

racks and confined the remaining prisoners inside. In every camp the musicians are organized into orchestras, which play almost every night in many tea rooms and restaurants in the towns. Siberia has never heard such music since the war began. These orchestras are capable of everything from ragtime to symphony concerts.

A well-known sculptor from Central Europe has since his imprisonment executed some remarkably lifelike heads of the now gradually disappearing Siberian aborigines; these will in future years form some of the treasures of one of the local museums. Some of the prison camps have studios for the painters who have been taken in the war; one camp had in its studio eleven Academicians from Vienna and Budapest.

The tradition of the old convict camps leads many persons to ask particularly about prisoners working in Siberia. The general answer is that the prisoners who have been obliged to work in Siberia are for the most part those who would naturally expect to be working if they were at home or in their own armies. I have heard tales of hardship and cruelty, coming from remote and inaccessible work-camps; but there are two sides to all those stories, and from what I know of the Russians I am just as ready to believe that in the small, scattered camps there is even more kindness and freedom than is afforded the prisoners in the larger centres.

## City Brings Down Coal—

**T**HERE may be something in the air which makes it possible to do things differently in Denver, but it is a fact that Denver people are getting all the coal they need from the municipal coal bin at a price more than \$2.00 per ton below the retail market price. This is how the glorious thing came about:

Last August local coal dealers advised Denver citizens to expect an advance in coal prices, because of labor scarcity and poor transportation facilities. Immediately thereafter, upon the Mayor's suggestion, the city council passed a sweeping ordinance authorizing him to utilize all powers of the city necessary to relieve widespread and general distress caused by increased cost of living.

Mayor Speer ordered an investigation by the municipal industrial bureau, the only department of its kind in America. Mr. George A. Levy, formerly chief of efficiency standards in Pittsburgh, was sent into the lignite coal fields and closed contracts for three mines.

The operators had threatened an advance in the price of lignite to \$7.50 or \$8 a ton, but the city's action effectually stopped this talk. At first the dealers showed fight, but, quickly realizing the futility and the danger of combating the municipality, they changed tactics and volunteered to supply 50,000 tons at the city's contract price, in the event the municipal supply proved inadequate.

On September 15 the city opened its office in City Hall, selling selected lump to citizens at \$4.15 a ton, delivered in the bin, the retail price of the dealers on the same coal being \$6 and \$6.50 a ton.

Production from the city's mines opened at 600 tons a day, but soon advanced to 1,000 tons, a very important factor in the total coal consumption of Denver. In addition, the city supplies city buildings and institutions with run-of-mine and slack at a cost of \$1 per ton below that previously paid to dealers. This means a saving to the taxpayer of \$17,000 or \$18,000 a year.

Purely an emergency feature is the sale of sacked coal to the very poor or the man caught unawares by a cold snap. Citizens may buy 50 or 100 pounds of coal at 10 and 20 cents, respectively, either at the municipal lodging or bath house. This coal is sold at less than cost

and the purchaser must remove it. To secure sacked coal of the same grade from the retailer he must pay at the rate of \$10 a ton.

## The Future of Poland

**T**O Americans the one most authoritative and significant pronouncement in answer to the question, What is to come to Poland out of the present war? is that of the President of the United States.

"I take it for granted," said Mr. Wilson in his address to Congress on January 22, 1917, "if I may venture upon a single example, that statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent, and autonomous Poland."

Upon none of the questions to be settled at the end of the war has the President been quite so specific of utterance, says Willis J. Abbot in *Munsey's*. Yet up to the moment when he spoke the opinion of statesmen had not been quite so unanimous as he seemed to think. A considerable school of publicists had urged that Poland should be made autonomous but not independent. They held that the suzerainty should be granted to Russia, whose statesmen should control the foreign relations of the new state. They pointed to the turbulent record of Poland under her own kings as a reason why she should not be left to her own devices.

Since that time the Russians have risen and overthrown their Czar and the bureaucracy. They have not yet convinced the world that they are competent of working out their own destiny, and while that doubt exists it would be folly to entrust them with authority over a new state.

Poland, indeed, after her twelve hundred years of turmoil and anarchy under her elective kings, was tried in the fires of persecution, and the dross of the nation was burned out. What remains is a passionate sense of nationality. What men's fathers and brothers have died for, the great cause for which men have suffered persecution, for that they will still fight, and the goal once won, they will defend it with their lives.

The Poles have been fitted by adversity for self-government. The ridiculous fustian of their ancient class of nobles has been sloughed off. It was the chief obstacle to an orderly and efficient government in the days of the Polish kings, and it is gone.

But what as to complete independence, as urged by the President, whose views are echoed by the more representative Poles?

If Europe is to be merely the old Europe, temporarily pacified, but armed to the teeth and steadily arming with a view to new wars, the position of an independent Poland would be precarious. In the territory which would constitute her kingdom are about twenty million people—say two million bayonets; but she would be hedged about by those intensely military and aggressive nations, Russia, Germany and Austria. She would be forced into the race for armament, into imperiling alliances. Unless we radically change the European theory, independent Poland would be merely a temptation to a new war.

But given the boon of a league of nations to enforce peace—which President Wilson has also endorsed, in company with many of the most eminent statesmen of Europe—and the wholly independent and autonomous Poland becomes practicable and almost necessary. Its creation will remove from the three neighboring nations a racial problem which has endangered their domestic order for more than a century. It will end an era of cruel persecution that cries to heaven for vengeance. It will give to a brilliant, emotional, industrious people a chance to work out their own destiny. It will create a new state in Europe that may speedily rival its elders. It will undo a century of oppression and render justice to an undeservingly downtrodden nation.



A FAST FREIGHT IN CEYLON.

*Nux vomica* is another important drug that comes from the far-away regions of the earth, and reaches western nations only by the long hauls that high ocean-freight rates largely preclude in these days of submarine warfare. It consists of the dried ripe seeds of a small tree which grows in India, Hindustan, Java, Sumatra, Malabar, Ceylon, and North Australia.

## —Submarines and Castor Oil

**A**T first sight it may be hard to see any intimacy in the relations between the castor oil bottle on the bath-room shelf and submarines, slinking about the seven seas, but John Foote, M.D., writing in the *National Geographic Magazine*, connects the two with a war bond and explains, incidentally, how the price of hair tonic at the corner drug store may fluctuate with the tide of battle on the battered fields of Flanders. He says: It is not generally known that most of the castor bean from which castor oil is pressed comes to the United States from India. Indeed, our annual importation in normal times is nearly a million bushels. The Orient has always produced this "delicacy" of our childhood days, and it is interesting to remember that the Ebers papyrus, an Egyptian medical manuscript, written when Moses was a young man,



BREAKING CLOVES FROM STEMS: ZANZIBAR. The clove, as we know it, is the partially developed bud of a tree which grows to a height of about 15 feet. These buds are produced in great profusion in clusters. These clusters are gathered and dried, turning from red to brown.

speaks of the medicinal virtues of the castor plant.

To-day importers are viewing with apprehension (and children with joy) the castor-oil situation. Not only is production lessened, but the difficulties of sea transportation from India are increasing with the lack of ships. In