



# The Month in World Affairs

By LOTHROP STODDARD



The Anglo-French Rivalry—Cheap Labor Threatens Japan—Rural *versus* Urban Russia—Things Worth Watching.

THE sudden fall of Premier Briand and the accession to power of the Nationalist leader Poincaré gave a dramatic turn to the course of Anglo-French relations. I have already discussed some of the outstanding points of difference between England and France in both Europe and the Near East, and I have stated that Anglo-French relations are likely to form the most significant aspect of Old-World politics for some time to come. We must remember, however, that the present conflicts of French and English foreign policy are due not merely to the post-war situation, but also to far older traditions and tendencies and to national points of view stretching back for centuries.

To elderly diplomats with good memories and a touch of cynicism the volleys of verbal brickbats now hurtling across the channel are amusingly reminiscent of their youthful days and mean not so much a novelty as a "return to normal." The destruction of German power has revived that older scene of a Europe rent by Anglo-French rivalry somewhat as it was in the days of Napoleon or in the time of Louis XIV.

The tableau is not precisely the same. History never really repeats itself, but history does produce situations sufficiently similar to rouse like

passions and to stimulate traditional points of view.

That is what is happening to-day in France and England. A glance at that older Europe before the rise of German power will help us to appreciate how it determined the national spirit of France and England and planted the seeds of the present differences between these two peoples.

We are apt to forget the profound transformation that occurred in Europe during the decade culminating in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. During that decade both Germany and Italy ceased to be the impotent groups of petty states which they had been for centuries, and became powerful united nations. The Franco-Prussian War capped the climax of this development by making united Germany the leading power on the continent of Europe.

But this was precisely the position which France had held for over two hundred years. In the first half of the seventeenth century Germany had torn herself to pieces in the Thirty Years War, while Spain simultaneously collapsed. These two events automatically made France the mistress of the Continent. And she was well fitted to play the rôle. At that time France was the richest, the most civilized, and the most populous coun-

try in Europe, with a strong government able to mobilize efficiently all these resources for national ends. The outcome was the "Age of Louis XIV," when France thought of herself, and was generally recognized as, the leading power in Europe.

Intoxicated by her greatness, France grasped not merely at Continental supremacy but at world dominion. Only one power stood in her path—England. At that time England was a relatively poor country, with a much smaller population; but England was none the less powerful and ambitious, and had no mind to acquiesce in French supremacy. The result was a long series of Anglo-French wars that lasted well over a hundred years, ending only with the downfall of Napoleon in 1815. In these wars France tried to do just what Germany did in 1914: she tried to conquer the Continent and to destroy English sea-power at one and the same stroke. The stroke miscarried. Compelled to divide her forces, France was defeated by alliances of England and the other European powers.

Though the French attempt at world dominion was foiled, it was foiled in a different way from Germany's. Germany's bid ended in a double collapse of both her land and sea-power after only four years. France's defeat, on the other hand, was stretched over two centuries. After the fall of Napoleon, France could no longer menace England on the sea; but France still remained the leading power on the Continent until 1870.

Now, these two stressful centuries produced profound effects upon both French and English national consciousness. In the first place, they implanted deep in French hearts the

idea of *la grande nation*. Despite repeated defeats and despite the rise of England, Germany, and Italy in population, in wealth, and in power, Frenchmen continued to regard their native land as intrinsically the greatest European nation. In the second place, Frenchmen and Englishmen came to regard one another as hereditary enemies. This attitude persisted through the nineteenth century. Although the two nations have not actually fought each other since Waterloo, they came within an ace of doing so on at least three occasions, the last being in the year 1898, when French and English colonial ambitions clashed at Fashoda, on the upper Nile, and called forth a British ultimatum to which France was obliged to bow.

Then ensued a sudden transformation. Germany's ambitions were startlingly unveiled, and the old rivals patched up their quarrels and made common cause against the new power that menaced them both. By the year 1904 the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale was firmly established, and resulted in the united front against Germany in 1914.

