

British Gossip

WHILE the fiftieth anniversary of the relief of Lucknow, September 25th, 1857, was celebrated in London by the decoration of Sir Henry Havelock's statue in Trafalgar Square, that Man of Unrest, Mr. Keir Hardie, M. P., was making inflammatory speeches in the East, causing much clamour by his fulmination against the country which is supposed to be his native land. The average British subject is quite at a loss to understand the mental gyrations of the Keir Hardie type and comes to the conclusion that the gentleman in question is seeking to advertise his eloquence and importance. Such a demagogue is not a source of much danger where he is known but the trouble is that the educated natives of India are not aware of Mr. Hardie's standing among British public men and may come to the highly incorrect conclusion that his opinions are of weight and majesty. How happy such chaps must feel in Hyde Park or Southern Asia where they can find a multitude to take them seriously. It may occur to the Englishman who has read the history of the Black Year that this is not an opportune time for a British M. P. to abuse Great Britain in India. The innocent and industrious may have to suffer for the vain imaginings of this inflated Socialist who, of course, would not be on the spot if his words excited blows.

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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's recent marriage was celebrated quietly in London and the dear public which loves a pageant and which would certainly have thronged to the wedding of the creator of "Sherlock Holmes," was kept in ignorance as to the scene of the ceremony. Some of the English journals and many Canadian newspapers made a curious blunder in connection with the affair. The announcement was made that the novelist was a bachelor "caught at last," and various pleasantries were the outcome of this remark. As a matter of fact, Sir Arthur, then plain Dr. Doyle, married in 1886 Louisa Hawkins of Minsterworth, Gloucester. He has been a widower for some time and the announcement of his engagement came as a surprise to most of his literary friends. The bride was Miss Jean Leckie, a pretty and graceful Londoner, concerning whom the papers made the cheering announcement: "She is not prominent."

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Mr. Winston Churchill, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, set out on a prow after problems during the last week of September and has visited Malta, Cyprus and Mombasa already. After spending a fortnight in British East Africa, Mr. Churchill will cross Lake Victoria and will travel through Uganda to Lake Albert. His return journey will be down the Nile, via Khartoum and Cairo and his return to England is expected about the middle of January. "Punch" has already indicated that Lord Elgin is in no hurry for the home-coming of his buoyant assistant. If the young man should fall a victim to the sleeping sickness or should become so enamoured of Africa as to set up his tent on the banks of Lake Albert, there would not be many mourning politicians at home—or in the Dominion of Canada, which Mr. Churchill once dazzled with a meteoric lecture tour.

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Centuries ago, before the Anglo-Saxons had dreamed of making their piratical way to England, the Island of Britannia was famous in Rome because of its oysters, a delicacy which the citizens on the Tiber highly enjoyed. British oysters have lost their supremacy, but a reminder of their early importance was received when the civic opening of the Colchester oyster fishery took place last month with the customary quaint ceremonial. The mayor and corporation went in a steam dredger to the limits of the fishery off Brightlingsea, where they consumed gin and gingerbread while the town clerk read in archaic phraseology the proclamation which declared that the fishery had been the property of the corporation "from time beyond which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary." The town sergeant then shouted "God Save the King," cheers were given, and the mayor hoisted up the first dredge of oysters.

It is quite difficult to remember that Mr. Alfred Austin is poet laureate, so lamentably has he failed in impressing his official songs upon the people. By way of reminding the public that he is still among the living, Mr. Austin has written to the papers to say that he is thinking of having cheaper editions of his poems published in the near future. Mr. Austin, we are informed, has been a man of several professions. He has been a barrister, a journalist and has actually faced the duties of war-correspondent. In the last capacity he represented a London paper throughout the siege of Paris. Mr. Austin's prose is gentle and fairly readable and had he been content to write paragraphs about gardens instead of poems on Mafeking, he would have been regarded as a pleasant dilettante sort of a chap.

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The novels of "Q" give us to understand that Cornwall is really a Delectable Duchy in which it is well to wander. Mr. James Douglas of M. A. P. has lately been spending a holiday there and gives that lonely country a testimonial which would make the fortune of a fashionable rest cure. Thus does the modern scribe reflect: "If I cannot be a cow or a cormorant, I would be a Cornish vicar smiling my sleepy smile and rubbing my hands together in the sun. Such a man surely was Hawker of Morwenstow, the vicar who deliberately chose Cornish quiet in preference to the restless glory of a London parish. In all the world there is no place like Cornwall for the rest. Its old churches are full of it to their crumbling roofs. For half an hour I drank deep draughts of it as I wandered among the tombstones in the peaceful graveyard of Manaccan. If not gay, I was at least healthy and I was admonished. . . . While we were driving back to Mullion Cove I nearly burst my lungs with trying to blow hideous sounds out of a coach horn. Really life is very like that. We all pass our lives in despairing attempts to blow dreadful dissonances out of an instrument which we do not understand. The Cornishmen and the cows and the cormorants know better."

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Transportation problems are likely to bear heavily upon British railway authorities this winter and a strike is to be averted only by care and concessions. The speed mania seems to have taken possession of the steamship companies, and the "Lusitania's" record is already menaced by the "Mauretania." Then the equipment of war vessels goes on apace and ships of the "Dreadnaught" class now form a quartette, while two more such monsters are promised. War-balloons are also a department of the latest experiments and aerial destroyers may soon follow. Altogether it is no wonder that the journalist of to-day regards Cornwall as a spot of refuge and refreshment.

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The disturbance created by Sir James Crichton-Brown's paper on sanitation and diet has not yet been quieted. Sir James is described as a gentleman of the old school, whose enormous Dundreary whiskers render him a remarkable figure in the modern assembly. Two years ago he was sent on a mission to Jamaica in connection with the Colonial Office. While at Kingston he had an amusing encounter with a coloured but very humble official. Sir James is an ardent Scot and was keenly interested in the Scottish population of the island.

"Do you have many Scotchmen in these parts?" he asked of the official.

The darkey thought for a moment, and then answered: "Not many, just a few—but enough." Sir James collapsed.

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The Cullinan diamond which the Transvaal proposes to send to King Edward may prove an embarrassing jewel to His Majesty. The gift is worth about one hundred and fifty thousand pounds and its money value might better be spent on a somewhat exhausted South Africa. The diamond itself appears to be a fairly handsome stone, weighing, uncut, 3,025 carats. The manager of the Premier mine found it by accident one day when he was taking a careless stroll.



Lady Doyle, wife of the novelist,
Sir A. Conan Doyle.