THE SUICIDE OF NATIONS. By M. de BLOCH.

THE FAMOUS ECONOMIST POINTS THE MORAL OF THE TRANSVAAL WAR AND THE CHINA CRISIS.

We conclude below the report of our recent interview with M. de Bloch on the lessons of the war in South Africa and the military expedition in China:—

CHINA: A MIRAGE OF TRADE EXPANSION.

Now, as to the situation in China, I have dealt with its possible developments in the third and sixth volumes of my book. This trouble in China is a foolish thing. You go far away, and at infinite cost take something which you find has no value for you. China has, comparatively, no value for us. For Great Britain there is a certain gain, but it is not worth all it is going to cost. Your trade with the four hundred million people of China is a small part of your whole trade, and even then a quarter of it consists of opium and more of rice—a trade which does not benefit the English people. I do not believe there will be any rapid growth of that trade. The whole annual imports of China do not amount to two shillings per head of her inhabitants, the insignificance of which you may gauge by the fact that German imports are by comparison sixty times as great. The chief part of Chinese imports consists of cotton, opium, rice, and petroleum. If you exclude opium, which cannot be properly said to yield a European profit, I do not believe that the whole profit on Chinese imports (reckoning profits at from five to ten per cent.) exceeds forty-three millions of francs—much less than two millions of pounds sterling—a year. If that be so, the cost of increased European armaments in the Far East, to say nothing of the destruction of warfare, has eaten up all the profit of Chinese trade over and over again.

THE INDUSTRIAL PERIL.

It may be said that it is not the present trade but the future possibilities of China which excite the greedy anxiety of the outside world. Very little reflection will show that this is a mirage. The very character of Chinese social organisation and Chinese ideas—which no amount of railway and telegraph extension can rapidly or radically change—is against it. Everything there is of the simplest character; the many needs on which international trade thrives simply do not exist. Of course, the resources of the country will be developed; but let us fully understand what this means. China is rich in coal and iron and other minerals. Labour is so cheap—only a tenth of what it costs here or in America—that they will be able to produce everything there and send it to the markets of Europe at a price with which you cannot compete. If China could become a ground for colonisation by the teeming peoples of Europe there might be some excuse for a territorial policy. But that is quite out of the question. China is already so thickly populated that only the extraordinary skill and industry of the people enable them to exist at all.

400 MILLION PATRIOTS IN REvolt.

As to the military situation, no available force of the other Powers can really conquer four hundred millions of people. The position has radically changed during the past few years. Hitherto China has lain quiet, ignorant of or not seriously feeling foreign influence. But her defeat by the small Japanese nation stirred her to the depths. Then came the Transvaal War, showing what even a few determined men could do in self-defence. You know there is a great network of telegraphs now in China. The British defeats have been published far and wide by the Government. Every centre of population has received the news of the long resistance of the Boers. Faced by the seizure of this place by Russia, that by Germany, another by Great Britain, the Chinese asked themselves whether they, too, could not do something with modern arms. "We can soon have a million rifles, and the Germans and British have taught us to make ammunition," they said; "we will try." What has happened illustrates one specific quality of the modern firearm: it gives the holder, especially if it is new to him, an assurance of ten-fold strength—an increase of prestige which has the utmost military value. And, after all, what is a "Boxer"? He is only what you would call here a Jingo, what in France they call a Nationalist, in Russia or Germany a patriot. Germany is probably the chief immediate cause of the outbreak, because the Germans in China have been particularly tactless and boastful. Is it surprising that when each Power is asking the other what it will take from China, the Chinese should say: "Well, you are very rich, but we are very many; we will defend ourselves"?

A LIST OF CAUSES.

No doubt many factors have contributed to the present outbreak. The return of large numbers of Chinese labourers from America is one element of agitation; the changed methods of the missionaries...
is another. Again, certain Chinese trades have been injured by foreign competition. The arrested emigration of Chinese workers synchronizing with the taxation caused by the Japanese war tended to create a social crisis. Add to these things the open aggression of Europeans, individuals and States, the contemptuous bearing of the diplomatists towards Chinese officials, and the influence of the Japanese war, and you have a long enough list of causes. It is a very dangerous and very ominous situation. I have seen something of insurrection, and I know what a terrible thing it may be even in a European country, to say nothing of such a country as China. It is possible that an allied force of 200,000 men may beat the Boxers, but what are one or two defeats amid such a population? You cannot really extinguish these patriotic movements. Apart from the dangers of the outbreak itself there is the danger of fresh dissensions among the Powers.

AN ALTERNATIVE POLICY.

What would I suggest, then? In the first place, if we wish to prevent a repetition of this outbreak, we must put a stop to the policy of territorial aggression and military terrorism, and return to a reliance upon pacific commercial intercourse. If differences arise the means of settling them is already being established at the Hague. You need not fear that Russia will have any unfair advantage; for many years to come her hands will be full with her own tasks, and effective competition with other Powers will be out of the question. As to the present crisis, punishment of offences against international law should be clearly distinguished from political and territorial action in China by the other Powers. I have suggested the dangers of a territorial policy. But the Powers might give notice to the Chinese Government, and, as far as possible, to the Chinese people, that until order was restored in the Empire, and proved malefactors punished, the outer world would hold no communication with them—would regard them as outside the comity of nations and the benefits of international law. But to punish a whole people by a military expedition would be no security for justice and certainly no security for future peace, and that is the chief thing. For if the patriotic movement which has begun be not appeased, when the race struggle takes wide dimensions you will have the gravest complications in India, Tonkin, and throughout Asia. In 1880 the Russian Ambassador in Teheran was murdered, with forty men, and the Embassy was burned amid horrible atrocities. The Emperor Nicholas said: "It is not a nation that has done this"; and while a

number of men were afterwards captured and executed and an indemnity was exacted, no general revenge was taken. So it might be in China to-day, and so it should be, all the more that China will be an infinitely more difficult and dangerous problem to attack in any other way.

A JOINT COMMITTEE AT LAST!

FIRST MEETING OF THE JUNIA DISCUSSES ELECTION POLICY.

A STEP toward the co-operation so often advocated in these columns, and especially toward the fulfilment of the proposal lately put forward by Mr. Moscheles for a monthly meeting of secretaries or delegates from the various English Peace societies, was taken on August 1. A first meeting was held on that day at 40, Outer Temple, the Peace Society, the Hackney Peace Union, a new Society formed at Blackheath, and the International Arbitration and Peace Association being represented—the first named by Dr. Evans Darby, and the last by Mr. Moscheles and Mr. Green—and sympathetic letters were received from Miss Cooke (the Peace Union), the Rev. J. J. Ellis (Birmingham Auxiliary of the Peace Society), Mr. Charles Stevenson (Manchester Auxiliary of the Peace Society), Mr. H. Bricc (Exeter Branch of the International Arbitration Association), Mr. Cremer (International Arbitration League), Mr. C. W. Loveridge (Morley Society, affiliated to our Association), Mrs. Mawson (Tynside Branch, International Arbitration Association), Miss Peckover (Wisbech Peace Association). Most of these and some letters received at a later date express the warmest wishes for the success of the experiment.

Various subjects were discussed, the most important of these being the attitude of the societies in reference to the coming elections. A series of questions to be put to candidates was drafted, and these will be submitted to the committees of the respective societies with a view to their discussion, amendment, and ultimate publication as a joint document.

It is proposed to make the first Thursday of every month (5 p.m. at 40, Outer Temple, for the present) the regular meeting time; and foreign and provincial friends are advertised that they will be specially welcome. In October there will be no meeting, as the Paris Congress will take its place.