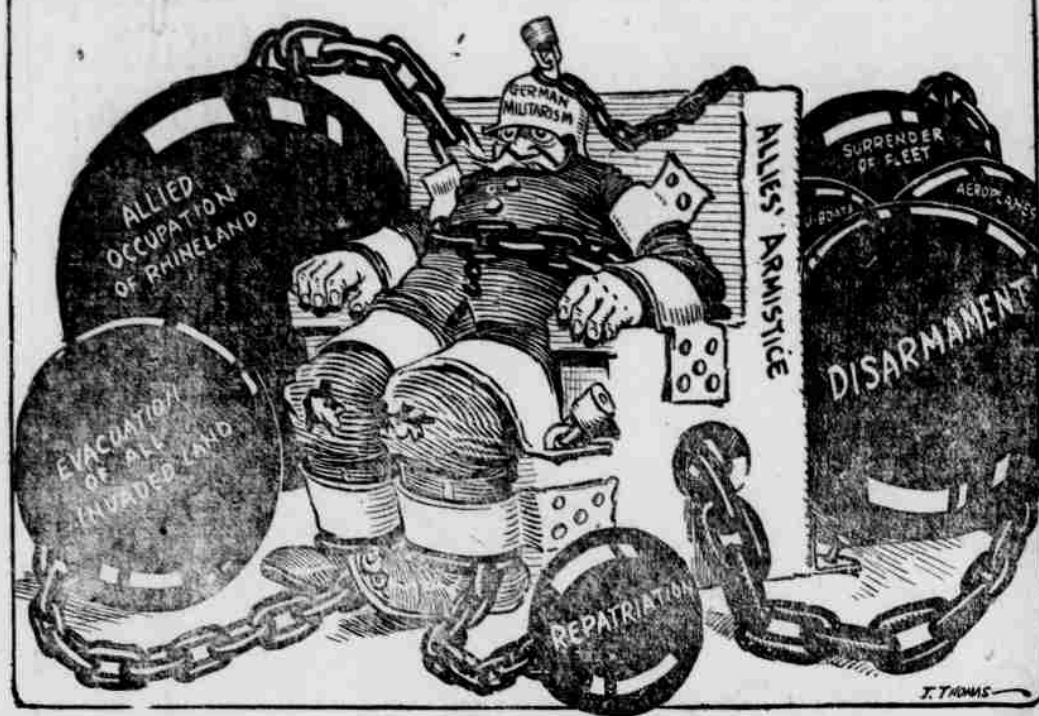


THE GUEST'S CHAIR--ANTI-CHEATING MODEL FOR PEACE TABLE



OLD ITALIAN SPORT

Peculiar Method of Snaring Migrating Pigeons

At Cava dei Tirreni the Birds Are Way-laid With Nets and Slings—Much Ingenuity Necessary to Secure Good "Bag."

It is not often that one comes across a little place that has an ingenious and exciting sport all its own. At Cava dei Tirreni in Italy, however, there has for a thousand years existed a peculiar form of pigeon catching. It was introduced in 1262, says Mr. Herbert Vivian in Italy at War and it has flourished ever since. At the beginning of every autumn great flocks of pigeons migrate from Siberia to Africa and pass over Cava and the Gulf of Salerno. They probably take other routes, but Cava is the only place where they are waylaid with nets and slings. The season is at its height from the 15th to 25th of October.

The pigeon catchers are mostly men of the lower middle class, who club together to form six societies, or "games." A game usually consists of three or four towers and a clearing where the nets are set up. One tower is probably a thousand yards from the net, and the nearest perhaps seventy yards, but the distances vary. The towers are tall and slim, windowless and weather-beaten. There are steps about halfway up the inside, and a rickety ladder leads to the parapet at the top. Each society has also a neat little clubhouse, usually near the chief tower.

