

THE BALKANS. IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS.

St. Petersburg, December 23.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has issued a circular Note to the Russian representatives accredited to the Powers signatory to the Treaty of Berlin. From this Note it is gathered that, while a conference on the Balkan question appears unavoidable, both Russia and Austria will mutually concede a portion of their demands, an assumption which renders a peaceable solution of the entire question at least probable. Russia does not hesitate to characterise the recent action of Austria and Bulgaria as a direct breach of the Berlin Treaty, and upholds the principle that this Treaty can only be amended subject to the unanimous approval of the signatory Powers.

In this connection the Vienna *Politische Korrespondenz*, according to a telegram from the Austrian capital, announces the pending publication by the Austrian Cabinet of a similar Note embodying the entire correspondence which has passed between Vienna and Petersburg on the subject of the Balkan dispute. Steps will be taken to ensure the wide-spread circulation of this Note. Bulgaria has already issued a Note to the signatory Powers, in which it is stated that the proclamation of independence by the Kingdom had taken place entirely on Bulgaria's own initiative; it was a necessary step, and was absolutely dissociated from aggressive intentions towards Turkey. The Note goes on to assert the readiness of Bulgaria to indemnify the Ottoman Empire for any material losses sustained. The Turkish policy, as outlined in the speech from the Throne, is criticised, and the accusation that the Bulgarian independence declaration had instigated the action of Austria with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina is repudiated. It is alleged that the vacillating policy adopted towards the question by Turkey has caused the Bulgarian Government uneasiness, and has necessitated the taking of measures to ensure the guarding of Bulgarian interests. The Powers are requested to join in a concerted movement whereby the perilous state of tension existing in the Balkans may be ended. That the unsatisfactory situation of today is not the fault of Bulgaria is, concludes the Note, evidenced by the strictly correct attitude towards Turkey which King Ferdinand's Government has maintained throughout.

QUEEN WILHELMINA.

EXPECTATION OF AN HEIR.

The Ministerial statement, read out in the Chamber at The Hague on Tuesday, that Queen Wilhelmina is in the happy expectation of an heir to the Throne, has aroused great enthusiasm throughout Holland, and is believed to foreshadow the happy event for which the Dutch people have been hoping for several years. After the reading of the statement the President, M. Rosell, said he was sure that the Chamber had heard the communication with a feeling of pleasurable emotion, and that all present were filled with a respectful and sincere desire that, with the blessing of God, Her Majesty's hopes would be realised.

At this juncture an extremely painful incident occurred. A Socialist deputy, M. Troelstra, rose, and amid a storm of hoots and hisses said that, speaking on behalf of some members of the Chamber, he desired to dissociate himself from any demonstration in connection with the Ministerial announcement.

MISSOURI AND THE OIL TRUST.

DRASTIC LEGAL MEASURES.

Jefferson (Missouri), December 23.

The Supreme Court of Missouri has rendered a decision by which the Standard Oil Company of Indiana and the Republic Oil Company of Missouri are precluded from carrying on business within the confines of the State of Missouri. The liquidation of the Waters Pierce Oil Company of St. Louis has also been ordered. All three companies have been fined a sum of 50,000 dollars.

SUICIDE OF NEW YORK BUSINESS MAN.

New York, December 23.

Mr. Frederick A. Burnham, former president of the Mutual Reserve Life Insurance Company, was found dead in his apartment today. The cause of death was asphyxiation, and the police believe it to be a case of suicide.

THE NEOTHOLIC AGE.

PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT UNEARTHED.

Stuttgart, December 23.

An extensive settlement, believed to date back as far as the Neolithic Age, has been discovered in

the neighbourhood of Heutingsheim, district of Ludwigsburg. So far the disclosure of twenty-six human habitations has rewarded the efforts of those engaged in the work of excavation. Considerable scientific importance is attached to this interesting discovery.

GAOL FOR MR. GOMPERS.

AMERICAN LABOUR LEADERS CONVICTED.

Washington, December 23.

Mr. Samuel Gompers, President of the American Labour Union, was today sentenced to one year's imprisonment for contempt of court. The offence arose in connection with proceedings brought by the Bucks Stove and Range Company. Mr. Mitchell, Vice-President of the Union, and Mr. Morrison, the Secretary, were sentenced to nine and six months' imprisonment respectively.

The proceedings against these labour leaders originated in the fact of the above-named company being placed on the black list published in the official organ of the Union, which list contained firms whose products were to be boycotted by Union members. A judicial decree ordering the Bucks Company to be struck off the black list was ignored by the Union's official organ, with the result that proceedings for contempt were forthwith instituted against the three leading officials. All the defendants have appealed against the sentences of imprisonment.

AMERICA AND HER NEIGHBOURS.

ARBITRATION TREATY WITH ARGENTINE.

Washington, December 23.

An arbitration treaty with the Argentine Republic was signed today by Mr. Root, Secretary of State. Similar treaties now exist between the United States and almost all the civilised countries of the globe.

THE CONGO FREE STATE.

FRANCE AS POSSIBLE PURCHASER.

Paris, December 23.

The *Echo de Paris* reports that the negotiations between France and Belgium respecting the former's rights of purchase of the Congo territory are approaching conclusion. According to the new agreement, which is expected to be signed at the end of this week, France retains her right to purchase the Free State in the event of its ultimate abandonment by the Belgian Government.

DANISH ROYAL VAULTS PILLAGED.

WREATHS STOLEN FROM COFFINS.

Roeskild, December 23.

