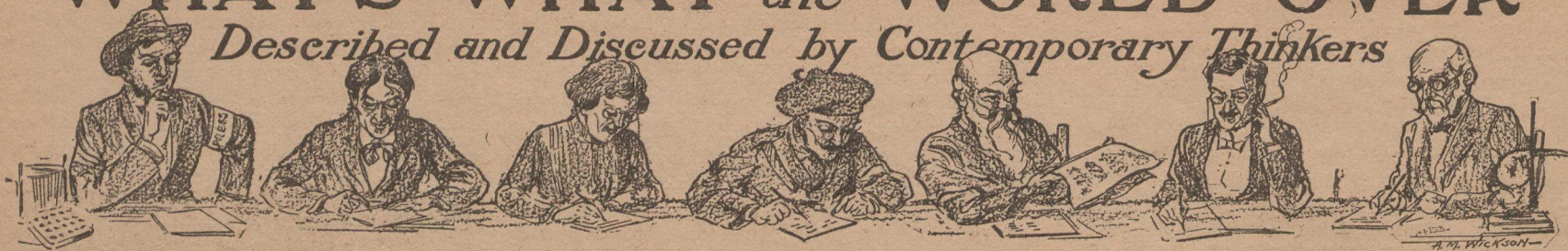


WHAT'S WHAT *the* WORLD OVER

Described and Discussed by Contemporary Thinkers



DENMARK'S CRISIS

This Small State is Unhappiest of all the Neutrals

WITH a land frontier touching Germany's, and sea frontiers which make her chief keeper of the entrance to the Baltic, Denmark is seriously exposed to the incidents which, even more than war agitation at home, the neutral States dread. For that reason the neutrality of the Copenhagen Cabinet has been specially demonstrative. That the crisis now under way is shaking this policy is not my own conclusion, says Robert Crozier Long in the Fortnightly. It is the conclusion openly declared by Government and party leaders, and it is the inevitable inference from certain present developments—the nervousness of the nation and Press, the panic on the Bourse, and the desperate zeal shown by persons in authority, as high as the King himself, to allay the party conflict.

The position is that the "Neutrality Cabinet" of M. Zahle has been defeated on a vital issue, with the result that a General Election to the Riksdag is threatened and that the maintenance in power of an administration which had no programme except neutrality is thrown into doubt. The defeat of a Neutrality Government in a country where the Opposition also is pledged to neutrality does not seem in itself to involve any drastic change of policy in regard to the war. But for over a year past responsible Danes, in office and out, have spoken and written as if the existence of the Zahle administration, the suspension of party strife, and in particular the avoidance of an election, were conditions precedent to peace. The men and parties who made a religion of this doctrine cannot to-day escape the conclusion that peace is not quite so certain as it was. Hence the immediate cause of the crisis—M. Zahle's failure to push through the Riksdag the West Indies Islands sale, and the secondary cause—the Opposition's desire for power, are both falling into the background, and the conflict takes more and more the form of a struggle between the ultra-Pacifists, ultra-Neutralityists, and (as opponents insist) Germanophile Radicals and Socialists who support the Cabinet, and the Conservatives and Left, who, though also programmatic Neutralityists, are not ultra-Pacifist, and who (at least on the Right wing) are so sharply anti-German that they are charged (again only by opponents) with being tainted with "Activism." The word "Activist," borrowed from Sweden, is being used liberally; and here it means the same thing, with the difference that Swedish "Activism" aims at intervention on behalf of Germany, and Danish "Activism" is inevitably on the side of the Entente. There is the further difference that Denmark, unlike Sweden, is not divided into definitely "pro-German" and "anti-German" parties. The country is emphatically anti-German. But the parties in power, in their passion to keep out of the war at all costs, have sacrificed their sentiments and sympathies, whereas the Opposition parties give free rein to theirs. Hence to the Conservatives, the openly anti-German wing of the Opposition, and also to the somewhat less openly anti-German Left, M. Zahle and his supporters are "pro-Germans"; while, in the Governmental Radicals' and Socialists' judgment, the Opposition, in spite of its ostensible support of neutrality, is moving, consciously or unconsciously, in the direction of bringing Denmark into the war as ally of the Entente.

Denmark is to-day the only neutral country where organized expressions of sympathy for one side or the other are not allowed. A typical case occurred

last winter, when Dr. Wieth-Knudsen, political editor of the Copenhagen Right newspaper Vort Land, the most emphatic pro-Entente publication here, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for assailing the Cabinet's alleged too Germanophile interpretation of neutrality. On appeal this sentence was quashed; but the trial illustrates the prevailing doctrine of what neutrality is. A remarkable fact is that the public, including strong sympathizers with the Entente, approved of this policy.

