THE FUTURE OF SYRIA.

PRESIDENT WILSON'S DECLARATIONS.

(To the Editor, "Egyptian Gazette.")

Sir,— I have read with great interest the articles recently published in your paper and other local European papers on the subject of the future of Syria and as far as I can make out the Syrian Parties in Egypt are: (1) The Independent Party who ask for immediate and full independence. (2) The Party who ask for the tutelage of France and (3) The Party who ask for the tutelage of the United States of America.

All parties appear to be unanimous in asking for Undivided Syria and those who are asking for the tutelage of America are doing so because they believe that as Great Britain and France are bound by an agreement for the division of their country the United States would be the only Power that is able to save her from partition.

Two important telegrams, however, received recently bear directly on the question of the future of Syria and should not be passed over without special comment. The first is the American Agency cable dated Washington, March 4, and published in your issue of March 7, which runs as follows:-

"A Jewish delegation headed by Judge Julian Mack of Chicago interviewed the President regarding the future of Palestine. The President expressed his sympathy with the principle of the incontestable right of the Jewish people everywhere to equality of status and recalled that he had previously expressed his personal approval of a declaration to the British Government respecting the historic claims of the Jews regarding Palestine. He said he was persuaded that the Allied Nations with the fullest concurrence of the American Government were agreed that the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth should be laid in Palestine"

and the second is a "Mokattam" special cable dated London March 6, which contains the following statement:- "M. Tardieu one of the French members of the Council of Ten made a statement to the effect that France would not oppose the placing of Palestine under England as a mandatory Power."

While the cable containing the French delegate's declaration is very clear on the point of France's final consent to the separation of Palestine from Syria and placing it under British tutelage, the other cable only contains a declaration that the American Government was agreed that the foundation of a Jewish Commonwealth should be laid in Palestine but does not state that this Jewish Commonwealth is to be independent of the other Commonwealths or Provinces of Syria or who the Mandatory Power is going to be.

I mention this as I understand that the contents of this cable are being interpreted by some to mean that the United States have given their final consent to the separation of Palestine from other parts of Syria and that the appeal made by the third Party to the United States to assume tutelage over Syria as a whole will not serve to avert such partition. This conclusion, however, is, in my opinion, rather hasty as apart from the fact that the telegram contains no such declaration, the text appears to be clear that President Wilson's intention is to allow the Jews in Palestine and in other parts of the world equality of status of which they were deprived before in that part of the world. Nothing is more foreign from the American mind than to give any special or preferential treatment to a certain community over the other based on sectarian or any other considerations. In fact when it is realised that in America each of the various states such as Massachusetts, Kentucky, Virginia, etc. is called a Commonwealth and all form an integral part of the United States Government, any doubt as to the intention of President Wilson on the point of national home will be dissipated. Moreover it is impossible that the President of the United States and the Allied Governments, whose aims and ideals in the war have been directed to the good and welfare of smaller nations should be that Palestine become a national home exclusive for the Jews and not a national home for the other communities living there—Mohammedan and Christian—and who form the majority. The contemplating idea must be that the Jews will not be prevented from emigrating to Palestine or from looking upon Palestine as their home if they settle there.

Whether Palestine or the Jewish Commonwealth is to be a separate State independent of other States of Syria is another question which the American Agency cable does not deal with and so long as the United States have not declared their concurrence to the partition of Syria, there appears to be no reason why the Syrians should lose hope of seeing their country one and undivided under the tutelage of the United States who are not bound by any partitional agreement.

Yours, &c.,
An Interested Observer.

Cairo, March 15.

ALEXANDRIA'S VITAL STATISTICS.

For the week ending March 18 there were 327 births and 331 deaths. Of the former 303 were among the natives and 24 were among the foreigners and of the latter 316 were native and 15 foreign. There were 17 native still-birth. Deaths from registered infectious diseases are as follows: tuberculosis, 28; exanthematic typhus, 17; puerperal fever, 3; chicken pox, 2; erysipelis, 2; dysentery, 2; typhoid, 2; measles, from dyphtheria, relapsing fever, influenza, 1 each.

