

The Oregonian

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Portland, Saturday, Dec. 4, 1915. AN ARBITRARY ACT. Not content with seizing the ships of the American Transatlantic Company, the British government has forced one of those ships into its military service before the vessel has been condemned by the prize court.

The requisitioning of these ships is the most arbitrary violation of neutral rights of which Britain has been guilty during the war. It differs from the seizure of the ships in that the latter are not sacrificed and ships are not sunk. If Britain were to assert the right to take any ship of any nation wherever she found it and to convert it to her own use, she would go beyond the step which she has taken in the seizure of the ships.

The seizure was made under a recent order in council setting aside article 17 of the Declaration of London, which makes the flag a vessel's conclusive evidence as to her nationality. The British government takes all the benefit of a prize court decision in its favor before that decision has been rendered, subject only to a contingent liability for compensation in case the decision should be against it.

The ground for the seizure is that they were bought with German money by Herr Jensen, a Copenhagen coal merchant, who owned "a few small steamers" before the war, according to the Times. That paper says that "a number of ships were sold to Jensen" and that the money, which was "interestingly" provided by Hugo Stinnes, "who himself owned a dozen German steamers." Jensen was imprisoned in Denmark for running contraband copper into Germany.

The arrangement was then carried through by the Danish Legation, and it was sought to transfer the ships into the name of the American Transatlantic Company of New York. Owing to the activity of the American consuls in Copenhagen, Jensen and those behind him were left with the fact upon their hands. The ships were then sold to the American Transatlantic Company, who were without incurring the penalties of seizure.

The British appear to have reached the conclusion from the Jensen episode that the American Transatlantic Company is in a position to hinder the operation of German-owned ships under a neutral flag. They therefore amended their regulations to catch the ships of all such concerns. Their assumption may be correct, but it is up to them to prove German ownership of the company's stock, and Secretary Lansing will do well to protest vigorously against their arbitrary action in assuming a decision favorable to them.

HALDANE AND SANITY. The world is filled with special commissions for those who are afflicted. Kindly inquiry is invited to make amends for those deeds of harshness which are visited upon some of her children in this troubled sphere. These gentle dispositions may be difficult to trace sometimes. For instance, what does nature do to right the fearful wrong of depriving a man of his hair? In what way is he favored over his brother who is permitted to desert himself in flowing locks? Dr. Clark, a Monroe, Wis., alienist, provides the answer. He asserts that the man who is relieved of cranial hair appendage never goes crazy. Hardly ever, at any rate. After having attended hundreds of cases of disordered mentality the observant doctor reports that he recalls but one sufferer whose hair had forsaken him. In observing the inmates of asylums he is struck by the fact that these unfortunate are invariably provided with abundant hair. He would naturally be peculiarly related in the doctor's estimation, while baldness and sanity are infallibly twins.

He offers an explanation. After mature reflection no one need feel surprised that he does not explain. The record is one that would appear to defy explanation. To begin with, the very fact of losing one's hair, hair by hair, is enough to cause a serious strain on any mind inclined toward vanity. Then think of the annoyance of firming which attends an unexpected cranial expense.

One acceptable explanation of baldness is that it results from hard, hot

use of the mind's machinery. Mental strain is supposed to generate heat, which provides the precise temperature needed for propagation of bacilli. It need not be mentioned that bacilli, denied other nourishment, browse upon roots of hair or at least upon the tissue of the scalp, causing an impoverishment which results ultimately in baldness. Mental stress is likewise a fertile cause of insanity. Hence if the observations were correct that bald observations were correct that bald men were in the majority among maniacs an explanation would be easy. Which goes to show how much care must be exercised in making any deduction.

The only explanation of the relationship between baldness and sanity is the one that nature is compensating the bald-headed men for the cruelty visited upon them. The matter of whether this is a fair rate of compensation, of course, we shall leave to the commission and the bald-headed men.

QUITE A STUNT. The Oregonian commends to all persons yet interested in the fast-waning common-rate agitation the following pungent and entirely logical comment from a rank outsider, the Salem Capital Journal:

It is rather unfortunate for Portland that she has two rate cases on her hands at the same time. The one is the case of the Portland and Northern California ports and the other is an appeal against the rate from Portland to California ports. The latter case, Portland claims, and it seems to have the support of the other ports, is a case of common-law justice. The position is taken that while Astoria should have a better rate than Portland, Portland should have a better rate than Astoria. The rate on the coast is the same, and if the Portland rate is to be raised, the rate on the coast must be raised also. It is necessary to follow that the rate on the coast is the same as the rate on the coast.

Being on opposite sides of the same question at the same time is quite a stunt, but it is entirely within the capabilities of some of our politicians. It is a stunt in the use of reversible argumentation.

NOT THE AGE OF "FULL." A careful reading of our progressive and ornamental city charter reveals nowhere an indication or implication that any department's list of employees shall be made up of friends of the majority of the Council. Indeed, the opportunity of the Council is responsible for the conduct of his own department and employs and discharges the servants thereof. It is a wise provision. It was designed to avoid the appointment of men whose chief qualification is pull.

You may credit either side in the existing controversy with truth as to the reasons for dismissal of a city quarantining officer, and the deduction is the same. If the City Council cannot cut a department head without not cutting a department head, it is a department head's head retelling by dismissing a pet or personal friend of the majority of the Council, the majority will hesitate to act. On the other hand, if a Commissioner cannot adjust that machinery of his department to the true interest of economy and efficiency without stepping on the toes of the Council majority and bringing about reprisals that counteract his honest endeavor, the Commissioner will hesitate to act. If an employe will protect him in his position, insubordination and loose work are likely to follow.

