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This being Ascension Day, our next number will appear on Saturday morning.

THE CLIMAX OF THE ENTENTE.

(From our London Correspondent.)

London, May 25.

There is nothing quite so stupid as a stupid tradition, and it is one of those wretched things which are almost impossible to shake off or to live down. Not the least stupid of traditions is the one which makes England a phlegmatic, undemonstrative, unemotional country. What nonsense! England is both demonstrative and emotional. Witness her literature, her drama, her social system, her art, her politics, her socialia for the prevention of cruelty, her small army and her foreign policy. All these things severally are conceived on the plan of charitableness and elasticity of feeling. Of his pity no one is more lavish than the Englishman, and certainly no one is less ashamed of hiding it. This intolerable tradition by which Englishmen are represented as wooden creatures lapsing occasionally into a grim smile, as Imperial mannikins fashioned after the Roman-republican model, and susceptible of but two emotions, to wit, admiration of heroic stoicism and profound veneration for the peerage—this stupidest of all stupid traditions has received a blow. Today London is giving signs of a lyric mood. The President of the French Republic is our guest; the matter has been in the air for a week past. As always in these cases, the streets have begun by presenting the appearance of a thinned forest of slender red trunks, and ended by looking as nearly as possible like a kaleidoscope.

So far, so good. The decorations were as excellent as decorations can be. There were flags and garlands, roses red and white, Union Jack and Tricolour everywhere in brotherly harmony. The great question was whether it was going to rain. The procession was due at St. James's Palace at about half-past-four. At two o'clock the weather was fairly bright; at half-past-two it was raining; at three the sun was shining as though rain were an impossibility; at half-past-three Stygian darkness and heavy rain-drops. Anyone who knows England will recognize the kind of day it has been—one of those perfectly dishonest days which are called "showery" but which really deserve a severer epithet. There was just a sporting chance of an hour's fine weather, and, wonderfully enough, the heavens abstained. What could have been more charming—and more French? The spirit of Paris has infected us, and even our intractable atmosphere.

One had but to breathe the morning air today to feel that this was the memorable day when the entente was to reach its climax. More than ever was the impression borne out in the streets that half Paris was in London. Anywhere within a hundred yards of Charing Cross one could study an infinite number of French types, and it was pleasant to see how some of the good French people were beginning to throw off the restraint which a foreign country imposes on their demeanour. It is amusing to watch Frenchmen trying to put a check on the vehemence of gesticulation, and paying English habits the compliment of imitation. But I saw a little incident equally diverting in the opposite direction. A globular French gentleman, whose round head, round eyes, round chin, round

figure seemed all to have been reproduced in the cut of his clothes, which could not show a single corner, was engaged in conversation with a young French lady just outside Charing Cross Station. She was carrying his coat and umbrella; he was obviously, implacably wrathful—and he was as wrathful as if he had been at St. Lazare instead of at Charing Cross. Not until all possible gesticulations of displeasure and despair had been exhausted did he take his coat and umbrella from the fair hands. The tragic hopelessness of the young woman was also quite picturesque. How she ran round the corner to the hotel! Perhaps it was to fetch the article she had forgotten, and perhaps it was because of that omission that the gentleman had been angry. Who knows? The London streets are full of romances.

Of such incidents, insignificant in themselves but illuminating in the aggregate, London is full just now. Every now and again along the line of the waiting crowds one heard the guttural sound of the French language, and one saw unwonted figures. The crowds, having waited long and patiently, had their reward. The procession was really a fine one, and its most pleasing feature was the obvious satisfaction of M. Fallières. He smiled a broad, good-humoured smile, raised his broad hat, smiled again, and bowed again. The King, who sat at his side, looked exceedingly well, and also exceedingly pleased; while opposite him were the Prince of Wales and Prince Arthur of Connaught. The crowds, even in St. James's Street, which is apt to take on the cold demeanour of clubs and fashionable chambers, were most enthusiastic. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved, and there was much shouting. There will be more pageantry tonight, more tomorrow, and still more on Wednesday, when the President will go to the opera in State. That is always a fine spectacle and well worth seeing.

GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL VISIT.

King Edward and President Fallières paid a visit together to the Franco-British Exhibition on Tuesday evening, their appearance being the occasion of a great ovation by the large crowd present.

The Paris journal *Le Temps*, commenting upon the speeches delivered at the State banquet at Buckingham Palace on Monday evening, refers to the objects of the entente cordiale and says that the support accorded by the French Army in an European war in which England might be involved would be of inestimable value to the London Government. Would England's support to France, however, in a war in which the latter might become embroiled, be of equal value to France? This question, says the paper, is the most serious that a French statesman can put to himself, and must be answered honestly. As things stand at present the diplomatic support of England would be extremely helpful to France prior to war, but as soon as war had actually broken out such assistance would avail France but little. Naval victories won by England would not keep a single cannon, nay! not even a single man away from the French frontier. England could by no manner of means afford the same assistance to France at the present moment as the Russian Army could. In a word, an alliance with England would benefit France but little. But all this could be changed and such an alliance would be of enormous value if the English Army were reformed;

not only in its organisation but also in its recruiting system, so as to make it competent to undertake energetic warfare on the Continent. If it was in a position to land at some point and so to distract the enemy's attention, so that the forces opposed to France in an encounter would be diminished, the British Army would become a second Russian Army to France, in which case, declares *Le Temps*, and with this single reservation, "we can heartily echo the sentiments voiced at Buckingham Palace on Monday."

The Prince and Princess of Wales gave a banquet in honour of M. Fallières at Marlborough House on Tuesday night, at the conclusion of which the guests proceeded to Buckingham Palace to attend a State ball. No fewer than 1,800 invitations had been issued for this function.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

During Tuesday's sitting Mr. O'Grady (*Labour*) asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the present relations existing between the Russian Government and various members of the first and second Duma, the British Government would take steps to prevent the contemplated meeting between King Edward and the Czar. Mr. Asquith, in reply, said the King had not yet returned the visit paid by the Czar to the British Court on the occasion of his accession to the throne, and that in addition His Majesty still owed the Czar the usual ceremonial visit resultant upon his accession, a visit which had been paid to the rulers and heads of all other States in Europe. Moreover, King Edward and Queen Alexandra had not had an opportunity of seeing their nephew and niece for more than seven years. Concluding, Mr. Asquith declared that the foreign relations of both countries could only receive benefit from this visit, while it would in no way influence the internal policy of either.

Mr. O'Grady said that England had always been considered the asylum of representative institutions of all kinds, and asked the Prime Minister whether he was aware of the fact that one hundred members of the first and fifty of the second Duma were being treated like ordinary criminals in Siberia, where they were incarcerated in prisons pending the judicial enquiry which would never be held. Further, was the Prime Minister aware that official and non-official murders in Russia remained unpunished, and that the instigators of such crimes were decorated by the Czar; that people who were hostile to the Government disappeared in a mysterious manner from among their friends and families? (applause). Mr. O'Grady appealed to the House to make representations to His Majesty the King to divest the Royal visit of its official and representative character.

Mr. Asquith expressed his regret that the internal affairs of a foreign State had been made the subject of interrogations in the House, no matter what State was concerned. He hoped that the reasons prompting the visit in question had been made sufficiently plain. As to Mr. O'Grady's plea that the meeting between the two monarchs be divested of its official character and his contention that the Government had a precedent to such action in the fact of England having severed her diplomatic relations with Serbia in consequence of certain circumstances analogous to existing conditions in Russia, the Prime Minister said that there could be no analogy between the two cases.

Mr. Ward (*Labour*) asked whether the Prime Minister had considered the dangers which might threaten the King in view of present conditions in Russia. No answer was given to this question.

(Continued on page 2.)