

THREE GREAT HOAXES OF THE WAR

Blessed Are They That Have Not Seen and Yet Have Believed

By Aleister Crowley

ON three notable occasions, since the war began, the credulity of the English people has passed all belief. The student of religious origins has probably noted that the hoaxes on all three occasions follow the generally accepted lines of demarcation, namely; legend, prophecy, and miracle.

It is now no secret that the famous legend of the "Russian Soldiers," that wonderful story of a million and a half Russian troops (with horses and artillery) smuggled through England in the dead of the night, was put about by the secret service to try to check the panic caused by the collapse at Mons. 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.

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.

SO much for legend: now for prophecy! 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 prophecy, 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 Thèbes and others—but they were all lacking in satisfactory details and antiquity, until the great and glorious find—the find of the Abbot Johannes.

Jauneau, Belshazzar-Dupont, and so on! Also he had announced himself to be a Rosicrucian—anything romantic and mysterious helps to work a clever trick—and published a book on the doctrines of that august Fraternity called "Le Vice Suprême," rather as if a learned Presbyterian divine were to preach on "Why We Believe in the Mass."

The worthy Péladan 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 Péladan. 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 two or three of these Abbots about 1600, but none of them were particularly prophetic!) Péladan 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 described unmistakably, owing to his withered arm, and the details of the war, 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 of detail.

THE present writer warned the Editor of the *Occult Review* that anything emanating from Péladan could only be a jest, but was rebutted by the evidence of an alderman from Harrogate, who was said to have seen the original. "An alderman from Harrogate" only made it worse!

However, 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 falls before the superb story of "The Bowmen."

There is nothing to beat it in all the annals of mythopoeia.

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. (Continued on page 118)



TRENCH TALK

POILU (to TOMMY ATKINS)—"I no not speak well se English language. In England say do not speak it se same as say do en Amérique: Par example in England say talk of se great Field Marshal, in America say say 'Ze Great Marshall Field.' Et puis alors,—In America say talk of se great French General, in England say speak always of se great General French!"

Drawn by John Paul

The Sar Péladan, a moderately good littérateur and a really fine critic (you can read all about him in Nordau's "Degeneration"), 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. Péladan 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 Mérodach-