A decade of diplomatic agreement and four years of comradeship in arms could not, however, entirely blot out the memory of two centuries of conflict, nor could the Anglo-French understanding of 1904 eliminate numerous points of friction centering in Africa and scattered all over the world. However firm the common determination to oppose German ambitions, there was a tacit recognition that, if the German menace was ever disposed of, the old disputes would come on the carpet once more. This undercurrent of feeling is well illustrated by an article by a British publicist in the

London "Fortnightly Review" of April, 1913. Discussing rival English and French ambitions in Syria, which are not, as many think, purely an after-war product, but one of long standing, this British writer stated:

The Entente with France is too unnatural to remain cordial very long; at any rate, fidelity is incompatible with French frivolity, and Syrian questions may soon suffice to reproduce the sort of hysteria which sprang from the swamps of Fashoda. Once eliminate German aspirations, and the old healthy rivalries between good-natured Albion and perfidious Gaul may be satisfactorily resumed. I say satisfactorily, for history has never hesitated about colonial issues between England and France. Pondicherry, the Heights of Abraham, the dual control of Egypt, indicate the results of any possible rivalries in Asiatic Turkey.

These lines certainly have a prophetic ring when we listen to the bitter recriminations which are to-day being exchanged by Frenchmen and Englishmen over those very regions. They illuminate and emphasize the wide differences between the two nations, which, obscured by a common peril, only remained latent and, under present conditions have again emerged.

Syria, of course, is only one of many points where French and English foreign policies and national points of view clash. This clash of French and English points of view is true not merely of particular regions, but of the world as a whole. Take the French and English attitudes toward the future of Europe. They are startlingly different. Frenchmen, with their emotional background of *la grande nation*, are likely to see a Europe once more dominated by France. For multitudes of Frenchmen the decades between

1870 and 1914 were merely an unnatural interlude, what one French writer has termed "the Prussian accident." Only a year or so ago the present French premier, M. Poincaré, stated that France was naturally entitled to the leadership of the Continent, and that this leadership she intended to retain. Despite all disclaimers by French diplomats and publicists for foreign consumption, it seems to me that this is precisely what French policy has aimed at ever since the war. Possessing unquestionably the best army in the world, France has been attempting to buttress her military strength by a network of diplomatic alliances, beginning with Belgium and extending eastward to include Poland, Czecho-slovakia, Jugoslavia, and Rumania. Lastly, France has been perfecting her plans for raising vast armies of Africans and Asiatics from her existing colonial empire for use in Europe, while at the same time endeavoring to found a new colonial empire in the Near East, centering in Syria.

All this is intolerable to England not merely for political reasons, but for economic reasons as well. On the political side, a French supremacy over the Continent would violate one of the traditional axioms of British foreign policy, which has always sought a "balance of power" on the Continent. To prevent such a Continental supremacy, England fought Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV and Napoleon of France, and William II of Germany, and the sacrifices which England made in the late war are the best proof that she has not fought down a threatened German supremacy merely to see a French supremacy rise in its place.

Yet even this is only half the story.

French statesmen may be able to think mainly in terms of politics; British statesmen must consider economic matters of equally vital concern. This is because France is economically almost self-sufficient, while England depends for her very life on industry and commerce. Here is a complication that did not exist during the earlier rivalries between the two nations. Down to the close of the Napoleonic wars England was still a self-feeding country, the majority of the population being devoted to agriculture and kindred pursuits. But during the ensuing century the "Industrial Revolution," which affected all Europe, produced in England its greatest results, so that England became a vast factory and market, highly specialized and absolutely dependent upon foreign trade. In the year 1911, in England and Wales, more than 28,000,000 persons lived under urban conditions, while fewer than 8,000,000 persons lived in the country. The relative percentages of urban and rural population were thus seventy-eight per cent. urban as against twenty-two per cent. rural. In Scotland the ratio was virtually identical, it being seventy-five per cent. urban and twenty-five per cent. rural.

Far different is the condition of France. Unlike Great Britain, France has maintained a balance between industry and agriculture, between town and country. In 1911 the French urban population was 17,500,000, the rural population 22,000,000. Under normal conditions, then, France is still able to feed herself. French foreign trade is also very different in character from British foreign trade. British exports are largely composed of staple manufactures that have to

meet the competition of other industrial nations. French exports, on the other hand, are largely luxuries and semi-luxuries, the products of French skill and taste with which other nations cannot effectively compete. Furthermore, France's vast colonial empire is surrounded by high tariff walls which give an effective preference to French exports and French capital.

