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THE SOUTH AND SHIPS.

A clear note comes from the south in the matter of the upbuilding of our American merchant marine. Of the 24 deep-water ports on the coast-line of the United States having channels capable of sustaining vessels with a water-draught of 25 feet and upward 11 are in the southern states—nearly half of the whole. The south therefore has a keen home interest not only in building up the business of these ports but in the provision of an American merchant fleet to carry their exports and imports; these 11 ports, too, are nearer to the Panama canal than any others in this country.

"If," argued a southern business man before the national merchant marine commission in session at Brunswick, Ga., a few days ago, "the United Kingdom has paid the Cunard company in assistance in some form the sum of $32,500,000 during the past 65 years—as it has; if she can afford to close a contract within the past year with this line for the building of two great steamships of 24½ knots speed, under which she loaned the company at 2¾ per cent for 20 years the sum of $13,000,000; if she can raise that money on bonds—as she did—at 3 per cent interest; if she can contract—as she did—for a subvention of $750,000 a year to these two ships for a period of 20 years and can give them at the same time a mail contract of $340,000 a year—if she can and does do all these things, surely the United States may wisely consider a policy in aid of her own merchant marine on some such lines."

And why not? We must "fight the devil with fire." The United States cannot go on forever refusing to her deep-sea shipping the protection that she accords to every other industry. She must do as her competitors do, or else retire from the cross-seas carrying trade entirely, with a humiliating acknowledgment of defeat.

She is dangerously near that point now.

THE COALING OF THE FLEET.

Surprise is expressed in Japan at the policy of France in supplying the Russian fleet with coal for its voyage to the far east. Such action, say Japanese papers, is analogous to letting belligerent troops pass across neutral territory. It does not appear, however, that the Japanese government is seriously, if at all, disturbed over the matter, says the New York Tribune. Complacency on its part has at least two good grounds. One is that such coaling of the Russian fleet is no violation of law, and the other that it probably will not particularly matter to Japan whether the Russian fleet ever reaches the far east or not. The chief interest of the incident is, therefore, in its emphasizing the desirability of further agreements among the nations concerning rules and regulations of warfare, an end which, perhaps, can best be attained in the convention which President Roosevelt is planning to call at The Hague.

There is, we know, a common notion that such provision of coal to a belligerent fleet is a violation of international law. That notion, however, does not seem tenable. Hall's "International Law," one of the latest authorities, does indeed say that "a vessel of war . . . may fill up with enough coal to enable her to reach the nearest port of her own country," the implication being that she may take only so much coal and no more—a very different thing from what the Russians are said to have been doing. But there is no general agreement upon the point. The latest English edition of Wheaton says the matter is entirely within the discretion of the neutral government. "A neutral is not required by the law of nations to place any restrictions upon the liberty which it accords of purchasing provisions, coal and other supplies (not being arms of munitions of war). *It is not a rule of international law that the supplies purchased should be limited to any particular quantity.*" During our civil war Great Britain made (for herself only, of course) the rule that a belligerent ship should be permitted to take in a British port only enough coal to carry her to the nearest port of her own country, and that rule was repeated in the Franco-German war, the Spanish-American war and in the present Russo-Japanese war. Holland, on the other hand, in various wars has openly proclaimed that belligerent ships might get all the coal they wanted in her harbors. The United States has always taken strong ground in favor of the right of its citizens to sell any and all kinds of merchandise, even munitions of war, to a belligerent. Dr. Wharton, in his elaborate treatises on criminal and international law from the American point of view, says explicitly: "It is not a breach of neutrality for a neutral state to permit the coaling of belligerent steamers in its ports to the same extent that it permits the coaling of other foreign steamers resorting to its ports casually and without settled stations established for them. *Nor is it a breach of neutrality for a neutral state to permit the sale of coal to any extent to a belligerent.*" All that is required, apparently, is that the neutral state shall treat both belligerents alike.

The questions involved in the present case, then, appear to be two in number. The first is what rules, if any, France has made for this war. The second is whether in practice France is treating, or is willing to treat, Russia and Japan alike. The former should be easily answered from the French official record. The latter may be theoretically answered from the same record, but its practical answer could be secured only through the visiting of a French port by a Japanese vessel in quest of coal. If France gives a Russian ship, at Havre or Brest, enough coal to carry her not merely back to the Baltic, but as far as possible forward on the route to Port Arthur, then it would seem to be incumbent upon her to give a Japanese ship at Saigon enough coal to carry her not merely back to Nagasaki, but as far as possible forward on the route to—let us say—Cornstadt! It may be that no Japanese ship will ever seek such supplies. But it is to be assumed that if one did France would treat it as liberally as she is treating the Russian ships.

