THE POISON THAT DESTROYS

(Continued from page 3)

We are shown a Germany not plotting war but dreading it, and, after the first initial error of promising Austria unreserved support in her quarrel with Serbia on the mistaken assumption that Russia would not go to the extremity of war, making desperate efforts to restrain her ally. We are shown a Germany, possessed assuredly of a very powerful and efficiently organised military machine, but whose armies were enormously outnumbered by those of her two foes — France and Russia, the French army ALONE being as large[1] as the German, with equal supplies of ammunition, superior in quality of its light artillery although inferior in heavy guns. A Germany exporting corn and gold to within a week or two of the actual outbreak — inconceivable in a nation engaged in plotting war; high military and naval officers on leave within a few days of the catastrophe; German merchant ships scattered all over the world and loading and discharging in the harbours of Germany's potential foes;[2] the German High Seas Fleet hurriedly recalled to home waters as late as July;[3] a portion of the German fleet stranded on the high seas with its destruction merely a matter of time — inconceivable in a nation plotting an assault upon the British Empire; a Germany not meditating an invasion of Britain, but fearing an invasion by Britain,[4] apparently quite unprepared for even an attempt upon the multitude of British transports conveying a British army of 160,000 men and equipment;[5] German statesmen and diplomatists in Berlin and Petrograd moved to paroxysms of despair in front of their future foes when the inevitable revealed itself.[6] And alongside all this there is disclosed on the other side — what?

(To be continued.)

Extract from the letter of the Russian Ambassador in London to Sazonov, Russian Foreign Minister, Feb. 25th, 1913: "When I recall his (M. Cambon's — French Ambassador in London) conversations with me, and add the attitude of M. Poincaré, the thought comes to me as a conviction that of all the Powers France is the only one which, not to say that it wishes war, would yet look upon it without great regret. In any case, nothing has shown me that France has actively contributed in working in the sense of a compromise. Now, a compromise is peace; beyond a compromise there lies war. She (France) has, either rightly or wrongly, complete trust in her army, the old effervescing animosity has again shown itself, and France could very well accept that the circumstances today are more favourable than they could ever be later." (Russian Imperial State archives.)

Izvolsky to Sazonov, August 30th, (September 12th), 1912: "Poincaré told me that . . . 'the informed and responsible authorities anticipated, with a great deal of optimism, the chances of Russia and France in the event of a general war . . . A favourable element for Russia and France will also be the immobility of the Italian fleet, Italy being involved in an African war (Tripoli), and also by her arrangements with France. As regards the special situation in the Mediterranean, the recent decision to transfer the third French squadron from Brest to Toulon reinforces once more the preponderance of the French fleet in these waters. This decision, Poincaré added, was taken in accord with England, and is to be regarded as a subsequent development and as a completion of the arrangements already arrived at between the British and French Naval Staffs" (No. 193, Un livre Noir).

In October of the same year, Izvolsky, who was seeing Poincaré "almost daily", contemplates that in certain eventualities Russia might "mobilise" and speaks of the possibility of "preparing a great general and decisive European war" (p. 323-5, idem). In subsequent dispatches he reports Poincaré's repeated assurances that France is prepared to go to war with Russia in the event of a rupture over the Balkans.

We learn, too (December 1912), that Poincaré opposed "in the most categorical fashion" Germany's attempt to secure a pledge of neutrality on the part of England "in case Germany found herself involved in a war which was not provoked on the German side." This is a sidelight of enormous importance on the failure of the Haldane negotiations of that year (p. 364, idem). When Austria mobilised against Serbia (in December, 1912), Poincaré seems to have urged Russia to do the same, telling that it would "involve, immediately and automatically, first Germany, then France. The French Government envisages this possibility consciously and calmly, firmly decided to fulfil its obligations as an ally. It has taken all the necessary measures; mobilisation on the eastern frontier is verified, the materiel is ready, &c." (p. 368-70, idem, &c.

It is impossible even to give a digest of all these publications, short of compiling a pamphlet specially dealing with them. This need, in part, been supplied by the author in a pamphlet on Allied preparedness, which will appear about the same time as the present one, with the Labour Publishing Company.

1) Even during the war, not to mention earlier parallels. Thus, while our Government was hanging on the old 1839 Treaty in all the railway stations, and calling heaven to witness German duplicity, our ally, Russia, was invading the territory of Persia (whose independence we had guaranteed in 1907) to get at the Turks, and our ally, Japan, was invading the territory of China (whose integrity Japan and ourselves had guaranteed) to attack the Germans at Kiau-Chow. The subsequent treatment of Greece by the Allies, to compel her to enter the war, was almost if not quite as bad in many ways as the treatment of Belgium by Germany.

2) In admitting, as he did in the house of Commons on February 6, 1922, that the secret obligations contracted towards France were the primary cause of our entering the war (and in implicitly acknowledging that the freedom of action of the House of Commons had been destroyed by those obligations), Mr. Austen Chamberlain was merely repeating the declarations made by Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bonar Law immediately preceding the war, by Lord Grey in the last days of the crisis, and by Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Haldane since the war.

