The Sun.

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For Whose Benefit?

The resolutions adopted yesterday by the Merchants Association concerning the ship purchase bill present squarely and state clearly the three great dangers inherent in that measure:

1. The danger of such legislation as a precedent in paternalism;

2. The danger to the future of an American mercantile marine which must in any case depend ultimately on private enterprise and management, and could not operate successfully either as the partner or as the competitor of the Government;

3. The danger of grave complications with the belligerent Powers, leading probably if not certainly to a clash with one or all of them.

It is to the last of these three perils that public attention is now most generally directed. The extent of the consequences involved is becoming apparent to the people as the Administration persists in demanding the passage of its ship purchase bill.

There is something else not quite so apparent.

Why is the Administration willing "to purchase a quarrel," as Senator ROOT puts it, "with every ship"?

What is behind this sinister proposal? For whose benefit or profit is the nation asked to incur the risk of war?

It is not a question of national honor and national courage, but of national common sense. Is there not war enough in the world to-day?

Another Important Ruling Under the Anti-Trust Law.

We have time and again emphasized in these columns the fact that the point in the anti-trust law upon which all interest converges is whether it is the organization or the conduct of a corporation that makes it offensive to the law. The corporation may be illegal for both of these reasons. It may have been so put together as to indicate that it was the definite purpose of its founders to make a distinct monopoly; and also the history of the corporation since it was brought into being may attest beyond possibility of dispute that the practices and general business conduct of its managers were those of unfairness, oppression and tyranny. But cases of this sort are very few. The old fashioned oppressive corporate monopolies have disappeared. No great business in the country is now run by boycotts, blacklisting, price cuttings for the mere purpose of ruining a competitor and other devices of that sort. These belong exclusively to the history of business in days long since past. To-day the all important question regarding the operation of the anti-trust law is:

"Given the case of a corporation which it is admitted from the start represents a merger of two originally separate companies that were to a greater or less extent competitors, Let it also be conceded that since the merger the operation of the combination has not only been inoffensive to the anti-trust law but has been demonstrated to be beneficial to the particular industry concerned and to the general business of the country as well. Is the mere fact that the organization of the combination involved the merger of two previously competing companies alone sufficient to bring it under the ban of the anti-trust law?"

Now, we believe we are correct in stating that it has been the uniform contention of the Government of the United States, represented by its Attorney-Generals, both Democratic and Republican, that an organization of the kind described is sufficient for a prosecution of the corporation by the Government authorities. The business interests of the country have, on the other hand, contended that while technically the organization of a corporation might be offensive in the manner described, in that it did undoubtedly represent a merger of two companies that had been to a greater or less extent competitors, yet the purpose and intent of the new organization and conclusive proof as to its legality or illegality could only be ascertained by an examination of the conduct and business practices of the new combination.

In the famous Standard Oil and American Tobacco cases the Supreme Court grappled with this question in what was thought at the time to be a decisive way. It held that a mere prima facie illegal organization was not in itself conclusive proof of illegality, and that a "rule of reason" as to the matter must prevail, that is to say, one based upon a common sense and comprehensive summary of the entire history and acts of the corporation.

It was generally supposed that this settled the matter so far as the courts were concerned, but events have shown that it did not. Last year the Circuit Court of the United States for the Eighth district handed down a decision in the case of the International Harvester Company in which it held, one of the three Judges of the court dissenting, that the Government view of the law was the only proper one, and all that was necessary to make a corporation offensive to the anti-trust law was to have it constituted by merger of two previously competing trade organizations; and yet since January 1 the Circuit Court in what is commonly known as the New Jersey district has, in the case of the Keystone Watch Company, unanimously held to an exactly different view. The Keystone Watch Company had acquired by legitimate purchase a controlling interest in the entire watch case making trade in our country. But the court held that this was in no sense illegal, and that no matter how large a company might become by growth, after the manner of the Keystone Watch Company, it was not an illegal combination as long as its trade conduct was fair. One of the business practices of the Keystone Watch Company was indeed objected to; but the court, in holding that this must stop, also declared that the mere fact of an illegal practice in one particular was not such as to justify the dissolution of the company or combination. The court in its decision referred in detail to the opposing decision handed down in the Harvester case by the other Circuit Court, and announced its disagreement with that decision.

