



EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR

BY EDWARD S. MARTIN

PARIS

THERE are easy chairs in Paris this year and tens of thousands of American tourists will rest in them from their travels, but they are not much in request at this writing by the French Government, which is sitting up quite straight and attentive and full of concern for the welfare of France. Not long ago France was in trouble, in trouble so severe that the neighbors had to be called in. Nowadays she is very alert that that shall not happen again. Think how it would have been if, even after she had been rescued, she had been left disabled and impotent, and needing to be propped up and led by the hand! Happily, she is not left in any such case, but on her legs and going strong, and attentive to her neighbors and her future.

We in the United States are apt to get an idea of France that she is just now an obstacle to the peace of Europe. She is undoubtedly an obstacle to a peace in easy chairs. She is in a way an obstacle to a kind of peace that England might perhaps be glad to see, and that would be quite acceptable to us because it would look like something which would hasten the recovery of trade. At Washington France made difficulties. At Genoa also she has been difficult. In both cases it has been not so much that she is hard to get on with, as that she is so vigilant for France. France is her great care. For France she wants safety and as much as she can get of the reparations accorded her by the treaty of Versailles. She never lets up in these desires. In the provision for her safety made at Versailles

she was disappointed, as we all know, because our Senate would not back Mr. Wilson's arrangements or ratify the treaty. That left her dependent upon her own energies to secure her own safety, and she has gone about it the best she knew how. To England the vital matter is the restoration of trade and the cure of her unemployment. England wants business as usual. So does the United States, and so indeed does France, but there is one thing that she wants more—the safety of France; and there is another thing she wants almost as much—the damages that Germany is bound by treaty to pay her for the devastations of the war in her territory and for pensions to widows and disabled men. She needs that money. As the indispensable price of safety and as a means of collecting what is due to her she keeps up a large army, much larger than in her present financial circumstances she can afford. In order to get much money out of Germany, she must let trade start up again in that country; and, in that particular, her interests are like those of the rest of the world. In her maintenance of a strong army she seems to be only a lukewarm supporter of peace, but she would not admit that, since she would claim that her army is the greatest safeguard of peace which is left to the world.

She fears the resuscitation of Germany. She has no confidence as yet in the Germans as neighbors. If she could detach South Germany from Prussia it would help her. She might then come to regard the South Germans as safe neighbors, but as yet she does not. The mere fact that the Hohenzollerns have

been turned out and that the Kaiser has to live in Holland, is by no means enough to reassure her. She hears, or dreams, that the Germans take thought of revenge, and are not so much disarmed as the treaty planned, and are by no means so destitute of the means of making war as they appear. That may be true or not, but it is what France thinks. When the German treaty with Soviet Russia was disclosed at Genoa it was like a nightmare to her—a dream of Russia organized and made efficient by German brains, and developing an overwhelming military force.

That suggestion was natural enough. France seems to believe in the continuance of the old order. To her this is not a new era. It is the same old era, and her expectations are of the same kind of behavior from her neighbors to the East of her that she has been used to in the past. One cannot yet say that she is wrong. One cannot assert that the day has yet come for her to pull in her horns and see the world pacified. If she says that she must have better proofs than she has yet received that the world has changed, that is not unreasonable.

It is held by some observers that all governments at the bottom are military machines; that their primary duty is to be powerful and hold their own in the world, and as much more as is possible. That has been considerably the idea of the governments, in Europe at least, in the past, and France is not detached yet from that notion. She is attentive primarily to be strong. She says it is not for purposes of aggression, but for defense. She is credited with a program of aeroplanes that will give her 200 squadrons of them for military use by the end of the year, and she has 116 squadrons of them already. Certainly that is a picturesque provision and gives her presumably the most protection for the money that she could get. The thing that checks France, and must save her so far as is necessary from herself, is that she is not safe alone in the world.

In Napoleon's time, when she had accumulated the necessary power and energy, she could rampage about in Europe until she got tired or used up. But the world has developed a good deal since then, and especially in solidarity. France must manage to get along with the other people and especially with her allies of the late war, and she knows it, and she wants to do it, and she will. When the new era becomes visible to her, she will adjust herself to it, but until it is visible, she will hold on to what she knows and go by that. She will not scrap one means of protection and advantage until she finds some other means distinctly better.

There are those who hold that the great job in the world in these times is not government at all, as it has been understood, but teaching. What the world needs is knowledge, all kinds of knowledge, and especially spiritual knowledge. The job of France is to teach Germany, not to fight her. Her method of giving that instruction is to keep herself so strong that the idea of fighting her will be unpalatable.

Well, that is one way, but it is the old way, and nobody denies that the old way has not worked well. It is not popular. Force is not popular. Some other application of brains and industry that would supersede it would be very acceptable. That is what the world is after: to find something which will keep order without the need of so many violent compulsions and so costly an apparatus for providing them. That is the idea of the League of Nations and the purpose of conferences.

Government is becoming almost as unpopular as force. That notion that governments at the bottom must be military machines has something in it; something difficult to get rid of, but which our present world would like very much to dispense with. The business of government ought to be to protect the evolution of mankind, to provide that people may live out their lives

on the best lines that they can discover and be free from molestations, so long as they do not molest others. That end governments at present secure very imperfectly. They spend enormous quantities of strength and money in standing one another off, and in sustaining and protecting a vast economic and industrial machinery which gives them power. The most encouraging thing about them is the growing prevalence of the opinion that, as constituted, they are intolerably stupid; but they won't be any better except in so far as the world comes to a better understanding of human life.

