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Those who attribute good and bad luck
to certain numbers may find some interest
in the fact that the new French President,
M. Paul Deschanel, was born on the thir-
teenth, married on the thirteenth, and
that it was on the thirteenth of the month
that the Chamber declared him a candi-
date for the Presidency. It was also
noteworthy that his name has thirteen
letters in it. Let us not forget that there
are also thirteen letters in Francis Joseph,
Kaiser Wilhelm, Czar Ferdinand, and von
Hindenburg—a somewhat sinister quartet!

GERMANY'S NEW BID FOR COMMERCIAL SUPREMACY.

With all the old industry and zeal,
and with a desperate doggedness com-
pensating for some lost confidence, re-
publican Germany has started to do what
Imperial Germany failed in—to beat the
inferior rest of the world. World power
or destruction—the grim alternative of
Bernhardi—is as actual as it ever was;
with the difference that the first word
to-day modestly qualified to domination of
the commercial world.

Of Germany's struggles with humanity
in every domain of civilisation—and of
barbarism—the struggle is financial or-
ganising power, technical industrial dex-
terity and commercial pushfulness re-
mains undecided; and here Germany,
though weakened, is still unbeaten. She
has behind her all the material, intellect-
ual and moral—or immoral—forces that
make for victory. The old personal in-
dustry and inherited skill of labour, the
high education level, the advanced tech-
nic of production and judicious unsqueam-
ishness as to means employed whenever
the dropping of "unreasonable" scruples
brings nearer to a satisfactory end.

And Germany has on her side a fur-
ther advantage which fully compensates
for her loss of maritime power. That
is her privileged geographical position in
the Eastern Hemisphere, in the mathema-
tical centre of the world's greatest ag-
gregation, of civilised men; next
door to England, France, and Italy; to
the potentially wealthy lands of Austria
and the Balkans, to the Scandinavian
north, and to the immeasurable Russia,
which almost seems to have been created
to supply Germany with everything that
Germany wants, and to take off Germany's
productive hands everything of which
Germany needs to be rid.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE CONQUERED.

And above all Germany has the special
advantage that her fighting days are over.
That is the real meaning of the gibe
which emanates from Berlin that though
the Allies won the war Germany won the
peace. The Peace Conference, it follows,
may have done the non-German political
world a service when it drew Germany's
political teeth, killed her high diplomacy
and broke her sword. But thereby it
rendered the non-German commercial
world no thoughtful service. It is easier to
fight with one weapon than with two;
and Germany to-day—rid of the cost of an
army and a navy, with the brain power
which she formerly wasted on planning
raids through Belgium concentrated on
the arts of peace—is more formidable by
far than the invincible fighting era of
her history. The ingenious Professor
Nicolai, Wilhelm II's heart doctor, who
first startled Europe by flying from Prussia
in an aeroplane, put that fact convinc-
ingly when in support of his doctrine that
the battle is not always to the strong he
quoted the reply of the wise old Li Hung
Chang to the merely violent conqueror
Waldersee: "How is it," asked Waldersee
when the Boxer trouble was over—"how is
it that you can look on so coldly when
your lands are being conquered and rav-
aged?"

"Oh we are always being conquered,"
answered Li with a weary smile. "The
Tartars also conquered us. But look round
you for a moment, and then please an-
swer my question: Where are the Tartars
now?"

In Germany and the adjacent countries
which are the present chief theatres of
German Commercial Activity this eter-
nal Paradox—the dwindling of the lion
and the wolf, and the unceasing increase
and multiplying of the laborious ant—is
brought to notice every day. In Germany
one sees it in unexampled preparations to
produce and export, to cut prices, to
regain markets, to win new ones; and in
the small neutral countries one sees it in
panic preparation to resist the inevitable
flood of impossible cheap German wares.

Most of all one sees it in Soviet Russia,
where the German engineer and German
trader flourish in a million of hardships
from which the toughest Ally citizens
long ago fled.