So it seems as if the Supreme Court must travel over again the ground already traversed in the Standard Oil and American Tobacco cases and once more settle the law, this time in the all important Harvester and Steel Corporation cases, which are still awaiting the action of our judicial tribunals. We have no doubt whatever as to what the decision of the Supreme Court will be.

Some Things Mr. Wilson Does Not Consider.

Even the members of President WILSON'S executive family have at last been compelled to recognize the necessity of retrenchment in national expenditure. The taxpayers felt the burden of extravagance years ago. Representative FITZGERALD, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, has warned his colleagues of the danger into which they were running so many times that he must be permanently hoarse. Every man in the land who takes an intelligent interest in the affairs of the Government has foreseen disaster if the waste was not checked; that is, every man except one.

That sole and lonely exception is the President. Of all the citizens of the nation whose opinion on the subject is worth having he alone has watched with entire complacency the rise of expenses and the exhaustion of the Treasury. He it was who when the opportunity offered for him formally and effectively to urge economy on the lawmakers spoke sneeringly of an amount of money, in his own words, "running, it may be, into the millions," as "relatively small." Thus he deliberately discouraged that thrift which alone can reduce appropriations and gave heart to every applicant for an allowance of the taxpayers' money who could muster the courage to say that it was such a little one.

Moreover, the President, in the face of a deficit, undeterred by the imposition of a war tax in time of peace, heedless of the impoverishment of citizens that must seriously affect the originally unsatisfactory product of the income tax, firmly exercises the power of his office to compel the embarkation of the nation in a commercial enterprise of the most portentous international significance, acknowledging in advance that it may easily prove unprofitable, and cheerfully acquiesces in the passage of a river and harbor bill that, like its predecessors, is filled with indefensible projects that can only further strain the resources of the country.

It is true that while countenancing and encouraging such oppressive measures, while contributing to the depression and exhaustion of his fellow citizens, President WILSON loves his fellow man and enjoys rubbing elbows with him in the crowded market place. At present this intimate intercourse with the objects of his affection is denied the occupant of the White House, a fact which may fill him with regret. Yet from the circumstances of his isolation he may derive a certain degree of comfort, for those who enjoy the privilege he longs for are well aware that his sentiments toward his fellows are not notably reciprocated by the vast majority of those benighted beings, a regrettable condition of which he might become aware were he to mingle with them at present.

The Latest Developments in Mexico.

Cuernavaca, where Provisional President GARZA now makes his capital after a hasty exit from the city of Mexico, has changed a good deal, but not in its sun steeped landscapes, since the amorous TERRY wrote of it that "a more peaceful spot could scarcely be found on this side of Hesperides"; but for a refined literary man like the historian of the first battle of Juarez it is more congenial, and of course safer, than the capital upon which the ragged legions of OBREGON are marching. The preceding Provisional President, EULALIO GUTIERREZ, now a fugitive, could find no sanctuary in Cuernavaca because it was a Zapatista stronghold. Fate is kinder to the bearded GARZA, whose favorite weapon is the pen. If he is to be preserved to write heroics about his master VILLA, the rose gardens of Cuernavaca, although sadly neglected now, are the environment for him.

The city of Mexico has become only a place of call for national Governments in the new era of reconstruction. There is no stability about them; they are the most ephemeral of creations. The people have become accustomed to their entrances and exits, and receive the newcomers with apathy. To GARZA and the Zapatista guerrillas, who have decamped to their old stronghold in Morelos, succeed General ALVARADO OBREGON, one of the ablest of the Carranza leaders, and his fairly well disciplined troops. The change promises security and good order for the present, but General OBREGON will not be able to maintain himself unless he can retain his communications with Vera Cruz and obtain reenforcements.

The impression that General VILLA is losing ground in his campaign against the Carranza following because he has not occupied the capital, or supported the convention Government headed by GARZA, hardly seems to be warranted. General VILLA is said to be planning a methodical campaign to which the possession of the capital is not now essential. With his usual energy he is organizing and equipping columns to clear the country from Aguascalientes to the east coast, seize strategic points and turn the Carranzistas out of Tampico. He seems to be well supplied with funds and to be confident of success. A recent acquisition is "a fleet of aeroplanes," to locate the enemy's positions and attack them advantageously, he says. VILLA is the most progressive of the Constitutionalist commanders. His deliberate preparations may well cause apprehension among the Carranzistas. There seems to be no doubt that large shipments of arms and ammunition are going over the border. When VILLA is ready to strike, a skilfully planned and vigorous campaign will develop. If success is to be assured, Tampico, Puebla and Vera Cruz must be taken. The capital would then fall into his hands.

