

## Our London Letter

(Concluded from page 14.)

One-tenth of the sum would have obtained ten times the information by the prosaic process of asking for it from the nearest bookstall to the Wilhelmstrasse.

But there is a class of "traitor" who cannot avoid technical treason, whatever part he plays. These are found chiefly among the smaller fry of the Royal families. Prince Albert of Schleswig-Holstein, who had his training in the German army, is clamouring for a commission in the British army, as he is a British Prince. The Duke of Albany, who has a seat in our House of Peers and is Colonel-in-Chief of the Seaforth Highlanders, is fighting with the German army, in which he holds a high command. The Duke of Brunswick is another case of his kind, and he is still wondering, although he is a member of the German army. A more curious instance is that of Lord Taaffe, who is a Viscount in the Irish Peerage. His family has been settled in Austria for two generations, and he, though a British subject, is a lieutenant of German dragons. I hope, for his sake, he will not be taken prisoner by an Irish regiment.

### THE PRESS BUREAU.

THE official news issued by the Press Bureau is very interesting, and would be more so if one had not heard it quite authoritatively in the newspapers a day or so previously. At the head of it is the redoubtable Mr. F. E. Smith, who has risen to his present height by a strict application of the Shakespearean adage, "Sweet are the uses of advertisement." One suspects a ministerial practical joke somewhere behind it all, because setting F. E. to keep the news and the newsmen in their places is, as a parliamentary colleague of the Rt. Hon. gentleman remarked to me, "an attempt to suppress by means of the irrepressible." I believe the real meaning of the Bureau, however, is to give the authorities a ready weapon of chastisement should any paper prove indiscreet. But, for the credit of the British press, let it be said that an even and loyal reticence has been universally observed. Therefore, there is no great harm in the Bureau, and it is an edifying and delectable sight to see the elegant and dashing cavalier of Ulster bestriding this innocuous Dobbin.

They do these things better in Germany. There the Press Bureau (which is a department of General Staff) doesn't tell the news long after it is known, it tells it before it happens. It is not cramped by a silly regard for facts, its only limits are those of its wishes. And above and beyond it all, permeating the whole system with his mendacious presence the Arch-Prevaricator nods his Imperial head and says, "Ach, so. Observe, my children Deutschland Uber Alles." The German press have tried hard to enlist the sympathies of the people of the United States, with their stories of Germany's spotless virtue in the matter of this war; but if they had known their Hans Breittmann they would have realized that an American can't swallow in safety the seasoned products which merely brisk-up a German. Hans had joined the Tummers, you remember, with a Limburg cheese, and:—

Ven he open der box it schmell so loud  
It strike der music dumb.

Ven der Deutschers cotch der vlavour,  
It coorl der hair on deir het;  
But dere vas dwo Amerigins dere,  
Und, py Tam, it killed em det.

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The Temple, London,  
August 28th, 1914.

### A LITTLE BRITISH ARMY.

A POPULAR song of the nineties used to inform the audience of the Empire that "A Little British Army goes a (big drum) long way." Mons thunders the same tale to-day in a sterner vein and to the audience in a vaster Empire. That little army has struck the first note of what we hope will be a great epic

of patriotism. Ill-advised as was the general advance of the allies from the chosen position of defence, the moral effect of that first great engagement of our own troops is enormous. Alone of that 200 mile line of brave men they withstood the onslaught of a vast army; but they did a far greater thing in their return on the line of defence, they came back without one instance of nervous movement. The retreat from Mons was caused by the movement of the whole line and, as every officer knows, a column that can retreat in good order and carrying, as that column did, a sting to its tail, is a fighting force of a value that can hardly be estimated. After the anxiety of the early days of the week and the reported fall of Namur—whose forts we now learn are intact—there appears to be necessary a breathing space, this probably means that the losses inflicted on the German troops were more heavy than those received by the allies, and that they must gather together their army before the supreme effort, which must be made to penetrate the defence of the solid line of Allies. The curtain has fallen again after a momentary glance, and we must await the next small revelation with what patience we may. Reticence is a virtue, as I have repeatedly said, but there is a lack of method in our reticence in London that makes purposeless what would otherwise be a discreet silence. Already the press is beginning to ask that there shall be some discrimination used by the Press Bureau. Mr. F. E. Smith has probably a just terror of his own unquenchable thirst for publicity, and, so moved by it is he, that he presses to the opposite extreme by issuing nothing but banal accounts, certified in the press days before by eye-witnesses. A great grievance at the moment is the suppression of any list of the casualties at Mons. We know that 2,000 casualties took place, and we—including mothers, wives and children—are to wait, forsooth, until a full list can be certified before one name will be disclosed.

### GERMANY'S TASK.

A FRIEND of mine who was in Holland last week tells me that the Germans there are quite confident of victory. The whole plan is, like most Teutonic devices, cut and dried. He took down and Englished the declaration of one of these omniscient persons: "Our troops will go to Paris; our fleet will keep the British fleet continuously occupied, whilst crippling it piecemeal. Having France in subjection, we will turn with one-half our troops upon the Russians, whom we will drive back to die of hunger and exposure in the early winter." "Go to Paris" is a charmingly simple way of putting it. It sounds like a week-end visit, but they are likely to be a little longer getting there. Absurd as the words I have quoted sound, they have the merit of putting with stark truthfulness precisely what the German nation have set out to do. They have not merely to conquer France, they have to crush her so that she can be kept by a fraction of the invading army, which same miraculous fraction is to guard the coasts so well that Britain cannot land a man. The bulk of the invaders are to return and to dislodge a million men without taking breath, and whilst this—this picnic is in progress the British fleet, if you please, is to be kept tickled like a trout in the North Sea by the hypnotic tactics of the German navy—presumably by a wireless attraction from behind Heligoland. That is Germany's task, the accomplishment of which she already envisages. Far be it from me to indulge in slang in these decorous columns, but my friend remarked when he read his note to me: "It's a bit thick, isn't it?"—and I think you will agree that it is.

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