

The Strange Case of Lord Kitchener.

What Will Be Done With Our Unemployed Field-Marshal?

Whatever Mr. Haldane may say, it is surely amazing that, of all great men in the British Empire, Lord Kitchener should find himself out of a job.

True, he is now sixty—Napoleon and Wellington were only forty-six when they met at Waterloo—but in these days of peace, sixty is not old for a general.

At King Edward's funeral, the tall, soldierly figure of Lord Kitchener, with his square, swarthy countenance, attracted more notice than the eight monarchs themselves who visited our Sovereign. Is it really true that Lord Kitchener, in his search for a job, has considered an offer to organize the Chinese Army? The very idea adds terror to the Yellow Peril—a population of four hundred millions, focussed for war by such an intellect.

Curiously enough, General Gordon, who was "avenged" by Lord Kitchener at Khartoum, made his name in China. Where he suppressed the terrible Taeping Rebellion. Like Lord Kitchener, he served his apprenticeship—surveying the Holy Land.

How did the present position come about? When Lord Kitchener left India, two posts were open. There was the Viceroyalty of India, and there was the Mediterranean command at Malta. India or Malta?—what a choice! It reminds one of Napoleon—Europe or Elba? Lord Kitchener was not offered India, and he declined Malta, when followed the impasse.

A Military Dictatorship.

Let us be fair. To promote the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army to the post of Viceroy would have been unusual, and would have suggested a military dictatorship. Nothing could have been more abhorrent to the peaceful soul of Lord Morley. Besides, Lord Kitchener was unmarried—a substantial disability.

Still, how could Lord Kitchener be happy at Malta? Think how the Mediterranean command originated. It is a long but very instructive story. In 1895 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman boldly retired the Duke of Cambridge from the post of Commander-in-Chief. There were two reasons: First, his age; and secondly, his Royal status, which made administration very difficult.

A few years later the post of Commander-in-Chief—just the post for Lord Kitchener—was itself abolished. Instead, we have now the Inspector-General, whose business it is to see that the Army is complete to the last button. The first Inspector-General was the Duke of Connaught.

See what followed. The Duke is, by universal consent, a good soldier, thoroughly keen on his work. But then he suffers, just as the Duke of Cambridge suffered, from his Royal status. An Under-Secretary cannot deal with the brother of the Sovereign as if he were an ordinary officer. Another opening had to be found for the Duke of Connaught.

The Mediterranean command was quickly evolved from Mr. Haldane's fertile brain. The Duke set forth, played at soldiers for a few months, watched the boats sailing by, grew tired of interfering in other men's duties, resigned, and was created Governor-General of Canada!

Inducements That Failed.

When Malta, thus rendered vacant, was pressed upon Lord Kitchener, all sorts of inducements were added. He should have the right to inspect all the Imperial forces in the King's Dominions beyond the Seas; he should carry out Mr. Haldane's idea of one standard of accoutrement in the Colonies, so that all the scattered forces of the Empire might work with the Home Army in time of war; he should have a seat upon the Defence Committee. No; Lord Kitchener would have none of it. He threw up the Mediterranean command, and the Government did not further extend the invitation to the Defence Committee.

Again, let us be fair. The whole of Lord Kitchener's wonderful career has been spent in the East. It is not quite easy to see what appointment at home he would have accepted. There is the Command in Ireland; but would not Lord Kitchener have resented such a suggestion? Besides, General Lyttelton has been barely a year in the saddle.

Then take the Inspector-Generalship. How could Lord Kitchener succeed Sir John French, his subordinate?

Of course, the great outcry has arisen because Lord Kitchener has no seat upon the Defence Committee. The matter lies exclusively with the Prime Minister, which was Mr. Bal-

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four's arrangement when he founded the Committee in 1905.

More Than Meets the Eye.

There is, undoubtedly, more in all this than meets the eye. Until he went to India, the career of Lord Kitchener was an open volume for all to read. His brain of "chilled steel," his terrible indifference to all save the end to be achieved, his hatred of waste, and how in Egypt he "drilled the black man white and made the mummy fight"—it was all common talk, even in the music halls.

Afterwards—mystery! The world only knew that Lord Kitchener soon came to loggerheads with Lord Curzon, then Viceroy, and that it was Lord Curzon who resigned. Then there was a shadowy scheme for reorganizing the Indian forces—two regiments of Gurkhas were enrolled—transport was decentralised—native mountain batteries were developed; but what did it mean? The very experts are dumb.

An Astonishing Story.

Finally came that astonishing story of a kind of promise made to Lord Kitchener, that, if he left India, he had best take a return ticket, since he would go back in another position—to wit, as Viceroy. Exalted names—very exalted names—are associated with this report.

Of course, if a war were to break out, Lord Kitchener would at once take command, and no such command would have been possible had he taken the post of Viceroy of India. Otherwise, there are those who think that he might become Secretary of State for War in the next Conservative Cabinet.

Such an appointment would be "political"—that is, it would involve policy in the widest sense. Lord Roberts is an apostle of compulsory military service. Some people hint that Lord Kitchener agrees with him. But would Mr. Balfour adopt so tremendous a proposal? These are some of the unplumbed depths in the strange case of our unemployed Field Marshal.—N.A.P.

Giant Spinach.

Vegetable Used For Paper-Making.
Among crops growing in Norfolk is an experimental plot of one of the most curious vegetables seen in Europe.

It is a spinach of enormous proportions that grows stems four and five feet in height. The first discoverer of the plant was a French professor, who brought over the seed for use as a vegetable and later tested the plant for paper-making. Out of his first crop some sample rolls of paper have recently been made, and the paper proves to be of the very finest quality.

It is claimed for this spinach that it will be a greater weight per acre than any other annual crop yet grown for this purpose, and that the consistency of the stems is more favourable for paper-making than any of the straws that some of the manufacturers have experimented with. This giant spinach is growing very luxuriantly in the Norfolk experimental plot; and it seems likely that it will duly ripen seed.

The French professor is the same who introduced "heliants," that half-sun-flower, half-artichoke, which is having some vogue as a fodder plant since it was introduced to England by Mr. Marsters, of King's Lynn. The French professor first turned his attention to these American plants in the course of a campaign in favour of vegetarianism, of which he is an ardent votary. But heliants, or the sun plant is turning out to be more useful for its mass of green fodder than for its tubers, and the giant spinach is now being grown chiefly in hopes that it may prove useful for paper-making.

It will be some time before it can be known what weight per acre the plant yields in England, but it will be considerable. In any event, the experiment is of interest botanically, if not commercially.

Death Rate Among German Babies.

The figures of the present infant mortality alarm Germany, where the fact that there is a notable increase is evident from the statistics just published. Out of 2,000,000 persons born alive last year in the empire 351,000 died under the age of one year, a record exceeding 17 per cent.

The highest mortality by Kingdoms is Bavaria, 22 per cent; the lowest, 16.8 per cent, is in Prussia. As compared with the British Isles the infant mortality in Germany is very high. In the former the general percentage is 10.8, the rate of mortality varying from 11.8 per cent in England and Wales, where it is the highest, to 9.2 per cent in Ireland, where it is lowest.—From America.

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