To have some idea of how things are going in Mexico it is important to keep an eye upon the movements of VILLA, who enjoys the prestige of being the convention's commander in chief.

"Society Children."

THE SUN wishes it could defend the newspapers of New York, and of the nation generally, against the indictment drawn against us by "A Self-Respecting Woman," whose letter we print elsewhere. We cannot. We agree heartily with the self-respecting woman. We are even unable to plead not guilty for ourselves. Our columns have sinned at times and in places.

It is a fact that the newspapers do misuse abominably the words "society," "wealthy," "prominent" and others of correlated signification. These terms have come to mean nothing, save only when they denote carelessness or imply tuft hunting. They are in the same category with "young, beautiful and expensively (or daintily) apparelled," when that familiar formula is applied to the female victim of a tragedy. We strongly suspect that not infrequently they appear in print as the product of subconscious cerebration.

Hereafter we hope they will disappear from at least one newspaper as the direct result of a definite process of conscious cerebration.

It seeks to all but close entirely the gates.

The matter is too fundamental.—*From the President's veto message.*

No literary test for President's messages!

Nothing could exceed Mr. WILSON'S respect for a political platform when its declarations coincide with his own patriotic desires.

"Old Reliable," a hen owned by Miss ELSIE DOBBINS of Caldwell, N. J., has laid 3,000 eggs in about thirteen years since reaching the age of capacity. Calculating that the average cost a dozen of "Old Reliable's" product has been 40 cents, the yield of her owner, excluding cost of feed and care, has been $1,200. Every year the eggs have brought $92.31, which is 5 per cent. interest on $1,846.20. Since hens do not produce eggs forever as principal produces interest, "Old Reliable" has never been worth $1,846.20 as she stood or was laying, but her value has been such as to provoke the calculation that 500 hens of equal industry and stamina would support a very large family in luxury, for their gross contributions in cash would be $46,155 a year, which moves one to speculate why the insurance of hens would not be a profitable business enterprise.

The gain of so many feet a day by the Allies in Flanders, when they make any gain at all, perhaps explains KITCHENER'S solicitude to enlist the professional football players.

Governor WHITMAN could tell why Mr. JEROME was kicked out of the Thaw case, and Mr. JEROME could tell why; and if THAW eventually goes free somebody may tell.

The highly commended steam roller operated by the Republicans in Albany appears to have too many chief engineers at present.

"Mother" JONES has decided that young Mr. ROCKEFELLER is not a burglar, and Mr. ROCKEFELLER is going to look at labor conditions through her spectacles for a while; and in consequence the world will hereafter revolve much more smoothly than it has in the past.

The saloon proprietor who was blackjacked while entering a dairy luncheon establishment will be careful hereafter of the sort of places he visits.

In admonishing Mr. EDMOND GOSSE to write his letters short and clearly—one of them was undelivered for several weeks—the British censor has doubtless made an implacable enemy of an industrious literary man who has a very good opinion of his style.

According to a Vera Cruz despatch, American aviators in the service of Governor CARRANZA "will pursue the Zapatistas from the railways in an effort to dislodge them from the mountains." The Villistas are also to be harried. This is obviously the invention of a romantic press agent. No thoughtful aviator would take the chance of falling into the hands of these patriots. Shorter shrift could no man have.

THAT AMAZING DECISION.

Another Modification of the Treasury's Attitude Revealed.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The letter to a gentleman of this city from L. F. Speer, Deputy Commissioner of Internal Revenue, under date of August 24, 1914, contains this declaration:

Upon a further consideration of the question of losses the clause in paragraph B of the Act of October 3, 1913, reading "losses actually sustained during the year, incurred in trade * * *" is interpreted to mean that losses actually sustained during the year as a result of any lawful transaction or investment made for the purpose of gain or profit, which gain or profit would be income subject to the income tax, are held to be "losses incurred in trade," and the amount thereof may be claimed as an allowable deduction, even though the said losses arose from investments or transactions not connected with the regular trade, calling, profession or employment of the person rendering the return. To be an allowable deduction, however, the loss must be actually sustained and determined during the tax year for which the deduction is sought to be made and must be the result of an actual, a completed, a closed transaction.

