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MISCHIEF-MAKERS AND THE PACIFIC.

We have already had occasion to refer to the loose and mischievous language which has been employed on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere respecting the relations between Japan and America. Among newspapers, as among individuals, manifestations of dementia or monomania or megalomania are frequently noted by political pathologists; but it is perhaps only in the United States that such phenomena can be observed to some advantage, for there causes as well as manifestations tend to become apparent. Why a nation should choose wantonly to batten on illusions and known prevarications, on scandal and empty innuendo rather than on fact, however scanty, it is not for us to determine; though we confess it needs no uncommon shrewdness to suspect the motive as similar to that which prompts certain men to prefer a dram of bad whiskey to a glass of pure cold water. The American people, in its political connotation, is at once the cause and the result of its newspapers. A condition of mind which must constantly be stimulated into excitement by rumours, and which is never more enlivened than when those rumours are improbable, unreasonable or mischievous is by no means a condition of health, implying vigour and alertness; nor is it a bad habit of which America's enlightened statesmanship and educated opinion have been able so relieve her. One can well understand that in a country where an irresponsible reporter may make a conflagration of the lighting of a match, an irresponsible editor may try to make a war with Japan, if not an international imbroglio on a Napoleonic scale, of the sailing of two American cruisers to the Pacific.

Mr. Taft has denied the statement that America intends to sell the Philippines. In a speech which we report today, delivered at the opening of the first Philippine Parliament, he called upon the Filipinos to support the United States in their policy, particularly in striving to justify their gift of self-government. No doubt this statement will be used in a hundred ways by a section of the American press to adumbrate the imminence of war, and should this be the case, it would certainly not be inconsistent with the grounds already adopted for similar prognostications. Even if America intends to adopt the Philippines as a new naval base, there is no evidence for anticipating a conflict and no justification for fostering ill-feeling. It is denied by the Government that warlike stores, including guns for the fortifications, are on their way to the Philippines, but the newspapers profess themselves sufficiently versed in Machiavellian tactics to be able to see in the emphasis of the denial a confirmation of the fact. Whatever the fact—and there has been much to confirm the rumours—it is unprincipled and mischievous to a degree to interpret as a measure of war a proper development of naval force, to which no Power can take exception, and regarding which the Japanese Government has semi-officially stated that it can have no cognizance of any defensive measures the United States choose to take within their own possessions.

Nothing indeed could be more admirable than the attitude of Japan throughout the extremely aggravating circumstances which have recently occurred, nor could anything better serve to justify her place among the great Powers. It has been declared both in America and in Japan that relations between the two Powers are excellent. Yesterday we published a telegram from Paris, according to which M. Tsuzuki, the first delegate at the Hague Conference, was reported to have deprecated the dangerous talk of war in certain quarters. He pointed out with great justice that there were two great obstacles to a war—the Pacific and the mutual good-will of the two nations in the past. The American coast was too far from Japan for the



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latter to send ships to it, while there could be small purpose in invading the Philippines, since the want of labour in Japan itself compelled the Japanese to leave almost half the arable land at home uncultivated. General Porter, the American delegate at the Hague, in confirming the views of M. Tsuzuki expressed himself with just emphasis when he declared it to be positively criminal to talk of a war between Japan and America. Public opinion cannot continue to be poisoned in the future as it has been poisoned during the last few months. Fortunately America has public men who are willing and, to a large extent, able to counteract the influence of such inflammatory bombast. Let us hope democratic government in America does not yet mean that politicians are to depend on the wild caprices of a mob.

THE RAILWAY CRISIS.

STATEMENT BY MR. R. BELL, M. P.

In an interview Mr. R. Bell, M. P., said the reply of the railway directors would be considered by the executive on the 28th October. The Executive could do nothing. The only thing now was to take their coats off, and what was the good of doing that until they knew what the men were prepared to do? Of course, they had their opinion as to what the result of the ballot would be, but they had no mandate now. As to the possibility of the Board of Trade intervening, the Board certainly had the power to take the initiative in bringing the parties together, but they could not force a settlement. Mr. Fox had recently computed that the membership of the Amalgamated Society a year ago was about 50,000, but he (Mr. Bell) did not know where he got his figures from. The Society knew exactly where they stood, and he might say that yesterday 206 applications for membership had been received. That morning 427 came in. Of these 93 were drivers.

