

Current Topics

Where are the Orangemen?

Sir Edward Carson's braves are still in the background, and the following is the full text of a question and answer submitted in the House of Commons on the subject. Question put to the Under Secretary of State for War by Mr. John Swift McNeill, M.P.: 'Whether of the four new armies the fourth new army started with the 30th Division and ended with the 36th (Ulster) Division; whether the 10th (Irish) Division, which was in the first new army, and the 16th (Irish) Division, which was in the second new army, and the levies of last autumn, would take the field before the 36th (Ulster) Division, which was the last in the fourth new army, and was composed of men who have had three years' training by efficient officers in field manoeuvres, in rifle practice, and even with machine guns; and, having regard to the fact that if due rotation be observed the Ulster Division, notwithstanding their superior advantage in training, would be the last to take the field, and the Irish Divisions, with a few months' training, amongst the first to take the field, what was the explanation of this treatment of the Ulster Division by placing it in the background?' Answer: 'Mr. Tennant—I am very glad to be able to reassure my hon. friend, in spite of the conclusions to which his researches have apparently led him, that he would be wrong in thinking that the Ulster Division will necessarily be the last to take the field.' The answer is in the last degree evasive and unsatisfactory, and the 'explanation' is emphatically of the kind which fails to explain.

Austria and Peace

Where there is much smoke, according to the well-worn adage, there is generally some fire; and the rumors of the possible and even probable conclusion of a separate peace between Austria and Russia have of late been so frequent and persistent as to suggest that there is something behind it all. As a matter of fact such a course has been strongly urged upon Austria by some of her public men for quite a long time past. More than four months ago the *Gazette de Lausanne* published some extremely interesting declarations made by a prominent Austrian diplomat, who had just tendered his resignation owing to profound differences of opinion between himself and the men who were actually directing the destinies of the Dual Monarchy. The article was reproduced in the Paris paper, *L'Éclair*, of December 20; and we translate from the latter journal the general conclusion of the author: 'There remains only one solution—peace, separate peace, the abandonment of Germany by Austria-Hungary. Our existence is threatened; whatever may be the issue of this war the duty lies upon us to withdraw while there is still time. We have nothing to hope for from a victorious German Empire: the future opens out before us in the face of a weakened Germany and of a Prussia which has failed in its mission: we shall be able to dream then of recovering a preponderance in central Europe without pre-occupying ourselves beyond measure with Oriental politics in which we have wasted our best energies for thirty years. From October 7, 1879, the date on which we signed a treaty of alliance with Germany and Italy, we have served as the political instrument of the King of Prussia. The role of Italy has not been more glorious than our own: but at least she has been wise enough, in these later years, to consider her own vital interests and to disengage herself from German tyranny, and that also to our detriment. . . . We have been too long in bondage: circumstances are now favorable, let us free ourselves from the German yoke and make peace. Scruples should not be allowed to hinder us: let us remind ourselves of the famous treaty, concluded in the face of a counter assurance, which Bismarck signed with Russia against us on March 21, 1884. In making peace now we may hope to preserve the *status quo ante*: the service which we shall render to the coalition justifying us in making some demands. To indemnify

Servia and Montenegro we shall be able to give over to them part of Albania. In this way we set up against Italy—our ally of yesterday, our enemy always—the Balkan peoples; we isolate her in Europe, and we prevent her from gaining supremacy in the Adriatic. It will be too late for her to wish to come out of her threatening neutrality—she will have against her Austria and the whole of the coalition. We shall be able to agree that Russia should go to Constantinople and that she may take whatever advantages she pleases from Turkey; in exchange, we shall save Galicia, Bukovina, and Transylvania. In the face of Prussia conquered and Germany weakened, we shall be able to recover, conformably to our historic rights, the hegemony over the Germanic peoples of Central Europe. . . . On the side of Germany, even if victorious we shall be subdued; separated from Germany, who will certainly be beaten, we may hope for a fine future, agreeable to our aspirations and our traditions. The highest duty of a country is humanely to develop its powers, in conformity with its traditions, and not to follow blindly the disastrous politics of an hereditary enemy whose sovereignty one accepts without being able to justify. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy ought to deliver itself from the Prussian yoke.' It is true that at the time this advice fell upon deaf ears, but the fall of Przemysl and the threatening attitude of Italy have changed the complexion of matters, and recent cables seem to indicate that these early counsels in the direction of self-preservation are now, at the least, receiving very serious consideration.

Is Germany Starving?

The German answer is quite emphatic. It is that Germany is not starving, that Germany is a long way from starving, and that Germany never can be starved. It is admitted that an order has been issued that no person shall have more than four and four-tenths pounds of white bread each week. It is admitted that practically there is no longer any white bread. There is bread that looks almost white, but it has an admixture of rye flour, the rye bread, in turn, being mixed with some potato flour. It is admitted that certain articles of the German diet have become unpleasantly scarce. Rice, for example, has become a positive luxury, and is almost literally worth its weight in gold. At the beginning of the war the supply of rice was taken over by the Government for soldier food; and since then it has been practically impossible to get any more into the country. It is admitted also that various expedients have been resorted to to husband the food resources of the country, and to compel the people to practise economy. The unlimited and lavish supply of rolls at restaurants, for example, has been forbidden. 'Why don't you give us a basketful of rolls?' I asked the waiter at the Kaiser-Keller the other night, says a Berlin contributor to an American paper. 'Verboten,' said the waiter. He continued to serve us with one slice of bread at a time. Under the law, he could only bring it when it was ordered.' It is admitted also that in order to lessen the consumption of flour consequent upon the customary revelry in rolls the Government has forbidden the bakeries to open before 7 o'clock in the morning, or remain open after 7 o'clock at night. By that means the German breakfast table is served with stale bread—a fairly successful check to over-feeding. It is further admitted now that the Government had over-estimated the amount of wheat in the country—or, rather, had under-estimated the amount which would be consumed by the army—and that there is serious danger of a shortage. A census which was completed about the beginning of the year has made this plain.

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Nevertheless there is something to be placed to the credit account of Germany in the matter of food supply. 'There is plenty of food in Germany,' says Herbert Corey, in the *New York Globe*, 'although the German table may not be quite as tempting as in the past. More land was planted in grain last year than ever before. The men on the western front planted abandoned