But T. D. 2,090, issued under date of December 14, 1914, entitled "Synopsis of rulings on questions relating to income tax imposed by Section 2 of the Act of October 3, 1913," signed by W. H. Osborn, Commissioner of Internal Revenue, and approved by W. G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, contains this passage:

The term "in trade" as used in the law and in T. D. 2,005 is held to mean the trade or trades in which the person making the return is engaged; that is, in which he has invested money otherwise than for the purpose of being employed in isolated transactions and to which he devotes at least a part of his time and attention.

A person may engage in more than one trade and may deduct losses incurred in all of them, provided that in each trade the above requirements are met.

As to losses on stocks, grain, cotton, &c., if these are incurred by a person engaged in trade to which the buying or selling of stocks, &c., are incident as a part of the business, as by a member of a stock, grain or cotton exchange, such losses may be deducted.

A person can be engaged in more than one business, but it must be clearly shown in such cases that he is actually a dealer, or trader, or manufacturer, or whatever the occupation may be, and is actually engaged in one or more lines of recognized businesses, before losses can be claimed with respect to either or more than one line of business, and his status as such dealer must be clearly established (T. D. 2,005).

Deputy Commissioner Speer informed his correspondent that "losses actually sustained during the year as a result of any lawful transaction or investment made for the purpose of gain or profit * * * are held to be 'losses incurred in trade,'" but his superiors rule that only losses sustained by actual traders, not persons indulging in "isolated transactions," may be deducted.

Thus the physician who on July 1 invests $1,000 in stocks, and on September 1 sells them for $900, is guilty of an "isolated transaction," and can claim no deduction for his loss; but his broker, under similar circumstances, may.

This is the latest Treasury ruling, and its incidence will be particularly felt this year, when the great losses suffered in 1914 are taken into account.

AN INVESTOR.

NEW YORK, January 28.

An Income Tax on Income Not Received.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* If I am not mistaken, a ruling was made last year permitting an owner of stocks and bonds to base his profits and losses on an inventory, or "account of stock," provided he had been in the habit of so doing heretofore. For this reason I consider an honest inventory should be accepted by the Department. I may add that with stock exchange securities it would be very simple and inexpensive to make "complete and closed transactions" by selling and immediately repurchasing at about the same prices the securities which the owner wishes to value for his own satisfaction at the close of the year, and perhaps incur the unwarranted and slanderous aspersion recently cast on citizens by Mr. McAdoo.

Allow me also to call your attention to another "amazing ruling," namely, that dividends shall be returned as of the date of their declaration, not of their payment. For example, Union Pacific Railroad dividend on common stock payable January, 1915, must be included in 1914 return as it was declared in the latter part of 1914.

How absurd to pay a tax for 1914 on income not received till 1915! How many stockholders know the date of declaration, especially in the cases of small companies which do not advertise them? Moreover, such a return would not agree with the taxpayer's personal books. In cases of dividends declared a month or even a year in advance of payment (as Delaware and Hudson Company and Bethlehem Steel Corporation) the failure of the company meanwhile and its inability to pay dividends declared would not release the stockholder from paying a tax on this income (?).

It would seem that this ruling is even more absurd than the one so clearly and justly criticised by you, being utterly unnecessary, and adding one more difficulty to rendering an honest and accurate return. B.

PORTLAND, Me., January 26.

The Practice Under Other Laws.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Referring to correspondence published by you on January 26 in connection with the income tax regulations covering "losses incurred in trade," it appears that on August 24, 1914, the Treasury Department ruled that losses actually sustained during the year as a result of any lawful transaction or investment made for the purpose of gain or profit, which gain or profit would be income subject to the income tax, constitute allowable deductions.

Under date of December 14, 1914, the Treasury Department issued a synopsis of its former rulings at the head of which appears the statement that all rulings or parts of rulings made before that date which are in conflict therewith are revoked.

From this it seems that the Treasury Department has revoked the ruling of August 24, modifying the former ruling (T. D. 2,005) with the result that losses incurred in trade, unless they are losses incident to a business, are not now treated as allowable deductions.