MR. FOX AND THE DIRECTORS' REPLY.

Mr. Albert Fox, Secretary of the Associated Society of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, was interviewed at Leeds as to the position of that body in relation to the railway directors' reply to Mr. Bell. Mr. Fox said: "I have seen the letter of the directors, and it is just what I have been expecting all along. I am sorry, however, to find that the letter applies to all the railway and other unions. We are very desirous that the officials of all the railway trade unions should be recognised.

We have been wanting recognition all the while, just as much as Mr. Bell has been doing, with, however, this exception: that our representation has been a request and not a demand, as in the case of Mr. Bell. The main object of our Society is to secure improved conditions for our men; and providing the companies give our men improved conditions, then we feel that, in duty to them, we can put up with a little disappointment in other ways."

London, October 16.

At a meeting of railway servants employed at Paddington a resolution was adopted to the effect that the only course now open to them lay in a strike.

THE SHREWSBURY ACCIDENT.

Shrewsbury, October 16.

The Board of Trade has instituted an inquiry into the accident which occurred here. The signalmen state that two adverse signals had been used; the driver says that the train was travelling at the rate of fifty or sixty miles an hour, and that the brakes were applied in vain.

After the terrible accidents last year at Salisbury, Grantham, and Elliot Junction, says the *Globe*, the public were gradually coming to renew their old and wellwon confidence in British railway travelling. Unprecedentedly heavy commercial traffic, and the usual summer tourist traffic, have both been dealt with, and no serious mishap had occurred. Now, however, the awful disaster at Shrewsbury, which has resulted in the death of twenty people and the injury of many more, will not only cause suffering and distress in many homes, but will force inquiries as to the safety of the railroad under modern conditions. Speaking generally, it may be said that our railways are safer than they were twenty or thirty years ago; but when a smash comes, the high speed which the public rightly demand naturally increases the severity of the accident. So far as the first incomplete reports permit one to judge, the Shrewsbury disaster is due to the same cause as that at Salisbury on July 1, 1906—excessive speed round a difficult curve. It is becoming a question among railway engineers whether, in view of the danger of such curves being taken at high speed, the permanent way should not be reconstructed on all main lines where express trains run, to make it as nearly dead straight as possible. The alteration may be expensive, but so are accidents, and it would restore the confidence of the public, which is no inconsiderable asset to the companies and their staffs. The risk of collisions has been practically eliminated, thanks to a perfect system of almost automatic signalling arrangements; but the new danger is derailment. Superelevation of the line is a safeguard to a limited extent; but the abolition of all curves save those with a large radius is the only complete security.

FLOODS IN SCOTLAND.

London, October 16.

Considerable damage has been caused in the Lowland districts of Scotland by cloud-bursts. Railway traffic is impeded to some extent, while in Glasgow the tram-way lines are partly under water.

AMERICAN NEWS.

THE PHILIPPINES' PARLIAMENT.

STATEMENT BY MR. TAFT.

Manila, October 16.

Mr. Taft, the American Secretary for War, today opened the first Parliament of the Philippines. He emphatically denied the reports that the United States intended to sell the Philippine islands. He had full confidence in the Filipinos, and believed that they would recognize the necessity of supporting the United States Government.

MYSTERY OF MR. TAFT'S TOUR.

New York, October 15.

Rumours as to the objects underlying Mr. Taft's tour are again finding currency (says the New York correspondent of the *Globe*), and are not confined to this country alone.

According to advices from Vladivostock, it is firmly believed in local naval and military circles that Mr. Taft is empowered to conduct negotiations of the highest importance, and that these negotiations are likely to be connected with the acquisition by the United States of a base for her warships in the Pacific. The strictest censorship is being maintained.

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