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THE FRENCH NAVY.

During the last few years numerous changes have taken place within the European kaleidoscope, none more striking, however, than the startling rapidity with which France, but lately an ambitious rival of Great Britain's huge maritime forces, has unostentatiously dropped to the fourth place among the great Naval Powers. Several causes have contributed to this effect, but the greater weight of responsibility must be laid at the door of the French Socialists, whose unscrupulous propaganda and lack of patriotism bid fair to ultimately drag the lilies of France in the dust. Under the pro-pestiferous misadministration of M. Pelletan, who took but little pains to disguise his militant Socialist proclivities, the Navy went from bad to worse until, when in 1905 M. Thomson took up his portfolio as Minister of Marine, it is safe to say that an outbreak of hostilities would have found the French ships easy prey for an enterprising enemy. The idiosyncrasies of Pelletan were extensive and peculiar. His favourite method of exerting his authority was to introduce radical "improvements" in the construction of a warship when the vessel was nearing completion, and this upon the advice of some *soi-disant* naval architect who had flattered the Ministerial ear. As a result, the fleet became heterogeneous in the last degree; there was no standardisation of mechanical and other parts, and this naturally gave rise to serious delay in repairs. Moreover, the drastic structural alterations, without due regard being taken for the original designs, developed serious defects even in the most modern units. But not content with criminal absurdities of this description, *L'écervelé* Pelletan utterly demoralised the subordinate personnel of the fleet and dockyards by openly advocating equality amongst all ranks, from ward-room to fore-castle. Consequently discipline, that *sine qua non* of naval efficiency, has almost ceased to exist both on board ship and in the national arsenals at Brest, Toulon and elsewhere. To this factor must be attributed, more or less directly, the amazing sequence of disasters, great and small, which has befallen the French navy of recent years, culminating in the loss of the armoured cruiser "Chanzy" in Chinese waters and the destruction of the "Jena" at Toulon. The incendiary epidemic at the southern arsenal undoubtedly emanates from the agitation engineered by the apostles of equality. That the Navy, in common with the sister service, is cursed with individuals of the Hervé stamp is clearly evidenced by the multitudinous minor cases of insubordination that are briefly noted by the French service organs. A very superficial acquaintance with the facts of the case proves beyond all doubt that the naval forces of France are in a deplorable condition, from which even the whole-hearted endeavours of M. Thomson cannot immediately evolve a formidable fighting squadron. The recent Marine Budget debate in the Chamber brought to light one significant discrepancy in the system. Owing to the disinclination of French dock-yard hands to exert more than the minimum of energy, and the short-sighted Government policy of maintaining inadequate reserves of constructive material, armaments, &c., a battleship is rarely in commission until six years after the laying of the keel-plate. Within this period battleship standards may—and do—undergo considerable alteration, and the invincible warship of today can be well within sight of the scrap-heap tomorrow.

It would be a matter of small difficulty to fill a modest volume with the incredibly numerous defects in the French Navy; flaws in administration, materiel and personal; but rather is it preferable to note the attempts now being made to purge the system of those elements, human and otherwise, which corrode the intricate mechanism of naval policy. The work of regeneration is steadily progressing. Despite the carping criticisms of the *sans-patrie* Deputies, M. Thomson and his colleagues are insisting upon the speedy elimination of the

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more glaring discrepancies. The 1906 programme of six 18,000-ton battleships is to be expedited, while the current programme, embracing additional craft, is receiving almost unanimous support. The discipline question has been seriously investigated, and a determined attempt to weed out undesirables among the rank and file is already resulting in increased obedience to orders.

Startled at the approaching prospect of taking rank behind Japan as a Naval Power, France appears to have made the initial steps towards recovery. Since an adequate French Navy is an essential instrument in the harmony of the European Concert it is to be hoped that now her hand is set to the plough neither morbid sentiment nor niggardly considerations will deter France from continuing to regain the measure of sea-power of which criminal mismanagement has robbed her.

COLORADO TEMPERANCE REFORM.

Whenever an intoxicated man is conveyed to the Denver Police-station, we read, his photograph is taken; and next morning he is shown how he looked the night before. A moment later, and he is laying the seeds of writer's cramp, signing the pledge.

THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES.

An order has been issued at Aden that all camels going beyond a walking pace after sunset must carry bells. Tail-lamps are expected next, and then police-traps.

A LIGHT REPAST.

An eating match has been decided at Burlington, New Jersey, states the *Cleveland Leader*, between Arthur Wilcox and a resident of Delanco. Wilcox consumed 33 ham sandwiches, 48 small pickles, two pounds of cheese, and 12 cups of coffee, but was easily beaten by his opponent. If a man toys with his food in this restrained manner, he must expect to be beaten in such a contest.



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NEWS FROM AMERICA.

THE PACIFIC CRUISE.

The Atlantic Fleet left Port of Spain, Trinidad, on Sunday, continuing its voyage to the Pacific Ocean.

NORTH RIVER TUNNEL COMPLETED.

A New York telegram dated Sunday states that the trial trip through the newly completed tunnel between Fourteenth street, New York, and Jersey City has been successfully accomplished.

THE FINANCIAL SITUATION.

The New York correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* cabled on Sunday that the Treasury will withdraw eight million dollars from the local banks within the next few days, which sum will doubtless be exceeded by remittances of bullion from the provinces to a greater amount, because the time for hoarding up money is apparently over and the daily rate for loans in New York is high.

HUGE AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY EXPORTS.

A cable from New York yesterday reports that six steamers have been chartered for the transport of agricultural machinery to Europe, and that other ships are expected to be hired in a short time. The cargoes of these six ships, with the shipments by other vessels which are to follow in the next four months, are estimated to amount in value to 25 million dollars.

NEWS FROM FRANCE.

FLOODS IN THE SOUTH.

It is reported from Paris that Cannes and its environs are inundated with floods.

THE FINANCIAL AND NAVY BUDGETS.

A Paris message states that the Senate has passed the Financial and Navy budgets.

PANIC IN A THEATRE.

A fearful panic occurred on Sunday in a theatre in Valence during a cinematograph performance, in consequence of a cry of fire. In the rush for the exits which followed one girl was killed, two children were severely injured and a number of others slightly hurt.

MYSTERY OF A BALLOON.

On Sunday, in the neighbourhood of Ferrières St. Hilaire (Department of Eure) a balloon came to the ground without any occupants. The envelope was torn, and the car contained some ballast, an overcoat, a hand-bag, a revolver, and various aeronautic instruments. The envelope bore the name Mallet, Paris. M. Mallet, upon being interviewed by a reporter, said it was not impossible that the balloon might be the "Fernando Due", which ascended some weeks ago at Bordeaux and since then had been missing.

NEWS FROM RUSSIA.

VLADIVOSTOK MUTINEERS SENTENCED.

The Commandant of the fortress of Vladivostok has confirmed the decision of the Court Martial with regard to the 75 men charged with armed mutiny on board the gunboat "Mandshur." Five of these were sentenced to death, 16 to imprisonment with hard labour for life; 26 were assigned to arrest detachments and six to disciplinary battalions; the remaining 20 being acquitted.

THE UNREST IN INDIA.

The Moderates represented by two-thirds of all the delegates to the National Congress at Surat have worked out a new Congress organisation, with the object of demanding Colonial self-government in a constitutional manner. They hope that, now the Extremists have been disposed of, the Government will support them and allow the Mahomedans to take a more extended part in the