

came as an imperial visitor to note how far the Westerns could aid in the fixing up of China. Whether that resuscitation be within the sphere of practical work remains to be seen. All depends on the influence Li can wield when he returns, and if he can dominate the Old China party. He never could expect that he would be accorded the augmentation on imported goods without being prepared to offer a *quid pro quo*. That must come directly from the State office at Peking, and the Westerns interested can act either collectively or singly. There are two salient facts accepted; the Russians and the English are the two peoples that have captured the Envoy. Perhaps this may explain the rumour of the *entente cordiale* of England and Russia to run China, and of the latter's willingness to be so guided. Could it also be a plan—Russia and China are so innocent—to secure English concerted action, the better to destroy the Anglo-Japanese *entente*? England wants nothing from China, but the throwing open of her ports, and the free navigation of her rivers—to all the world; freedom to trade; and to execute public works, if conditions suit. Russia can take no territory from China without counting with Britain and Japan. As for Germany and France sending expeditions to the Far East to oppose these powers, and to help Russia, the idea is not to be entertained. When Germany cannot spare a ship to join in a blockade of Crete, she will not risk her baby navy in the Far East, and the French Parliament would never vote the sums for such an adventure. Besides, how could their ships arrive there with British vessels dogging and raking them fore and aft. However, no reasonable offer for an *entente* with Russia ought to be declined unexamined. She is not the only power that has broken faith with Britain—only Russia has done so most often.

The new departure of England, to depend on herself, to be omnipotently armed, to display a Cromwell disposition to stand no nonsense from the foreigner, while being ready to pull with him for mutual interest, while being perfectly indifferent to his sensibilities and his humours, is bearing its fruits. Britain has at last put on something like the whole armour of righteousness. She is no longer mocked at and jeered; her views are solicited and well weighed. As to any forcing of love between Russia and England, that had been better at once abandoned. Leave all that to the French. Russia is archi-protectionist; can she offer Britain a sound commercial treaty? That would be an excellent example also for China; to be up to-date in reforms is the best bait to catch the money she needs, and to promote the modernization she aspires to. Were the Czar to run up to London on his way down Channel, he would do more to convince Englishmen of his sincere desire for a good understanding with them than any amount of side evidence. He goes to Paris politically, consequently England's *entente* is not so politically important. There is, then, something in the Franco-Russian alliance after all, that keeps Nicholas II. from coming in touch with the British as with the French.

Now, in the near East, as in the Far East, Russia has much to gain by a straight talk with Lord Salisbury. The latter will not separate his action in the Cretan question from the other five powers; all will move together, but on lines well secured in advance, and offering no loop-holes for twelfth-hour retreatings. Abdul Hamid has arrived at the end of his power of resistance; at any moment he may be dethroned, as the Turks have no desire to accept the consequences of setting fire to Europe. Opinion will gladly welcome a settlement of the Cretan question, but insist that the reforms to be conceded be guaranteed by the six powers, and so prevent these becoming as heretofore, waste paper.

Something is going wrong with Germany. Whatever may be her home troubles, the leading commercial men of France are down upon her like Philistines. They intend to dispute her commercial supremacy, and although the odds are in her favour so far, they will not prevent the struggle. French firms are sending delegates to reside in the centres of German industry and commerce, and make a self-apprenticeship as to the ways and means on which the unparalleled prosperity of Germany has been built and is being built. Every observer is noting how quiet the Germans have ever been respecting their "boom;" they wanted no Paul Prys to intrude. That day-dream is now over. There are French fabricants prepared to turn out goods of quality and price on a par with German products. Much of the predominance of the Teuton in the foreign market is due to the Consuls

and Vice-Consuls of Germany; they are experienced, hard-working men, who do not conclude they have been sent abroad for ornamental purposes, but to work, and to work hard, for their manufacturers and shippers. Technical home education, the rehearsing of the *roles* of commercial travellers by the young, are excellent preparations, but not worth much, if, when arriving, the bag-man does not find in his Consul a guide, philosopher and friend, instead of a stuck-up, self-appointed sort of ambassador. The French demand the reform of their consular system from cellar to garret; it is only a refuge for played out politicians and used-up publicists. The right men will now be put in the right place. And England, is she perfect in this respect?

The French have never disguised their sympathies for the Boers, and which may be well comprehended, after the example of the amicable relations the Kaiser proved he entertained for his worthy grandmother. But they are puzzled as to the aim of the Boers in laying in such supplies of arms and munitions when England displays no intention to raid them or allow them to be raided. It is whispered that during the inquiry next spring into the Chartered Company, President Kruger may be astonished at revelations connecting his *entourage* with Germany's best wishes for the success and prosperity of England in South Africa. After the classical pluck of Cecil Rhodes to go unarmed and next to alone into the Matabele rebel den and secure the submission of the chiefs, Oom Paul, after his daily chapter of the Bible and a fresh pipe, ought to demand that he be allowed to sign the petition of the 5,000 for the restoration of Rhodes to the managing directorship of the Chartered Company. That would necessitate the surprises in Jame-son's forthcoming book to be also sponged out.

If Italy publishes the proofs she is said to possess, and of which the British Government is in possession of copies, of the secret alliance between Menelik and the Dervishes, His Majesty's independence will be of short duration. England has only to send a small expedition to invade Abyssinia on the south, and his thrill of glory is over. But till Sirdar Kitchener secures Dongola and increases his flotilla and army stores along the Nile, preparatory to starting the Khalifa from his capital, the Italians had better remain quiet at Kassala. The civilization of Africa, like that of China, cannot be rushed. But England can take in hand both simultaneously. She likes work.

A "boon and a blessing" in the eyes of many is the "bar railway carriage" attached to the suburban trains. On returning from "the city," the merchant, trader, or clerk can employ the thirty or sixty minutes' run from Paris to his extra-rural residence drinking and smoking in order to get up an appetite. Even that is better than the present plan of friends securing a compartment in which to play cards. In the "bar waggon" will be materials for writing, so that the busy man can still return to the desk, write a few notes, deposit them in the letter-box in the van, which will be later transported to the post-office. The innovation is only the prelude to the introduction of the corridor cars, to replace the old rolling stock.

The gunning season is in full swing; the game is good, only the poachers have creamed all the preserves as usual. Happily no accidents are recorded; not even a dog has been shot in mistake, nor a John Gilpin recorded to have contracted rheumatism from his first night out in the fields and the evening dews. Alcoholism is reported to be making terrible progress in France, but this fact is to note how rarely a French gunner is supplied with a flask of the mountain dew, or a little Scotch to keep away Scotch mists. Frenchmen set out with a good stomach full of excellent soup and meat; they have a substantial dejeuner at some inn at noon, and at three o'clock recommence setting and blazing. Anything on four legs or with two wings is endangered. However, there is no shooting worth the name, unless over a preserved property, which gives a gunner the right of shooting so many times a week—but few bags are ever filled, save what game is sent from the Paris markets to soothe *amour propre*—if desired. Z.

Paris, August 26th, 1896.

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The Queen signs on an average three photographs a day, and often a much larger number, for presentation to her friends at home and abroad.