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THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Mr. Lonsdale, Conservative, Member for Mid-Armagh, asked the Foreign Secretary what was the condition of the negotiations between England and Russia with regard to their several spheres of influence in Persia. Sir E. Grey replied that for the present he could make no statements as to negotiations relating to Persia. Mr. Bowles, Conservative, Member for Norwood, thereupon asked the Foreign Secretary if he had received official information that a close working agreement had been concluded between the German Orient Bank and the National Bank of Persia owing to the activity of the German Minister in Teheran. Sir Edward Grey replied that information had reached the British Minister in Teheran as to the assistance given by Germany to the organising of the National Bank, but the information had not yet been confirmed.

Mr. Byles, Liberal, Member for North Salford, asked the Foreign Secretary to inform the House in view of the confusion existing owing to various contradictory reports on the subject, what attitude the British Government would at first adopt at the Hague Conference with regard to the proposed limitation of armaments. Sir E. Grey replied that the instructions to be given to the British delegates to the Conference were under discussion and he could not at present make any statement, and in view of the fact that the wishes and intentions of other Governments must be taken into consideration the possibility existed that any further announcement as to the Government's proposals might lead to that confusion of which Mr. Byles complained.

The debate on the Naval Estimates was then resumed and the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Lambert, informed the House that there existed in British territory 26 private and Government docks capable of receiving a ship of the "Dreadnought" type. Experts were at present examining the question on the spot as to whether Rosyth was suitable for a fleet base and their conclusions would be carefully taken into consideration by the Admiralty. The Government dock at Haulbowline, County Cork, was to be enlarged up to a length of 600 ft. so that it could receive any one of the ships existing at the moment or contemplated.

In the course of the debate Mr. Lee, Conservative, Member for Fareham, said that at the present time the North Sea fleet had no serviceable fleet base and that the delay in organising the fleet base at Rosyth was incredible and constituted a grave danger.

Mr. Balfour, Conservative, Member for the City of London, called attention to the strategic importance of the new base on the East Coast and urged the Government not to depart from the policy of the late Government.

Mr. Robertson, Parliamentary Secretary of the Admiralty, said that the Government was convinced that a fleet base of a modern type on the East Coast was necessary and in his view everything still pointed to Rosyth as the place most conveniently situated. The Admiralty was occupied with the preparation of plans which relied much on those of the late Government; the work would be commenced as soon as the plans were approved although its execution would be slow.

The Channel Tunnel Bill has been definitely withdrawn.

A CANARD DENIED.

Reuter's Bureau announces that an authoritative statement was issued on Thursday that there is no ground for the report that a naval alliance has been concluded between Great Britain and Spain or that a quadruple *entente* between England, France, Spain and Italy has been formed.

THE COLONIAL CONFERENCE.

At Thursday's sitting the Conference discussed naturalisation and emigration. The President of the Local Government Board, Mr. John Burns, dwelt on the necessity of facilitating emigration.

A resolution in favour of emigration to the Colonies instead of to foreign countries was adopted unanimously. The Home Secretary, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, spoke of the divergences in the naturalisation laws of the different Colonies. The further discussion of this latter question was adjourned.

NEWS FROM AMERICA.

THE PRESIDENT'S NEXT SPEECH.

There is increasing interest in financial and political quarters as to the character of the speech which President Roosevelt will deliver on Friday at the opening of the Jamestown Exhibition. It has been stated on Washington authority that the speech will contain important references to the relations between the great railroad corporations and the Inter-State Commerce Commission, and the assertion has been denied, upon what seems to be equally reliable authority. Certainly the occasion does not appear to be particularly opportune for dealing with a question of current and embittered controversy, but no man can say in advance what President Roosevelt is likely to say at any given moment or occasion.

One thing is certain, that the speech is regarded at the White House as of the first importance, and this belief is emphasised by the action of the Administration in the matter. The text of the speech has been confidentially communicated to the leading newspapers and news agencies, and its main features are already known to scores of editors in the same way that Congressional messages from the White House are sent out in advance. So far the pledges of secrecy exacted and given have been faithfully kept. As, however, President Roosevelt is emphatically a man with an imagination, he must, in thinking over the general lines of his speech, have had in his mind's eye the imposing naval demonstration, which is to be the leading feature of the opening day of the exhibition, and it may be, therefore, assumed with some degree of confidence that there will not be lacking in the oration a more or less direct and detailed reference to the question, a burning one in some quarters, of the need for a strong American navy.

THE JAMESTOWN EXHIBITION.

