

and plans on this subject are much in evidence. Also, there are probably not more than ten thousand automobiles in Prague, — a growing proportion, now about ten per cent, of which are American makes, — and the municipal tramways are well run. The main trouble is not far to seek — it is the labyrinth of tortuous streets no one of which runs straight for more than a few hundred yards. Widening streets means tearing down old buildings — a step which conservative folk oppose with vigor. Around this sentiment has been built up a society known as Old Prague. On the other hand, those who see the necessity of Prague becoming a modern metropolis have banded themselves together in a counter-movement under the banner of New Prague and have come out flatly for pulling down any historic monuments which stand in the way. Here again is a running fight going on between the old and the new scheme of things.

Of course, underlying ideas and ancient custom die hard in Europe, where the sense of the past is so preciously carried into the world of to-day. Coming across lovely Bavaria last week, I was again impressed by signs of social immobility which are in evidence in every country in Europe. A stately old conductor came through the train to collect our tickets, all dressed up in an elaborate uniform. I was more particularly struck by the polished red-leather belt swung over his left shoulder. That elegant belt may in some mysterious way have contributed to making his routine existence bearable, worth while. In any case, it gave him an air of dignity, perhaps of dire authority over his fellow workers. All that may be true about the red-leather belt, but what was cruelly apparent to me was the iron chain, the symbol of class stratification, of lack of economic opportunity. . . .

## BIRTHDAYS

BY W. H. DAVIES

[Observer]

My friend has a birthday;  
 And what can I say  
 To young Betty Blake  
 With her wonderful cake  
 And seven pink candles there? —  
 One candle for every year.  
 'How many candles shall I see  
 On yours?' asked Betty Blake of me.  
 'Sixty!' I cried, excited by it —  
*Steady, old heart! Lie quiet!*

## LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

### *'Room 40'*

WHAT was probably the best-kept and certainly one of the most important secrets of the World War has at last been made public by Sir Alfred Ewing, Principal of Edinburgh University, who now reveals himself as having played a part in real life worthy of any assumed on the stage by our most intrepid *matinée* idols. At a meeting in the Scottish capital Sir Alfred described the work of a department in the British Admiralty known as 'Room 40,' thanks to whose ingenuity the German plans for the Battle of Jutland, as well as the text of the famous Zimmermann Note to Mexico, were intercepted. Starting with a small force of helpers, Professor Ewing began in 1914 intercepting and decoding German wireless messages. When he was succeeded, in May 1917, by Admiral Sir Reginald Hall, of whom Walter Page said 'neither in fiction nor in fact can you find any such man to match him,' fifty cryptographers were employed in 'Room 40' deciphering an average of two thousand messages a day. They were particularly successful in picking up the messages of triumphant submarines and Zeppelins, which would relate detailed descriptions of their achievements, along with indiscreet references to future plans.

The English press points to the whole affair as a typically British performance. Before the war Professor Ewing was known only as a Cambridge don who had become an expert on thermodynamics and had written treatises on earthquake measurements and steam engines. To distract attention still further from his new pursuit, the

Government made a point of encouraging stories that revealed the stupidity and amateurishness of the British Secret Service. In consequence the Germans never discovered how their channels of information were being tapped. But perhaps the most remarkable part of the whole affair was the extraordinary secrecy with which 'Room 40' was surrounded and the perfect discretion maintained by all its associates. When the Zimmermann Note was received, its contents were transmitted through Balfour to Page and Wilson, and finally to the American press, together with the story that the message had been intercepted by the American Secret Service. Sir Alfred's staff became so proficient at deciphering their material that the Germans' daily change of code that went into effect every midnight hardly threw the British out at all, for in two hours they would solve the new system and work along as calmly as ever. Indeed, the efficiency of this bureau makes the layman wonder how the Germans succeeded in accomplishing anything at all.

### *The Man from Guatemala*

ENRIQUE GOMEZ CARILLO, native son of Guatemala, adopted son of the Argentine, and long a resident of Paris, died in his beloved European home on the ninth of December, and in his death the boulevards lost one of their most animated musketeers. Carillo got his start in life by praising President Estrada Cabrera of Guatemala for his complicity in the murder of a Guatemalan general when no other