ARE WE POISONED AS WE GO?

Are we, the people of the United States, being slowly poisoned by the very agents who are supposed to be looking after our comfort and health? That is a startling supposition, yet there is authority for it in the latest report of the agricultural department of the United States government, says the Standard Union. That report treats of many subjects of interest to consumers of various sorts and kinds of goods other than foodstuffs, to which most people naturally look for anything in the way of poison when the subject is broached. But this report, or "bulletin" as it is officially called by the department, treats of other things than foodstuffs, and quite as important in our daily lives, dealing with the use of arsenic in their preparation. Now every one knows arsenic is a powerful poison. Yet it is used in the making of wall paper, furs, rugs, dress goods, stockings, and similar articles of frequent or constant use. Wall paper makes the best showing, as out of 537 samples examined only four showed the presence of over one-tenth of a grain to the square yard, the maximum allowed by law in the state of Massachusetts, the only state in the union having a law regulating the use of arsenic in manufactures. As to stockings, which concern us all more than wall paper, a far more serious state of things was found, for out of 41 samples analyzed only 2.4 per cent were found to be arsenic free, while some of them were heavily charged with it. According to this bulletin black stockings were open to this objection to a larger degree than any other color. In furs 17 times as much arsenic was found as the law allows. In fur rugs one sample contained no less than 16.93 grains of arsenic to the square yard. It is needless to point out that this is a very dangerous amount. A very large quantity of dress goods was found to contain a dangerous amount of this poison in the dye used in their preparation.

It would seem advisable for some other states than Massachusetts to enact laws on this subject for the protection of the public.

Early in the coming year an American forest congress will meet in Washington under the auspices of the American Forestry Association. The congress is called to consider the forests in their relation to the great industries closely dependent on them, such as lumbering, transportation, irrigation mining and grazing. Its intention in general is to guard intelligently our forest resources, and bring to an end the ignorant and destructive ravage of the lumberman and the wood pulp man, who, left to themselves, would in a century denude the continent and provide the way for it to become a desert. The congress is of national importance, the president will address it, and its aims have the sympathy of everybody with sufficient intelligence to comprehend their bearing on the public welfare. The congress may bear in mind and flourish forth anew Humboldt's dictum that wherever man has appeared on the earth he has prepared the way for his extinction by his destruction of forests.

The form of western education which the Filipine women, particularly the older ones, take to with the most willingness is card playing. They easily master all the American games—euchre, poker, seven-up, bridge and the like—and spend whole days in playing them. They learn very quickly when to "order it up," "raise the ante," and so on, and acquire the skill of the heahten Chinee which the veteran Bill Nye was somewhat surprised at.

The Russian soldiers in Manchuria are delighted at the return of winter. Perhaps the real reason is that it stops the fighting.

The new Japanese bonds are offered at a price to net investors 7½ per cent. No wonder they are in good demand.

PRESIDENT'S SIMPLE LIFE.

A Wholesome Object Lesson to the Entire World.

"I was particularly struck with the simplicity of the home life of the president. To one accustomed to viewing the pomp and ceremony which surround the rulers of Europe, there seems to be something notable in the entire lack of ostentation in the Roosevelt family. I was surprised at Mr. Roosevelt's habit of inviting to his private dining table those who are doing work in the world, quite regardless of what their power or social position may be. He looks to the man himself rather than to his appurtenances, and this is a brushing away of the superfluities which is rare in men of his position. In Washington I saw his boys starting to a public school, and one of them did not even bother to wear a hat. This, of course, was a small matter, but it impressed me. In Europe the children of a ruler with not one-tenth of the power of Mr. Rosevelt do not go to school at all, much less to a public school. They have a corps of private tutors, and rarely venture into the streets except in elaborate equipages.

"The observance of complete simplicity in his personal and family life by the president of the United States, one of the most powerful rulers on earth, has a wholesome influence, not only upon America, but also upon the world at large."