For all these reasons France, despite much suffering, might be able to survive a prolonged economic collapse of the rest of the Continent, whereas England would be almost certainly ruined, because continental Europe, taken as a whole, is England's chief market. For example, before the war Germany was England's best customer. In the year 1913 Germany took 40,000,000 pounds worth of British exports, not counting British colonial and foreign-transhipped products, which totaled another 20,000,000 pounds. In 1920 Germany took only 21,000,000 pounds worth of British exports. Furthermore, last year the situation became much worse, British foreign trade decreasing nearly fifty per cent. below that of 1920. England is today in a very critical industrial situation, which might easily lead to a catastrophe. It has been estimated by some British economists that even a few years' continuance of present conditions might force 20,000,000 Englishmen to emigrate or starve.

Thus economic and political reasons alike impel British statesmanship to seek a politically stable and economically prosperous continental Europe in the shortest possible time, and most Englishmen have made up their minds that the chief obstacle to the attainment of these aims is the foreign policy of France. In English eyes the suc-

cess of French policy would menace both British political security and economic existence.

Now, when the British lion gets such ideas into his head he becomes a very ugly-tempered beast. Already his growls are filling the air. When Mr. H. G. Wells wrote that France was getting ready to fight England, the editor of his London paper called him to task. But the ink was scarcely dry on his offending article when British statesmen began reading France lectures that, though more politely phrased, contained unmistakable warnings. The speeches of Lord Curzon and Mr. Balfour, and the verbal clashes between Lord Lee and the French Admiral de Bon at Washington, were the most sensational tidbits offered the diplomatic world in many a day. Meanwhile British public opinion of all shades is getting more and more aroused. Imperialists and Laborites join in condemning France and in calling on British statesmanship to clear up an intolerable situation.

Let us make no mistake about it: if Anglo-French relations keep on as they have been going for the last three years, Great Britain is going to send France some sort of ultimatum. This ultimatum would probably not be public, because British statesmanship is too clever not to give France the chance to "save her face." And of course it may never come to that, because France may modify her policy and thus avert a crisis. However, assuming that a crisis does come, one thing can be confidently predicted: *there will be no war, because France cannot fight Great Britain with any hope of success.* Not only is France no match for the British Empire, but French foreign policy since 1918 has

alienated almost every nation in continental Europe. In Italy France has become so unpopular that the sight of a French uniform is enough to raise a riot. In Russia all parties from Bolsheviks to czarist reactionaries unite in hating the French. In Germany the gall and bitterness formerly showered on a multitude of foes are to-day reserved for the *Erbfeinde*—the "hereditary enemies" to the west. To the south lies Spain, exceedingly sore over French policy in Morocco and now engaged in a tariff war with France. Even Switzerland has been offended by France's abolition of the "free-trade zones" near Geneva. Belgium and Poland seem to be about the only European countries which are genuinely Francophile.

To be sure, even a diplomatic breach between England and France would probably throw Europe into something very like chaos. That is a trump-card which the French Foreign Office has played recently with good effect. But the card is a dangerous one. If matters get sufficiently tense, England may call the bluff, while by taking such an attitude France will forfeit sympathies everywhere and will stand in perilous isolation.

Of course well informed Frenchmen are becoming increasingly aware of all this and are frankly alarmed at the outlook. Their influence may well succeed in averting a crisis and in extricating France from the bad position in which she has entangled herself. Still, multitudes of Frenchmen are blinded by the psychology of *la grande nation*, notably the members of the *bloc national*, who form a majority of the French parliament. The present French parliament, elected shortly after the close of the war, represents



popular passions which there is good reason to believe have since then somewhat cooled. Nevertheless, this "victory parliament" remains the legal mouthpiece of the French nation, and has enthusiastically supported Premier Poincaré, who has consistently professed an extreme Nationalism. Of course M. Poincaré sings lower as premier than he did from the side-lines, yet it will be hard for him entirely to eat his former words, and harder still for his Nationalist followers to adopt a policy markedly at variance with their political professions.

