Letter Box

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Neutrality alone is therefore not sufficient to save us. The nation should understand very clearly what it wants and not imagine that neutrality guaranteed by all the treaties in the world meets every case.

Happily, thank God, none of these contingencies materialised during the course of the war. Switzerland was able to rely on her treaties, resolved to defend her territory and independence and ready in case of aggression, but in that case only, to ally herself with the adversary of her own aggressor.

For Switzerland, neutrality is also necessary for the sake of internal order. We are attached intellectually to one or other of our neighbours through our three different languages. The affinities which result are inevitable and divergent. The day our Government comes too close to one or other of these powers it risks provoking an internal crisis which would be fatal for the country. In the World War Switzerland should remain neutral as long as she was not herself threatened and to guard against this threat she mobilised to the last man.

But the sharp criticism which reached us from belligerents, the *faux pas* of a censorship sometimes unfortunate in its control of the Press were irritating and confusing. Compared with other neutrals we were nearer to the war. It surrounded our country on all its frontiers. And morally also we were nearer to the one or other of the belligerents whose language we spoke. Moreover, this war had begun with the violation of a little neutral country like Switzerland which stood between Germany and the road to Paris. Innumerable conferences were organised throughout the country not only by Swiss people, but also by excited belligerents at which the word neutral was used as a term of abuse. We were loaded with reproaches. M. Gustave Herve, editor of the "Victoire" in an article entitled "Neutral before Crime," accused the Swiss of practising the "neutrality of fear." M. William Cougnard replied to him from Geneva by recalling many occasions when France and the other liberal powers had allowed abominable political crimes to be committed without intervening and even without protest (the case of Denmark in 1864, of the Armenians and many others). France, wrote M. Cougnard, had not marched to the present war simply to honour her treaty with Russia. "The day will come, perhaps, when our existence will be at stake, then we will be no more cowardly than you." After all it is natural that belligerents should be annoyed with the neutrals. He who fights against a pitiless adversary, who risks all, his life, his possessions, how could he help feeling an aversion for those who look on? "Neutrals have nothing to say," wrote M. A. Suares in the "Opinion," "it is right that in the end the neutrals should be humiliated, that they should suffer. These neutrals have done more harm to justice than its attackers." And M. Paul Margueritte in the "Echo de Paris" set out different categories of neutrals; "neutrals by prudence, by selfishness, by greed, by calculation; there are also, he said, false neutrals who sell themselves to the highest bidder and stab their allies in the back." He forgot the neutrals by duty, by respect for the given word. Political and military neutrality should never be confused with moral neutrality. This latter is imposed on nobody. No man, no authority, can silence the conscience.

(To be continued.)

RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION.

("*Electrical Review*" 10.11.39.)

Considerable satisfaction is expressed in Switzerland at the operation of the railways, now largely electrified, since the beginning of the war. From 1914 to 1918, it is pointed out, the Swiss railways were able to maintain only a very uncertain service, on account of the dependence on coal suplies, imported entirely from abroad and through belligerent countries. The result was that many places were completely isolated from the rest of the country for days. Since 1918, however, the remarkable progress made in railway electrification, with power derived from hydro-electric stations, has practically overcome this difficulty. Those who have been complaining of the expenditure on electrification work are now admitting that it was a sound investment, since it will be possible to continue normal services on the majority of the lines. The last statistical information of the Swiss Federal Railways gives the total length of lines in the country as 2,982 kilometres, with 2,175 km. electrically operated.

PERSONAL.

Hearty good wishes to Mr. J. J. Boos (President S.M.S.) whose marriage to Miss Maud (Toni) Daley takes place to-day at Our Lady of Muswell, Colney Hatch Lane, Muswell Hill, N.10. Reception at 2.30 at the Glendower Hotel, South Kensington, S.W.6.

LETTER BOX.

D. G. — St. Imier. We have posted you the missing issues and reciprocate your good wishes.

S. S. — The report enclosed is certainly not cheerful and we are afraid not an isolated case; the mobilisation has had disastrous effects on many households, and the "little man" is always the chief sufferer.

A. G. — Your name was removed from our mailing list as subscription was not renewed on due date. We are pleased that after all you are not a "casualty."

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