

## CRITICISM OF THE PRESS CENSORSHIP

Sir Edw. Cooke, in Book on Subject, Attempts Defence

Rule on the Publication of the Order of Battle — British Censorship Declared to Have Been Most Effective.

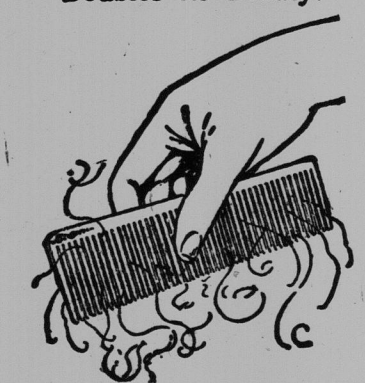
(Mail and Empire Toronto.) It will be admitted that anyone who undertakes to explain and defend the operations of the press censorship in the Great War is assuming a man's shoe task. Such an effort is now made in "The Press in War Time," by Sir Edward Cooke, K. B. E., and issued by the Macmillan Company. Sir Edward Cooke was the chief of the Press Bureau, and had many qualifications for the post, a brilliant career in journalism being the most important of them. He died untimely, after writing the little book which was intended to justify the censorship, and before it was published; and there can be little doubt that the strain and labor of the war contributed to his end at the age of sixty-two. The book is of important value, for it explains many things that were not generally known while the censorship was an operation, and which might have softened judgement upon it had they been made public. And this, we might note, constitutes a criticism of the censorship. These facts might have been published long ago. Why were they not?

A Good Defence. Moreover, we think that Sir Edward Cooke, while he makes out a good case for many of the restrictions placed upon the press, fails to give due weight to the advantages that might have accrued had there been fewer restrictions. It is true that some danger would have been run; but it seems equally clear that great advantages might have been obtained. He shows that so far as he was concerned, an effort was made to strain the regulations in favor of the publishers, and that there were few prosecutions. This was due to the fact, no doubt, that Sir Edward Cooke was a newspaper editor. Still the real authorities on the censorship were military and naval men, inclined to take the view that the job of conducting the war was primarily the business of the commander-in-chief of the army, and the Lords of the Admiralty, and that it was an act of grace on their part to take the public into their confidence.

An Objectionable Rule. The writer says that the rule of censorship about military dispositions which caused the most grumbling and discontent was that which had reference to what is called the Order of Battle, that is, the distribution of troops along the various fronts and the composition of brigades, divisions, corps and armies. We think also that Sir Edward Cooke has failed to justify the policy of suppression. The correspondents were not allowed to say that a certain division, a certain brigade or company had particularly distinguished itself. It was only permissible to refer to "North county troops" or "Midland troops," nothing more definite.

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It was frequently argued, and we think with great force, that it would have proved an admirable stimulus to local recruiting throughout the war to learn promptly, when some particularly brilliant feat of arms had been done

what county or town or regiment deserved the glory.

The Other Side.

Sir Edward Cooke says that there is no information which a commander is more anxious to obtain from his enemy than that which relates to the precise disposition of the troops which are or may be opposed to him. We know something of the nightly explorations in No Man's Land, and the Indian-like forays that were carried out with a view of securing shoulders straps or some other clue which might identify the enemy. But surely we are not invited to believe that after an action, the Germans were in the dark as to whether they had been up against troops from Montreal or Toronto, or Birmingham or Belfast? The complaint against the censorship was not that it refused to give the enemy valuable information in advance, but that when the enemy had the information it was still kept from the people in England, and that the press was thus handicapped in its duty of maintaining the home front.

Peeved Prophets.

Sir Edward Cooke has a laugh or two at the military critics who sometimes were restrained from making predictions as to approaching movements. He notes that one of them bitterly complained on one occasion, because the very prophecy he had been forbidden to offer was justified by subsequent facts. He is able to quote Germans of high authority to the effect that the British censorship was by

all means the most effective in history. On the other hand he sets out the fact that no other belligerent nation dealt so frankly with the general public. Taking these two statements together one would probably be justified in assuming that the British censorship was a triumph. Nevertheless, it could have been better, had it always applied with the imagination that one would be justified in expecting from a man like Sir Edward Cooke.

