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THE POLITICAL FIRMAMENT.

(From an English correspondent.)

The journeys of King Edward always cause a stir among the political seers. The art of diplomacy is the closest parallel our age can find to the science of astrology; both are mysteries to the vulgar, both are hedged in with curious superstitions, both are suspected by enlightened spirits among the uninitiated. The difficulty today is to determine on who are the initiated and who are not. Great statesmen like Sir Edward Grey and Prince Bülow, great journalists like the late Mr. Lavino or Professor Vambéry, great powers who move unknown behind the scenes in politics and society—these are figures whose opinion clearly influences the course of events in one direction or another. But of the Babel of unknown voices arising whenever an event of seeming importance shows itself, whose are we to single out as true or just or wise? King Edward meets the Emperor at Cronberg. Well and good; no man can object to that. There is still much to hope when the heads of two alleged unfriendly States spend a day together in obvious cordiality. It is nothing, says one journal; it is an epoch-making meeting, says another; it is the beginning of the limitation of armaments, says a third; it is of small importance, says a fourth, because we cannot expect the King to initiate a policy of his own, and the reduction of navies would certainly be a new policy. Strip all these readings of the heavens of their technical adornments; reduce the matter to a statement of logical certainties; eliminate pious hopes and sentimental digressions. The result often is neither more or less than this, that somebody knows something which somebody else has had from a leading personage and dare not tell it outright. This, at all events, appears to be the Continental practice. In England only one journal has in the past been officially inspired, and then to a limited degree, while it is doubtful whether today it enjoys the same access to the political holy of holies as it enjoyed in years gone by. English newspapers confine themselves to arguing from the facts to probabilities; Continental newspapers diffuse sand and light in equal parts and with a deliberate show of innocence and independence. It is charming to see how consistently the decencies are maintained, and wonderful, to a close observer, how narrowly prophecy follows on experience.

The English people, with its keen instinct for the practical in politics, shows small taste for the cloudy speculations on foreign policy so acceptable to the newspaper public here and elsewhere on the Continent. It is not only that England is isolated, that it has never had the experience of a Napoleon on the Thames, a Frederick in Surrey, or a Charles at Winchester. The old policy of the balance of power is no longer England's, and England has as much interest in Europe, is as much a participator in dangers and benefits as Germany or Austria-Hungary. It is not, therefore, in the "splendid isolation" of British policy that we must seek the cause of the difference in standpoint. That difference is temperamental and traditional. The suggestion that England shrinks from a far-sighted policy will not bear analysis, so that it is not simply to an exaggerated prudence that the reticence of journals and politicians alike must be ascribed. Where steps like the Anglo-Japanese alliance or the Anglo-Russian Convention are taken amid intelligent discussion and enthusiasm, the development of events in Turkey or the effect of royal visits are subjects on which there is reserve and patience. Take the observation a degree further and you get the cardinal principle of an Englishman's well-being, the ancient aphorism on the minding of one's own business. With that key you may unlock the most sacred cabinets in individual and public consciences in England.

Referring to the present situation the *Vossische Zeitung* declares that British policy is not to be affected by any considerations of sentiment. That would have been true had the journal added the words "except British sentiment." The tradition of an England playing arbiter in the quarrels of the world is not dead; it is not even dying. For the present, the tradition is finding expression in the visits of King Edward and in the pacific results to be hoped from a well-balanced ring of friendships.

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For the future there is preparing itself the vast ideal of an Empire too strong to seek war and strong enough to impose peace. Not insolent aloofness, nor interested aloofness can any longer be laid to the charge of British foreign policy, for beneath the old caution something new is stirring, something that the cosmopolitanism of the last two or three generations has called into life. Possibly this is clearly reflected in the political heavens, however contradictory may be the report of the seers.

GENERAL NEWS.

KING EDWARD AT MARIENBAD.

Marienbad, August 16.
During the performance at the theatre yesterday, at which King Edward was present, a young Hungarian, seated in the tiers above the Royal box, fell down in an epileptic fit. The ladies seated near were much alarmed. The Hungarian was quickly brought outside, where Dr. Ott attended him; the commotion, however, did not escape the King's notice. Crowds waited in the pouring rain outside the theatre to witness the King's departure.

