

Current Topics

The German Blockade and Mines

A week or two ago we commented upon the stress which was laid in the German Note to America upon the intended use of mines in carrying out the so-called blockade of the British coasts. In the Note presented at Washington by Count Bernstorff the announcement was expressly made that Germany intended to sow mines in waters around the British Isles as part of the warfare against belligerent merchantmen—with, of course, certain and inevitable risk to neutrals. German papers emphasise the same point, and indicate quite clearly that the wholesale use of mines was looked forward to, no less than the action of the submarines, to play a great part in the work of strangling British trade. The *Cologne Gazette*, for example, gives the following advice to neutrals:—‘To genuine neutral shipping only this good advice can be given. Remain far from the waters which have been declared a war zone, because another weapon may be called on to play an important rôle—namely, the mine. England will not fail to protect herself against submarines by mines. Our navy, too, probably with the assistance of submarines, will not fail to cover the English coast with mines, and to devote particular attention to English harbours. It is not, however, possible for mines, with the best will in the world, to distinguish neutral from enemy vessels. They bring death and destruction to all alike who approach too near them.’ And even the well-known *Germania* announces and approves the indiscriminate sowing of mines for the blind destruction of unarmed passenger vessels, whether British or neutral. ‘We, of course, shall place mines before English harbours. We are fully entitled to do so, since all the British ports have been declared war ports. Our U boats have contrivances for mine laying, and will make lavish use of them. We may expect from the discernment of our U boat captains that they will be able to recognise neutral ships, even in the present difficult circumstances, and spare them, but mines are blind, and may strike anyone going into danger. Neutral shipping must make itself clear on this point.’ As little, if any, destruction by mines has been recorded since February 18—the date from which the ‘blockade’ was to operate—it must be presumed that the policy above outlined has been found difficult, if not impossible, of accomplishment.

What Will America Do?

The American Note presented in protest against Germany's famous decree declaring a naval war zone, and announcing that even neutral ships would be liable to be destroyed if found within the proclaimed area, made it very clear that, officially at least, Germany was to be held strictly accountable if any injury were done to the lives or property of American citizens in carrying out what the Note described as this unprecedented naval policy. The Note observes: ‘To exercise the right of attack or destroy any vessel entering the prescribed area in the high seas without first certainly determining its belligerent nationality and the contraband character of its cargo is an act so unprecedented in naval warfare that this Government is reluctant to believe that the Imperial Government of Germany in this case contemplates it as possible.’ And it continues: ‘If the commanders of German vessels of war act on the presumption that the flag of the United States is not used in good faith, and should destroy on the high seas an American vessel and the lives of American citizens, it would be difficult for the Government of the United States to view such an act in any other light than an indefensible violation of neutral rights which it would be very hard indeed to reconcile with the friendly relations now happily existing between the two Governments. The United States Government would be constrained to hold the Imperial Government to strict accountability for such acts, and to take any steps that might be necessary to safeguard

American lives and property.’ The American press is even more explicit and emphatic, and warns Germany of the peril she runs if any ill befalls any American citizen—whatever be the nationality of the boat by which he or she is travelling. The *New York Sun* says:—‘The contention that officers of a submarine cannot be expected to ascertain the identity of neutral ships is preposterous and indefensible. British submarines are hailing neutral ships and stopping them every day, and no German officer in his senses can plead incapacity, although he might feign it, by obeying secret orders.’ The *Sun* again warns Germany that ‘there must be no doubt in the German official mind that the United States will hold Germany strictly accountable for mistakes that cause the destruction of American merchant ships or loss of American lives.’ The *New York Herald* says that ‘the United States is clearly within its right in notifying Germany in terms incapable of being misunderstood that she will be held to strict accountability for the destruction of an American vessel or the loss of a single American life.’ And the *World* remarks: ‘Mr. Wilson's Note to Germany applies to Americans on board British and French ships as well as to American ships by declaring that a submarine has no more right wantonly to kill Americans in the *Lusitania* than in the *St. Paul* or *St. Louis*.’ In the *Falaba* case a German submarine has killed an American citizen in the person of Mr Thrasher. It will be interesting to see what action President Wilson's Administration will take in the matter.

Arizona Prohibition

Some time ago we referred to the new and drastic prohibition law which has been carried in the State of Arizona, and to the application which had been made by Bishop Granjon for an injunction to suspend the operation of the law so far as the exclusion of wine for sacramental purposes is concerned, and to have this provision annulled as being *ultra vires* and unconstitutional. That application has so far failed; and unless the Supreme Court takes a different view from that of the District Court, and comes promptly to the rescue, there is imminent danger of the Catholics of Arizona being entirely deprived of Holy Mass in the near future. As we learn from the *Arizona Daily Star*, Tucson, January 8, the seriousness of the situation was only realised when it was learned that the dealers who supply sacramental wine to the Catholic churches of that part of the country had been unable to fill an order sent to them by Father Marx, of Winslow, because the railroad companies refused to accept the wine for transportation. News of the matter reached Tucson when Bishop Granjon received a letter from Father Marx, in which he enclosed the following communication, sent to him by the San Francisco house with which he had placed the order:—‘Rev. Father,—We regret to state that your order reached us too late. The drastic prohibition law in your State goes into effect on the 1st of January, and railroad companies since the last few days are refusing to accept liquor shipments to Arizona on the ground that it is impossible to have the goods delivered to consignees by the first of the year. With best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year.—We remain, yours very respectfully, Brun and Chaix, Inc. December 28, 1914. To Rev. George Marx, Winslow, Ariz.’ When questioned about the matter, local railroad officials said that the statement of Brun and Chaix was correct, and that none of the transportation lines would accept consignments of liquor of any kind for delivery in Arizona, there being no exception whatever in favor of sacramental wine for Catholic churches.

Interviewed on the matter, Bishop Granjon expressed the natural hope that some relief from the law might be secured through the courts or through a modification of it by a vote of the people, and was also naturally loth to consider the condition which would result when all the sacramental wine then in Arizona had been used. He did say, however, that if they were unable to secure sacramental wine the priests would be unable to perform their duties, and in such a case doubt.