Last year, when the defence agitation was acute, the book-market was flooded with publications bearing such titles as "What Good is It?" and "How Would it Help?" all from Radical or Socialist pens, and all in "Defence-Nihilistic" spirit. The Minister of Defence is accused of being the author of one. These publications proclaim that Denmark, in par-



The Morning Caller: Vos you ze man vot safe mine little poy from drowning, yesterday?

The Rescuer: Yes, I am.

The Morning Caller: Zen where's his cap?

—Drawn by Lawson Wood, in the Sketch.

ticular Copenhagen, cannot be defended. Copenhagen could not be defended from the sea side because British warships would not be risked in the Sound, and it could not be defended from the land side because the German Fleet would isolate the islands from the mainland, making army concentration impossible. An army of 50,000 men, the strength of the forces with local reserves in Zealand, would be useless.

Up to the beginning of August the Zahle Cabinet's chief asset was its neutralism. With most Danes this was rather a cause for supporting the Cabinet than for liking it. The masses were satisfied with a system under which they could nurse their strong anti-German sentiments without being exposed to risk of war. This is the prevailing Danish sentiment to-day; but there are signs of growth of a more patriotic and less passive attitude towards the war, which may be ascribed to the military failures of the Central Powers during the summer. This new tendency, which the Government Press roundly characterizes as "Activism," coincided with the patriotic sentiment against selling the West Indies islands.

The main American motive was undoubtedly Washington's desire, on the eve of the Presidential Election, to complete a deal in which former Presidents failed and which has real strategical value since the construction of the Panama Canal. Denmark's motives in consenting have not been revealed by the Cabinet. Instead, the Riksdag was given vague hints of terrors to be expected if the deal did not go through at once.

During the present controversy some Radical and Socialist journals have not hesitated to proclaim that Denmark would not take back North Schleswig if she got it as a gift. In fact, the question has not been very alive. Last November in Prussian Schleswig rumours were afloat that the recession of the Danish-speaking part had been decided on "as an act of policy by the Entente, or as a measure of conciliation by Germany, or as a reward for neutrality." These rumours were apparently taken seriously by the Schleswig Danes, for the Ober-Präsident (formerly Prussian Minister of the Interior), von Moltke, issued a denial. "If those who spread this rumour," the report ran, "speculate on our foes' victory it is sufficient to point to the military situation; and as for the Imperial Government's relations to Denmark, it would be undervaluing the Danish Government's sense and political wisdom to imagine that in its efforts for strict neutrality it is influenced by hope of foreign reward."

This, of course, would not be so; the immediate question would be merely whether the policy of unconditional neutrality would be supported or whether a Cabinet, also neutralist by programme but more susceptible to intervention interests, would come to power. The neutralityists are afraid, not of anything a Cabinet formed from the present Opposition would do immediately after it took office, but of what it might do if the military expectations of the Powers now fighting Germany are realized. The question is: Could Denmark at any date, however remote and under any conceivable circumstances, voluntarily go into the war on the Entente side? Anyone who studies Danish sentiment as it is now would answer "No." But, having so concluded, he would have to seek some explanation of the nervousness created by the crisis, of the pleas of the Cabinet and of the King for the avoidance of an election, of the Bourse panic, and of the declarations of the Government parties that the Opposition's policy threatens national peace and independence. The explanation is the Neutralityists' dread that popular sentiment may undergo a change corresponding to military changes unfavourable to Germany in the course of the war. What will happen in the future? What will be the effect on national sentiment of a complete German collapse? They answer that Activist or Interventionist sentiment would grow, and that it might become too strong for any Cabinet. The dread of the Radicals and Socialists is natural enough, for both parties are pledged to reject intervention even in the most comfortable, riskless, and profitable circumstances. A Right politician assures me that the Cabinet's policy towards armaments has been governed by such fears; M. Zahle's anti-armament policy, that means, should not be ascribed to indifference about national defence, but to fear that the better Denmark is armed the stronger would be the temptation to make use of armaments by intervention. The "Activists" do not exaggerate the military importance of intervention, but they realize the value of even a small army like Denmark's with an entirely new front to operate on, and the still greater value of Danish territory as a base and of the Danish islands as keys to the Baltic. The election—if it comes off—will not clear up the question how far the Activists are to get their way; but it will be