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LONDON GOSSIP.

PRINCE LEOPOLD OF BELGIUM.

LONDON, Sept. 7th, 1915.

There is some expectation that Prince Leopold of Belgium, the heir to the Belgian throne, will soon become an Eton boy. If that turns out to be the decision of his parents, it will be quite in keeping with the good sense of both. Prince Leopold, with his younger brother and sister, came to this country during the progress of the German invasion of Belgium. The boy, who is only about 14, has been formally embodied in the Belgian Army, in accordance with his own ardent desires, but he is manifestly too young to undergo the rigors of military service. His readiness to fight for his country's liberties does him credit, but the destinies of Belgium may be far better served if for the present he continues his education.

A HERO OF THE AIR.

M. Pegoud's sad fate has a special interest to Londoners. Two years ago the intrepid French aviator was the hero of the hour here. He came across to England to give an exhibition of his great feat of looping the loop in the air. It was the first time that it had been accomplished in this country, and huge crowds went down to Brooklands to see him do it. I remember that I had a conversation with him after his descent. He had had a great ovation from the spectators, but he was cool, collected, and modest. His talk was of the technical side of aeronautics, and the conversation turned to the utility of such performances as looping the loop. "You have to be very well to do this sort of thing," M. Pegoud remarked. He was very emphatic on the danger that attended such attempts by any but the most skilled of airmen. The essentials to success were self-command and command of the machine. Given those he maintained that such feats as he had been accomplishing were to make up the education of the perfect aviator, the man with the cool brain, alert and quick to act in any emergency caused by the unforeseeable vicissitudes of the upper atmosphere. M. Pegoud had the great qualities of nerve and resource, and his previous training in the school of intrepidly enabled him to render signally valuable services to his country. In his case what we used to call "freak flying" was the prelude to the great feats which his admirers in this country as well as in France recall to-day, when he has found his death on duty in the altitudes to which he loved to mount. M. Pegoud impressed me as quiet, modest, imperturbable, while his slight curled moustache gave a touch of Gallic jauntiness to his appearance.

ROMANIA AND THE WAR.

The conviction is growing that Roumania's decision has been taken to enter the war on the side of the Allies, although active operations may possibly be delayed for some time yet. The diplomatic history of the last thirteen months will make interesting reading. When the war broke out the Central Powers had a treaty of alliance with Roumania which the late King Carol had signed,

and the refusal of a Crown Council to approve King Carol's resolution to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers was a great blow to them. The Allies' efforts to convert a negative into a positive success were shaken by the resistance of the new King who is, of course, a Hohenzollern, by the scepticism of the Roumanian General Staff, and by some differences of opinion with Russia. The Roumanian Government wished to commit themselves to enter the war only when the Roumanian General Staff should think fit. This was not satisfactory to the Allies. Finally Roumania agreed to fix a date for her intervention, but not all the Allied Powers were prepared to sign this agreement. It is believed now that the Allies are unanimous, but the difficulty this time is the resistance of the King. Probably the Roumanian Parliament will have to be summoned before war is declared. The moment of intervention may still be uncertain, but the decision to intervene sooner or later seems beyond doubt, and the various reports of frontier movements and precautions suggest that it will be sooner rather than later. If Roumania does move it will mean that she has no fears from Bulgaria, so that the mobilization of the Balkans will be a long way nearer realization.

NO LIKELIHOOD OF CONSCRIPTION.

I have grounds for stating that, in spite of rumors and apparently inspired reports, there is no prospect of conscription either immediately or as far ahead as can be at present foreseen. The purely military case against conscription is overwhelming. It is simply this—that the War Office has, and will for months to come have, more men in hand, trained and ready, than it can supply and send to the front. Nearly every village in England is full of soldiers, nearly every lane in the land is tramped by their feet. It takes a vast army to spread out like that. If you ask these men how long they have been in training you will find that most of them have been at it for more than six months (to put it at the highest) which is necessary to train a modern soldier. Many soldiers in England and Scotland have been in training for a year. When the Government early this year asked for the third million of men it had the first two millions complete or virtually complete. We know, roughly, how many men have been sent to the various fronts. It is easy to calculate what an enormous surplus of men the War Office has in hand. It will need them all and more, but the stream of recruits flows steadily in (with spurts every time a Zeppelin drops a bomb on England). The voluntary system is adequately providing the men, providing them in the way that can be most conveniently and economically handled.

WAR AND INSANITY.