Not So Many Changes in the Hardware Market ("Hardware and Metal" Sept. 25.) There are not so many price changes in hardware commodities as usual this week. Chain has been advanced in price and the increase in price includes steel coil chain and also steel and brass jack chain and cow ties, heel and trace chains, etc. Higher quotations are in effect on dry cell batteries and on ignition units. Cold shuts and repair links are advanced in price and some makes of tools, hammers, wrenches, etc., are also increased in price. A slight advance is recorded in black

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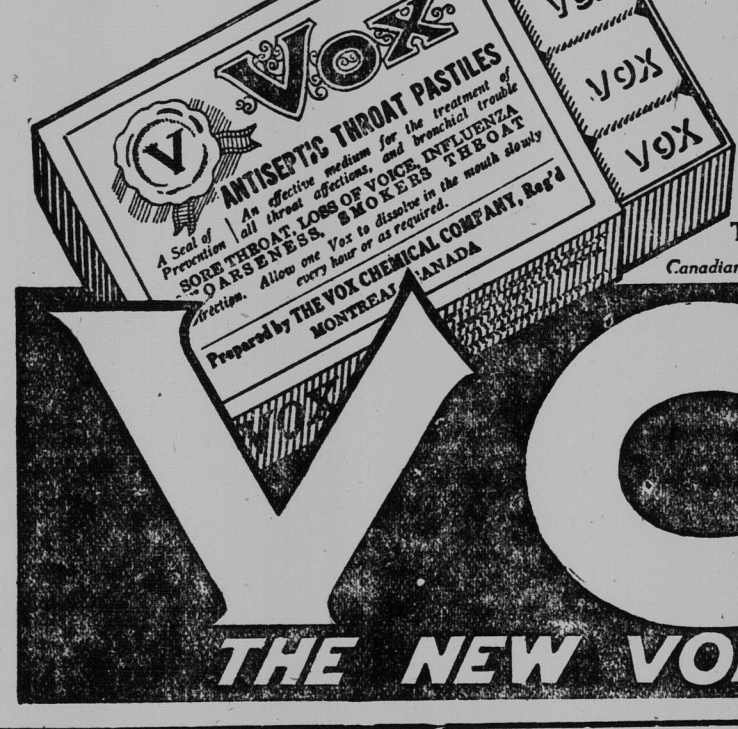
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## What They Read in the Klondike

By Mrs. Helen Green Van Campen, Author "Behind the Scenes," etc. In The Morning Telegraph, New York

"Every one wishes to hear about what is going on in the wide world, and you will be interested to know what is our most popular publication in the Northland. It is THE LITERARY DIGEST. "I was out in the wild country looking over a mining prospect, and while on the move toward my destination, an old miner ran out from his shack and bid us stop. He said, 'Got a LITERARY DIGEST for me?' I talked with him and he said he wanted THE LITERARY DIGEST because it told him about what was going on in the world—everywhere. He got his news in condensed form and liked it that way. I have since investigated and have found that virtually everyone up here looks to THE LITERARY DIGEST to tell them

things. Not everyone takes the publication of course, but when a man reads it he saves it and passes it on to a neighbor, who passes it along in the same fashion. "It is interesting to see one of the old timers sit down to read his LITERARY DIGEST. It is a serious matter with him; he does not merely skim through it; he reads it carefully, advertisements and all, like old man Jucklin did his Bible—from kiver to kiver. "Then he gives it to another old timer who also reads it from start to finish. Afterwards they light their pipes and engage in debate on the topics they have been reading about. "And I, even I, have got the habit, too. Please mail a LITERARY DIGEST to me every week if you can think of it."

A Glimpse at the Contents of This Week's Literary Digest (Oct. 2nd Number)

Are Good or Bad Times Ahead? Are Prices to Be Lower or Higher? Are Jobs to Be Plenty or Scarce? Is Business Headed for the Rocks or for a Safe Channel? A Timely and Deeply Interesting Survey of Conditions in the United States

The Socialists' Hour at Albany  
Wall Street's Bomb Mystery  
Drys to Discipline Lax Judges  
The "Root Plan" for a World Court  
Forgiving the War-Offenders  
Japanese Views of California  
Cheaper Coal Demanded by British Miners  
New American Interest in Europe  
After-War Drunkenness in England  
Explosions in the Wheat-Fields  
Why Lighthouses Migrate?  
Chemistry in the Kitchen  
How to Wash Dishes  
The Man Who Would "Paint the Sun"

New Status of Army Chaplains  
Problems of Democracy  
The Pilgrims Who Came Three Hundred Years Ago  
The "Restrained Joy" of Being Fifty  
Why Young Women Are Leaving Our Farms  
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