

Notes from Two Capitals

BRITISH CABINET CANARDS.

By SIR HENRY LUCY.

LONDON, October 6.

From time to time, *à propos de bottes*, there is a rush of rumor of dissentients in the Cabinet, pointing to its early break-up. It is an old habit, more active when a Liberal Ministry is in power than when the Conservative Leaders dwell in Downing Street. It was in exceptional force during the short-lived, troubled Ministry of Lord Rosebery. From the outset rumor most consistently buzzed round the head of Sir William Harcourt. Talking to a friend at a time when reports of his resignation were prodigally circumstantial, he likened his position to that of Louis XVI, practically a prisoner in the Tuileries after his attempted escape from Paris. Suspicious crowds of citizens and citoyennes formed the patriotic and pleasing custom of spending the night in watch and ward round the palace, from time to time insisting that the hapless King should show himself in testimony that he was actually on the premises. He accordingly turned up at the open window wearing the red cap of Liberty, with royally assumed geniality remarking, "Me voilà mes enfants." "At all hours of day and night," said Sir William, "I am called up by a News Agency man or an importunate reporter with inquiry whether it is true that I have resigned. All I can say is 'me voilà.'"

Two years ago there was a sudden—evidently an organized—outburst of rumor of revolt in Mr. Asquith's Cabinet. It was reported that Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill, following the classical precedent of the lion and the unicorn, were fighting for the crown. It was assumed, as a matter of fact, that "Asquith was going," all that remained in doubt being issue of the struggle between his energetic young friends for reversion of the Premiership. The story had its day, ran its course, faded into the nothingness from which it emerged, and is probably forgotten by its inventors. Within the last fortnight another plot against the Premier has been discovered. Again Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill are at the bottom of it. This repetition is proof of the lack of fertility in the minds of the class of politicians who circulate these fables. There must, however, be some variety in other particulars. This is accordingly provided by the assertion that Mr. Asquith is to be "shouldered out" (the phrase used by one authority) "on the question of conscription." An active section of his colleagues in the Cabinet, led by the two who apparently are now working together, is determined to break up the Government, leaving out Mr. Asquith, an avowed believer in the efficacy of voluntary enlistment, in the process of reconstruction.

This is, of course, sheer nonsense. The Prime Minister is not the sort of man to be shouldered out of any position in which it suits his purpose and inclination to remain. If any body of conspirators, obscure or otherwise, are bent upon undertaking the job, they would do well to go into training by attempting to shoulder Dungeness off the mainland. Apart from his slowly gained, now complete supremacy in the House of Commons, his popularity in the country, and his authority

in the Chancelleries of Europe, no Premier has been stronger in the personal affection of his colleagues. That enviable position has been further strengthened by accession of recruits from the Opposition benches in both houses. During the fiercest heat of battle round the question of tariff reform and home rule, Mr. Asquith's interposition in debate was suffered with a courtesy in marked contrast with the reception accorded to some of his colleagues. Once, it is true, he was refused a hearing by a small body of extreme advocates of Law and Order, who, upon occasion, did not even spare their own leaders. The outbreak was so promptly and sharply subdued that it was never repeated.

Between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Asquith there has through all the chances and changes of party warfare existed esteem born of mutual admiration of supreme capacity. This feeling, long existent, has naturally grown in the intimate relations of service to the State. In degree, the same feeling towards the Prime Minister exists on the part of Lord Lansdowne and other of his colleagues in the late Government who patriotically responded to the invitation addressed thirty years ago by Lord Randolph Churchill to Lord Hartington and his followers in the disruption of the Liberal host on the Home Rule question to "Come over and help us." The suggestion—rather, the affirmation—made that dissension within the Cabinet has reached a stage at which a break-up is not only inevitable but near at hand, is a gross insult to the statesmen who have been publicly named not only as contemplating but as scheming for such an event.

