

When, before the battle of the Marne, the German troops, marvellously equipped, marched into H—, they gave an impression of overwhelming strength which was painful to the French Sisters, but the latter's secret consternation increased when they found that the new arrivals took possession of the place as if they had lived there for years. The staff officers proceeded, without hesitation, to a chateau belonging to a wealthy French family. The proprietors had left, but their German governess, an old and valued retainer, was there, and it was she who did the honors to her countrymen and put them in possession of the rooms that she had prepared. Again, close to the town were two important factories. These were immediately occupied by Germans, who knew how to use the machines to the best advantage. Nothing was destroyed, the necessary German workmen were in readiness, and in a short time the factories worked in the service of the invaders, who were acquainted beforehand with every detail that might serve their purpose. At the hospital, the Sister saw the German surgeons arrive, unpack, and settle down. There was nothing for them to learn; they knew the exact size and position of every room, the capabilities and deficiencies of the place, as if they had built it. Sister Agnes is a brave woman, but she owns that these extraordinary proofs of a preparation which extended to the smallest details, made her heart sink within her. More than the triumphant aspect of the invading army, it gave her a sense of inferiority. 'If they are like this,' she whispered to another Sister, 'they will march straight down to Marseilles.'

A TIMELY REBUKE.

Mgr. Brown, V.G., was among those invited to take part in the deliberations of the recent conference at the Lambeth Town Hall on the subject of encouraging thrift amongst the working classes, but he declined to do so in the following trenchant letter:—

'I consider it an impertinence to call upon the working classes to put their small savings at the disposal of the Government until some example of self-sacrifice is given them by the governing classes, and those possessed of large means. For a long time we have been exhorted by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, members of the Government and the press of the country to forego luxuries and practise rigid economy so that money may be saved for war purposes. Numerous economies, it is true, have been effected in national and local expenditure, but for the most part at the expense of the lower classes. Only three weeks ago I read in the *City Press* how the Guardians had effected considerable economies in the dietary of their Central Poor Law schools. Needless to say, it was the children's dietary which was attacked, and not that of the officers.

Papers like the *Observer* and the *Westminster Gazette* are exhorting us to economy, yet at Christmas the latter gave special prominence in its news columns to gala dinners at leading London hotels and restaurants. Even to-day (February 20) the *Observer* has an advertisement of dinners at the Criterion at prices ranging up to 7s 6d per head, and a great deal of its advertisement space is devoted to booming expensive articles of dress. What can all this be called except mere cant—i.e., economy in theory, lavish expenditure on luxuries in practice? Last November we had the Lord Mayor's banquet—a gorgeous feast, judging by the published menu and wine list—attended by preachers of economy like the Prime Minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and the chairman of the London County Council. By a strange coincidence, on that very day the Education Committee of the Council had voted large reductions in the estimates, including the abolition of the cheap prizes which do so much to brighten the lives of the children in the poorer districts of London.

'The theatres are in full swing,' added Mgr. Brown, 'hotels, both in London and the provinces, still advertise their "unrivalled cuisine" and find many patrons; and I read to-day that the demand for shops

in the West End thoroughfares, so far from being affected adversely by the war, is greater than ever. I have lived now for nearly thirty years among the poor of South London, and I know the sacrifices their lives involve. I know how they have been libelled by reckless writers and speakers, who accuse them of wholesale intemperance and extravagance since the war began, and I am forced in the interests of truth and justice to make as public a protest as I can against extravagance amongst the rich, which not only escapes condemnation in the press and in the Government, but is advertised by the one and encouraged by the other.'

WHY THE DISTILLERIES ARE COMMANDEERED.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says that considerable interest and some curiosity has been caused by the announcement that the Government have commandeered the grain distilleries of the United Kingdom. What is the military object? Alcohol is required for the purposes of the manufacture of high explosives, and probably the urgency which has been pressed is on account of the limited amount of acetone which is available to meet the colossal expansion in ammunition output. An authority on the subject explained the chief spirit used in the manufacture of cordite is acetone. After cotton waste has been thoroughly treated and nitrated, it is washed in water. Then it is mixed with vaseline and other articles, and the addition of acetone has the effect of dissolving the whole, and forming the cordite, which is of a high propulsive character and is used for big shells and small arms ammunition.

Acetone is a product of carbonised wood treated with acetate of lime, the process being a somewhat lengthy one compared with the manufacture of grain spirit. Most of the supplies of acetone come from America and Canada, and it is essential to the driving force of the larger shells. It has been found that grain spirit—alcohol—when it has been etherised, has the same properties of dissolving guncotton and other ingredients as acetone, and that it is particularly useful in the manufacture of cordite for small arms. The use of etherised alcohol, therefore, would release large quantities of acetone for the larger calibre ammunition. The use of acetone—which enters into the composition of a large number of manufactured goods—has been restricted, so that with this further immense call upon manufactured spirits, practically the whole output of acetone will be diverted for big gun purposes.

Cardinal Mercier, on February 17, had an audience with the Holy Father which lasted nearly an hour. His Eminence told his Holiness it was his intention to arrange with his colleagues of the Belgian episcopate that the 1st of May should be appointed as a day of prayer and special Communion for all the Belgian faithful on behalf of Benedict XV. His Holiness assented with emotion.

Owing to the war the condition of many of the foreign missions is deplorable. The French foreign missions have suffered very heavily through so many of the missionaries having been called to the colors. The Paris House of Foreign Missions, which provides for the spiritual wants of so many missions in the Far East, has been able to send out only three missionaries since the war began, but last year it lost by death no less than thirty-six. The Lyons Seminary could send out but one. The Italian and Belgian foreign missions are badly crippled by the conflict, and Mill Hill is struggling with financial difficulties.

HOTEL MANAGERS!

Why is the delicious MILITARY PICKLE on all well-kept tables? Buy a bottle to-day and supply the answer. Price Reasonable.