

TALK OF EUROPE

The *Liberté*, recalling M. Poincaré's intention not to renew his candidature for the Presidency when his term of office expires five months hence, mentions that the President of the Republic will have to look about him for a future residence, as all the houses possessed by him have been rendered uninhabitable by the Germans. His villa at Sampigny, which stands in the midst of a beautiful park, received 50 shells. Another house, a few hundred yards away, which the President had purchased for the officials of his household, will also have to be almost entirely reconstructed. M. Poincaré's family house at Nubécourt was entirely wrecked by the explosion of a French motor-lorry carrying petrol. Finally, the President's little house at Bar-le-Duc was bombarded by aircraft. It is estimated that the pleasure which the Germans took in destroying Presidential property cost them about £40,000.

THE *Strassburger Neue Zeitung* publishes, in a recent issue, some extracts from a pamphlet, which, it declares, was circulated during the last days of the war by Herr Thyssen, the well-known Rhenish ironmaster. The pamphlet goes to show that the ex-Kaiser had fully developed his war policy in 1912. The document, which was written before the revolution in Germany, is all the more convincing from the fact that the author plainly admits his own complicity, and seems to awaken to a consciousness of guilt when his own moneybags are threatened. After stating that his revelations are made with a view to opening the eyes of the German business world, Herr Thyssen proceeds:

When the Hohenzollerns wished to insure the support of the industrial and commercial world for the carrying out of their plans, the latter were placed before us as a simple business proposition. We were invited to support the Kaiser's war policy because it would be a profitable business for ourselves. I admit at once that I gave

my assent to the war plan of the Hohenzollerns when it was laid before the leading business men of Germany in 1912-13. I was forced to this decision, as a matter of fact, against my own will. In 1912 the house of Hohenzollern regarded war as a necessity for the maintenance of the military system, upon the power of which the dynasty was based. At that time the Imperial house could have directed the country's foreign policy along lines which would have insured peace for at least fifty years. But a prolongation of peace would have meant the collapse of the military system, and in the end would have involved the downfall of the Hohenzollern power.

This was clearly recognized by the Kaiser and his family, and in 1912 they were decided upon a war of conquest. In order to conduct such a war to a successful conclusion, however, they had to make themselves sure of the support of the business and industrial world of Germany. Efforts were made to secure this, and the advantages which a war would entail were painted in glowing colors. When one considers the events since August, 1914, these promises can only be regarded as ludicrous; but at that time the great majority among us believed in their realization.

To me personally, says Thyssen, 30,000 acres of land in Australia were promised, as well as a loan of 3,000,000 at 3 per cent for their exploitation. Other houses were promised economic concessions in India, if that country were conquered by Germany in 1915. A syndicate of 12 big firms had subscribed a capital of 400,000,000 for the exploitation of Canada. Approaches were made to every branch of the business world. Heavy indemnities were to be imposed on the vanquished peoples, thus relieving the fortunate German business men from any burden of taxation for many years.

These promises were not made frivolously. On the Kaiser's orders they were set forth in the fullest detail by Bethmann-

Hollweg, in the course of various conferences with the business world, and in many instances were personally given. I have already mentioned the promise to me of 30,000 acres in Australia. Similar promises were made to at least 80 other business men and reduced to writing at special conferences arranged by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. On three separate occasions they were confirmed by the Kaiser himself when, in 1912 and 1913, he attended big private meetings of the business world in Berlin, Munich, and Cassel. I was present at one of these meetings. The Kaiser delivered one of his flamboyant speeches, and if only one half of his promises had been realized most of the business men of Germany would have been enriched beyond the dreams even of the most avaricious among them.

The Kaiser waxed particularly enthusiastic over the prospect of the conquest of India. 'We will not only occupy India,' he said, 'we will conquer it, and the heavy

tribute which England has raised from the native princes will, after our conquest, flow to Germany like a golden river. In the richest lands of the world the German flag will wave above all others.' In conclusion, the Kaiser said: 'I do not make you promises that cannot be kept. They will be kept if you are prepared to make the sacrifices which are necessary in order to bring our country into the position to which she is entitled in the world, and which she will hold. Whoever refuses his support is a traitor to Germany. Whoever voluntarily gives his support will reap a rich reward.'

Herr Thyssen says that all this sounded very attractive, and although some of those present doubted the possibility of conquering the world in a year, most of them accepted the Kaiser's plans. Later they wished they had not been so credulous. Instead of a swift victory the war only brought constantly increasing burdens, and eventual ruin.

THE EDITOR'S NOTE-BOOK

George Saunders, scholar and student of politics, was for many years the Berlin correspondent of the *London Times*.

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Louis Latzarus is a distinguished French critic and journalist.

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Lewis Melville (L. S. Benjamin) has long made a special study of Thackeray's life and works. He is the author of a Thackeray biography and the editor of an edition.

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Walter de la Mare and **Laurence Binyon**, poets and men of letters, are

well known to readers of *THE LIVING AGE*.

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Archibald Hurd is a distinguished civilian critic of naval affairs.

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E. V. Lucas is the author of several charming books of essays; among them being *The Open Road* and *The Friendly Town*.

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Edith Sitwell and her brother, **Osbert Sitwell**, are the leaders of the 'advanced' school of modern British verse.