It is quite possible, indeed presumable, that there may be difference of opinion in the Cabinet on the question of national service for the army and voluntary enlistment. Such diversity will be found among any average score of men. To assume that therefore a Cabinet recently constructed with the avowed purpose of presenting to the enemy a closer, stronger front of national union is on the verge of disintegration is more than an unintelligent blunder. It is an unpatriotic crime, calculated to spread throughout Germany more joy than would follow on the sinking of a sister ship to the Lusitania.

It is probable that had Mr. Asquith chanced to see a circumstantial rumor of which the Speaker, when his attention was called to it, declared his ignorance, he would regard it with some measure of wistfulness. That Ministers tenaciously cling to office and its emoluments is a conviction cherished in some quarters. It certainly finds no confirmation in fact. Lord Rosebery, in one of the epigrams that sparkle in his speech, put the true situation in a sentence. "There are," he said, "two happy days in the life of a Prime Minister. One is when he receives the seals of office at the hands of his Sovereign; the other, welcomed with greater effusion, is when he sets forth to return them." Mr. Asquith has, with one exception, exceeded the length of the term of Premiership served by predecessors. Nor has he throughout enjoyed the comparative ease of normal times. At the commencement of his seventh year of servitude he found himself faced by the duties and responsibilities of a war beside which Armageddon was a skirmish. It is natural that he should sometimes yearn for the release that, after long conflict, came to the Happy Warrior, "his helmet now a hive for bees." But, like Pitt, till his work is done he will not seek it.

ROBERT M. LA FOLLETTE.

It is a long stride, perhaps, back to the first term of Grover Cleveland, but it must be taken by whoever would scan the career of Robert Marion La Follette as a national character; for it was then that strangers in the gallery of the House of Representatives, after picking out Carlisle and Morrison, "Pig-Iron" Kelley, and "Sunset" Cox, would inquire: "Who is the little man with the smooth, round face and the shoe-brush hair?" When told that he was "Bob" La Follette, a new man from Wisconsin, whose wife was his law-partner, they were satisfied with a mere second glance at him. Another item was added to his descriptive list in the Fifty-first Congress, for McKinley made large use of him in framing the tariff bill, which carried their party down at the next election; and for ten years thereafter he did not emerge from the wreckage but once, when his neighbors sent him as a delegate to a Republican National Convention. But he had not been idle, by any means, in the intervals of a fair professional practice; for in 1900 he was elected Governor, and thus received a chance to launch the popular government propaganda which in due course landed him in the United States Senate.

To call the roll of La Follette's traits as his contemporaries see them would be to exhaust the "f's" in any ordinary type-font. He is a free-lance, a firebrand, a fighter, a fad-dist, a fanatic, a fatuous fault-finder, according to the critic you press for an opinion; some go further and—but why carry the catalogue to its end? Suffice it to say, that wherever he is, you may count on finding something drastic on the day's programme. He put Wisconsin on the State Socialist map alongside of California. According to his theory, there is no good reason why the State should not dip its finger into every activity in which its people feel an interest, from free education to accident insurance; and his favorite tactics in controversy are to proclaim his thesis and discover a sinister cause for every bit of opposition it encounters. If the railways charge higher rates than he approves, they have been able to do it by buying lawmakers and newspapers wholesale. If abuses exist in the American merchant marine, knock it on the head with an act of Congress so radical that half the steamship companies would rather go out of business forthwith than attempt to comply with the requirements imposed. The logic of this remedy is simplicity itself: the fewer shipping companies, the fewer are the abuses complained of. If any one has the temerity to suggest that this is like burning down the barn to get rid of the rats, silence his treason on the spot by asking him how much the corporations paid him for airing such an opinion!

Jesting aside, La Follette is a strong man and a useful one—in his place. He belongs in the pioneer class, but resents not being counted among the successful constructives, forgetting that, though Lincoln is the supreme hero of our later history, it was the long-despised agitators who hewed through a hardened public conscience the trail which he developed into a highway of freedom for all mankind. Without the agitators we might never have had a Lincoln; and it is for men like La Follette to prepare the ground on which less fiery though not less patriotic followers can put the social order of the future upon a firm foundation. But, because he cannot wait for the clock of opportunity to sound

the hour, many of his best projects have been brought forward prematurely and cut short at an immature stage.