In a merry mood the members take their places in the fresh morning air. Most of them are dressed in velvetene coats, top-boots and peaked caps. Two men ascend each tower and the rest are distributed among the nets. In each of the clearings stands a small house from the center of which rises a tall black mast. To that two huge nets are fastened, stretching right and left to clumps of trees and spreading out obliquely to the ground. Inside the house is a handle and a cogwheel for raising the weighted nets. The lookout place is a straw hut two or three miles away in the direction from which the pigeons are expected. When the watcher sights a flock of birds he gives a signal on his horn, which other watchers scattered about the woods take up.

The birds travel at a tremendous speed, always with a leader, and in flocks of from 30 to 100. Every one takes to cover, for the birds are easily frightened. The men on the towers are provided with long slings and whitewashed stones about the size of small hens' eggs. These they discharge with great force. The pigeons, it is said, mistake the stones for hawks and make frantic efforts to avoid them, so the slingers must fling the stones where they do not wish the birds to go; yet when they are flying high, a stone flung beneath them will bring them hurtling downward. Then, with loud cries, the watchers drive them toward the nets. The stone-slinging is the essence of the sport, and it requires strong muscles, a quick eye and a steady aim.

But the netting is also difficult. The man at the ropes is white and nervous; everything now depends upon him. If he releases the weight at the right moment, the net comes down instantly and the birds are bagged. A moment too soon, and they see the danger and avoid it; a moment too late and they pass in safety. It is a matter of an instant, and many more flocks escape than are taken.

The birds are gray and somewhat smaller than the domestic pigeon. They cannot be trained or tamed. The sport is far from being profitable, for even when they have good luck the pigeon catchers never take enough birds to pay for the elaborate preparation they have made. But the moment when the nets whirl down at Cava is a moment of rare excitement.

"War Time."

A novel memento of the great war is a clock, which is made from munitions—both enemy and allied—collected on the Somme battlefield by a soldier, who afterwards used them for this purpose. The body of the clock is a German shellcase, and German cartridges form the legs. Of the three cartridges on top of the timepiece, the two outside are German, and the one gracing the center French, while the two small ornaments between these are Belgian bullets. The side ornaments are made from Versey-light cases, pierced to admit of a British cartridge projecting through the top. The pendulum consists of five French bullets, and the figures and hands are bent to shape from copper wire taken from German trenches.

To complete the whole, the clock movement inside is also of German make, and, after necessary repairs, is found to be entirely adequate.

Look to Africa for Food.

The world-wide shortage of food and the certainty that this shortage will continue in modified form for years to come has roused France to utilize more fully her great colonies just across the Mediterranean. Comprehensive plans are being formed—and started on the way to fulfillment—for refrigerating and packing plants in Algeria, so that the animals need not be shipped across the sea alive. These institutions, too, will give a much readier and steadier market than has been available hitherto, and that is probably all that is needed to quadruple the meat exports of North Africa.

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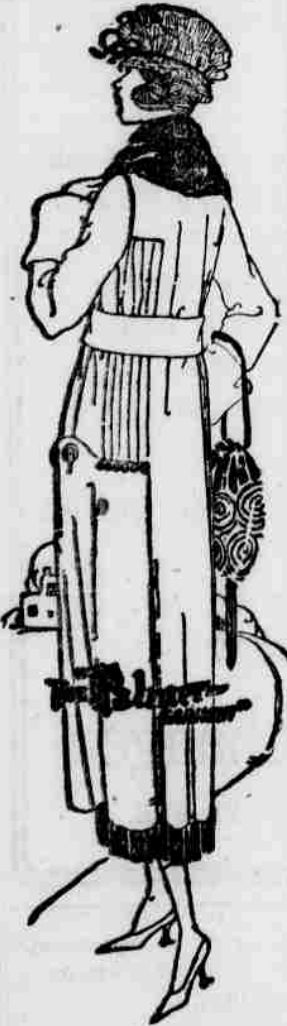
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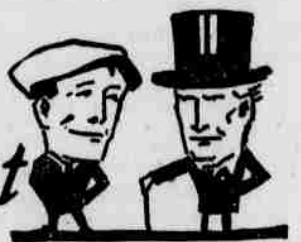
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