For the opening today of the Jamestown Exhibition 35 battleships and cruisers as well as many torpedo boats and private yachts have arrived, Hampton Roads presenting a very attractive spectacle. President Roosevelt was to arrive early this morning in the yacht "Mayflower" accompanied by the yacht "Delphin" and will steam past all the flag-bedecked ships. The "Mayflower" being escorted by the American, English and German flagships. Between 9.30 and 10 the foreign Admirals will be received by the President. From the "Mayflower" the President and the Admirals will proceed to the Exhibition, where a luncheon will take place, in which the President, Admirals and commanding officers will take part. After the opening of the Exhibition the President will hold a naval review in which besides the American, only the English and German ships will take part. President Roosevelt will then return to Washington. At 7.30 the ships will be illuminated. Today Admiral Evans has invited the commanders and commandores on board the "Connecticut". Tomorrow a dance will be given on board the German battleship "Roon" in honour of the American naval and military officers. The officers of the German ships have been invited to Washington, where they will be received by the President. Owing to the rise in prices Admiral Evans has placed provisions from the American provisioning ship at the disposal of the foreign ships, an attention which is much appreciated.

NEWS FROM FRANCE.

CIVIL SERVANTS AND THE GOVERNMENT.

The disciplinary council of the Post and Telegraph Department has recommended the dismissal of the General Secretary of the sub-agents, M. Grangier, and the General Secretary of the younger postmen, M. Simmonet, for having signed the open letter to M. Clémenceau on the right of forming syndicates.

THE NEW GERMAN IMPERIAL LOAN.

Thursday's issue of 4 per cent Treasury Bonds to the amount of 300 million marks has been, so far as is yet known, subscribed 45 times over.

EARTHQUAKES IN ITALY.

Shortly before 6 a. m. on Thursday earthquake shocks were felt in Padua, Salo, Mantua, Cremona, Piacenza and Urbino; the shocks were also registered by the seismographs at Domo d'Ossola, Montcalieri, Porto Maurizio, Modena and Florence.

THE SPANISH NAVY.

The Ministerial Council yesterday approved the Naval Estimates which amount to 50 million pesetas, an increase of 15 millions on those of last year. The Minister of Marine denied the statement published in foreign journals that the Spanish Naval Estimates in eight years would amount to 400 million pesetas.

NEWS FROM RUSSIA.

THE DUMA.

At Thursday's sitting a proposal by 32 members of the Right, to appoint a day after the Easter holidays for the discussion of the treatment of political criminals, was rejected.

In the course of the debate the members of the Right, in demanding the speedy discussion of the motion, pointed to the increasing number of political murders and begged the House to give them an opportunity of proving that if the House expressed its disapproval of political crimes, many human lives might be saved.

In the name of the Social Democrats, M. Cerebeli moved to bring in interpellations as to the suppression by the Prefect of St. Petersburg of mining organisations, and as to the strike which broke out on Wednesday at the Tshesh factory in the Viborg quarter. M. Golovin said that he had not yet had time to read the interpellations and could not therefore allow a debate on them. M. Cerebeli described the interpellations as urgent and again demanded a debate. The President repeated that he could not allow the discussion of interpellations of the contents of which he was ignorant. M. Cerebeli left the tribune amid protests from the Social Democrats and laughter from the Right.

The House then resumed the debate on the agrarian question. The Tambov peasant Deputy, M. Kizeloff, considered that if the Government and the Right were not blinded by the success of the courts martial and the punitive expeditions, they would hear the voice of the people so long as it was not too late. He said "We have not come to threaten, we would far rather settle the question on a peaceful basis, so long as it is possible; we fear, however, that a delay of a few days or hours even may involve danger."

The peasant Kalukoff, from Perm, said that he would not make a long speech since to him the question was a very simple one. If the Government would not hear the voice of the people the peasants would simply seize all the land and share it up, without more ado.

It was decided to prolong the sitting in order to discuss the interpellation on the incidents that took place at the Tshesh factory when the police used force to the workmen during a labour dispute. Urgency was admitted for the interpellation.

The Social Democrats attacked the Prefect in violent language; all his measures, they said, served to make the situation unbearable for the workmen and to cause further bloodshed. The House adjourned at 7 p. m. It was rumoured in the lobbies that a deputation of 20 peasants of the Right was to be received by the Czar on Friday. The Deputation wishes to assure the Czar that they are determined to work legislatively as good subjects but in no revolutionary manner, and that they are grateful to His Majesty for his solicitude for the peasants.

THE STRIKE IN THE CAUCASUS.

With reference to the strike of ship's companies at Baku, General Taube has issued a proclamation according to which the captains, mates and stokers are ordered to join their ships by 5 p. m. on April 28, under penalty of 3 months imprisonment, a fine of 3,000 roubles and banishment to distant provinces.

Employers who hinder the carrying out of this order will be subjected to the same punishment. All attempts at resistance or acts of violence will be relentlessly suppressed by force of arms.

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