Speaking in the Washington Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Louis F. Swift, president of the Swift Company, states that Great Britain has 100,000,000 pounds of frozen beef in storage in the United States. He admitted that his company has 250,000,000 pounds of pork on hand, and other packers have maximum amounts. A drop of 1 per cent has caused a loss to the Swift Company of 2,500,000 dollars, and Mr. Swift urged the continuance of the control in price to prevent a serious drop in the market.

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THE NATIVE PRESS.

EGYPT AND HER GUESTS.

The "Ahram" (a letter signed "Hassan el Shore")—The demonstration which took place in the capital, a few days ago, was a guage of the hospitality of Egyptians towards their foreign guests, and one of the good signs of the sympathy of those foreigners towards their hosts. Indeed the spirit of sincerity felt by the guests of Egypt has exhibited itself in that demonstration in a form which makes us believe that we have opened our arms to people who are worthy of every respect and hospitality. The land of Egypt which has among its inhabitants many foreign residents now sees that those communities have the best understanding of favour and are the readiest of people to respond to good deeds with equally good and even better deeds. The crowds of demonstrators who paraded through the streets of the city were composed of various classes of the nation. They all shouted for the beloved homeland as they proceeded under the banner of union and in the shade of tranquility and peace. The guests of Egypt stood on both sides of the way and on balconies admiring the order of that impressive scene. By wishing good for Egypt our guests only wish good for the country in which their interests meet with ours, and which make both parties as brothers in happy and unhappy circumstances..... As our guests said "Long Live Egypt" we say in reply "Long Live the guests and friends of Egypt."

REGRETTABLE EVENTS.

The "Ahaly."— It is now proved that regrettable events which all wise people never like to see happen, and which the foresighted advised the public to avoid, have occurred in the provinces. The circulars which have been issued by the enlightened youth, and by ulemas, all prohibit aggression and urge the necessity of guarding tranquility, representing the real interest of the country and warning people against committing anything of a nature to touch that interest or bring harm to it. The wise members of the community, and the enlightened class of its youth and every individual possessed of sober sense here, can realise that patriotic interest requires action within the limits of law, order, tranquillity and harmony. They understand that the claiming of right, or defending of right ought to be within the same circle. This is what has been advocated by the wiser people and what has been adopted by them and made public. The demonstrations held by students were carried out in accordance with this pacific rule. The Alexandria demonstrations and the great demonstration which took place in Cairo on the 17th inst. in which thousands of the educated youth and ulema and other classes took part was a most sensible proof of this straightforward wayfaring well as of civilisation and of harmony between Egyptians and foreigners who received the crowds of demonstrators with applause and signs of admiration. There is no cause after that for any suspicion that there is any sort of animosity in Egypt towards the foreign residents of this country who enjoy as much security here in these days as they always did before. The disorders which have taken place in the course of demonstrations are only the work of a class whose attitude is ignored by the wiser members of the nation. It is the earnest desire of all wise people that this exceptional state of things should come to an end as quickly as possible, so that the situation may return to its normal condition.

EXCHANGING BROTHERLY VISITS.

The "Ahram" (under the heading "Exchanging brotherly visits).— Four days ago, it will be remembered, the venerable Sheikh Mohamed Bekhit, Grand Mufti of Egypt, paid a visit to His Beatitude the Coptic Patriarch at the Patriarchate; and now we learn that the Coptic Patriarchate has delegated Rev. Abdul Malak, Rev. Mansour, Rev. Girgis, and Rev. Bulos to visit the Azhar University. The clerical visitors were warmly welcomed there and some of the ulemas escorted them the Rewaks of the University and explained to them the methods of teaching. They also took them to the Azhar Library and the visit lasted some time.

HURRYING ON PEACE.

CAMPAIGN IN FRENCH PRESS.

The latest French papers show that a determined campaign is being made by the press to hurry on the peace and the French newspapers are loud in their condemnation of the perpetual delays that have postponed the great decisions promised. Never before has the whole tone of the French Press been so bitter, because it was announced and confidently expected that the already indefinite renewal of the armistice with Germany would have been changed into definite conditions tantamount to a preliminary peace, enabling the average man to resume normal life. True, a few days more or less, may not be of great importance but hopes were fixed upon a speedy settlement of a provisional character with Germany, and procrastination seems the last straw which breaks the back of French patience.

