. Interviewed at Copenhagen, he said: "I was on board the Danish motor vessel *Fionia* during her recent trips in the Kielfjord, and can only admire the way in which Denmark has worked out and solved this problem. I think motor vessels will be of special importance in ocean navigation."

"The only trouble is that oil does not exist in England, Germany or France, but in America, especially in Western America, motor vessels will be largely used soon, as oil is plentiful and much cheaper there than coal. However, for large transatlantic liners steam power will prevail for the present, until more experience has been obtained."

"There is no doubt that for the carrying trade motor vessels of 10,000 to 12,000 tons are superior to steamers of the same size, and for that reason their invention means a revolution in navigation."

The last word will not be said about motor ships or automobiles until we get the long-promised effective light and economical storage battery—and probably not then.

### Panama Canal Discrimination.

As the *Pall Mall Gazette* truly observes Great Britain is in the responsible position of having to uphold not only her own rights, but those of the whole world which depend on the Hay-Pauncefote treaty.

Even in Germany the press expresses cordial approval of the British protest, although the German Government is not willing to join in it. Secretary Knox in his letter on the subjects to the Chairman of the Committee on Interoceanic Canals says:

"The communication sums up the proposals mentioned as (1) one to exempt all American shipping from tolls; (2) one to refund to all American ships tolls which they might pay; (3) one to exempt from the payment of tolls American ships engaged in the coastwise trade, and (4) one to repay to the last named class of American ships tolls which they might pay."

"The communication indicates it to be the opinion of His Britannic Majesty's Government that to exempt all American shipping from the payment of tolls would involve an infraction of the treaty, and indicates further the opinion that there would be no difference in principle between charging tolls, only thereafter to refund them, and remitting such tolls altogether. The opinion is expressed that the method of charging but refunding tolls, while perhaps complying with the letter of the treaty, would still contravene its spirit."

"The communication admits that there is nothing in the Hay-Pauncefote treaty to prevent the United States from subsidizing its shipping, but claims that

there is a great distinction between a general subsidy, either to shipping at large or to shipping engaged in any given trade, and a subsidy calculated particularly with reference to the amount of use of the canal by the subsidized lines or vessels. Such a subsidy, if granted, would not, in the opinion of his Britannic Majesty's Government, be in accordance with the obligations of the treaty."

The refusal of the Senate to postpone action in the matter until the question has been threshed out in the ordinary diplomatic channels, can only have the effect of making a satisfactory agreement more difficult. Any discrimination in favor of American shipping, is a discrimination against all foreign shipping and an adverse decision by the Hague Tribunal would lead to endless claims against the United States for damages direct and indirect.

### Anti-Noise Laws in Berlin.

They manage some thing better in Berlin than they do in Montreal. One of them is the suppression of unnecessary noises. They have numerous regulations on the subject; and what will strike Montrealers with amazement, is that they are systematically enforced. The Berlin police do not wait for the municipal council to tell them to enforce a law. They act on the assumption that laws are intended to be obeyed and that it is their business to see that they are obeyed. In Berlin it is illegal to make any noise at all between two and four o'clock in the afternoon. How this can be obeyed heaven only knows, but apparently if you take snuff at five minutes past two, you mustn't sneeze until after four. Only from 9 to 2 and 4 to 10 can a musical instrument be used at all, although by application to the police, if you propose having "company" you may obtain a special permit to make "music" after 10 p.m., for which privilege a fee must be paid in proportion to the amount of "music" to be made. It is forbidden to sing, shout or whistle on the front stairs of an apartment house, to play any musical instrument in a room with the window open; or to beat carpets except in certain hours on two particular days in the week. Organ grinders are only let loose one day a week in each district. Among other regulations are:

A requirement for the special packing of loads (metals, milk-cans, etc.), which produce great noise in case of street transport.

A requirement that springless transport vehicles—automobiles or otherwise—which cause undue noise must proceed at walking pace.

That automobiles must give their warning signal in a manner not offensive to the public.

Even the locomotive whistle is silenced within the city. You can make very little noise in Berlin without paying a fine of seventy-five cents. The use of our canal boat syren, our automobile shrieking machine, or flat-wheeled street car with noisy gear and rattling windows would cost the owner a small fortune in Berlin.