In all these countries acute economical
observers realise that the supposed crush-
ing of German commerce is a myth. They
remember that Germany, after the Thirty
Year's War was far worse off than to-
day; and that after the Seven Years'
War the Prussia of Frederick the Great
was a byword for poverty, mean living
and an anti-commercial bureaucracy, so
that neither in Germany itself nor in the
neighbouring neutral countries does one
find a single intelligent observer who does
not foresee a time, which historically con-
sidered is not very remote, when Repub-
lican Germany will be the greatest seller

in Europe, and not impossibly the greatest
seller in the world.

Enterprising German business-men with-
in the first few weeks after the revolution
laid special stress upon this dominant
feature of Germany's commercial rena-
issance—on the fact that only as a great
seller, as a great exporter, can Germany
again get on her legs. And for that she
must make every conceivable sacrifice.

"We have nothing to export but we
shall export our own blood" are the
words used by the representatives of
commercial Germany.

But the doctrine that Germany will sell
abroad what she cannot afford to buy at
home is well understood. A frantic ex-
port trade is necessary because only in
that way can the shrunken exchange of
the Reichsmark be restored.

Because only in that way can the fore-
ign indebtedness, swollen to enormous
dimensions by the Treaty of Peace, be
met; and finally because however unpleas-
ant it may be for the home consumer it
is indispensable to cast goods upon fore-
ign markets while these are in a state of
flux, and before rival sellers have consoli-
dated their position. So—as indeed the
new German prime minister told the Na-
tional Assembly at Weimar—indispensable
goods, indispensable clothes and indispen-
sable raw materials are all that Germany
will consume for at least a generation to
come; and her surplus of productive en-
ergy will be concentrated on a profitable
and redeeming export trade.

The German whom I have referred to
not only stated this; he added that Ger-
many's exports must be of a particular
kind.

They must be quality goods—goods, the
production of which will absorb the great-
est possible amount of labour, and the
smallest possible amount of raw material.
That is involved by the vast prices that
foreign raw material will in future cost
Germany.

Whereas this German's own corporation
paid for copper before the war 1200 marks
per metrical ton, to-day as a result of the
three fold depreciated mark exchange it
must pay for copper, which in the world's
market has less than doubled in price at
least 6,000 marks a ton. Such an extra
burden could be borne only if the corpora-
tion turned out high price goods in which
the cost of raw material was a relatively
small item.

GERMANY SHAMMING.

That accounts for our observations in
neutral countries: That offers of German
marked goods have markedly fallen off,
whereas all the big cities teem with Ger-
man agents who have fine and costly pro-
ducts to sell. The dumping of German
goods of which one hears so much is in-
deed a fact; but this does not mean the
production of goods of a cheap class; it
means that the production of naturally ex-
pensive goods and their export at prices
below those of neutral and enemy rivals
are the main means by which Germany
hopes to recover her position in foreign
trade.

Visitors to Germany and to neutral
countries where German trade emissaries
abound are surprised to find overweening
confidence as to the future side by side
with exaggerated depression. Part of the
depression is false—its source is Ger-
many's wish to paint her condition worse
than it is, that being useful in combating
the economic provisions of the Peace
Treaty.

But in fact Germany has troubles that
are real enough; and it is only when one
weighs also her advantages that one real-
izes how fundamentally strong her posi-
tion is. All German industrial troubles
converge in one direction—towards the
raising of production costs. That is the
practical result of the higher wages and
inflated cost of living of which German's
complain. By this price rise beyond
doubt Germany's selling power abroad is
reduced.

But against the drawback is the over-
whelming advantage of the sunken mark
exchange. And this sunken exchange is
the lever for selling which Germany is to-
day wielding with success in every country
within her reach.

The main facts of Germany's price level
and of the compensation of the fallen mark
exchange need to be made clear. Ger-
many is short of coal and iron. In the
first five months of 1919 the coal output
in the Ruhr district fell to 60 per cent
off normal. In 1918 pig iron production
totalled only 11,864 tons against 18,935,000
tons in 1913.

The 1,520,000 tons of pig iron is
all that Germany produced in 1913 in
the one month of April alone. The prices
now being charged for coal and iron to the
finishing manufactures are unprecedented,
and this is not because the insufficient
output has freed producers from competi-
tion but because of a permanent rise in
productive cost. The wage list of seven
metallurgical works in western Germany,
registered a nominal increase of 400
per cent over peace rates. Owing to fallen

individual efficiency the real wage in-
crease is even greater.