The outcry in the newspapers, and among the intelligent public is unanimous. It is recognised that when issues are of such vast importance solutions should be durable, and that there must be no "botching" by undue haste, but criticism is concentrated on the delay in preliminaries.

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AT THE CONFERENCE.

DELEGATION DISTRESSES.

(By Someone in Paris.)

The accounts one reads in most of the London papers of the life of the British delegation in Paris appear to be written by casual visitors to the restaurant and lounge of the Hotel Majestic—visitors, moreover, who are easily deceived by appearances. They look round delightedly on an assembly of celebrated people. At one table they observe that Field-marshal Haig is talking strategy with General Pershing. At another table Lord Derby is manifestly amusing the Maharajah of Bikanir. At another table Miss Megan smiles in bright anticipation of a dance which is toward in the *sous-sol*.

Our visitors proceed to the lounge for coffee. They observe the Dominion Premiers familiarly hunched beside the little cabinet where cigars and cigarettes are sold. A little later they watch a procession of fair women, festively attired, drifting more or less in the same direction. Following the drift they find that some of the younger diplomats and officers are setting to partners to the rhythm of a foxtrot.

NO SIGN OF WORK.

The company is distinguished. The hotel is warm. There is good wine. The food is adequate. Our visitors have by the time come to the conclusion that to be a member of the British delegation is enviable. They have seen, being invited to enjoy the surface of things, no signs of work being done. They have been told by their newspapers that the Peace Conference has been making very little progress. It is a small wonder that they leave the Hotel Majestic with the idea that a set of men who are being spent a magnificent international parade, and that to be one of the participators in all this splendour and gaiety is to be in the middle of fortune's favours.

And thus the legend spreads and waxes—a legend with scarcely a particle of truth, even for a foundation. Had our hypothetical visitors joined any one of the small after-dinner groups in the lounge they would have found them, almost inevitably, occupied in one of two ways. Either they are discussing the day's work or the work of to-morrow, or they are wondering when the Conference will be finished and when they will be free to return to the sanities and decencies of normal life. Represents to them that the hotel is warm, and they will ask whether you are in the habit of living in a conservatory. Remind them that the food is good and plentiful, and they will ask whether you would breakfast, lunch, and dine from choice every day at the Hotel Majestic.

RATHER FUNNY PEOPLE.

Indicate that you are impressed by the distinguished company, and they will maliciously deflate you by casual remark to the effect that they had noticed there were some rather funny people about. In brief, you will find, on the slightest investigation, whether it be among the higher officials or the youngest "secretary," that the British Delegation is a bored Delegation.

You will also find that it is a very serious, devoted, and anxious Delegation. The members have come to work, and have brought with them special aptitude and qualifications. That the work is irregular and capricious, that it overflows into mealtimes, and refuses to be put away with the after-dinner coffee, that everything is unprecedented, that uneasy torpore alternate with feverish activities, that military, political, or economic problems are among the private but cheerless hearths of the Majestic, and even in the lounge must be dealt with in a converted bedroom—these are factors which, though they have so far failed to add to the general cheerfulness of the members, might more easily be borne if it were not for that universal, intolerable assumption of the strangers that the members have come to Paris simply to enjoy themselves.

However, the Delegation will continue to suffer, more or less in silence, until peace is signed and the last diplomatic hat and delegation coat has been handed out over the marble counter of the "Majestic" cloak-room. After all, it is perhaps as well that the Delegation should be misunderstood in London. While the public continues to believe that the members are enjoying themselves at the public expense there will continue to be a strong feeling in favour of pressing the work in Paris to a speedy conclusion. And that is what all the members of the Delegation most heartily desire.

One of the most depressing notices that has as yet appeared in the entrance hall of the Hotel Majestic is an announcement to the effect that a small committee may shortly be formed to arrange excursions to the pleasant environs of Paris *in the meantime*. It was once assumed that the Conference would rise before the tours of the Champs Elysées were in leaf. Some of the delegates cling hopefully still to that cheerful assumption. Here, however, on the Majestic notice-board, a concrete evidence that hope has been definitely abandoned in certain quarters.

WANT IN INDIA.