It is my understanding that under former income tax laws (1867 and 1870) the Treasury Department ruled that losses "incurred in trade" included losses such as those which are referred to in the Department's letter of August 24, 1914, and that under the 1894 law the Department's rulings indicate that such a construction would have been adopted had the law been declared constitutional.

Is it not reasonable to suppose that it was the intention of the Congress which passed the present law to incorporate the provision covering losses "incurred in trade" with the same meaning as that which had been given to the similar provisions of the former laws, and that had the intention been otherwise a phraseology different from that of the former laws would have been used? C. W. M.

NEW YORK, January 28.

A Personal Application.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I read with a great deal of interest your article concerning the absurd ruling made by the Department as to losses incurred in speculations.

On the printed blank furnished by the Department every person is required to report all his profits from bonds, stocks and from all other sources, and yet this astounding ruling refuses to permit losses from the same sources to be deducted. It seems to me impossible that the courts will sustain this position.

What authority has the Government to say that a man shall not engage in any other legal pursuit than some particular one? There are thousands of professional men all over the country who habitually engage in speculation in stocks, bonds, cotton, grain, &c., and they engage in this because it gives them a chance of adding to their incomes without having personally to give their time to the business.

For many years I have done this. Of course some years I have lost, while in other years I have made enormously more than my entire professional income. For the last two years I have unfortunately lost. If I am not to be allowed to deduct my losses for last year and should be compelled to report any gains I might make this year, the law will be rendered one sided and unequal.

It seems to me that this decision should be at once resisted and that the Attorney-General should be called upon for an opinion. PROFESSIONAL.

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., January 26.

SNOBBERY.

Serious Complaint Against Certain Canned Phrases in the Newspapers.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I have endured without complaint the silly and meaningless use by our newspapers of the word "society" as an adjective to describe women who so far indulge their hospitable instinct as to entertain their friends at dinner, the theatre or in the ballroom. I have writhed in silence when with this senseless term the sordid word "wealthy" was coupled. Even when unassuming and virtuous ladies of my acquaintance have suffered the indignity of being publicly placarded as "prominent and wealthy society women" I have restrained my rage.

But to-day, when the innocent children of respectable parents are labelled "society children," I must protest against this practice of the press, grotesque in its idiocy, abominable in its snobbishness and offensive to every precept and practice of good taste and good manners.

If there existed in this country an official caste, to which entrance was obtained by birth, public office, governmental recognition or formal acknowledgment by some constituted authority, the word "society" with a capital "S" would have a clear significance. But no such caste exists. Instead, we associate with those who please us and who reciprocate that interest. My own experience has taught me that there are here numerous groups of persons who take their social pleasures together, judging their associates by the congeniality of their dispositions, and enjoying one another without thought of "wealth" or "prominence" or "society." Yet the newspaper reader would be justified in believing that a sharp line separated "society" from the bulk of the population, and that within this line there existed grades distinguished by "wealth" and "prominence," all subordinate to some most prominent, most wealthy, most society authority.

How utterly false this is even a moment's thought will disclose. How lightly "wealth" and "prominence" offset the choice of companions by those who bear the press conferred title "society leaders" the experience of every person who has made the slightest effort to satisfy himself on this point will show. So why not drop the silly custom of wasting good white paper and black ink on these meaningless words?

Particularly, the children: why should they not be protected against this degrading form of tuft hunting, in the hope that another generation shall not see the creation here of a snobocracy builded on the stupid fawning of the present?

A SELF-RESPECTING WOMAN.

NEW YORK, January 28.

THE FIVE DOLLAR MAN.

Even Henry Ford Can't Take Away Gold's Exchange Value.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* If the man who made walking a pleasure were able to pay $5 a day to every man, woman and child in these United States without becoming insolvent, his doing so would not affect the average purchasing power of $5 at all, for that is based on the market for gold metal.

The purchasing power would simply be transferred from Mr. Ford to his employee. Which would use it more wisely?

If in addition to paying $5 a day he so directed the labor of each man, woman and child as to make it worth $5 a day, and I understand this is a coordinate part of his plan, then the wealth of the nation would be greatly increased.

SALEM, Mass., January 27. F. S. T.

Further Observations on the Effect of a General Minimum Wage.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Mr. J. Hemsby Johnson of Baltimore seems to have hit the nail on the head in his letter in THE SUN of to-day entitled "What Would Five Dollars Be Worth?"