It is no discredit to him to say that the ambition of his life is to be President, or to prophesy with entire confidence that he will never attain it. Though we may pass over his ultra views and his tactless way of bludgeoning his adversaries, we cannot ignore the fact that no man of his personality has ever risen to the first place in the republic. We have had Presidents short and tall, fat and lean, straight and stooping, hairy and bald, elegant and clumsy, handsome and ugly, gay and serene, scholarly and scant of learning, sociable and undemonstrative. But we have never had one who meets all approaches with an air of suspicion, or whose mind is so chained to his hobbies that he takes them to bed with him and gives them the chief seats at his table. La Follette, with all his redoubtable pioneer qualities, is the kind of companion who soon wears you out. You cannot escape from his regenerative schemes or his vocabulary of anathema without raising an impassable barrier between yourself and him; but the man whom the American people are willing to trust with the Presidency must be one who, however sincere a reformer, is able to detach himself from his ideals now and then long enough to bring a fresh eye to bear upon them in perspective. Even so intense and unjudicial a person as Theodore Roosevelt has this faculty, thanks to his native sense of humor.

Like others of his temperament, La Follette has no conception of how to care for his physical well-being. He runs his nervous system to the last limit of endurance, and then suffers a reaction, during which he is not himself in any sense, is hardly able to eat or sleep, and can do only a fraction of his normal stint of work, and that pretty badly. It is of one of these periods—which are accountable for much of the antagonism he has aroused in the Senate—that the story is told of his being moved actually to tears when a new member came up to him with hand outstretched and a friendly word of appreciation of his latest speech. Imagine so emotional a collapse in the White House!

TATTLER.

Correspondence.

THE "NATION'S" WAR RELIEF FUND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: I presume that many persons who, while not in a position to follow the lead of "O," the writer of "A Word to the Moderately Rich," were deeply impressed by his letter, would be glad to make such response as they can to his suggestion. Of the ten subscriptions he called for, of \$2,000 each, for the relief of the terrible distress in Europe, it appears that three have now been received by the *Nation* and one by the *New York Evening Post*, which reprinted "O's" letter. I trust that more will shortly come in and the list be completed. But that result may perhaps be made more certain if persons acting in the same spirit but not able to subscribe so large an amount are permitted to join in the undertaking. May I ask you to accept my subscription of \$200, to serve as the first of ten which shall jointly count as a subscription of \$2,000? And of course the more tens of the same kind the better. F. F.

New York, October 17.

ANOTHER GERMAN "FIND."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: In the issue of the *Nation* of October 14 (p. 448) it is stated that

It may be a great find that a semi-official organ of the German Government has made when it charges that the French Yellow Book suppressed the last two sentences of a passage sent by the British Ambassador at Petrograd to Sir Edward Grey, on July 24, 1914; but why the find should be exploited in that quarter is a little difficult to see. The Ambassador stated that it seemed to him "as if France and Russia had decided on firm resistance, even if we refuse to join them."

There cannot be much of a "find" on the part of the German Government in this respect because in a pamphlet issued under the authority of "his Majesty's stationery office" in London in 1914, on page 14, there is the telegram mentioned above from the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg to Sir Edward Grey, the last paragraph of which reads:

It seems to me, from the language used by French Ambassador, that, even if we decline to join them, France and Russia are determined to make a strong stand.

The language is somewhat different from that quoted in your editorial article, but in substance it is the same. It can scarcely be contended that there was any concealment in this Ambassadorial statement, since it appears, as I say, in a pamphlet issued by the English Government in 1914, and sold for the sum of ten cents.

SAMUEL A. BOYLE.

Philadelphia, October 15.

PRESIDENT WILSON'S "COCKED HAT."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: If Mr. Wilson had read the Biglow Papers, he would probably not have written the letter in which he expressed the hope that Mr. Bryan might be knocked into a cocked hat. This is what Hosea Biglow has to say on the subject (p. 109—edition of 1892): "Formaly to knock a man into a cocked hat was to use him up, but now it only gives him a chance for the cheef mad-guistracy."