His Majesty's three weeks' stay at Marienbad, says *Reuter*, is by no means a holiday. Not only is the "cure" very strenuous, but batches of letters arrive daily by post, and important documents, which require the King's personal attention, are forwarded twice a week by King's messengers.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

STRONG LANGUAGE BY MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL.

NO QUARREL WITH GERMANY.

London, August 16.
At the outset of his speech at Swansea on Saturday, Mr. Winston Churchill, the President of the Board of Trade, said he was astonished and grieved at the wild sayings that were indulged in about Germany. He alluded in particular to the speech lately made by Earl Cromer in the House of Lords. The alarmists had no cause whatever for panic. Great Britain was an island. No Government that might, perhaps in the near future, be at the helm of State would deviate one step from the naval policy which in fact secured the country from invasion from without. All parties were bound to help forward those reasonable measures of maritime defence which ensured the development of the country, freed it from the curse of militarism that afflicted the Continent, and never implied a menace to any other

Power. "In the second place," continued Mr. Churchill, "I say there is no collision of the elementary and obviously important interests between Great Britain and Germany. In all parts of the world Germans are among our best customers; if the door were closed to them, I know not how the injury to our commerce would be made good. As our material interests are in no danger, the only result to be expected from a war between the two countries would be a most frightful catastrophe. Weak-minded people have expressed the opinion that it would be worth while to fight for the sake of commerce. A war of one month would destroy more property than commerce could amass in five years. We have been told that our Colonies could be alienated from us. Nothing could alter the fate of great communities like Canada, Australia, South Africa, and India, if they go their own way and follow their own destiny, which would not be altered as the result of a war between European Powers. What would be the prize for a fight between Great Britain and Germany? Nothing but tropical plantations, and small coaling stations scattered about here and there. Let all the snapping and growling in the newspapers and the London clubs go on as it may, the two peoples have nothing to fight about, no prize for which, no grounds on which, a war would be possible. There are not ten thousand people in Germany who seriously think of committing such a hellish and heinous crime, and in England, I believe, not nearly as many."

PROPOSED LOAN FOR NAVAL EXPENDITURE.

London, August 17.
The *Daily Telegraph* learns that, in view of the rivalry in naval armaments, the Government is considering the expediency of raising a loan of £100,000,000 sterling. Several financiers have undertaken to provide that sum at a nominal price. It is believed that this plan will prevent the Budget being unsettled. An influential group in the Cabinet is in favour of the plan, which is in harmony with the declaration that the two-Power standard will under all circumstances be maintained. The *Daily Telegraph* comments on the article in the *Westminster Gazette* of Saturday last, which in cautious terms argues in favour of the loan project, as one that should make it clear to all parties what course England will adopt if the situation "on the other side" remains unchanged.

THE NEW MILITARY AIRSHIP.

(From our own correspondent.)

London, August 16.
The reconstructed military airship "Nulli Secundus" had a most successful trial trip on Friday evening, which was witnessed only by those who were "in the know." Yesterday morning another run was determined upon, but this was kept a secret until the last moment.

The weather being favourable, a good many spectators assembled on Cove Common and Jersey Brow on the off chance of seeing "Dirigible No. 2," as the airship is now officially named, make another ascent. Soon after noon they were rewarded for their vigilance, for the great doors of the shed were opened and a company of sappers appeared on the scene. "Nulli Secundus's" successor was brought out, and, gaily trimmed with the Union Jack, presented a gay and, at the same time, a very serviceable appearance.

Clear of the enclosure, the ship was soon let go, and it ascended some 200 feet, when observations were taken. The sun shone out brightly, and there was an almost cloudless sky, but the wind, though not exactly fresh, was very slightly shifty, and blowing at times almost dead against the ship. If it was intended to go to London the destination was also kept secret, but when a start was made the bow of the "Dirigible" pointed just in that direction. It went off at a rattling good pace facing the wind. It did not go over the south camp, but passed above South Farnborough, going directly over the post office and thence towards north camp station, South-Eastern Railway, and Foxhill.

When last seen from Farnborough Common it was heading for Camberley, and it was generally understood to be making for the White City.

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