That is the basis of the opinion that the great job of the time is teaching. But what sort of teaching? Every kind helps that discloses truth. Whether it is truth about the powers of nature or about the mind of man, understanding of it makes for understanding of life. The increase of knowledge about chemistry and physics and engineering and medicine helps the general case because it adds to the powers of men, but by that very increase it makes it the more necessary that those powers should be directed to real attainment and progress and not fooled away on futility and destruction. The Bolsheviks started out to cure a world suffering from compulsions, and the remedy they brought was a more drastic compulsion than anything which existed. Their homeopathic treatment has failed, and as they have admitted their failure they seem to be getting back into society. They have given the world instruction in a way, but so far it has been the sort of instruction that proceeds from a terrible example of what not to do.

What seems to be going on in the world just now in the conferences at Genoa and elsewhere is an effort to gain time; to set up a tolerable machinery with which men can work along until they get more light. For light is what they need and there are signs that it is on the way to them. When they get it they will manage better. Until they get it they will muddle along.

France is fortunate in having positive views about her duty to herself and to the world. She does not seem to expect any new light, and goes ahead resolutely with such light as she has got. The United States is not so lucky. Its views of its duty to the world are not positive at all, but nebulous and divided. It does not see its duty, but at least it is very desirous to see it. It suspects that it exists and believes that it ought to find it. In one respect it is in the same boat with Great Britain. It wants trade to revive and all the world to prosper, and is without fear of evil consequences to itself from the prosperity of any other nation. Geographically, and by reason of its strength of population and industrial development, it is safe from outside aggression, but it is not safe from internal dissatisfaction. Neither for that matter is any other nation. A man's most difficult antagonist is within himself, and the same is apt to be true of nations. The United States is organized under the rules of the old order, and, in so far as those rules are defective, it will have to meet the consequence of their defects even though it has nothing to fear from any outside people. It is much the same with England except that the British are in more of a hurry than we are. Being under a greater pressure of unemployment and debt, they are the more anxious for the revival of trade. A great problem, perhaps the greatest, of both nations is to induce brethren to dwell together in unity inside their national boundaries. Any nation that can solve that problem can lead to the solution of the kindred problem of international peace and co-operation.

An outside peril to a country is a help to unity within its borders. Men are less apt to quarrel and haggle over details in the presence of a common enemy. The anxieties of France about impending dangers from outside help to simplify, or at least to minimize,

her internal problems; and just as an outside force or peril may hold a nation together, so an outside interest or hope or expectation may provide a necessary balance to human life in general. To people who feel that this life is all there is, or all at least that we can count on, the present problems of the world seem more insoluble than to those to whom the visible world, and the life that goes on in it, is all a temporary adventure connected with an existence infinitely more real, more durable and more important. It is no new thing for the people of this world to live by light and strength that they believe has come to them from the world invisible. If we are to have new light, and strength to follow it, the expectation is not unreasonable that it will come from the same source whence light and strength have come to the world before. The most hopeful people in the world are those who believe in the helpfulness and the activity and the boundless resources of the world invisible, and in the power of living people to reach those resources and use them. It is the people who have faith in the invisible world who will pull the visible world through. They are the hardest of all people to beat, the most enduring, the most diligent. Stripped of material things, they

still have spiritual possessions. In despair they still have hope; in misery, expectation.

It is notable too that confidence in the continuance of life after death does not make for the neglect of terrestrial life while we have it. While our adventure on earth lasts it is our great concern to make the most of it; to develop our powers and the bit of earth we live on, in the highest possible degree; to learn all we can, to teach all we can, to get out of earth-life as much as possible, and gain by it all that goes with the conception that the whole of existence is not in sight, nor this world our final home. The enviable people on earth are those who know that there is more awaiting and affecting than they can see, and who can draw wisdom and strength out of the invisible. It is they that are the hope of the world and the number of them seems to be increasing. Moreover, they all seem nowadays to get very much the same message, that comes by various channels to people in all parts of the world, to the learned and the unlearned, the sophisticated and the humble—a message of encouragement and of stimulation, and assurance that there is a way out of the present difficulties of earth, and that men can find it.

EDITOR'S DRAWER

GETTING SQUARE WITH THE LAUNDRY

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

"HELL'S bells!" is my favorite swear word. I don't consider it so very wicked—I don't think it means much of anything. I never heard of any bells in that particular place, and if there are any it can do no harm to mention them occasionally, under sudden and trying circumstances.

I did so, quite sharply, when not so long ago I observed among my freshly laundered shirts, neatly piled upon my bed, a garment that manifestly was not my own. It was the second time this thing had happened, and the first experience still rankled. The laundry had refused to redeem that errant garment—to recognize any mistake—had insisted that there could be none, that the shirt was cer-

tainly mine, even though clearly built for a smaller man. I tried it, repeatedly, nearly choking myself in the attempt to get even, finally working it off on the janitor.

In the present instance I gradually became calmer. Even the briefest examination showed it to be a shirt of excellent quality, correct as to measurements and captivating as to pattern—captivating from my standpoint, I mean. I like shirts to have a good deal of the cosmic urge in them, that gripping quality so often referred to in publishers' advertisements. I saw at once that this shirt had it—that to engage with a shirt like that would be to give life, at once, quite a new and wonderful definition.



MOST OF THE INK LANDED ON MY NEW POSSESSION