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## SPECIAL NOTICE.

Widespread interest has been aroused by the publication in several newspapers of a report to the effect that certain monster battle-ships now building in north of England shipyards, under orders from Brazil, are in reality designed to become units of the Mikado's battle-fleet. Our esteemed contemporary the *New York Herald* has recently devoted columns to this report, weighing the pros and cons with commendable precision.

In tomorrow's issue, however, we shall print an article on this subject—based upon information received from a most authentic source—which will throw an entirely different light upon the matter. Everybody interested in the sphere of European politics and the balance of power in Europe should not fail to procure a copy of the *Daily Record* tomorrow (Friday).

## THE SENTIMENTALIST IN ENGLISH POLITICS.

In one of his essays Macaulay draws a distinction between politicians proper and what he calls political fanciers, that is to say, people who choose their political colour arbitrarily and more from caprice than any reasoned process of conviction. If the distinction was a just one when Whigs and Tories still divided the political world, and when the names of Liberal and Conservative were still vague forces with which progressive intellects tended to juggle, it is indeed a just one today, when almost every week produces theorists anxious to put their individual dogmas into immediate practice. On the one hand, we hear that the party system is breaking down, that men are no longer content to merge their personal consciences for the sake of an ultimate point of agreement, that Government ought to be conducted by a permanent body of democratic representatives, removable on personal, not on party, grounds. On the other hand, we are asked to believe that what is called by one section the process of decomposition is in fact only the process of reconstruction, and that the inevitable antagonism between the progressive and the conservative elements in the State is merely finding for itself a fresh basis. On either assumption it is difficult to accept any prophesying, but it is at least possible to suggest some reasons for the indeterminate character of present-day politics.

We have frequently maintained in these columns that politics is becoming increasingly a profession for specialists, that a Prime Minister is driven to act more and more on the advice of his subordinates and is less able than ever to justify the figure which makes him the omniscient pilot of the Ship of State. A Government going into power on one programme will frequently find itself engaged upon a totally different one before it has been a year in office; and not merely through the sheer force of public opinion, which is expressed today as it could never have been expressed half a century ago, but through the independence claimed and asserted by the heads of the various departments. The spirit of co-operation, so clearly manifested in all branches of intellectual activity, has not failed to infuse itself into political life, with the result that the complexity of modern problems is being treated with a corresponding complexity of method. The ancient function of the House of Commons as the mouthpiece of public opinion has been largely usurped by the Press; and the system of carrying through Government measures by the weight of party organization has, since the time of Disraeli, been raised to the point of scientific precision. From these circumstances arises the curious anomaly of a largely heterodox majority in the House of Commons voting in one direction and talking in another; and, further, of a Cabinet fervent as a whole yet lukewarm in several places. Were this simply evidence of some temporary dislocation one might possibly find parallels in the past; but it has its roots deep in the composition of the House of Commons and in the spirit in which candidates present themselves to their electors. For the candidate to declare himself of this or that political colour, for him to point to the label of Liberal, Conservative, Radical,

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or Labourite, is not sufficient; he must declare allegiance to some doctrine which is not necessarily co-extensive with party cleavages. This is a new and significant manifestation which tends so far to tie the hands of an Administration that it prefers to dissociate its labours as much as possible from the troubled atmosphere of the House of Commons. The days of eloquence, also, are over. It is no longer possible—at all events, there is no recent instance of such a thing—for a great Minister to win over the House to some new idea merely by a brilliant presentation of his case. The individuals who constitute the House are pledged to their electorate and dare not act independently of them. At the same time, it is quite impracticable that most of the important measures of Government should go direct to the country. As a consequence, measures are rushed through the House by large majorities after debates that do not tally with the division figures, by a Cabinet anxious at once to conciliate public opinion and to carry out its ideas. Hence the real difficulty of arriving at any reasonable compromise which should make the House of Commons a help rather than a hindrance to Ministers and which should restore to it something of the old critical spirit and something of a true share in the work of administration.