There is not much use of industrial concerns increasing wages 10 per cent. if the cost of living is going to increase 50 per cent.

It would look like pouring 10 per cent. into the bunghole of a barrel and letting 50 per cent. run out of the spigot.

CHARLES WATSON.

NEW YORK, January 28.

The Chancellor and the Pig.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg's argument with respect to Belgium reminds me of that of the young lawyer defending his first client, who was charged with stealing his neighbor's pig.

In his opening for the defence the lawyer announced that he would show (1) that his client had bought the pig, (2) that the complainant had given his client the pig, (3) that the complainant's pig had wandered into his client's yard and could not permanently be dislodged, and (4) that the complainant never had a pig at all. On any and all these grounds he confidently demanded his client's acquittal. ANDREW PROUT.

NEW YORK, January 27.

The Two Sides of the Hyphen.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* All praise to THE SUN for the admirable editorial "Amerika Ueber Alles." There cannot be too much publicity given to such broad minded patriotic sentiments. It makes salutary reading for our many valued hyphenated citizens of every nationality who have accepted the protection of the American flag and must be impressed with the fact that liberty does not give them license to ignore on which side of the hyphen their duty and their loyalty lie. L. C.

GLEN RIDGE, N. J., January 28.

In the Newspaper Room at the Public Library.

With travel stained feet
Stands the lonesome youth
One hour long
In the library booth,
Bending, homesick,
All the while
Over a blessèd
Newspaper file.
Homely old paper,
Looks to me;
Banal and trite,
It seems to be,
But watch his eyes scan it,
Up and down,
Blessèd old paper
From the blessèd home town.

Type is shabby,
And ink is poor,
Has a colored supplement
For a lure;
Gives advice to girls
And hints on dress,
Steers new married couples
To happiness;
Yet in the trite sheet
A vista lies
Of the Somewhere Else
To those homesick eyes,
Of the Somewhere Else
With its memories sweet
To the lonesome youth
With the travel stained feet.

H. S. HASKINS.

THE SHIP PURCHASE BILL.

The Government, Bargain Hunter in Second Hand Contraband Vessels.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Aside from international law, which may or may not prevent the general use in trade of vessels purchased by a neutral country from a belligerent:

In the present stress will the United States appear at its best in the proposed role of bargain hunter of second hand merchant vessels?

Will the moral obligation implied in getting something for comparatively nothing help our neutrality cause? Does not the need of maintaining that cause and the difficulties attending it make necessary the laying aside of every weight?

Will the proposed merchant fleet, after necessary repairs fitting it for general use of American trade, be worth the outlay, granted of course that we would not take the advantage arising from the internment of vessels of a belligerent nation?

Are those principles American which accept indirectly through operations of an imperial Government private property and convert it through our Government ownership into a possible, if not likely, Government monopoly?

Will the contentions which must arise from the sailing of United States Government owned vessels in trade with foreign lands, more closely allied with the Old World at war than with the New World, help the general situation?

Will suspicions, just or unjust, which will inevitably attend the purchase and use of interned vessels by the United States tend to place Uncle Sam in the coveted position of a peacemaker when opportunity offers?

Will the precedent involved, if established and maintained by the United States, be always working in our interest among nations which have within past years undergone vital changes, nations which may change again in their relations not only to each other but to our own country?

Without the barnacles of controversy attached to a Government owned marine to weigh down, will not the United States be in a stronger position to maintain effectually with all the world those principles of government and self-control which under Providence have made it great?

Did the international law for the interning of ships contemplate the purchase of those ships by the neutral nation in which they were interned?

These questions are respectfully submitted to Congressional representatives at Washington. QUESTIONER.

SCHENECTADY, January 28.

KING ALBERT'S COURSE.

The Future Alone Can Justify or Condemn His Conduct.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In considering whether King Albert was fully justified in involving his country in a war which, as he ought to have known, would mean sure ruin for his subjects, we should not underestimate the value of upholding the honor of a nation, nor should we go so far as to let women and children suffer, the men be killed in battle, and all the fruit of years of hard labor be destroyed, just for the sake of national honor, which might after all have been better preserved if Belgium had consented to Germany's demand.