Such are the main points in contemporary Anglo-French relations. It is a thorny problem, with many dangerous possibilities. The fundamental fact to remember is that it is not a mere flurry of the moment, but rather a problem the roots of which run throughout the world and strike deep into the past.

#### CHEAP LABOR THREATENS JAPAN

American manufacturers are voicing grave concern at the invasion of our home market by European goods produced by labor paid in depreciated currencies that, measured by international exchange, amount to almost nothing. It is interesting to note that similar concern is beginning to be shown in Japan, a land where wages have hitherto stood at levels far beneath the American scale. A Tokyo paper recently compared the wages paid machinists in that city with the wages paid to German machinists in the Krupp steel works. This paper found that Tokio machinists were receiving as much as ten yen (five dollars) per day; whereas the wages paid at Krupps, reckoned at the pres-

ent exchange-rate, was only about half that amount. Furthermore, the paper pointed out that Japanese wages seemed to be rising, while German wages, owing to the precipitous decline of the mark, might fall to a still lower level. According to this Japanese paper, the effects of these wage-differences were already visible in Eastern markets, for, it went on to state, "European goods, produced more cheaply than those of Japan, are crowding our wares from the market in China, the East Indies, and elsewhere."

Of course the extremely low wage-levels in central Europe are largely the result of abnormal financial conditions and will probably not be lasting. Meanwhile, however, it will be an amusing irony of fate to hear Oriental business men uttering slogans like, "Ruined by Western cheap labor!"

#### RURAL *versus* URBAN RUSSIA

Economists and sociologists alike assure us that the disruption of Europe's industrial life caused by the war will result in an at least partial reversal of the process begun by the Industrial Revolution which urbanized large parts of Europe. The reports of the census taken in 1920 by the Soviet Government show that in Russia at least this predicted decline of the urban population is already rapidly under way. The last general census of Russia was taken in the year 1897. The census of 1920 has not yet been completely tabulated, but results have been published for twenty-five provinces, embracing most of European Russia. Everywhere the story is the same: the rural districts have generally increased in population, while the

towns have tended to decline. Of 180 cities and towns reported, thirty show a decrease of more than half their population. Most striking is the case of Petrograd, the former Russian capital. In 1915 the population of Petrograd was estimated at 2,318,000 souls. To-day it contains little more than 1,000,000. Even Moscow, despite the fact that it is now the capital of Russia, has sharply declined. In 1915 Moscow's population was estimated at about 1,800,000; to-day it is less than 1,200,000. So rapid is the decline of urban population in Russia that if it should long continue, many once-flourishing towns and cities will become deserted ruins and will live only in memory.

#### THINGS WORTH WATCHING

Our transition world is full of just such points of interest—situations which promise to develop rapidly in both local importance and general significance. Let me here point out a few of the matters which my readers may profitably keep in mind while reading the newspapers.

In central Europe, particularly Germany, the abnormal economic situation is producing its inevitable fruits. Wild speculation, starvation wages, strikes, riots, and the like are symp-

toms of the feverish state of economic life. The Genoa Conference was projected to grapple with these and kindred problems.

The Irish political situation remains extremely complex, with many troublesome possibilities. In addition to the traditional political elements, there are factors of social unrest which should not be disregarded.

The Near East continues to be a center of acute disturbance. The Turco-Greek conflict has not been settled; England and France are in bitter opposition; Syria, though pinned down by French bayonets, is sullenly rebellious; Palestine is the scene of intense racial and religious animosities between Jews, Moslems, and Christians; Egypt is on the verge of rebellion.

In the Middle East there is the chronic storm-center of India. The situation is very serious and shows no signs of improvement.

South American politics remain clouded by the interminable Tacna-Arica dispute between Chile, Peru, and Bolivia. We must realize that, should war break out between these nations, it would be very likely to spread all over South America. The South American states tend to fall into two groups, just as the European states did before the Great War.



## Atlas

*By J. BLANDING SLOAN*

Back down among  
The dry, brown leaves,  
I feel like Atlas.  
He probably  
Only stood upon his head  
And cried, "I hold the earth."