

CENSOR STILL KING IN LANDS OF FAR EAST

Allies Let America Know Only What They Choose.

NEWS WILL NOT BE BOTTL'D

"Grapevine Telegraph" Flourishes on Sands of Desert—Uncle Sam Hastens to Rescue Americans.

BY WILLIAM T. ELLIS. (Copyright by the New York World. Published by Arrangement.)

CONSTANTINOPLE, Aug. 20.—One fact affecting all facts, and more meaningful than any other fact in the near east, is the censorship. News about the censorship really should take precedence of news concerning any other political conditions here. It is the story which explains most other stories. Even after the censorship conditions have been described the average American reader will not have grasped the significance of it all, no foreign is this censorship idea to us.

Bluntly put, censorship is an effort to keep from the world all the facts except those which serve some government's policy. Political purposes take precedence of the truth. The censorship is an invisible Chinese wall to keep out or in all news alien to the ruling interest.

Censorship aims to conceal from the whole world what is done with or by or to a part of the world. All such dangerous ideas as "pitiless publicity" and such radical teachings as "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," are completely blue pencilled by the censor. His doctrine is that all people may learn only what a few persons think is good for them to know.

All sorts of methods are adopted to keep news shut up within territorial borders. For example, American Red Cross and relief workers in Syria, Palestine and Egypt have been required to sign a pledge that they will send or take out no uncensored news or communications. Even information concerning strictly American activities and interests must pass through the sieve of old world politics. Americans may know of the American Red Cross interests in the orient only what our political allies and commercial rivals want them to know.

America, through a Glass, Darkly. Of paramount interest recently in Turkey has been the presence of the American commission upon mandates. Nothing else in all the world has interested the people of the near east, for the time being, so greatly as this commission. Its story is told in another article. I mention it in connection with the censorship only because its objects and limitations have been ardently presented to the Syrians in a way that suits the purposes of certain powers with interests in this part of the world. The Americans have had to watch their step at every step of the road. They stood for something that is popular just now with everybody in Syria—except the foreign interests who do not wish this so-called Americanism to be popular!

Of course, the natives, accustomed to news via censorship and propaganda channels, are wary and suspicious. They have the real Missouri attitude. So when the local papers announce that the American commission is purely a personal enterprise of President Wilson, and that it has no authority, and that the treaty of London takes precedence of all its recommendations, the Syrians merely stick their tongues in their cheeks and slip off to some trusted American friends to ascertain the facts.

"If You See It in the East?" Because one reads an important statement in a newspaper in the near east is almost prima facie evidence that it either is not so, or else that it is put out for some hidden purpose. Since it bears the stamp of the censor's approval, it is guaranteed "safe," and therefore either innocuous or sinister. Real news, supposedly, is what circulates from mouth to ear.

One curious result of this is that important news is often to be heard in the cafes as much as 48 hours before the newspapers carry it; if they publish it at all. Censorship naturally retards publication in order that all the possible bearings of the facts upon government policies may be weighed carefully.

Thus, in Cairo, I learned of the withdrawal of the Italians from the peace conference a full day before it was printed. I took it to the American diplomatic agent for confirmation, and he had not yet heard it, although he corroborated it within a few hours. Yet the American who told me the story had heard it from one of his servants!

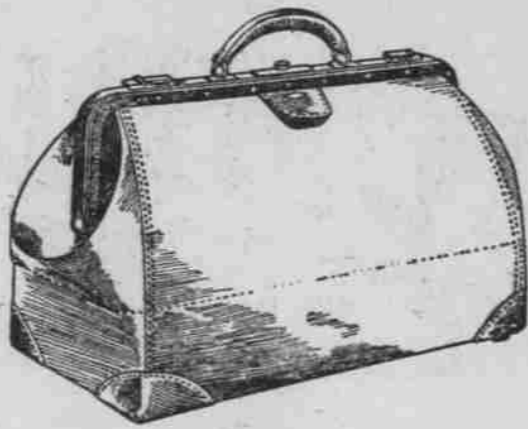
Often facts never come out. The first intimation we had in Cairo of the Greek massacres in Smyrna were the dispatches protesting how well the Greeks had behaved and how pleased the Turks were with them! Any old hand in the orient, possessed of a knowledge of background conditions, could read between the lines of these "communiqués"—and British, French, Greek and Italian news bulletins, or "communiqués"—are regularly put out in the hotels, clubs, cafes and other popular centers of cities like Cairo and Constantinople. Dealing in propaganda news is a regular branch of government activity in the near east.

Censorship Often Beaten. No invention has yet been perfected which will serve as a news-proof container. All the bottles ever devised by censorship are sure to leak. How they leak is one of the romances of the orient. Every correspondent who has not passed his word not to do so feels free to beat the censor, for the newspaper man is a servant of light, and the censor is a servant of darkness, and light cannot be subject to darkness.

The impassive-faced Indian or Egyptian servant behind the chair of the British officer is believed to be "perfectly safe," yet how else did the news of that important conversation get so quickly to Moscow headquarters.

A common trick is for the servants to profess to know no English whatever, and since the oriental finds it easy to mask his face with blankness all sorts of state and military secrets find their way quickly to the quarters where they will be best concealed.

While an expensive staff of censors and intelligence officers is searching



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the mails and the persons of passengers an ignorant and deferential native—perhaps a charcoal burner, returning to the mountains of Mount Sinai with his camel or donkey—is slipping across the border unheeded. What can a camel driver know of politics? Well, what he knows is quickly communicated to wiser men than himself, perhaps with documents.

