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**Origin of Some Great Hoaxes of the Present
War in Europe**

**Russian Army Myth—Legend of the Bowmen of Mons—
Report of the Intervention of Angels In the Same Battle**

Everyone has heard and read of the myths which have cropped out since the war started and despite the handicap of very great improbability in every case, have been almost universally believed for a time. Aleister Crowley contributes an interesting article on the subject to Vanity Fair under the title "Three Great Hoaxes of the war." He first deals with the Russian army myth as follows:

It was quite useless to point out to the English people that Archangel is served by a single line of rail, and that to ship even 10,000 troops would have strained the resources of the line for an entire summer. It was useless to ask why, having got all these troops on transports, the English did not sail them quietly down to the place where they were wanted, but went to the enormous and senseless trouble of disembarking them in England and embarking them again.

Useless to Argue

It was useless to make calculations; to show that as an English railway coach holds fifty men, and ten coaches make a pretty long train, it would have needed 3,000 trains to "flash by, with drawn blinds" for the men alone, and that the disguising of the horses, artillery, champagne and other necessary appurtenances of a Grand Ducal Russian army must have been a task worthy of Sherlock Holmes at his best.

One was always countered by the reply: "But Admiral X, or Captain Y, or Lord Z, or my Uncle Harry (as the case might be) saw them with his own eyes." The best of the joke was that the papers never printed a word of it, though the story was the sole topic of discussion for weeks. The idea was to keep the whole thing a secret from the Germans! Ultimately, long after the yarn had been exploded—even among the semi-educated—the

Evening News featured it as a "Strange Rumor" and one that might well be believed.

Prophecy Also

So much for legend: now for prophesy! The clairvoyants, astrologers, and psychics in England were of course besieged from the beginning. Everyone who was reputed to be able to "look into the seeds of time and see which grain will grow and which will not" was immediately paid to do so.

But the clairvoyants were confronted with this difficulty: Current prophecy must always be conceded as rather a matter of faith. But if there could be found a prophesy, many years old, which had foretold the details of the war, foretold them accurately, then it would be safe to assume that the prophet who had foretold the beginning might foretell the end. This demand soon created the supply; several prophecies were discovered—Madame de Thebes and others—but they were all lacking in satisfactory details and antiquity, until the great and glorious find—the Abbot Johannes.

The San Peladan, a moderately good litterateur and a really fine critic (you generation!), has, in his time, contributed much to the gaiety of the French people. Years ago, someone remarked to him in a café that his name was rather like that of the Assyrian, Beladan. Peladan jumped at the idea and said that he was Beladan, in a new incarnation; after that he gave himself the title of Sar. He even conferred similar glories on his associates; hence his friends, who became Merodach-Jaunauneau, Belshazzar-Dupont, and so on

Not Taken Seriously

The worthy Peladan was therefore not taken very seriously by his contemporaries in France; but England now-a-days will stand for anything, even cubists and futurists and vorticists. So the English lent a willing ear to the masterpiece of Peladan. It appeared that the Sar—so he said—in going through some old papers of his father's, some ten years previously, had found a Latin prophecy of the Abbot Johannes. (There were about two of three of these Abbots about 1600, but none of them were particularly prophetic!) Peladan had made a translation, but did not, of course, produce the original for the inspection of experts. The prophecy is in the best allegorical style; all about a cock, and a lion, and an eagle, and a bear. The Kaiser is de-

scribed unmistakably, owing to his withered arm, and the details of the way, down to the battle of the Marne, are given with an accuracy which reflects extraordinary credit on the seership of Johannes. After this point, however, he becomes a little indefinite and less careful in detail.

Soon Passed Current

The story "got over" and went the rounds of the press, and was swallowed by everybody. It did not last very long, though, for that part of the prophecy dealing with events subsequent to the Marne, though vague, was not vague enough to prevent even the most faithful believers from perceiving that it was totally wrong!

But all this palls before the superb story of "The Bowmen." There is nothing to beat it in all the annals of mythopeia.

Writer in England

There is a writer in England who is not very well known over here, but who is certainly among the first half-dozen living English authors. He is saturated with the love of mediaevalism and sacramentalism. His name is Arthur Machen. Falling upon evil times, he has had to write for the Evening News. In the course of this unhappy occupation, he read the famous Weekly Dispatch account of the retreat from Mons, which account was true, and caused the prosecution of the publishers. This was on Sunday morning, and he went to church later, and thought of the battle instead of the sermon. By and by he wrote a story on it called "The Bowmen." In a few words, this was his yarn:

Legendary Story

Five hundred British soldiers, the remains of a regiment, were covering the retreat from Mons. Disorganized and desperate, they saw annihilation approaching them in the shape of ten thousand pursuing cavalry. One of the men, who had been educated in Latin and the like, in the stress of emotion, found his mind wander back to a vegetarian restaurant in London where the plates had had on them a design of St. George and the motto "Adsit Anglis Sanctus Georgius." With involuntary piety he uttered the motto. A shudder passed through him; the noise of battle was soothed to a murmur in his ears; instead he heard a great roar as of thousands of soldiers shouting the an-

cient battle-cries that rang out at Crecy and Poitiers and Agincourt! He also saw before him a long line of shining shapes, "drawing their yew bows to their ears, and stroking their ell-long shafts against the Germans."

It was then observed by all that the enemy was being swept away, not in single units but in battalions. In fact, they were slain to a man; and the British rear guard strolled off quietly in the wake of their army.

Thoroughgoing Artist

It is to be noted that the author very artistically refrained from trying to lend verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative by stating that the burying-parties found arrows in the dead Germans. He thought it too much mustard!

Well, he printed the story on September 29, 1914, and thought that that would be the end of it. But no! A few days later the Occult Review and Light wrote to ask for his "authorities!" He replied that the old musty English ale at the "Spotted Dog" in Bouverie Street might know; if not, nobody did.

In a month or so, several parish magazines asked leave to reprint it; and would he write a preface giving the name of the soldier, and so on? He replied "Reprint away; but as for the soldier, his name is Thomas Atkins of the Horse-Marines." The editor of one magazine replied (it was April, 1915, by now): "Pardon me, sir, if I appear to contradict you; but I know positively that the facts of the story are true; all you have done is to throw it into a literary form."

How He Described It

In May, Mr. A. P. Sinnett (the man who first wrote of the Blavatsky tea cup fables) had an article in the Occult Review saying: "Those who could see said that they saw 'a row of shining being' between the two armies."

Now Machen did say "a long row of shining shapes." In this phase one may find the *raison d'être* of the last stage of the myth. Angels are still popular in England; fairies are dead, and saints are held a trifle Popish; St. George is only a name except to mediaevalists like Mr. Machen. So he drops out of the story. "The Bowmen" became "The Angels of Mons" and the story fairly took the bit between its teeth, and bolted. It was quoted in Truth, in The New Church Weekly, in John Bull, in The Daily

Chronicle, in the Pall Mall Gazette, and in every case it was treated as a serious story.