The royal vaults of the local Cathedral were last night broken into by thieves, who abstracted several costly gold and silver wreaths, among them being one presented by President Fallières. The indications are that more than one individual was concerned in the outrage. Access to the church was obtained through a window, and the vaults were forced open. The wreaths stolen were from the coffins of King Frederick VII., King Christian IX., and Queen Louise. The affair had evidently been carefully planned, and so far the police have not succeeded in obtaining a clue.

KING EDWARD AND THE BOY.

AMUSING STORY FROM BRIGHTON.

An amusing anecdote relating to the King's recent stay at Brighton was related on Thursday evening by the Rev. Cecil Maunsell, vicar of Thorpe Malsor, to a gathering of his parishioners, who made a presentation to him in celebration of his return from Brighton, where he has been staying for the benefit of his health.

The rev. gentleman, who vouched for the authenticity of the story, which has since been published in the *Globe*, said that a few days ago a boy walked up to His Majesty as he was strolling along the esplanade at Hove and said to him:—

"Mister, can you tell me the time?"

"Yes," replied the King, taking out his watch, "it is a quarter to one."

The boy then informed His Majesty that he had "been waiting two hours to see the blooming King," adding, "I am not going to wait any longer."

"Neither shall I," replied the King, as he resumed his walk. His Majesty himself, said Mr. Maunsell, afterwards related the incident with much gusto.

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

The *Chicago Record Herald* gives the following example of the a posteriori method equal to any given in logic treatises. "You and that little Wattles boy seem to play very nicely together," said Johnny's mother. "I am glad there is one boy in the neighbourhood that you can get along with." "Yes," replied Johnny. "I lick him every morning, and then he's nice to me all day."

TARIFF REVISION A REALITY.

(From our New York correspondent.)

Hardly a man in the United States believes seriously that the tariff revision planned or contemplated will cause considerable reduction of duty on any important staple of produce or manufacture. The protective principle is too deeply rooted for that, and the representatives of protection will be in a majority in the next Congress. Contrary to first impressions, however, it is felt that the public tariff revision proceedings recently commenced before the Customs Committee of the House of Representatives will not end in a farce. In the first week of the enquiry the only witnesses examined were representatives of industries that are already well protected; one and all of whom advocated an *increase* of existing duties. Manufacturers of chemicals and drugs, of colours, perfumery, and volatile oils, spoke in favour of considerable increases of duty in order to shut out competition from Scotland and Germany. The Californian wine-growers called for a rise in the duties on sparkling and other wines; and so one interesting group of claimants followed another. It was quite a refreshing change to hear occasionally a modification of the tariff proposed instead of an increase. The friends of revision on a falling scale are not yet numerous in Washington. That is a striking fact; Mr. Taft's recent declarations are therefore all the more gratifying, that he will do all in his power to make tariff revision a reality, and that he takes the promise seriously that was given in the Republican platform of a thorough overhaul of the tariff. In this connection, Mr. Taft has said on various occasions that it is his fixed intention, as soon as possible after he has taken over the Presidency, to summon a special Session of Congress carrying out the revision of the tariff. He has also pointed out to the friends of revision that now is their time for bringing their arguments before the Washington Committee; and so it has come about that most of the evidence given in the second week of the Committee's work has come from them. Another remarkable fact is that some of the protectionist witnesses before the Committee have unreservedly admitted that the present duties secure them such high profits that even the protectionist members of the Committee have rubbed their eyes in astonishment.

The endeavours of the Government to help on the work of revision by instructing American Consuls in Europe to collect materials for estimating the cost of producing certain classes of goods, have met with little success. In many cases information has been refused by European manufacturers, obviously from fear that it would only be used as a means of tightening the customs screw. This suspicion has been embodied in several prominent German newspapers, in the columns of which attempts have on more than one occasion been made to brand travelling officials of the United States Treasury and State Department as "spies." While this attitude is quite uncalculated, there is still something to be said for the grievances which prompted it. There is, in fact, good reason to believe that the conscientious activity of such agents has considerably influenced the Government standpoint towards the imposition of even higher duties on certain manufactured articles from Europe. Every possible measure has been taken for the protection of the American manufacturer and producer, without any regard for the interests of Europe. Naturally, no reasonable exception can be taken to this policy; but neither can Americans complain of the suspicion with which their methods are regarded by outsiders. The question of tariff revision is, I believe, destined to loom largely in the near future. It involves so many powerful interests that there is a certain amount of astonishment expressed in America at the lack of really energetic resistance to revision proposals up to date. Possibly the Trust magnates and their myrmidons are conserving their strength until such time as the tariff wall is actually threatened with overthrow. The position of Mr. Andrew Carnegie, which I outlined in a recent despatch, is not believed to be representative. He has long since "made his pile," and cannot therefore entirely hope to escape the obvious imputation. His views are certainly not shared by his colleagues in the steel industry, who are incensed at what they regard as his selfish desertion.

Humour has entered into the proceedings of the Ways and Means Committee now sitting at Washington to consider the tariff revision question. One day last week, says a New York report, the discovery was made that the towels used in the members' toilet rooms bear the embarrassing legend "Made in Great Britain." It is predicted that they will promptly be displaced by the home made article. The chairs in the committee room were also found labelled underneath "Vienna, Austria," and it is said that other furnishings in the Ways and Means Committee room were imported. When the gypsum merchants appeared before the committee they pointed to the plaster on the walls of the committee room as having been manufactured from gypsum imported from Nova Scotia. This goes to show that the advocates of a protective policy who have been clamouring for home markets for American products went abroad to fit up the headquarters of the House Tariff Committee!