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LONDON GOSSIP.

THE ARAB THRONES.

LONDON, Aug. 30th, 1920.
I am a little afraid that there may be trouble in store for all the Allies on the Tigris and Euphrates. Not to mention the present Arab risings in Mesopotamia, the murder of the new Francophile Ministers near Damascus does not augur well for the new regime inaugurated in Syria by General Gouraud. The French have already protested against the possible installation of the Emir Feisal as King of Mesopotamia. They declare that in deference to our wishes they are so far refrained from supporting the Emir Said, whom Lord Allenby has obliged to expel from Damascus, as the future King of Syria. But they also declare that if we insist on Feisal's enthronement in Mesopotamia they will put up Said at Damascus. In which case, in view of the ancient feud between the two Arab families, we shall be threatened with a bitter inter-Arab war.

SOLDIERS STILL IN HOSPITAL.

There are still 8,000 soldier and sailor patients in the London hospitals. Eight hundred of them are at the great Orthopedic Hospital, Shepherd's Bush, where there is an elaborate equipment for the treatment of surgical cases, and 400 are at the Southampton Hospital, which supplies and trains men in the use of artificial limbs. Hundreds of other patients are at such distant places as Lapham, Edmonton, Woolwich and Footing. The 4th London General Hospital, at Denmark Hill, still retains between two and three hundred men, and a number are fortunate enough to be at Milbank Military Hospital, from which they can easily get to central places of interest. These long-term patients are suffering from shell shock, from wounds and fractures which will not heal, and from other troubles which require tedious treatment. Those that one sees about the streets—and they are very few nowadays—look as though their long con-

valescence bored them, but they are happier than the men who cannot walk abroad or the cases still confined to bed. They are not entirely forgotten. Here and there one hears of people who arrange entertainments in certain wards or outdoor excursions, but generally speaking they do feel that the public has forgotten them. They miss the frequent hospital visitors, the gifts of fruit and cigarettes, the numerous entertainments that used to be arranged for them, and the motor rides.

FASHION IN SPECTACLES.

There are fashions in everything—even in spectacles. The circle in which all modes are said to move has brought us back to the horn "specs" of the days of our grandfathers. Gold-rimmed and rimless pince-nez are fast disappearing in London, and their places are being taken by clumsy looking contraptions which suggest an optician's test frame or a pair of motor goggles. The vogue is said to be of American origin. One of its earliest devotees here was Ian Macpherson, the present Pensions Minister, who soon found many imitators in the House of Commons. The optician will tell you that the horn frames are lighter in weight and more restful to the eyes, and that the larger lenses—usually about the size of the glass of a watch—also have special advantages. He may be right, but he probably knows that the decree of fashion more than his expert advice influences purchasers in many cases. So far the new fashion seems to have found favour only with the men. The new style is a disfigurement rather than an aid to beauty, and this doubtless accounts for woman's shyness in adopting it.

A BAN ON GAUITY.

Civilised life on this planet is a series of contradictions. The days have gone by when we went abroad for our little summer vacation. But we can all of us recollect the refreshing charm of foreign scenes and foreign habits.

How many of us have not listened in rapture to merry parties of Frenchmen or Italians going home after some sociable evening entertainment singing as they went, and regretted the absence in our own country of this cheerful and picturesque feature of everyday Continental life. Yet how strangely illogical is the British nation. When our young people attempt to emulate this fascinating gaiety, what do we do? According to police court reports we promptly arrest the songsters and charge them with "insulting behaviour," and with being "a nuisance to pedestrians and inhabitants." Three young and respectable girls were actually locked up at the police station until midnight and charged with this offence at the North London Police Court because they walked home from a music hall arm-in-arm singing. It is small wonder that the Magistrate expressed indignation with the police authorities. We are officially condemned. It seems, to take our pleasures sadly.

THE OLD TRAIL AGAIN.