On the Ruhr since 1914 the coal produc-
tion per man per shift has fallen from .95
tons to .66 tons.

The outlay in wages per ton rose enor-
mously—from 5.68 marks to 22.21 marks;
and the net production cost per ton rose
from 9.38 marks to 41.40 marks. Since
the Armistice coal prices to consumers
have risen at break-neck pace.

Whereas between the outbreak of war
and January 1, 1919, coal prices were
raised by an additional 44.50 marks.

To-day coal at the pit's mouth costs
73.85 marks a ton; and foundry coke,
which has undergone an even greater
rise costs 104 marks.

Owing to pressure on our space this
powerful article will be continued in next
week's "Digger."

CHARLES GARVICE.

"The death is announced of Charles
Garvice, the novelist."—Cable News.

Mr Garvice's novels may not suit every-
body, but there is overwhelming evidence
that they suit most people. When the
author takes his walks abroad, whether in
main thoroughfares or in slums, he must
often feel as if he were making a triumph-
ant progress through streets specially de-
corated to his honour with the jackets of
his own romances. For he seems to ap-
peal to readers of all classes as the fol-
lowing incidents bear witness.

"WOT! NO GARVICE?"

A story is told of a Costermonger who,
attended by his lady friend, tried to buy
a Garvice novel at the bookstall. There
were none left—other book lovers had
stepped down before him.

"Wot! that? Ain't got no Garvice in
stock? Then you may take my word for
it, young man, you don't know your busi-
ness."

Another story is told of a gentleman
of cultivated literary tastes, who was talk-
ing to a friend. "I've just been looking
through two novels," he said. "One of
them was by a So-and-so. It was a clever
psychological study, and beautifully writ-
ten; but I found it ghastly dull. The
other was by Garvice. My critical sense
disapproved of a good deal—but I found
it very interesting.

A strange consensus of testimony. How
as these things come about? They come
about for the simple reason that Mr Gar-
vice realized more clearly than almost
every other novelist of his day that the
primary function of a story-teller was to
tell a story.

Mr Garvice started his professional career
as a playwright, and a drama of his, "The
Fisherman's Daughter," enjoyed a very
successful run some years ago. He has
also made a bid for immortality as a poet.
But since "Eve and other verses," ap-
peared he has given the public over fifty
novels. Perhaps one of the secrets of
his success is the fact that he does not
take himself too seriously. A woman
once asked him if he had ever written
anything that would live after he was
gone. "Madam," he replied, "I am try-
ing to write something that will enable
me to live while I'm here."

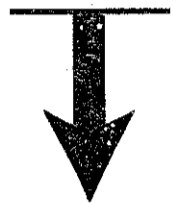
"NO ACCOUNTING FOR TASTES."

He did not mind telling a storey against
himself. On one occasion he went into
a book-seller's shop to buy a book by one
of his favourite writers. "While paying
for it," he afterwards confessed, "I
chanced to see some of his own little 'six
pennies,' and asked with a nervous af-
fectionation of indifference, "Do Garvice's
books sell well?" "Oh! lor' yes,
sir," said the worthy book-seller wearily,
"He's very popular just now, though I'm
sure I don't know why. He's no better
than anyone else and a good deal worse than
some, but people will have him, say what
you will. There's no accounting for
tastes!"

LITTLE WILLIE.

Many novel ideas are held concerning
the Kaiser's future, but that advanced
by a Samoan correspondent is in a class
by itself. Briefly put, it is that the
Germans should give him enough money
to buy out New Zealand interests in
Samoa, and that the Kaiser should then
be permitted, with the aid of such Ger-
mans as might follow him into his plea-
sant exile, and 100,000 indentured
Javanese, to develop the islands commer-
cially. The writer professes his willing-
ness to continue living in Samoa, with
the Javanese and German gentlemen, and
quaintly says that the islands would
make an ideal retreat for the Kaiser.
Doubtless, also, for submarines and Zepp-
elins if the Hohenzollern could manage
to conceal these among his imports. The
only people this correspondent appears
to overlook are the present residents in
Samoa, European and native. What have
they done to deserve such company, or
what indication is there that they would
share this correspondent's quaint tastes?

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days.

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to better buying.