A. L. PINCOFFS.

New York, October 15.

ALOHA, THEN BANZAI!

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Wednesday, September 29, may be said to have marked the closing of an era in the transportation history of Honolulu. On that date the last steamer of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company scheduled to call here, the *S. S. Manchuria*, sailed for San Francisco. With her departure transpacific shipping under the American flag via Hawaii terminated. The *Mongolia*, of the Pacific Mail Line, now in the Orient, will return to San Francisco direct from Yokohama by the Great Circle route.

The passing of the last ship of a great company was by no means unattended in Honolulu. A crowd of at least 1,000—described in the afternoon newspaper as an "immense throng"—gathered at the Alakea pier to bid a last good-by to ship, crew, and passengers. Flags of many nations waved from the dock, and Hawaiian leis of carnations, yellow ginger, and vari-colored crêpe papers were profusely scattered among officers and passengers. On the bridge with Capt. Andrew Dixon was a large wreath, on which was the inscription, "Aloha, 1915, After Sixty Years," the gift of the local Chamber of Commerce and promotion committee.

Mother Nature, as though to insure a favorable last impression for the "Paradise of the Pacific," provided a blue sky overhead, but in the air was that fine mist, blowing from clouds above mountain-tops afar, which here is called "liquid sunshine."

The Hawaiian Band, of native musicians—once the Royal Hawaiian Band—which has played at countless steamer sailings, was on the wharf. On the *Manchuria* were 124 German refugees, mostly women and children, and from respect to them "Die Wacht am Rhein" was played. The hackneyed strains of "Tipperary" and "On the Beach at Waikiki" were then employed to evoke a few more tears from other nationalities represented. As the last farewells were voiced and the handkerchief-waving began, the brown musicians played, with an intense fervency, the famous "Aloha Oe" (Farewell to Thee), which was followed by "Hawali Ponoi," the unforgettable Hawaiian national anthem, and, finally, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Of the sobs that were "choked," of the sighs that were "stifled," of the lips that "quivered," as the big boat backed into the bay, little need be said. It is enough that the manifestations of deep regret were everywhere visible. A wrinkled old lei vender stared at a few wooden boxes and pieces of rubbish floating by the pier and muttered "Pau" (through). Many voiced their sentiments in such words as "Shame," "Crime," and "Awful mistake."

It is certain, too, that in some of those present the last deep siren of the *Manchuria's* whistle provoked thoughts, not of the glorious past of the American merchant marine on the Pacific; nor of the painful present, when the Stars and Stripes is sailing away to other seas; but of an ominous future when traffic to the Orient may be monopolized by lines called "Kaishas" and steamships called "Marus."

And, while the attention still lingers on the irony of circumstances which make it necessary for the little brown men of Nippon to transport our persons, our freights, and our mails, dispatches from the Orient arrive that portend the strengthening of Japanese control in the Pacific.

The *Osaka Shoshen Kaisha* announced, on September 30, that two new liners will be placed on the run between San Francisco and the Orient via Honolulu. These, the *Panama Maru* and the *Seattle Maru*, have a tonnage of 6,000 each. They were designed for the Puget Sound-Japan run. Freight rates will be \$1 per ton higher than the rate which at present obtains.

On the same day the directors of the Mitsui Company gave out the information that they will operate tramp steamers from Yokohama and Kobe to Honolulu and San Francisco, carrying freight at an increase of \$1.50 per ton.

At the same time the established line on the semi-tropical route—the *Toyo Kisen Kaisha*—is declared to have increased its fleet by the purchase of three liners, in addition to the *Persia*, which was recently secured from the Pacific Mail Company, making a fleet of eight. An increased freight rate is, of course, in order. A new T. K. K. dock will be built in San Francisco at once.

Apparently, the existent freight and passenger congestion on the Pacific is to be alleviated. Reports have been circulated concerning a Chinese line and a new American line. As yet no definite announcement has been made. Seemingly "banzais" are in order.

HARRY W. FRANTZ.

Honolulu, T. H., October 1.