In respect to cold, calculating efficiency, it would be better for the city if every employe were retained in it every day of his life. The members of the Council were eliminated. "Full" is destructive of discipline, economy and efficiency.

THE PERPLEXED BELLEGGERS. Perplexed is the word which best describes the mental condition of the belligerent nations. France and Britain cannot make their position in the Balkans safe without assurance from Greece of an open way of access to Saloniki. Greece will not give that assurance unless the allies land a large enough army to exact it and to avert German-Austrian vengeance. The allies cannot land such an army without being deprived of its services for six months. It may be badly needed there, for the Teutons could rush a large force from Serbia to France in a month. The allies are perplexed.

So is Greece, for if she yields to the allies, the Germans will crush them and then crush her, while, if she holds out, they may cut off her food supply by sea and send in enough troops to force submission. In that case, she would be left out of division of the spoils, which is a party won.

Germany is puzzled how to get an army into Bulgaria. Rumania shuts the gate and will not open it unless the army is big enough to ensure victory nor unless she gets a slice of Rumania. Russia tries to force the gates but Rumania joins the Teutons, and lacks the ships to send a large army by sea. The bear is sorely perplexed.

across the Greco-Serbian boundary might send Greece into the arms of the allies. Austria's perplexity is due to conflict between desire and caution. Turkey is wondering where she will get off if her allies win. The prospect is as complete subordination to Germany as that of Egypt to Britain, without recovery of any lost territory. The Teutons know that their own interests are best served if they win, whoever wins.

Bulgaria's claim to Macedonia conflicts with Austrian aims, and the Austrians still hesitates between pleasing the Allies and Austria's restraint here, while the shadow of Russia is over her. Nothing can be taken from Turkey, and only a slice of Serbia is in prospect.

Rumania still hesitates between siding with the Allies and the Teutons, and the Russians, but also in fear of getting nothing out of the scramble.

Italy, too, is puzzling how to keep on the right side of the Allies and give substantial help to Serbia, the rival claimant to Dalmatia. The Oregonian commends to all those nations which they would fall make belligerents have a knotty problem to study about Christmas. And what a Christmas it will be! No peace, good will or glad tidings in Europe.

THE FORCE OF LOGIC. Just to illustrate how logical he was in persuasive art, some genius once clearly demonstrated by force of logic that man ought to walk on his hands instead of his feet. We have forgotten for the moment just what reasons he advanced, but at the time we read them they seemed excellent. This by way of calling attention to the letter from Mr. W. J. Butler today on the question of preparedness.

Mr. Butler has proposed himself to a state of strong suspicion as to the motives and inspiration back of the movement for defense. The manufacturer, he reasons, are selling war munitions at fancy prices, and the bankers are lending money to induce America to prepare at this time they will not only sell munitions to solvent America at high prices but will put this country in a state of readiness to force the present belligerents to pay their bills when they are in default. He seeks to regulate them. Plausible, is it not?

But just to show what can be done with the argumentative faculties, let us turn to a less important but no less interesting matter. It is the relationship between the interests of the traction company and the rule of politeness which requires men to surrender their seats to women in streetcars. To be sure, the custom is not a war, but it is a war in miniature. It is not a big business conspiracy?

Observe, please, that the men must go to town. They are the breadwinners as a rule, and have no choice but to patronize the company. The women, however, are merely out to make social calls, inspect the goods in the shops, or attend the movies. They do not have to go, and if they were not reasonably sure of seats, they would probably remain at home. The streetcar company's income, then, would be diminished or the company would be put to the expense of adding equipment.

Thus may we reasonably suspect that the machinations of the business enter into our most intimate affairs and even govern our code of etiquette. It has reached such a pass that we cannot do much of anything except twiddle our thumbs without predatory wealth extracting from us. And it is probably for the best that we should not do anything but twiddle our thumbs, for some enterprising person would find a way to capitalize the practice. Therefore, let us sit down in resignation and mope away our existence.

A SOUND SHIPPING POLICY. In marked contrast to the Government shipping bill is the sound, rational policy proposed by the merchant mariners' committee of the National Foreign Trade Council. In contradiction of the Administration's charge that its bill is opposed in the hope that ship subsidies may be obtained, not a suggestion of subsidy is contained in this report. The charge that opposition to the bill is prompted by foreign shipping interests is refuted by the calm, businesslike analysis of our needs from a thoroughly American viewpoint.

The tonnage of American ships engaged in foreign trade is less now than in 1912, though the aggregate shipping of the world has grown enormously. Americans have shown no aversion to this class of investment, for our coastwise and inland waterway tonnage has increased, and we have built 2,000,000 tons of ships under foreign flags. They have practically boycotted the American flag for foreign commerce because they have been denied equality of opportunity.

for better quarters and working conditions for seamen. Its only objection to the safety requirements is that they have not yet been put into force by competing nations and therefore place "such a heavy handicap on American passenger-carrying ships as to exclude them from competition." The objections are to the language used and to the requirement of a high percentage of able seamen.

The injury which our neutral trade has suffered by belligerent acts and the certainty that after the war keener competition will add to the handicaps of our exporters proves the vital importance of American participation in the carrying trade. This can be brought about only "through the certainty that the sea is open to American competition on the same terms as to the subjects of any nation with which it is expected the United States will compete." To give this certainty a definite policy of encouraging investment in ships and recognition of the fact that foreign ships are not only carriers of freight but are "agencies in the stimulation of National commerce are necessary." One of the first objects should be "the creation of a complete system of overseas communication lines on exactly the same terms as to the subjects of any nation with which it is expected the United States will compete." 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