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LONDON GOSSIP.

LONDON, August 20, 1915.

RUSSIA AND THE WORLD.

The effect on the public here of the fall of Warsaw has had several directions but there is no despondency. One cheerful note is the way in which the Russians swept the city bare before evacuation, of anything which might be of the slightest use to the incoming Germans. Metal, food, horses and everything have been taken away. Very keenly people feel sympathy for Russia in the loss of that city, and the bitterness of yielding it to the Germans. At no time in the war have English people realized so intimately our alliance with Russia, and the splendid, undeviating courage and endurance of the mighty nation whose cause and fortunes are ours. We have come to a time when Russian literature has passed beyond our intellectuals and has become a possession of the ordinary reading public. The old strangeness and remoteness of the world of Russia has been thawed and brought near to us by the wonderful human conducts of Tolstol, Turgeniev and Gorky. If the strategy and organization of war on these enormous fronts are impossible to realize, we still feel that we understand and thrill to the deeds of the great Russian people fighting hand to hand with the elaborately equipped Germans with their weapons of flame and poison, retreating step by step, staggering and shattered, but never broken. Through the supreme art and humanity of Russian literature we know (as Americans, France, Holland and the rest of the civilized world know) the Russian as a brother. It is a significant fact that there are no modern books which have made the German a brother of the world. Because of his literature the Russian's agonies and silent triumphs of endurance can be realized in every country, and by us who are his allies and comrades in a way that both touches and hardens.

THOUGHTS OF A YEAR AGO.

It is impossible now to remember the phases of the war, just as it is impossible to think of the developments of a fever. One remembers how in the early days of last August there was a scare about food, and

people carried sacks of flour and sides of bacon in taxi-cabs, and how afterwards during a normal interval the stores bought things back again at 15 per cent. reduction. Newspapers used to jump out upon us at all hours, night and day, and at extortionate prices. The group of papers which now sees black everywhere it looks, destroyed a German fleet of cruisers in the North Sea in the first few days of the war, and told us that the Belgians had retired in order to lure the Germans on to Brussels and then fall on them and make them all prisoners. That seems a very long time ago. One would instance as a chief London thrill the appearance of newboys in the Hampstead tube stations screaming their news on the dark Sunday night when the report of the Dogger Bank battle and the destruction of the Bleucher arrived. Then there was a Russian myth, and the awful Belgian reality brought home to every district in London as the Broken Belgians arrived and percolated through the town with their awful story of what an invasion by a scientific civilized people meant. At first crowds waited at Charing Cross to see the arrivals—men in tall hats with white spats like figures from French comic papers, only they carried nothing else and their faces were not comic; little nuns in droves, with mother superiors with bitter, white faces, and rosy novices eager and pleased, despite their agitation, to be in London, which they had never dreamt to see. One remembers them clustered together in our motor buses, strange, delicate birds eyeing the Strand and Piccadilly half fearfully as they passed to their quiet destinations. One remembers also the railway policemen, fatherly and protective, patting proud abbesses on the shoulder and telling them that "it will be all right here, mum. This is England."

SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH.

Professors and teachers are usually envied for their long holidays, but this summer there will be little or no holiday for such of them as are engaged in the teaching of chemistry, for large numbers of these have been mobilized for work in connection with the war which will keep them busily occupied in their laboratories. Already registers have been compiled of men who have volunteered for scientific work, and many of these volunteers have agreed to accept no fees. The other day I saw remarkable developments in a laboratory attached to one of the old London Schools of Chemistry. The benches, which during the school session are occupied by some fifty students, are covered with complex sets of apparatus for carrying out the instructions of one of the committees which is directing scientific work. It would be unwise to state the precise nature of the operations that are being conducted, but generally speaking they are connected with the production of supplies of materials used in various industries and of certain drugs that are necessary for the treatment of wounded soldiers and that have now become extremely scarce. In connection with some of the materials required, the several intermediate products are being made in various laboratories, and will be sent to a central laboratory, where the final processes will be completed. All the university colleges and many, if not most, of the technical schools in the country are being used in this way. Thus the national scheme for the organization of scientific and industrial research is already in full operation. The shortage of apparatus, which became very pronounced in the earlier stages of the war in consequence of the cutting off of supplies of German and Austrian glassware, is no longer acute. British manufacturers have solved many of the problems connected with the production of laboratory glassware, and are rapidly solving others, so that technical chemists are no longer embarrassed by a lack of the necessary appliances for conducting their experiments. This is an extremely important and very gratifying fact, for had it not been for the enterprise of the British glass makers and the scientists who assisted them, chemists would have been very seriously handicapped in carrying out the work connected with this national scheme.