Belgium to-day is a devastated country with a very gloomy outlook. Of course, only future years will show the very reasons that were behind all those far reaching actions, but something extraordinary will have to be shown to justify King Albert's decision to heap untold misery upon Belgium. H. DEPPE.

NEW YORK, January 28.

Mr. Frank Harris and His Lectures.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I fear that the forthcoming series of articles from the pen of Mr. Frank Harris which are advertised for future issues of THE SUN will not add to its reputation for being "so," if they are as vindictive in tone and misleading in matter as his lecture on Sunday night would lead us to expect.

It may be, as Mr. Harris says, that Americans do not sympathize with Germany because they do not speak German. I would have more faith in his reasoning if he did not try in the next breath to prove that the English are narrow and antiquated in their ideas because they live on an island. The answer to that is that mostly the whole civilized world sympathizes with the Allies (of which the English are a part), and yet few of them live on that island.

Besides, it would seem that the cause of irritation to Germany during the past six months has not been that the English live on an island, but that they won't stay on it! Why Mr. Harris should also be so peevish does not appear.

Furthermore, it does not need a knowledge of the German language to know that Mr. Harris's comparison of the franchise of England with that of Germany is very misleading. The Prussian franchise is notoriously discriminating against the poor man, the voters being divided into three classes according to a property qualification, the combined votes of the few in the two upper classes always being sufficient, under their law, to outnumber the one man one vote of the far more numerous poor class.

Neither does any American need to speak German to know that "the perfect state" apotheosized by Mr. Harris is, in Germany, a paternalism more obnoxious to real lovers of freedom than all the corruption and inefficiency which up to date can with more or less truth be charged against republics and constitutional monarchies.

Mr. Harris is something more than ridiculous. He is a crude and suspicious excrescence on a very natural and understandable body of German thought and sentiment. MRS. H.

GREAT KILLS, S. I., January 28.

The Truly Neutral Paper Discovered.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* At a club yesterday I met Major Schwarzbrod (not his name), formerly of the German army, and asked him this question with earnestness and sincerity:

"Major, I have read a number of papers and can't find one that I regard as neutral; can't you recommend one that is fair and square and gives one the news as it happens?"

The Major looked me direct in the eye and with the air of a benign father replied:

"The *Staats-Zeitung.*" ZOLONG.

SCRANTON, Pa., January 28.

More Modest.

Knicker—Does he hitch his wagon to a star?

Bocker—No, he hitches his sled to a wagon.

Instance.

Great size will not bring gladness,
Does it not come to pass
An iceberg makes less tinkle
Than pieces in a glass?

WAGNER TETRALOGY BEGUN AT OPERA

"Das Rheingold" Given With Excellent Ensemble at Special Matinee.

SEMBACH A GOOD LOGE

The annual performance of "Der Ring des Nibelungen" began at the Metropolitan Opera House yesterday afternoon, when "Das Rheingold" had its single yearly representation. It is unfortunate that the Nibelung series cannot be given with some continuity. The separation of the consecutive dramas by a week's interval each time defeats Wagner's purposes and destroys his illusions. But the Metropolitan is afflicted by conditions which cannot easily be removed. In fact the operation would be fatal. Hence we hear "Das Rheingold" but once in a winter, while repetitions of the other three dramas are scattered through a procession of "Aidas," "Carmens," "Manons" and their kindred.

In such circumstances it is especially creditable to the persons concerned in the preparation of the "Ring" performances that "Das Rheingold" should be given so admirably as it was yesterday. The defects were few and did not seriously mar the performance. There was too much noise during the course of the change from the first scene to the second. However, there nearly always is, and it was at this point that Wagner elected to write some of his gentlest and most transparent orchestration.

There may be some differences of opinion as to the employment of steam to hide the supposedly magical disappearances of *Alberich* in the second scene, but there cannot be any question that the moment he has accomplished his disappearance the steam should be shut off. This was not always the case yesterday. Naturally the rainbow in the final scene showed signs of uncertainty when first exhibited; it always does something erratic. Furthermore it thrust its glorified span across the valley of the Rhine while yet the Siebengebirge were wrapped in the black gloom of a thunder storm. It takes sunlight to make a rainbow in most countries.

Aside form these items the scenic garb of the difficult music drama was excellent and the lighting effects were well managed. The stage management was such that the action of the play moved with smoothness and the series of pictures devised by Wagner had all the illusory atmosphere attainable in the theatre.