Under these circumstances, and having due regard to the tendency of the Cabinet to absorb all real business while leaving much responsibility with its supporters in the House of Commons, should matters have to go before the country, the agitation for the widening of the franchise in every direction would appear to be a symptom of restlessness and dissatisfaction which is not quite properly traced to its cause. It is not the case that the franchise is inadequate but that there is no longer any harmony in the large masses misnamed parties, and that the Cabinet tends to take advantage of the circumstance to act rapidly, effectively and independently. Whether this is an evil in itself, whether it is a proof of the failure of democracy or the imminence of Socialism, are disputed points. It is well, however, to realize the facts and to be prepared for comprehensive changes. Meanwhile, let us protest against the aimlessness and baselessness of the political faddism current in many places, for that becomes a disruptive force whenever it becomes widespread. There was, after all, a great depth of wisdom in the Greek principle which made all citizens take one side or another in political strife. Unless one is an autoerat, actually or potentially strong individual views are purely negative; they represent so much efficiency subtracted from one side or the other.

## GENERAL NEWS.

### NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

#### THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Col. Lockwood asked the Secretary for War what steps, if any, he intended to take with regard to the facts forwarded to him on the subject of the military men from a foreign nation who had been resident for the last two years, on and off, in the neighbourhood of Epping, and who had been sketching and photographing the whole district and communicating their information directly to their own country.

Mr. Haldane replied that as the laws of this country stood at present, everybody, whether he was an Englishman or a foreigner, was at liberty to go about, and, if he liked, to sketch and photograph, except in places where there were fortifications. Nor was he aware that in other civilised

countries the law was materially different; nor if he were put to it would he be able to draft a law which would exclude the very people who would be dangerous. He wished to add that he neither attached much importance as to the result of this proceeding nor was he quite as certain as the hon. member was about the facts.

Col. Lockwood asked the right hon. gentleman whether he was aware that in foreign countries where similar proceedings were carried out there was a speedy method of ending it.

Mr. Haldane: If you go to a fortification, either here or abroad, you will find yourself very speedily dealt with; but you may go and sketch over the whole of Germany, so far as I am aware.

Answering a question by Mr. James Hope, Mr. Haldane said not long ago he heard of an apparently most authenticated case being discovered of three foreign officers who were taking observations. They were living apparently in great luxury in a house in the country, with motors and champagne (laughter). On careful investigation he discovered that they were three gentlemen of quite different character, not in the least associated with military matters or anything so desirable. That was the kind of thing which was constantly going on.

During Tuesday's sitting M. Dillon requested the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to give the House some information respecting the situation in Persia, the memorandum of opinions regarding Persia expressed at the meeting of King Edward and the Czar of Russia at Reval, and the communication sent to King Edward by the Shah bearing on the state of affairs in Teheran. Mr. Dillon also wished to know whether the British Embassy in Teheran had, for the second time, been surrounded by Persian troops on the 5th of this month.

Sir Edward Grey, in reply, stated that the documents relative to the case of refugees in the Teheran Embassy would remain unpublished provided the matter was satisfactorily settled, as he hoped it would be. The surrounding of the Embassy by troops had already been made the subject of protests and a satisfactory explanation was anticipated. The affair was, however, still unsettled.

From a reliable St. Petersburg source we hear that the Russian representative in Teheran was charged by his Government to support the protest made by the British Ambassador against the posting of sentinels around the British Embassy. This would appear to indicate that the two Powers are in complete accord so far as their mutual policy in Persia is affected.

### THE BERESFORD-SCOTT EPISODE.

London, July 8.

It now appears that the difference of opinion between Rear-Admiral Sir Percy Scott and Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, commander-in-chief of the Channel Fleet, has been settled in an amicable manner, since the local newspapers report that upon receipt of the order from Lord Charles Beresford, the carrying out of which it is alleged would have endangered two armoured cruisers, Rear-Admiral Scott drew his superior officer's attention to its impolicy; whereupon Lord Charles immediately signalled that he was completely in accordance with Rear-Admiral Scott's opinion, and the order in question was cancelled.

Details of Lord Beresford's alleged extraordinary order are contained in *The Times* of Tuesday, as follows:—"We have received the following account from a correspondent of an occurrence which took place last week in the cruiser squadron attached to the Channel Fleet: The "Good Hope" and "Argyll" were abreast of one another on a parallel course, 1,200 yards apart. Lord Charles Beresford made a signal to them ordering the "Argyll" to turn 16 points to starboard and the "Good Hope" to turn 16 points to port. Had the signal been obeyed the "Argyll" and "Good Hope" would have collided, as did the "Victoria" and "Camperdown." The "Argyll" obeyed the signal, but the "Good Hope," to avoid a collision, disobeyed the signal."

(Until more authentic data respecting this occurrence are to hand, we must refuse to credit such an extraordinary story. Admiral Beresford has won world-wide renown as a tactician and

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