GREAT RISE IN PRICES.

The crop failure in India is perhaps the most extensive on record. Even the famine pinnacles of the 1900 famine year are trifling compared with those now ruling. To quote a few examples:- Wheat in the famine year cost 3s. 4d. a maund, its present price is 6s. 6d. Millet, the staple food in this part of India, which was as much as 3s. 8d. then, has now gone up to 10s., and is therefore quite beyond the purse of an ordinary man. Rice in this part of India, which then stood at 2s. 8d. (remember, these were famine prices), now costs from 7s. 6d. to 10s., while milk is four times its normal price, and so on.

These incredibly high prices, matched also by the dearness of clothing, fuel, and other necessities, coupled with the non-existence of fodder for more than a small proportion of the cattle, have followed on the top of outbreaks of influenza, which in some places swept away as much as one-sixth or even one-fifth of the population in a couple of months; and while in many ways there has been an enormous improvement in recent years in the economic condition of the Indian labourer, the prospects of millions of poor people just now are very serious indeed.

In one of the last interviews he had with the German plenipotentiaries, Marshal Foch demanded delivery of one of the Big Berthas, capable of firing 3,000 range on Paris. This gun had been taken back by the enemy and placed in one of their artillery parks in the neighbourhood of Mayence.

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MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NORTH SEA.

A RHINE-RHONE CANAL.

SWITZERLAND'S AMBITION.

London, March 17.

A communiqué from Paris says that the Inter-Allied Commission of Ports, Waterways and Railways today heard Switzerland's legal and technical reasons for claiming to participate in any convention hereafter governing navigation on the Rhine. Reuter.

It is difficult to appreciate the difficulties confronting a country entirely landlocked, such as Switzerland. Surrounded on all sides by other nations (France, Italy, Germany, and Austria), Switzerland has denied the advantage of a seaport, and consequently in respect to her overseas trade dependent on her neighbours, whose rail routes she uses for the conveyance of her goods to and from the coast.

Thus it has happened that, although Switzerland has not taken an active part in the war, her sufferings as the result of her peculiar geographical position, have been severe. The Allied Powers, it is true, have given her all possible assistance in providing her with raw materials and food, but this question has been fraught with difficulties owing to the absence of available rolling-stock from the ports of discharge, and the restrictions that were necessarily placed upon the country as the result of war conditions. Often quantities of grain and other goods destined for Switzerland were held up at Marseilles as they could not be forwarded, while at the same time the scale of rationing for the population had to be reduced to an almost intolerable level.

These circumstances have brought home to Switzerland the vital necessity of an outlet to the sea, and have given rise to serious considerations of certain projects aiming at the utilisation of the two natural waterways which have their source in Switzerland, namely, the Rhone and the Rhine, the former running into the Mediterranean near Marseilles, the latter into the North Sea near Rotterdam.

Whilst the Rhine between Basle and Rotterdam is already navigable and needs only some correction and straightening to allow of barges of over 2,000 tons to reach Basle direct from the sea, the Rhone, unfortunately, offers a series of obstacles, especially between Lyons and Lyons, where considerable work of correction is necessary to open the way for navigation. Nevertheless, France has decided to undertake the work both in view of the advantages that will no doubt accrue to her from a Rhone made navigable, and also having regard to the enormous amount of water-power that can be simultaneously exploited.

The great Swiss scheme, however, includes the linking up of the two rivers by means of a canal through Switzerland, which will practically make Geneva with Basle by water and ultimately form a link between the Mediterranean and the North Sea. This project is known as the Rhine-Rhone Canal, which is to a large extent already furnished by the natural waterarteries of the Lakes of Geneva, Neuchatel, Bienne, and the River Aar flowing into the Rhine some thirty miles above Basle.

The possibility of barges up to 2,500 tons plying between Basle and Rotterdam suggests at once the possibility of direct Swiss traffic to England. so that trade relations with this country, which in the past have been hampered owing to the cumbrous nature of communication would receive a useful stimulus, to the advantage of both countries. A number of articles, such as condensed milk, cheese, silk goods, embroideries, machines, etc., could profitably be shipped by the waterway, which would cheapen their sale in England. The same applies to the quantities of cotton and yarn which are imported from England, manufactured and embroidered in Switzerland, and returned to England in a finished condition.