I have had incontrovertible proof that news, essential news, high political news, seeps out of every country in the east, carried by humble traders or pilgrims or servants. Even the veiled woman may have concealed beneath her voluminous raiment a paper more dangerous than dynamite. The route is easy and open between, say, the sands in Egypt, his servant, a native sailor on a ship and a correspondent in Constantinople.

Grapevine Telegraph on the Desert. Also the desert ways are open. Algeria and Tunisia and Morocco and Tripoli are all accessible to the Arabs who thread the apparently pathless wastes of sand. One may hear more news within a week in Syria or Constantinople concerning what the French and Italians are doing in North Africa than he will read in the press of the world in a year.

This is the supreme nullification of the censorship. The east gets the news which it believes by channels that were old a thousand years before the art of printing was invented. It is not what is published in the subsidized newspapers of the orient that shapes public opinion east of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, but what is said in the bazaars, the cafes, the khans and by caravan campfires. As I have watched Arabs colloquing half a night around a little blaze of camel-thorn, on a desert far from human habitation, I have wondered what they found in their barren life to talk about. But if there was a stranger among them I found their knowledge of political conditions increased and their surmises quickened.

That is the way the east forms its opinions. Every oriental, especially in the Levant, has a clear-cut conviction concerning the relative merits and qualities of the great powers and their nationals. Even the educated west has no such habit of sweeping generalization. Ask the next American you meet what he thinks of the English, the French, the Italians, the Greeks, the Germans, and he will probably answer concerning at least half the list, "Oh, I donno," or, "I never thought about it." Yet your donkey boy or carriage driver in Cairo or Jerusalem or Damascus or Aleppo or Constantinople can give you a shrewd appraisal of every one of these nationalities. And that opinion, which runs so close to the ground, is what makes history.

Uncle Sam to the Rescue. It is common report that political censorship is so intimately related to the commercial interests of the censoring power that valuable business

information is communicated to the nationals of the government in control. In Constantinople it is openly declared that a fair and equal opportunity at the trade of the near east is not given to all the allies.

So serious is the disability under which American business men out here feel themselves laboring at the hands of the allied censorship that the American government now permits them to make their communications with the homeland through the channels of the American embassy. Presumably embassy messages are safe from prying eyes. This is an extraordinary privilege, but Admiral Bristol and Consul General Ravndal, the American commissioners, are real patriots, of the sort who do not hesitate to cut red tape in behalf of their countrymen.

At a certain port in the eastern hemisphere I was told by an American this incident of "friendly" censorship: He had been in confidential communication with Washington concerning a certain important commercial concession for the American government. Recently the expected message came from the state department, in one of its simpler codes, instructing the consul to secure the concession in question. That official message, in code, was five days on the way—although cable conditions were such that it should have arrived within a few hours—and during this interval representatives of the friendly power which controls the censorship sought to secure the concession in question for themselves. Only the ardent enthusiasm of the native population for America kept that deal from going through, to the serious discomfiture of our country. The incident illustrates the perils of censorship; no nation can be trusted with the unlimited power and confidential knowledge which the censor possesses. Certainly the institution is not in harmony with the spirit of democracy and fair play.

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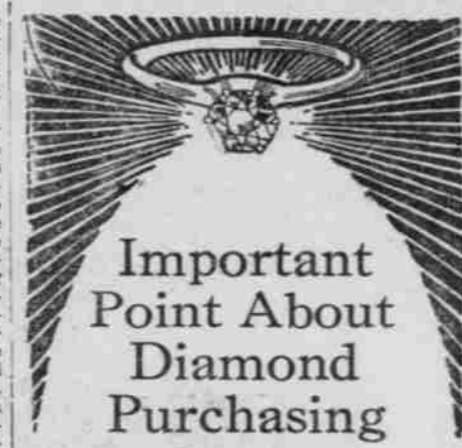
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Ireland Loses Tourist Traffic.

DUBLIN, Aug. 20.—There are numerous protests in the Irish press against the abandonment of Queenstown as a port of call for great American liners. In future only the small vessels are to call there, and it is pointed out that this means that the profitable tourist traffic from America will be taken direct to England.

Aerial Mail Service to Congo Plan.

ANTWERP, Aug. 20.—An aerial postal service between Leopoldville and Stanleyville in the Congo will be in operation within the next three months, if the plans of the Belgian government are carried out. A steamer has just left Antwerp taking 1000 packages and 15 planes which will be used in the service.



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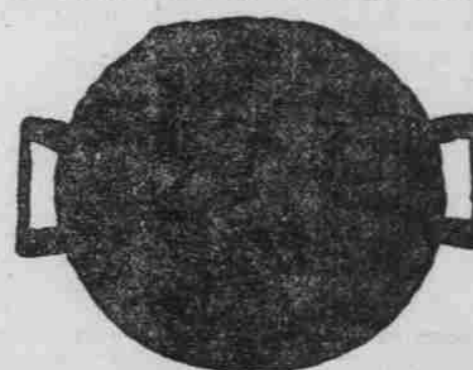
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A Little Gallery of Art Goods

is the name we have given to a little room on our second floor. In here you will find the popular Easel Frames in several finishes and many styles, Book Ends of all kinds, Framed Mottos and Framed Parchments, and a few select framed pictures. Visit this little room for gift suggestions or when you wish to add something choice to your home.

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