SHORTER HOURS FOR WOMEN.

The attractions of the open-air life of soldiering may lead to results which should partly ease the labor problem after the war. Letters to former employers and friends show that many men view the prospect of a

return to the counter and the desk with repugnance. One large Oxford Street draper states that in many cases his former hands have expressed their intention of emigrating to the Colonies after the war. The subject has an important bearing on the position of the women who have taken the place of men in such large numbers. Something like a truce applies to controversial questions affecting both sexes, but an agitation is on foot for the earlier closing of shops in London, so that the strength of the women now employed, many of them unused to physical strain, should not be over-taxed. Believing that the employment of more women in shops will be a permanent condition, the Early Closing Association, which consists of both shopkeepers and assistants, is petitioning the Home Office to prevent women being employed after eight o'clock three nights of the week, after nine o'clock on Fridays, and after ten o'clock on Saturdays. In its petition the association states that it has been conclusively proved that late shopping is a habit and not a necessity, and that it is but asking for similar protection to that already afforded by the Factory Acts to the women employed in the workrooms of the same establishments.

GIRL RAILWAY WORKERS.

Young women and middle-aged men, with but a very slight proportion of men of military years, now work the tube system of London. Some of the women are employed in the booking-offices, and a little practice seems to have made them astonishingly quick at the work of issuing tickets and giving change. Others are used as ticket-snippers at the platform entrances, and are dexterous at the job. They wear a tailor-made uniform of dark serge, with a hat to match, and have cultivated instinctively a severely official manner. They are lynx-eyed in the detection of irregularities in the use of tickets, and rigidly enforce the rules of the companies. Youths under twenty used to be employed at this work, but the recruiting sergeants have got most of them, and their replacement by small boys has not been easy, chiefly because of the scarcity of boys and of extravagant ideas of the money value of their services which boys have entertained since the war. The girls are fairly paid, and it appears that the only disadvantage of which some of them complain is that the long standing incidental to the work is rather trying. But stools are provided, and the experiment of employing women, is being carefully watched from the health point of view. It is reported that about 30,000 women are now employed on the railway systems of the country in one capacity or another, and it is not improbable that for the lighter kinds of work many will be retained permanently when normal conditions return.

THE SPIRIT OF THE BELGIAN ARMY.

Following upon the forced inactivity of the Belgian army on the Yser, I may convey the impression of the spirit of the soldiers given by an invalid stretcher-bearer. Before the war this typical Fleming was a business man in Antwerp, and he volunteered for Red Cross work, but if he had been unmarried nothing would have kept him out of the trenches. The soldiers at the front, he says, fret greatly at not being able to make a move onward. Their feelings towards the Germans in its intensity of hatred is such that even French and British soldiers can hardly realize it. The Belgians look across the water and see the Germans in brutal possession of their homes. They strain onward in imagination, hoping for the day when they can do their share in driving the invader back. Beyond the German line are their wives and families, absolutely cut off from all communication with them. They do not know what has happened to their dear ones, or whether they are alive or dead. As my friend said, those soldiers whose families are safe in England are the most fortunate. For them it is at least possible to go over to England for a few days' leave now and then and see them, but the other soldiers have lost everything but the unconquerable hope of fighting to get it back and bursting through for revenge.

GERMAN FRAUDS EXPOSED.

The practice of sending presents to soldiers at the front has become common to people of all countries engaged in war, but it seems that in Germany a certain section of the community has not been slow to take grossly unfair advantage of this custom by inducing the relatives of men in the trenches to lavish money on worthless commodities. So prevalent has this custom become that the

