

# GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE.

## A PLEA FOR UNDERSTANDING.

I.

By ARCHIBALD STRONG, Professor of English Literature in the University of Adelaide.

No one can spend even a week or two in Paris at present without feeling that the British are by no means popular there; and no one can read at random in the British press—without discovering that certain writers—Lieutenant-Commander Keenworthy, M.P., is perhaps the most extreme of them—are actuated by a positively rancorous feeling against France. Anti-British feeling in Paris is certainly not running so high to-day as it ran about 1900, when I visited France repeatedly, and found that the combined effect of the Fashoda episode, the Boer War, and England's belief in the innocence of France's victim, Dreyfus, made it positively unpleasant for an Englishman to stay in Paris. At the same time there is in France to-day a certain shade of hostility or resentment in the attitude of many Frenchmen towards the English, and this sometimes goes a good deal beyond the brusqueness—to call it by no harsher name—which, according to my experience, has always characterised the Parisian masses. Once, indeed, an offensive reference to the British attitude towards the French war debt was made in a heightened voice and for my special benefit by one of a party of Frenchmen who were dining next to me in a cafe; and a similar sentiment was expressed to me in more courteous terms by several other Frenchmen whom I met during my stay in Paris. The burden of their complaint was that we were unreasonable in our desire for the payment of at least an appreciable portion of the French war debts, and were over-lenient towards Germany, especially in our attitude towards the Allied occupation of the Rhineland, and towards certain other matters which France considers essential to her security.

### France Thinking of Security, not Revenge.

It is easy from the British point of view to answer these objections, and it is human, all too human, to resent them; but hasty resentment, based on ignorance and lack of sympathy is a poor foundation for that international understanding without which Western civilisation is utterly doomed. Before any Englishman or Australian condemns or even criticises France it is excessively important that he should make some effort to understand her psychology. In the first place, the French race is an impetuous one, far more impetuous than any section of the British, and is in the habit of reacting violently to the grievance of the moment, to the extent even of saying bitter and sometimes unjust things about those who are prepared to be its friends. This trait explains much recent French criticism of England, and I consider that in view of France's manifold sufferings and sacrifices it should be regarded with leniency and not with rancor. Secondly, it is immensely important to realise that France's attitude towards Germany to-day is primarily caused, not by greed nor by vengeance, but by deep and deadly fear. That she is at present thinking of security rather than of revenge seems to me to be proved conclusively by her enthusiastic advocacy of the Geneva Protocol, with its provision for drastic international action against the makers of aggressive war.

France's fear is amply justified. Three times within a little over a hundred years

has she seen her country overrun by the forces of German militarism; and on the last two occasions the invasions were unprovoked, and were made in the most cynical spirit of aggression. Furthermore, in the few years preceding the war of 1870 France witnessed Germany deliberately picking a quarrel with two other nations, Denmark and Austria, and beating them to their knees. For a century she has seen the German menace lowering across her border, and has lived in daily fear of its becoming an annihilating reality. In 1870 she lost two of her fairest provinces to Germany, and in 1914 her northern regions were utterly devastated by her brutal foe. To-day she maintains, in my opinion, with intense sincerity, that Germany is still potentially a danger to her, and the sensational disclosures recently made by the Parisian daily, "L'Éclair," as to Germany's secret arming in defiance of the Versailles Treaty show that this belief is by no means unjustified. One of the worst features of all, I consider, is the declaration made by more than one Government in Germany that she will never rest until she is absolved from the charge of war-guilt which her representatives admitted at Versailles. It is quite obvious that the country which fails to recognise criminality in the invasion of Belgium has not changed in spirit since the Armistice, and numerous acts and utterances of the Luther Government show that so authoritative a French newspaper as "Le Temps" is justified in regarding that Government as reactionary, and as a potential danger to French security.

### Debts Not Repudiated.

Is it any wonder that to-day France resists the idea of evacuating the occupied territory till she is convinced of Germany's good faith; that she maintains the largest army in the world; that she is keeping her native troops in Africa drilled and fit for any emergency; has developed a huge and superbly equipped air force, and is actively supporting Poland in the east of Germany, Czechoslovakia to the south, and even so remote a State as Roumania? It ill becomes either England or Australia, neither of whose territory has ever been overrun by a foreign foe, to be scornfully superior to France when she is taking what she believes to be the necessary steps to save her life. To many her behaviour in respect of her obligations to Britain seems unreasonable; some journalists, indeed, write as if she had repudiated her debts outright. Yet M. Herriot has recently declared most earnestly that this is not the case; and even if France's attitude toward her indebtedness is in many ways mistaken, as I, for my part, believe it is, there is at least much to be said for her claim that the question of debts is inseparable from the question of security; that to-day she, in all civilisation's interest and at vast cost to herself, is standing sentinel over the nation which came near to destroying civilisation, and that leniency should be shown toward her whose soil bore the brunt of civilisation's battle, and was cruelly mangled in consequence. Many people of British stock who, like myself, are keenly alive to the weaknesses of French character and policy, will yet be prepared to weigh such considerations carefully. Much must be pardoned to France because she has loved humanity much, and has suffered terribly in its cause.

### THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PROTOCOL.

From H. DARNLEY NAYLOR:—Mr. Hamilton accuses me of having changed my ground. This is not a light charge, and I deny it. The passage in my first letter, which Mr. Hamilton himself quotes, bears but one interpretation. I there ask the Prime Minister to explain "Why he has rejected, in this cavalier fashion, a proposal which he allowed Sir Littleton Groom largely to frame." The words, "in this cavalier fashion," are (in literary dress) the equivalent of "without Parliamentary discussion." Mr. Hamilton will surely admit that there is a vital difference between these two propositions—(1) "I complain that the Prime Minister rejected the protocol" and (2) "I complain that the Prime Minister rejected the protocol in this cavalier fashion." My attitude has been consistent throughout. For instance, on February 20 I had the honour of addressing members of the Australasian Congregational Union at Hobart. On my suggestion the following resolution was drafted and carried unanimously:—"That this public meeting respectfully urges the Federal Government to give the most careful and sympathetic consideration to the reasons in favour of Australia's acceptance of the protocol, reasons which have been advanced by its own representatives at the Council of the League at Geneva, by the League of Nations Union, and by those who are convinced that the protocol is necessary to the peace of the world." Again on March 6 I moved this resolution at the meeting of the League of Nations Union executive:—"That this union expresses regret that the Geneva Protocol, unanimously recommended by the Assembly of the League of Nations to the earnest attention of all members of the League for acceptance, has been definitely dealt with in the name of Australia, without the matter having been discussed or considered by the Federal Parliament. We also regret that the British Government have been allowed to assume, without justification, that public opinion in Australia is opposed to the protocol." This resolution, too, was carried unanimously. I am sure that, on reflection, Mr. Hamilton will wish to withdraw a charge which is not supported by the facts. If Mr. Bruce has "some very strong reason for his action other than has been made public up to the present," might he not and ought he not to have said—"It is inadvisable at present to give reasons for the course which I have taken, but I will give my reasons when it is wise to do so." Had he said this I, for one, should have waited patiently. Mr. Hamilton speaks of me as being "piqued and annoyed." Perhaps I may be allowed to say that, when any one has watched with grave anxiety the fortunes of an organization which, in his eyes, provides the only hope of happiness for his own and his neighbour's children, and the only hope of preserving what mankind has won with tears and travail, he is likely to feel any action or want of action calculated to injure that organization, and such words as "piqued and annoyed" are a weak and colourless description of his feelings. Lastly, I cannot enter upon a debate about communism. It has nothing to do with the question "Should the Prime Minister have summarily rejected the protocol?" and this question is the only one that I am called upon to discuss.

### MEDICAL RESEARCH.

#### Federal Council Proposed.

#### Suggested University Chairs.

MELBOURNE, Monday.

Recommendations having reference to the founding of an Australian Medical Research Council, with a fund of £30,000 to co-ordinate investigation into medical problems, were contained in a document bearing the signatures of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Melbourne University (Professor Berry), and the recently appointed Professor of Pathology (Dr. MacCallum), which was laid before the Federal Royal Commission on National Public Health to-day.

Professor MacCallum was questioned by the commission in elaboration of the proposals. When giving evidence before it in February, Professor Berry laid down:—That medical research in Australia does not pay; that no investigator can live on the meagre emolument offered; that research requires co-operation, and that such co-operation does not exist in Australia; that many finely equipped laboratories are lying idle for lack of men and money; that the medical problems of Australia are essentially Australian, and require Australian research. Since giving that evidence, Professor Berry has availed himself of the arrival in Melbourne of Professor MacCallum to call a conference of University representatives, Melbourne pathologists, representatives of the clinical staffs of the general hospitals, and of other research experts, to discuss research generally.

#### Defence Against Disease.

As the result, and with the full approval of a subsequent meeting of pathologists, Professors Berry and MacCallum have suggested to the commission that the time has come when the Commonwealth should fall into line with other parts of the world and establish its own line of defence against disease, by the creation of an Australian Medical Research Council, which should consist of six representatives of the Faculties of Medicine in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, two to be nominated by each faculty (not necessarily from their own members); three representatives of the staffs of the general metropolitan hospitals throughout Australia (to be members of those staffs and elected by them); one representative of the staffs of children's hospitals; one representative of women's hospitals; six representatives of branch councils of the British Medical Association (one from each State), to be themselves members of those councils and elected thereby; one member to be nominated by the Australian National Research Council; and one by the Commonwealth. A Medical Research Council so constituted, it is stated, cannot fail to be familiar at all times with medical and clinical problems requiring investigation, research, and study; while the Government representative provides the necessary liaison.

The seventh member of the research committee it is suggested, shall act as treasurer and be responsible to the Ministry and committee for all financial transactions. All, or at least a large majority, shall be medical men solely selected on account of outstanding eminence in medical research, ability to prosecute research, and proven contribution to the subject. The council shall hold one statutory meeting a year, and shall meet at any time as requested by the executive committee. It shall discuss with the committee future lines of research, and be at the disposal of the Minister in an advisory capacity. The committee shall meet at least four times a year.

#### Research Fund.

The Australian Medical Research Fund of £30,000 is to be a charge upon the Commonwealth Government. The committee is to have power to receive donations, bequests, and legacies for the further prosecution of research in preventive or curative medicine. It is also recommended that the committee in its activities shall be entirely free from political or departmental control or influence; that Universities pay into the executive committee's fund the interests on small research legacies and bequests for the prosecution of medical research (which are almost invariably insufficient for the purpose). The document lays two other suggestions before the commission:—That it would be to the material advantage of Australia if the Tropical Institute, Commonwealth laboratories, and most of the hospital laboratories were placed under the general control of the executive research committee, insofar at least, as research is concerned.

NEWS. 22.4.25.

### Joseph Fisher Lecture

Under the auspices of the University of Adelaide the Joseph Fisher lecture for 1925 will be delivered in the Victoria Hall on May 8 by Sir Henry Braden, K.B.E., M.L.C. The subject of Sir Henry's address will be "A Survey of the Old Guild System." The lecture was founded many years ago as the result of an endowment by Mr. Joseph Fisher to the University of Adelaide in aid of commercial education. Tickets are obtainable at the University of Adelaide. The lecture will be subsequently printed and copies will be obtainable free of charge.

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