The forthcoming number of the "Lancet," Great Britain's foremost medical journal of which I have received an advance proof, gives a very interesting psychological analysis of

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the effect of the war on the nation's nerves. The general expectation—perhaps the general assumption—is that there must be a great increase of insanity owing to the nervous strain of the war. So far as there is any evidence it is just the other way. The "Lancet" cites the case of a big asylum in Belfast where there has been a remarkable decrease in the number of admissions for the past year as compared with the twelve months before. The only reason that can be discovered for the decline in insanity is the war. The psychological explanation must be that the war, though it is dreadful and nerve-racking and to sensitive minds a horrible nightmare, does nevertheless take people out of themselves. Insanity is bred in preoccupation with self. Egotism and morbid absorption in self is the germ. The surrounding circumstances that foster the germ are monotony and boredom. "It is not the great tragedies of life that sap the forces of the brain," says the "Lancet," "but rather the monotony of narrow and circumscribed existence." To live out a great public tragedy, therefore, is not enfeebling to weak minds but strengthening.

THE CHANCE FOR WOMEN DOCTORS.

In connection with the shortage of doctors in general practice owing to the war and the rare opportunity presented to women medical students who are just beginning their training, I learn that the critical stage is likely to be reached about five years from now. There is no shortage in the Army Medical Service, but the demand for army doctors is, of course, increasing concurrently with the expansion of our military forces, and this is what has led to the further call for volunteers. One in three of all the doctors under forty now in the country, I am told, will probably be needed in the next half-year. Meanwhile the army authorities are taking a wise step in sending back from the colors medical students who when they enlisted were in the fifth (the last) year of their training. Two points should be brought home to the public—the need for encouraging the entrance of women into the medical profession and the desirability of relieving as much as possible the present and future pressure on doctors in general practice at home. This last can be done in many ways, but one particularly useful thing would be for a patient, when at all possible, to call upon the doctor rather than ask the doctor to call upon him.

PUBLIC DINING IN WAR TIME.

It seems that there will be no relaxation of the rule established a year ago regarding the abandonment of public dinners in civic circles here during the winter season. Some newly-elected Masters of the London Livery Companies have notified their members that the customary amenities of their office are suspended, though they append the expression of a hope that happier circumstances will later permit them to offer the usual hospitalities. The Guildhall Banquet will be given as usual, however, on November 9th, by the incoming Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London, but the social side of the Mansion House will continue to be very greatly restricted, and this example will affect commercial coteries, whose annual reunions are normally of much value for the consolidation of special interests.

WAR AND THE LIBRARY.

The Library Association, which began its annual convention in London on September 1st, will be busy during its discussions, like every other society in these times, with the great subject. Stanley Jast, who has just been appointed sub-librarian of Manchester, will lecture on what public libraries can do during and after the war, and later the literature of the war will be discussed by experts in some of its many aspects. How enormous the flow of war literature is can be roughly estimated from the interesting exhibition of war books on view in the hall. The impossibility of getting hold of German books robs the exhibition of anything like completeness, but there is an astonishing variety of books and pamphlets in English, French, Italian and Spanish. I believe that a special Government permit is necessary for importation of German books into this country, and this has been granted occasionally to English authors engaged on war books. The size of the library of this war is already staggering, and of course the output has only begun, and a century hence the authors will still be busy explaining it away, just as they are still busy with the Napoleonic wars. The writers of the future will have an incomparably larger volume of contemporary literature to work upon than the historians of to-day. There is, I believe, no complete bibliography in existence of contemporary Napoleonic literature, but we live in a more scientific age, and already our bibliographers have got to work. The list compiled by the librarian of the St. Bride's Institute contains the titles of 500 books and pamphlets, chiefly English and French,

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published in the first five months of the war. This bibliography is already in its third volume, and the number of publications in this country alone must be approaching two thousand. The mass of literature is growing more rapidly now that people have had time to think before writing, and the authors of the bibliography consider that the quality is improving. It is said that the German books on the war already number 6,500. A feature of the more recent output is the growing number of books on the religion and ethics of the war.

FURS IN WAR-TIME.

The West End of London fur departments are beginning their autumn and winter season. There has been much speculation as to the state of the fur trade, and it is now evident that those authorities who predicted that war economy would kill the popular demand for furs, and those who talked of a famine in peltry owing to supplies being held up, labor and transport difficulties, were both wrong. Inquiries made in wholesale circles during the last day or two brought the information that fox in all colors, black, white, blue, and natural; skunk, musquash, both in the natural color and the seal-dyed variety, and wolf, which latter will be one of the leading hard-wearing furs of the coming winter, are available in quantity and will be largely worn. Prices will be high and supplies short in the case of certain costly skins such as seal and sable, but prohibition of killing rather than immediate war causes are responsible. White fox will also be dearer, chiefly owing to this fur having been seized upon by ultra-fashionable Parisians and American women. Generally speaking, however, reasonable prices will prevail in the showrooms, and an exceptionally heavy demand is anticipated in the trade for what may be described as furs of average quality. This demand will come from the new fur-buying public created by the abnormally high wages prevailing in many of the skilled trades.

Date balls for the holidays are made of three cups of dates, chopped and stoned, a cupful of black walnut meats, chopped, a tablespoonful of ginger syrup and one of chopped preserved ginger. Run through a chopper, make into balls and roll in coconut.

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