It is, of course, essential that the Rhine should be internationalised—that is, free navigation should be extended to all nations concerned, in the sense of the Treaties of Paris and Vienna of 1814 and 1815, which declare the Rhine an international river. Not only Switzerland but also Holland and Belgium have an interest that the clauses relative to navigation on the Rhine should be ratified or put on a new basis.

There are other projects intended to link up Switzerland with the sea—viz. the connection of Lake Maggiore in the south with the River Po, and through the latter with the Adratic Sea; further, the navigability of the Rhine is to be extended up to the Lake of Constance with a view to a connection with the projected Lake of Constance-Danube Canal, opening the way to the Balkans and the Black Sea.

Thus Switzerland hopes to free herself from the dependence which threatened to cripple her economic life, and by getting in direct touch with the outside world to improve the condition of her handicrafting people and take a useful place in the coming regeneration of the world.

The "Manchester Guardian" thus comments on this great project:—

It is not out of the question, but of course it has extreme difficulties to overcome. The canal across Switzerland would have to reach Basle, approximately 3,000 feet, and would require a number of locks probably far above the high English average of one for every 1,200 yards. The Rhine though the most magnificent navigable waterway in Europe as far as Bonn, presents rapidly increasing difficulties of navigation in its higher reaches. Up to Cologne and Bonn there is no difficulty about the use of barges with a cargo capacity of 4,000 tons. The trains of from five gigantic barges drawn by Rotterdam tugs with tow-ropes of extraordinary length are one of the sights which have most interested the British soldiers at Cologne. But between Bonn and Bingen the Rhine is pressed into a narrow gorge, reducing the width of the river by two-thirds and cutting down by a-half the maximum size of barge that can safely be used. Farther up above Mannheim, the pace of the Rhine, everywhere swift, becomes much swifter, so that a tug can only tow half the weight it did before, and can only tow the reduced weight half as fast, between Mannheim and Strasburg. In the next reach, from Strasburg to Bale, about 700 tons is the heaviest burden possible. At each of these stages, too, the number of months during which full navigation is practicable diminishes rather rapidly, coming down to less than a third of the year at Bale. So the Rhine is, except for its great speed, a perfect barge waterway for 220 miles, a fine one for 120 miles more, a pretty good one for another 80, and a very troublesome and discontinuous one for the same distance further.

The Rhone part of the scheme is not such a tough job as people might think who chiefly know the Rhone as a turbid summer torrent above the Lake of Geneva or as a blue arrow of smooth water shooting out of the lower end of the lake. Almost five-sixths of the 6,000 feet that the Rhone falls in its course it falls before reaching Geneva; between Lyons and the sea it falls little more than two feet to the mile. It has a steadier depth throughout the year than the Rhine, because it is fed in better proportions by glacier streams which swell in the warm months and by rain-fed streams which swell in autumn and winter. So the upper part of the navigable Rhone keeps up a minimum depth of 4 1/2 feet, while the Rhine at Bale comes down to a minimum of three feet in winter when the Alpine surface drainage is stopped by frost. Thus there is no fatal obstacle to the making of a through navigation from Rotterdam to the Gulf of Lyons, though the financial basis of such a waterway, in competition with railways, would present great difficulties, and though it would be too much to hope for a through passage for barges of the monster-Rhine type, beside which even the fine French canal boats look small, and Thames barges minute.

An aerial postal service between Berlin and Hamburg was opened recently. The machine on its first journey only carried newspapers. Two flights will be made daily in both directions.

RACING ENTHUSIASTS.

Those who cannot attend the Races can yet have a big interest by taking chances in the "Gazette" weekly competition. All entrance fees less ten per cent given to the winner.

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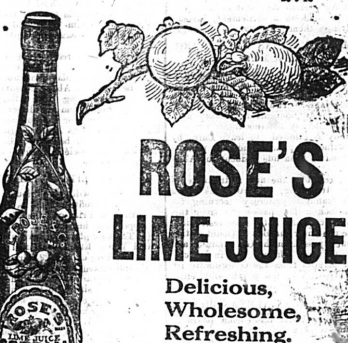

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