

## THE NEAR EAST.

(Continued from page 1)

(of vast importance to the credulous Philistine); because it freed her hands, somewhat, in the delicate mendacities of diplomacy; and because of the scruples of a troubled Moslem world. But with the failure of Greece to hold the line, Britain was forced to show her hand. Under the guise of "Allied occupation" she held Constantinople—for herself. With the prop gone she was compelled to hold it openly. That was why Curzon was sent to Paris—to surface the rough edge of Imperial necessity and secure—for the moment—French compliance, through the medium of French need or cupidity. Britain holds the Straits for the same reason as she has troops in Mesopotamia—oil and communication. She carved out Iraq as she fashioned Kiloit—as a counter-check in the grim struggle of Imperialist development. She could keep watch on Egypt on two sides; she had a vantage to counter hostile movements in the Levant and its littoral, and the whole historic battle grounds of the old world. She held the cotton of Egypt and the hopes of Anglo-Persian secure, and she wedged herself insidiously near to the indispensable pipe lines—and between them and her rival.

That is why the "freedom of the Straits" figures so prominently in the news. It is the smoke screen that hides the "gushers" of world supremacy. It is now one of the keys of Empire, and as Czarist Russia and Ottoman Turk and Cassellian Greek have vanished from their place, the "anointed of Israel" must fill the breach. It is a part of the question of the freedom of the seas and in ultimate reality means the "freedom" of British Imperialism. That is why the whole Atlantic and Mediterranean fleets are in Eastern waters. The issue is life or death. It is true that France lends support to "the freedom of the Straits." For to France also they are the gateway of Empire; the oil of life, the freedom of transport, the security of communication.

But she wishes Turkey to hold the city. Since, thereby, the Turk will be practically returned to "business as usual." And with Thrace and Bulgaria and the "Little Entente" in front and the Moslem ranks in the rear France will hope to play her off in the general service of rivalry against her immediate foe, and to ensure her particular service in the climax of gathering war. That political fraternity is of infinitely more account than the economic kinship of indebtedness.

But the war cloud is not ready to burst. The Dardanelles is but a spluttering fuse. Before the "issue" is touched the line up must be advanced, the necessity clear, the material ready. These things are not yet. Press and power (or its reflex of identity) are at variance on the issue in all countries; the barbed entanglements of trade are not apparently stiffened enough. But they are nevertheless, quietly coiling round the stricken civilisation of capital. The fighting units of France are seemingly in good shape and well equipped, and all that appertains to militarism, active. But financially she is sore afraid, her oil supplies are insignificant and her cotton needs unguarded. Clearly, France is not able to face the issue—alone. With whom then?

Britain is by all odds the first power. But, like all Europe she has her back to the wall and is coming face to face with her supremest struggle. Unemployment is rife, taxation intolerable, the burden of Imperialism sapping the whole life of industry. Business is stagnant; is declining. India has been "peacefully" pacified; but Lancashire appears to have derived no benefit. The henchmen of Cassel and D'Erlanger have quieted Egypt, but the cotton boom is not yet. The market of Europe has gone by the board; the coal trade is ruined. The steel industry is still; shipbuilding dead; freight rates cut by four, the merchant marine swinging to anchor in the bays of the "tight little island." Over the water, "in God's country," America has substantiated the tariff against "foreigners"—striking hard at capitalist Britain—the "workshop of the world." She has subsidised shipping, organised production and transport, cut wages to meet the

"prosperity" of cheap production, slashed deep into what remains of a world market, gathered in some of the coal trade, established foreign banks and facilities, and is the first creditor nation.

America controls the present supplies of oil; Britain apparently has secured the future. And as organisation for cheap production and efficient handling is the order of the day in Britain, as in America, the grim struggle of productive costs presages the grimmer struggle of "iron" persuasion. Obviously, Britain and America are antagonistic. Will they settle the matter alone? Both are equipped, both preparing, both have vast resources to draw on,—but America is probably the more secure.

America has kept out of European entanglements so far, but future oil and cotton may ask a sudden question. The condition of Europe is daily becoming more desperate; of France more precarious. There a conclusion cannot be long delayed. If that conclusion favors the general interest of Britain and Europe it must antagonise France. And if France propounds the problem,—what then? France, as we saw, can hardly meet the issue alone. She is antagonistic to Britain. And America is being steadily driven against the same power. Will America, with present oil, and cotton, and finance, and shipping, unite with a France who has neither? The hope of the one, immediate salvation; of the other, the future? Would Japan, who has neither steel nor coal, nor oil nor cotton, come to the support of Britain, who can supply her with them all,—I wink at her transgressions of the "open door"? The immediate advantage of Britain, the future of Japan. Britain would doubtless wish Germany to come into the fold, for that might affect Lorraine and Briey; but the German claims in American industries might prove another link in the chain of Stinnes and Lubersack. And finally, if the issue is forced on France can America afford to see her only ally crushed, as Germany is crushed, knowing that she alone would be required to face the swollen power of a victorious Britain? The not distant future will settle all those worries, Russia alone being about the only reasonable certainty, and even that is risky.

It is said that war between the Anglo Saxons is unthinkable; and it may be that the "black Douglas" will not catch us. We are no prophets. But there are the facts. Like Hump and the cook on the "Ghost" the nations are sharpening their weapons. The social forces of production are in sharp conflict with the social forces of humanity; but the former are so far the stronger. Because they are conscious and cognisant; the latter are not. Thus it is not the question of the freedom of the Straits that is at stake. Nor Turkey and Greece, nor Britain and France, nor right and justice, nor Christian nor Moslem. But two world groups of Imperialist finance, politically entrenched in the means of life, farming society for privilege and profit, deadlocked in Titan struggle and crushing the whole world in the steely tentacles of their insatiate ambitions. That is the spectre lurking in the dark shadows of the Dardanelles. R.

## "WHAT IS THE I.W.W.?"

(Continued from page 6)

"Thus ignorance is the greatest obstacle we have to overcome, many times greater than capitalist persecution. . . . An illiterate workingman is as dangerous to the aspirations of the workers in these trying times as a small-pox or bubonic plague patient would be to our health."

And what is the only cure for working class ignorance? Working class education; the I. W. W., admit that much. And what is education in this respect but a means to an end? And using means to an end is an "indirect" method of doing something that cannot be done any other way and, consequently must be "indirect action." But if it is the only way it can be done it is also the most "direct" way and, therefore, must be "direct action." Let us have done with this rot about "direct" and "indirect" action, once and for all.

In my next article on the same subject I will examine a few passages from the pamphlet, "The Lumber Industry and Its Workers."

## PARSON MALTHUS.

(Continued from page 5.)

tion Supplement to the Manchester Guardian Commercial (1s.), is devoted to this question of Population and the Food Supply. The a priori approach to the problem, to which I have referred, is in places in evidence, when social politics are under discussion. But the articles by Keynes on Malthus, by Dr. Brownlee on The Census, by Sir H. Rew on the World's Grain Supplies, by Prof. Sering on the Agrarian Revolution in Central Europe, and by Louis Levine on the Agrarian Problem in Russia contain much useful information.—M. H. D.

—MAURICE H. DOBB, (The Plebs.) London.

## HERE AND NOW.

WE have nothing bright and startling to enter upon the record this issue. Dust and ashes, not to mention deep humility, overtake us as we set these figures up one by one. Our vocabulary of expressive words in swelling. If the figures could only keep pace with that . . . !

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