3) "Before the war" (op. cit.); "Diplomacy Revealed" (op. cit.).

4) See, inter alia, Lord Loreburn's "How the War Came" for a masterly analysis of these particular Belgian disclosures.

5) "Before the War" (op. cit.).

6) The plan of General Michel, who, in 1910, was vice-president of the Supreme War Council and Generalissimo-designate of all the French armies in the event of war. His idea was the employment of forty French army corps "in part in the active defence of all the region between Belfort and Mezieres, the remainder in a vigorous offensive in Belgium." Le plan 17, Morinet: Paris, 1919. The Belgian "Hansard" of the sitting of the Belgian Senate of December 5, 1912, makes interesting reading. The speeches delivered show that some Belgian Senators were quite as apprehensive of a French as of a German invasion.

7) Nos. 119 and 123, White Book.

8) The whole subject is treated with admirable lucidity in Mr. Brailsford's "Belgium and the Scrap of Paper" (National Labour Press, 1915). Every subsequent disclosure has strengthened his conclusions.

9) "Let France Explain." (Allen & Unwin, 1922.)

10) See Buat (op. cit.).

11) An interesting fact in this connection is registered in Mr. J. E. Turner's recently published book, "Shall It Be Again?" (Huebsch: New York): "On July 18 the North German Lloyd Steamship 'Kronprinzessin Cecilie' sailed from New York with $10,000,000 gold on board, consigned one half to London and one half to Paris. Halted by a wireless in mid ocean, she made a sensational race back to port to avoid capture by British cruisers. Had the Kaiser's irresponsible Government even as late as July 28, 'chosen its own time for the war', had it determined to deliver 'its own sudden blow' within half a week, the great German liner would hardly have been permitted to sail out of a safe port" (p. 187).

12) Corbett (op. cit.), p. 27.

13) "The Germans seemed to be more concerned with meeting a descent than with making one" (Corbett).

14) Corbett.

15) White Book.

COLLEGE COLUMN

Some people are so stingy, they refuse to smile, for fear they would give you a free look at their gold teeth.

MYSTERIOUS CHEMICALS TESTED

A prominent chemist died a few months ago in one of our larger cities. A large laboratory, filled with huge bottles, mostly labelled "Nitric-acid", "Sulphuric-acid", "Formalin", and with the names of other very poisonous chemicals, was left to the heirs. The relatives did not dare to touch the bottles on account of their poisonous contents and sold the laboratory to one of the chemist's colleagues.

This chemist soon started to experiment with the acids, but there was no sign of chemical reaction in any of his experiments. The nitric-acid did not even react with wood, much less with zinc or copper. He applied all possible tests to the various chemicals, but they only increased confusion, because they all showed the same properties and differed only in colour. The bottles seemed to contain a large quantity of alcohol. Finally he resolved to taste the chemicals. This last test showed that the bottles contained excellent "homebrew" and "moonshine."

J. M.

A clever young lawyer of a small town had a horse that refused to cross a little bridge at the outskirts of town. No amount of urging, whipping, and entreaty could induce the creature to cross the bridge. At last the lawyer advertised him thus: "To be sold. Owner wants to go out of town."

A MOTHER'S PRAYER

Somewhere in France, two strangers knocked at the door of a monastery at a very late hour. When the porter opened, they asked to see a priest. The porter refused, saying that it was too late. Then one of the men threw back his cloak, revealing the uniform of an officer of the French army.

"See here", he said, "I am general F. Please oblige me by calling a priest." Upon this the porter retired with a low bow and soon came back with the confessor of the monastery. When asked what he wanted, the general said: "This is my servant, he wishes to go to confession."

When the priest and servant had returned, the officer said: "Father, it is now my turn. For over twenty-five years I have not been to confession. This evening my servant came to me asking permission to prepare for death. Why for death? I asked; you have been through so many battles without getting hurt! But I feel a presentiment, he answered, that something is to happen, and I promised my mother that, when I felt this, I would go to confession. This made me reflect. When I was a young man of twenty-two, my mother was pleading with me to go to confession, but I turned a deaf ear to all her entreaties. Finally, I promised her that if I felt a presentiment, I would make my peace with God! Now, Father, I know that these words of my servant are a warning of God to myself and I also wish to go to confession; for I have lived a very wild life."

Twenty four hours later the general and his servant were both lying dead on the field of battle.

E. G.

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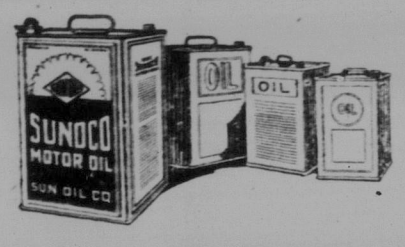

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