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THE DISARMAMENT QUESTION AT THE HAGUE CONFERENCE.

At Saturday's plenary sitting of the Hague Conference, the first British Delegate, Sir E. Fry spoke as follows on the question of the limitation of armaments.

"At the instance of the British Government I have the honour to lay before the Conference a question of the utmost importance. When H. M. the Czar of Russia summoned the first Peace Conference he suggested as its first task the immediate search for a method whereby a limit might be placed to the continual increase of naval and military armaments, a question the solution of which, with regard to the continual extension of these armaments, is becoming ever more and more urgent." Sir E. Fry then mentioned the resolution passed by the first Conference in which the limitation of military burdens was described as in the highest degree desirable, and alluded to the memorandum of Count Muravjeff addressed in the name of the Russian Czar to the European Powers; in this memorandum Count Muravjeff stated that the burden of armaments permanent and oppressive as it was must in the end lead to a conflict, the horrors of which were already filling the minds of all thinking men with dread. "These words" continued Sir Edward, "so true and eloquent, are today still more true and more convincing for the expenditure in naval and military objects has in the interval since the last Conference become considerably larger. The annual military outlay of the European Powers, excepting Turkey and Montenegro, as well as that of the United States and Japan, has increased by more than 69 million pounds sterling. I am quite sure that you will agree with me that the realisation of the wish of the Czar of Russia and of the First Conference, would signify an enormous benefit to humanity. Whether this wish is capable of realisation is, of course, a question to which I am unable to give a categorical reply. I can, however, give you my assurance that my Government is a convinced supporter of these distinguished aims and has charged me to urge you unanimously to work for the realisation of this noble wish. Formerly men dreamed of a golden age, but today the idea of the cohesion of the human race is more widespread than ever throughout the world, and in the name of this idea I beg you not to separate without having expressed the wish that all Governments of the world should seriously devote themselves to the question of the limitation of military burdens. My Government does not fail to recognise that it is the duty of every country to protect itself against enemies and dangers and that to every Government belongs the right and duty to decide what is necessary for its country for the fulfilment of this object. Accordingly, only by the good will and the voluntary impulse of each several Government, which of its own accord works for the happiness of its country, is it possible to realise the object of our wishes. In view of the fact that several Powers cherish the wish for a check on military outlay, the English Government considers it its duty to enquire if some means may not be found whereby these wishes may reach their goal. My Government, therefore, empowers us to make the following declaration. Great Britain would be prepared to annually communicate to those Powers, who would be willing to take similar action, her proposals respecting the construction of new battleships and the expenses to be incurred by such proposals. This exchange of information would render easier the exchange of views which the Governments hold with respect to the reduction of armed forces, which might be set in work by a mutual understanding. The English Government believes that in this way an understanding might be arrived at with regard to the outlay, which those Powers who are prepared to advance on the path indicated could then in all fairness include in their budgets."

Sir Edward concluded his speech by moving the following resolution "The Conference confirms the

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resolution passed by the 1899 Conference and referring to the limitation of military burdens; in view of the fact that since the year in question these burdens in nearly every country have considerably increased, the Conference declares that it is in the highest degree desirable that the Governments should once against take up the serious study of this question."

After Sir E. Fry's speech, which was listened to with great attention, and which at its conclusion was loudly applauded by many Delegates, M. Nelidoff read a statement of the United States' Delegates in which sympathy is expressed for Sir E. Fry's views and support promised to his proposals. M. Nelidoff also read a Note with the same import from the Spanish Delegates and a memorandum from the Delegates of Chili and the Argentine with respect to an agreement concluded by those two States with regard to the limitation of armaments.

M. Bourgeois stated that in the name of the French Government he supported the resolution of Sir E. Fry and hoped that the next Conference would take up the study of this question with determination.

Finally, M. Nelidoff in a lengthy speech, said that the wars that had occurred since 1899, viz. the China, the Transvaal, and the Russo-Japanese wars, and the Colonial struggles and diplomatic difficulties, had caused the Russian Government not to lay before the second Conference the disarmament proposal of 1899. Their experience in that year had shown that a discussion of that kind only accentuated the differences of opinion among the Powers on this matter. Russia and other Powers had, therefore, come to the conclusion that they would take no part in any such discussion, but public opinion was occupied with the idea to such an extent that the English Government had, in spite of all, drawn the attention of the Powers to the subject. The Conference was, however, as little as that of 1899, prepared for the question. But they could renew the wish expressed by the first Conference and have nothing but praise for the English initiative. He recommended the Conference to pass Sir E. Fry's resolution with acclamation. This was accordingly done and the sitting closed.

In honour of the birthday of the Emperor Franz Josef the senior Delegate of Austria-Hungary, the Ambassador v. Mercy, gave a dinner at which the Delegations of Germany and Italy, with Freiherr v. Marschall and Count Torinelli at their head, were among the guests. Herr v. Mercy proposed first the Emperor's health, which was drunk with



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enthusiasm, and then the toast of "the allied Sovereigns Kaiser Wilhelm and King Victor Emmanuel".

AN ANGLO-VENEZUELAN INCIDENT.

News has reached London from Georgetown, British Guayana, that an officer and a detachment of frontier guards have seized a quantity of gutta-percha on Venezuelan soil and had it conveyed back to British territory. The Venezuelan boundary Commissioner allowed this to occur as he was unable to prevent it, but has informed his Government of the incident. The Venezuelan Consul in Georgetown has also raised a protest against this frontier infringement.

OCEAN GAMBLERS COME TO BLOWS.

The passengers who landed at Plymouth on Saturday from the Hamburg-America liner "Kaiserin Auguste Victoria" reported that on Thursday an exciting scene took place in the smoke-room, as the result of a quarrel over a game of poker, which had been played for high stakes.

One of the party, it is said, paid losses amounting to £400, but could not get £300 afterwards won by him from the same man.

The parties came to blows, and the police were informed by the liner's captain.

ON THE TRACKS OF MORENGA.

It is announced from Capetown that Cape Police from inland districts and the mounted Scouts have been sent to the German frontier.

NEWS FROM AMERICA.

THE PLAGUE CASES IN 'FRISCO.

The Naval Hospital Administration has been informed of three cases of plague in San Francisco. Two sources of infection have been discovered. General disinfection and the destruction of rats have been suggested.

CUTTING STEAMER RATES.

The Russian-E.-Asian and volunteer shipping Company have lowered their steerage rates for passengers from New York to the East to 25 dollars. The North German Lloyd, the Holland-America Line and the Red Star Line also reduced their fares to 25 dollars—the Hamburg-America Line charging 33 dollars for express steamers, 25 dollars for other steamers for the voyage from New York to Hamburg—thus meeting the Russian reductions. Thereupon the Russian Company further reduced the fares to 23 dollars.

THE REPORTED UNREST IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

With reference to *Reuter's* announcement from Mexico that within four days a war would break out in Central America the San Salvador Consul in General in Hamburg has telegraphed to his Government and has received the answer that there is not a word of truth in the report. The country is perfectly quiet and there is no reason to fear any complications.

JAPAN AND THE PHILIPPINES.

The Washington correspondent of *The New York Herald* had an interview with the Secretary of War, Mr. Taft, about the rumours that are current of a purchase of the Philippine islands by Japan. Mr. Taft remarked that he well knew that Japan was not engaged in the plan to purchase the islands, and that America would never sell them. The United States either wished to keep the islands until the Philippines were in a position to set up a regular Government of their own, or they would be obliged to hand over the islands to the Philippines at once.

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