Seldom too has the prologue had such a well balanced cast. Among the principal roles only Mr. Sembach's *Loge* was new, and its discovery was one of the inspiriting elements of the representation. To achieve a large measure of success on the stage which has known the two greatest *Loges* of the world, those of Heinrich Vogl and Ernest Van Dyck, is little short of a triumph. Mr. Sembach's impersonation will certainly not take rank with either of those mentioned, but it must not be excluded from their region of artistic endeavor.

Intelligent grasp of the significance of the part, no small measure of the plasticity essential to the fusion of his personality with that of the elusive and sinuous spirit of fire, a tolerably mobile face capable of publishing much of the keen and rapid thinking of the character, and poses and gestures, conventional to the role indeed, but skilfully employed, united with judgment in the use of tonal qualities and craft in the declamation of the dialogue. Let it be added that Mr. Sembach also imparted to *Loge's* lyric passages a higher musical value than impersonators of this part usually give.

The comparatively extended record of the tenor's impersonation is given for the good reason that with an incompetent *Loge* any performance of "Das Rheingold," perfect in all other respects, must fail. *Loge* is the deus ex machina of this drama, the master hand which pulls the strings of fate attached to the helpless gods. He must always convey the illusion of intellectual domination of the scene.

All the other important parts were well done. The memory lingers with delight over the tragic intensity of Mr. Goritz's *Alberich*, the never failing cunning of Mr. Reiss's exposition of the craft and cowardice of *Mime*, the solid strength of Mr. Braun's *Wotan*, the musical beauty of Mme. Matzenauer's *Fricka*, the clear and firm outlines of Mr. Ruysdael's *Fafner*, and the dignity of Mme. Ober's *Erda*. The three Rhine maidens, too, were admirable. They were Miss Sparkes, Miss Schumann and Mme. Ober. To complete the record, Mr. Middleton was the *Donner*, Mr. Althouse the *Froh*, Mr. Witherspoon the *Fasolt* and Miss Curtis the *Freia*.

Mr. Hertz, who was received with long continued applause, conducted the work. At no recent performance under his baton has there been such a nice adjustment of the balance of tone. The brilliancy and pictorial significance of the score were brought out without any obscuration of the vocal parts, and the tempi were such as to give to each scene clearness and definiteness together with appropriate movement. The orchestra played with beauty of tone and finish of technic. The audience crowded the house and large numbers stood through the one long act of which the work consists. Thus the presentation of the "Ring" series began with artistic success and abundant public interest.

ANTI-SUFFRAGIST CONCERT.

French and German Songs Given at Mrs. Bartlett's Home.

A concert under the auspices of the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage was held last evening at the home of Mrs. W. Allen Bartlett, 40 West Sixty-seventh street. Mrs. Ethel Stewart Elliot sang French and German songs and George Halprin, pianist, played compositions of Chopin and Liszt.

Some of those present were Mrs. B. Aymar Sands, Mrs. John Ames Mitchell, Mrs. Henry Seligman, Mrs. Francis R. Scott, Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, Mrs. Clinton Gilbert, Mrs. Arthur M. Dodge and Mrs. Lucien H. Tyng.

Paul Draper's Recital.

Paul Draper, tenor, gave the third and last in a series of lieder recitals yesterday afternoon at the Little Theatre. He had a good sized audience which seemed to much enjoy his programme. Mr. Draper sang with especially good taste five songs by Bach, "Frohe Hirten" (with flute obligato), "Todesschmerz," "Bist Du Bei Mir," "Weihnachtslied" and "Ich Will An Den Himmel Denken" (with oboe obligato). Other songs were four by Moussorgski, the "Lieder und Tänze des Todes" and six of Schumann, which included "Der Knabe mit dem Wunderhorn" and "Der Soldat."

BIG TRY FOR STEVENS TO-DAY.

Workers Will Attempt to Complete Fund by 1 P. M.

The volunteer workers in the Stevens Institute of Technology campaign reported $4,625 at yesterday's luncheon at the Machinery Club, which made the grand total $1,191,065. Included in the day's report was a contribution of $2,000 from the John A. Roebling & Sons Company of 121 Liberty street.

Chairman Walter Kidde urged the workers to do their utmost to complete the fund by 1 o'clock this afternoon, when the volunteers are to meet again at the Machinery Club.