authorities have been compelled to check it, and the directors of the chemical laboratory of the Department of Police in Berlin having made a report on the subject, a number of persons have been prosecuted. For the most part the frauds have taken the form of compressed footstuffs and condensed substitutes for alcoholic beverages, and a very extensive trade appears to have been done in "solid alcohol" which on examination has proved to be worthless. Some of the samples of this commodity which have been analysed consist of cakes of gelatine, to which a small quantity of brandy and some sugar have been added before the mixture has solidified, but, as the manufacturers must have known, most of the small modicum of brandy must have evaporated before the cakes could reach the trenches, the result being that when hot water is added to the cakes in accordance with the directions, a drink is produced which resembles a solution of sweetened glue rather than "the glass of punch" as advertised. The fondness of the German soldier for spirituous drinks has also been exploited in other ways. Thus a large business has been done in collapsible tubes of semi-glutinous mixtures containing alcohol, advertised for use with hot water. The Berlin police chemists pronounce these to be worthless, some of them containing no alcohol whatever. Another "substitute" for brandy which has frequently been included among the presents from home, consists of nothing more than a cube of sugar, colored red with an aniline dye and flavored with tartaric acid. Owing to a defect in the German law respecting adulteration prosecutions of the vendors of these fake articles have failed, but the police have warned the public against them. The police have also exposed certain makers of compressed tablets of coffee, cocoa, and dried milk, whose products have been found on examination to be of very inferior quality, for which exorbitant prices are asked. For instance a brand of coffee tablets which has attained great popularity, probably by reason of the ennobling message to "the heroes of the war" which is printed on the wrappers, sold at the rate of twelve shillings a pound.

THE CENSOR'S TEMPTATION.

The big public schools are, of course, in very close touch with the front, where so many boys who were with them a year or two ago are now commanding men and facing all the terrors of modern war. Letters from the front to the schools, to masters and old schoolfellows, are always arriving, and every day the school re-acts in a striking and intimate way to the messages from the war. Naturally enough the schoolboy turned officer is greatly tickled by finding himself a censor of other people's writing and many of the favorite stories in the schools are about strange discoveries made by these censors. One of them found out that six letters from soldiers to their wives and sweethearts were almost to a word, the same. The officer was puzzled at this unanimity of sentiment, until he found that one man had written so good a letter to his wife that he read passages aloud to the others, who appreciating talent where they found it, asked and got permission to copy it out for their own use, and a copy was even lent to the men of another company for their use. It was said to be quite a common thing to find two letters from one man to two lady friends with no difference except in the address. One censor passed a letter which said, "I am enclosing five shillings with this, but I must tell you that it has to go through the censor's hands." The censor testified on a corner of the letter "The censor has withstood the temptation." He was, of the way, a very well known Leicestershire cricketer. One advantage of censoring duties was (one of the officers explained) that it gave them something to write about.

GENERAL SAM HUGHES.

I hear that General Sam Hughes, the Canadian Minister of Militia, is about to pay a visit to the Canadians at the front. He will be away about a week, and will make a careful inspection. It is probable in view of a recent controversy, that he will give particular attention to the Ross Rifle. General Sam Hughes has had a busy time in England since he came over. He was at the Welsh Stisteddod the other day, and has been to see the wounded Canadians in the hospitals. He visited the Taplow Hospital on the same day as Queen Alexandra. He is a very well known personality with Canadians, and is sure to get a cordial welcome from the men in the trenches. Sir Robert Borden's tour at the front set a precedent which will be followed by other leading Canadians.

CAPE RACE, To-day.

Wind S. light, weather dull and hazy. The S. S. Ulubora passed west and Coban inward yesterday evening, an unknown gale, and two-topmast schooner passed in and an unknown steamer west this a.m. Bar. 29.50; ther. 54.



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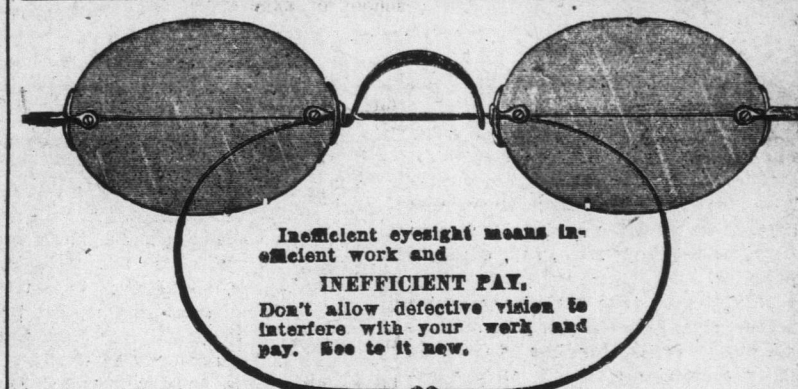
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