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putting into effect an economic boycott or a blockade. Among the warmest supporters of the scheme were some of the smaller European nations who, by virtue of it, would have received aid although offering nothing in return. Britain, of course, could not entertain it for a moment. The role of constable would have been both burdensome and invidious, for the measures required of Britain might well have involved her in a serious international quarrel. But it was rather unfortunate that the plan was ever brought forward, for it, quite unnecessarily, created a false impression in America. America, always suspicious where British naval policy is concerned, construed it as a subtle device for clothing Britain with increased powers, although the so-called "powers" were actually extremely onerous duties. Again, in 1926, Finland was the sponsor of a proposal for the establishment of an international war chest of £50,000,000, to be at the service of any nation threatened with attack. The idea was that Britain and the other great Powers should each find £10,000,000, to be given as a loan to the victim of aggression. Needless to say they were not enthusiastic. Altruism has its limits.

The Assembly now sitting has provided an example of an untimely proposal. Dr. Benes, of Czecho-Slovakia, advocated the immediate summoning of a disarmament conference. He was supported by Jonkeer Loudon, of Holland, who said that he intended to request the Governments of Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States to send delegates to Paris forthwith. These gentlemen were inspired by the worthiest of motives, but M. Paul Boncour and Lord Cushendun had no difficulty in showing that the suggestion was inopportune. Lord Cushendun said that Jonkeer Loudon evidently did not appreciate the implications of such an invitation. The Powers in question are all signatories of the Washington treaty, which is to be reviewed in 1931. The adoption of the proposal would be tantamount to ante-dating the review, and this, for obvious reasons, would be undesirable. There is a further objection. Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that a disarmament conference has no prospect of success unless there has been due preparation. The want of this is held to have been the chief cause of the failure at Geneva last year. The delegates must meet forearmed with a knowledge of the special necessities and interests of the other nations represented. It is useless for them to wait until the conference is in session to acquire this information. At Geneva Britain and America were hopelessly at cross-purposes, yet it is quite possible that with a better understanding obstacles might have been surmounted and divergent viewpoints reconciled. This knowledge can best be gained by informal conversations, and the exchange of Notes such as have recently been proceeding between Britain and France. To dispense with these preliminaries and to rush headlong into conference would be to court disappointment. Lord Cushendun's reply to Jonkeer Loudon must not be interpreted as a sign of hostility to disarmament. Facts speak for themselves. Only a few days ago he told the Assembly that since the war Britain has voluntarily scrapped 2,000,000 tons, and that the personnel of the Navy is now 40,000 fewer than in 1914. No other nation can boast a reduction approaching this. Britain has given the world a lead.

A NOVEL FACULTY.

One of the American universities, it is said, is about to institute a Chair of Humour, and the innovation has so much to recommend it that the real wonder is that its possibilities have not long ere this, been seen and seized. The serious study of humour is in itself so beautiful a paradox that, if there be any virtue at all in intrinsic merit, the new chair is bound to be a success from the start. Unfortunately, we are not informed of the exact locality of the institution whose senate has decided thus to teach the world the gentle art of jesting; but it certainly ought to be the University of Chicago. For there, indeed, if the Mayor be truly representative of the citizens, the supply of those who badly need a course would

It would run, presumably, the whole gamut of the art, starting with a course in punning, which is, upon high authority, the "lowest form of humour," and proceeding thence by gradual steps through the bon-mot, the judicious drawing-room story, the after-dinner speech, and the gently ironical essay to the subtle mysteries of the Higher Witticism. There would be special courses, naturally, for politicians in the art of repartee, and for such members of the legal profession as desired to achieve the degree of "Judicial Humorist." A laboratory, it has been suggested, would be required, equipped with apparatus for experimenting in the latest methods of practical joking, and containing naturally an operating table for demonstrations in pulling the leg. But this is a refinement which, while greatly to be desired, can hardly be expected at so early a stage. So far as the minor details of the innovation are concerned, discussion may very well revolve about the matters of costume and the conferring of degrees. So far, however, as the former question is concerned, there can hardly be any doubt that the most appropriate dress to distinguish undergraduates of the new faculty from the ordinary wearers of the cap and gown would be a cap and bells; while the senior student of the year, being in a sense the biggest "card" in the whole pack, might very well be known as The Joker. The prospect which the new departure in scholastics opens up, regulated in this or some similar fashion, is fascinating, indeed. What nobler sight could one imagine than that of a group of spectacled young sophomores trying to be funny, and to instil into their earnest souls the saving salt of humour. The mere thought of it is enough to bring tears to the eye of any conscientious lover of his species.

As to the personnel of the students we need say little. The laws of supply and demand are always to be regarded as reliable; and that being so we may be sure that the classrooms will be filled. For the number of those lacking even the most elementary knowledge of the art of humour is as the sands of the sea; and if they all applied to be accepted as pupils no university in the world could hold them. The only factor that is likely to lessen the demand upon the services of the new professor is the incapacity of these unfortunates to recognise their own misfortune. They are ignorant of their own ignorance; and the very last thing to which the great majority of them will confess is that they lack that very sense of humour in which they are so conspicuously deficient. This blindness it is which will prevent—if anything should do so—the success of the new curriculum. But if it were not so—if, in regard to humour, men were as ready to admit their shortcomings as they are as a rule in other fields—how great might be the benefit bestowed upon the race by such a chair as this! Think of the list that might be made of persons to whom that benefit would mean so much. Think of those whose perverted ideas of humour might so fittingly be corrected to the advantage of themselves and everybody associated with them; think of the myriad dull and solemn heads that might be filled with wit and breezy and refreshing mirth. What a list we might prepare if we could but be sure that they whose names figured upon it would take the course. And first upon the list should be the name of him who made the great suggestion of this Chair of Humour. For he, above all others, surely needs it most!

PERSONAL.

The Premier (Mr. Bavin) left the city yesterday, to spend the week-end in the country. Mr. W. G. Davies, of Anthony Horderns' London office, will leave Sydney to-day for Melbourne, to join the R.M.S. Narkunda. He will leave the steamer at Marseilles for a Continental tour, prior to his return to London.

Alderman Primrose, Mayor of North Sydney, and the Mayoress visited Neutral Bay Boys' Intermediate High School on Thursday, to present Mr. Heppburn (science master) with a case of pipes on behalf of the North Sydney Council, as a token of recognition for his services as secretary to the jubilee sports committee.

BUDGET SPEECH.

PROBABLY ON THURSDAY.

FINANCIAL MEASURES.

It is probable that the Budget speech will be delivered in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday or Thursday. Now that the Address in Reply has been disposed of the path is clear for Parliament to settle down to business.

A meeting of the State Cabinet was held yesterday, when the programme for next week was discussed. Another meeting of the Ministry has been called for Monday morning, when the programme will be completed. The Transport and Hospitals Acts, and an amendment of the Local Government Act, will also be discussed.

Private members' business is to have precedence on Tuesdays up to 6 p.m., but as there are no notices of motion on the business paper, practically the whole of next Tuesday's sitting will be devoted to Government business.

The main measure to be dealt with on Tuesday will be a temporary Supply Bill covering two months. Its is anticipated by the Government that by the time that period has elapsed the Budget, financial measures arising therefrom, and the Estimates will be completed. The second reading of the Liquor (Amendment) Bill, and the first reading of the Housing and Fair Rents Bills, will be taken on Tuesday if time permits.

Later in the week the Income Tax Bill and the Electoral (Amendment) Bill will be submitted. The Budget is now ready. All the financial measures arising out of the Budget will be introduced during the next fortnight.

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