

TALK OF EUROPE

THAT Joseph Conrad's prose can on occasion be perfectly companionable is shown in an account of what he calls his first and last flying experience, written by way of friendliness for the journal of a certain Flying Squadron, and not as yet discovered for quotation by the outside press. It is interesting, at the moment, to note that he flew in a seaplane: 'The machine on its carriage seemed as big as a cottage, and much more imposing. My young pilot went up like a bird. There was an idle, able-bodied ladder loafing against a shed within fifteen feet of me, but as nobody seemed to notice it, I recommended myself mentally to Heaven, and started climbing after the pilot. . . . As to my feelings in the air, those who read these lines will know their own, which are so much nearer the mind and heart than any writing of an unprofessional can be. At first all my faculties were absorbed and as if neutralized by the sheer novelty of the situation. The first to emerge was the sense of security, so much more perfect than in any small boat; then, as it were, material stillness and immobility (though it was a bumpy day). I very soon ceased to hear the roar of the wind and engines — unless, indeed, some cylinders missed, when I became acutely aware of that. Within the rigid spread of the powerful planes, so strangely motionless, I had sometimes the illusion of sitting as by enchantment in a block of suspended marble. Even while looking over at her shadow running prettily over land and sea, I had the impression of extreme slowness. I imagine that had she suddenly nose-dived out of control I would have gone to the final smash without a single additional heart-beat. I am sure I would not have known. It is doubtless otherwise with the man in control. But there was no dive, and I returned to earth (after an hour and twenty minutes) without having felt 'bored' for a single minute. I descended thinking I would never go flying again. No, never any more — lest its mysterious fascination, whose invisible wing had brushed my heart

up there, should change to unavailing regret in a man too old for its glory.' Mr. Conrad's allusion to boredom refers to a warning from the Commander before he started on his flight — a warning most beginners receive from experienced flyers.

PARIS must be well worth seeing, if the correspondent of the *Telegraph* speaks truly. He writes:

'It seemed as though, in order to provide Paris with a cosmopolitan population, the world was drained of its crowned and uncrowned rulers, of its prosperous and luckless financiers, of its high and low adventurers, of its tribe of fortune-seekers, and its pushing men and women of every description. And the result was an odd blend of classes and individuals, worthy, it may be, of the new democratic era, but unprecedented. In the stately Hotel Majestic, for example, where the dignified political cloud-compellers of the British Empire had their residence, exquisite diplomats actually danced with spry typewriters and smart amanuenses. Fallen Royalties, self-made statesmen, clever politicians, Premiers, and Ministers who had formerly swayed the fortunes of the world, resided in gorgeous palaces, and were favored by Kaisers, Emperors, and Kings, were now the unnoticed inmates of second-class hotels; Ambassadors, whose most trivial utterances had once been listened to with painful attention, but could not now obtain an audience of the greater plenipotentiaries, and were not permitted to travel in France without more than average discomfort and delay, met and crossed each other in unexpected places. I once sat down to lunch with a brilliant company, and had for my neighbor a man who was understood to have made away with a well-known personage in order to rid the State of a bad administrator. Killing is no murder, many revolutionists hold. And ours is a revolutionary epoch.'

THE scandal of the abuse of the British Museum by the authorities apparently continues. A protest has been made against their intolerable usurpation by Sir Arthur Evans, who prefaced his address to the Society of Antiquaries with the following winged words:

'Though it was found impossible in the face of the general condemnation of the proposal to make the British Museum the headquarters of a combatant department, other departments of a civilian character were installed within its walls, and whole galleries dismantled and broken up, to the undoing of the work of generations, for their reception. A promise was given to the Trustees that two months after the conclusion of the war these intrusive bodies should be removed. In many cases, both in the British Museum and in other public galleries, after six months' interval of peace, they are still in bureaucratic occupation.

Protests in Parliament insistently put forward by our recently elected fellow, Lord Harcourt, have elicited no satisfactory assurance of a time being set on this usurpation. As to the present condition of affairs I may relate an experience of my own only a few days since. Having urgent need for the purpose of Cretan researches to refer to certain objects in two different sections of the Museum, some in the early Greek and others in the Egyptian Department, I found them in an almost unrecognizable condition, their cases empty and concealed by shelves laden with piles of business documents, while on each side of the central gangway were rows of improvised shanties, run up with match-boarding and resembling nothing so much as a street of some mushroom settlement in the Wild West! The inhabitants as far as I could see were mainly of the half-fledged female species.'

THE EDITOR'S NOTE-BOOK

J. L. Garvin is the editor of the *Observer*, and author of one of the most distinguished books of the year, *The Economic Foundations of Peace*.

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Gabriel Hanotaux, historian, critic, and statesman, was the author of *France Marches to the Rhine*, printed some weeks ago by THE LIVING AGE.

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M. Paderewski, composer and pianist, has for some time devoted himself to the cause of Poland.

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Algernon Blackwood is the author of *John Silence*, *The Centaur*, and other

tales in which the mystical element predominates.

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E. V. Lucas, humorist and essayist, is the well-known editor of the favorite anthologies *The Open Road* and *The Friendly Town*.

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Sir Arthur Steel Maitland, scholar and student of world politics, has been Parliamentary Under Secretary for the Colonies since 1915.

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Sir Charles Addis, author and banker, has been manager of the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank since 1911 and has written extensively on Chinese civilization and affairs.