Motorists know about the great commercial traffic on the road, but the ordinary public has little conception of the degree to which this trade has swollen. Much of it is done by night. North and South the big motor wagons trail along, waking up the old hostleries that have revived in the new world. In consequence of the extraordinary amount of damage done in transit to valuable machinery and of the habitual delay, an enormous carrying traffic is now done on the road. It costs more, but it saves days. The firm knows where it stands about its good. Newcastle, Coventry, Dudley, Port, Lincoln, Nottingham, and other big industrial towns are now sending their machinery by road to London. The road has reacted to the new traffic, and the inns that used to house the carriers' traffic, the Wagon and Horses of the smaller towns, are now enlarging themselves from the public-house status to which they had fallen and opening their creaky old yard doors, and providing stocks of petrol, too, and good lodgings to the heavy wagons and drivers. In such inns now the talk at night is of the Bapaume Road and Ypres and Armentieres, for the drivers are nearly all old army transport men, glad to get out again on the egrat road.

THE ALL-ROUND ATHLETE.

Londoners seem to be taking very little interest in the Olympic Games, and many of them are wondering if they serve any useful purpose. Provided they were held in London it is probable that there would be considerably larger attendances than have followed the most important events at Antwerp, and that a degree of enthusiasm in particular contests might be provoked. At the same time there is a strong feeling of doubt in many quarters whether the games are worth participating in, and a good many appear to be inclined to the view expressed by Eustace Miles (who runs a large food reform and vegetarian restaurant in London) that the competitions are conducted in circumstances and under conditions which render the results unconvincing. They do not, it is urged, provide any test for an all-round athlete. On the contrary, as the American achievement shows, success is more a matter of technique and practice than of all-round physical efficiency and versatility, the highest number of points being scored by Americans because the contestants had confined their training to one particular phase of the game. It is suggested that if this country is to take part seriously in them in the future the best persons should be selected for each event after a series of competitions, otherwise all-round British athletes are promised small chance of many victories.

THE PETIT PALAIS OF THE EMBANKMENT.

The Astor Estate Office building on the Thames Embankment has not been very busily used in recent years, and the news that it is to be sold was expected. It was built by the late Lord Astor as the petit palais of a millionaire. It was romantically designed in the nineties by L. C. Pearson, the architect of Truro Cathedral (Cornwall), in the late Tudor style, and its setting, half-hidden beside office buildings in a byway of the Embankment, where no one would see the lights of its hospitable night in that deserted quarter, must have had something of the new Arabian fantasy that Stevenson has brought into the period. Its great bronze gates and screen with grills and scrollwork, rich stone portico, carved stone gables, and decorated finials surmounted by a beautiful metal ship indicated the sumptuousness which its interior revealed. A second marble stair-case decorated with carved wooden figures of the characters from "The Three Musketeers," rooms with rare, sweet-smelling woods and elaborate carvings and silver door-panels with reliefs illustrating the "Idylls of the King," heavily eilded ceilings, and state bedsteads are some of the fancy features. A curious conceit, far removed from the taste of our time, is the east and west windows, that are filled with colored glass to represent sunrise and sunset. The brightest period in the history of the house was when Astor first ran the "Pall Mall Gazette" with his band of fashionable young men and held his staff parties there. Even

Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower wrote of one tea party there: "I was quite oppressed with the crowd of duchesses that were there." It is hard to see how so specialised a building can now be profitably adapted to the uses of common day. But it would make a nice little pied-a-terre in London for a movie king.

Education.

S.—OUR CHILDREN—AT SCHOOL.

There are fourteen Protestant schools, including colleges, in St. John's, in which are registered 2817 scholars. Of these there are 1994, or nearly 70%, in the Primer grade and the first four standards. After the fourth standard the numbers very greatly decrease. That is, a very small proportion of our children go beyond the elementary stages of education. The majority leave school in their twelfth year, very meagrely prepared to assume the responsibilities of citizenship or to undertake any form of leadership.

The ages of the children attending school range from 4½ years to 19 years, and above. Of the 2817 scholars, 342 are in the second standard, and the ages range from 5½ years to 13 years. In the primer grade there are some children 4½ years of age, and others 12½ years and over. In the same grade. The educational experts visiting one of the better schools examined four standards selected at random. In one of these standards the children ranged from 8 years of age to 12 years, in another standard, from 10 to 18 years, and in another standard from 4½ years to 9½ years.

A distribution which is almost as wide exists in the large majority of grades or standards. One might expect this condition where four school systems are involved, as they are in St. John's, and examination of individual classes chosen at random, showing the same situation to be true. The cure for the wrong appears to be some scheme of compulsory education, so that children at a certain stated age should be compelled to attend, and take up the proper standards at their proper ages.

Of the 2817 scholars it was found that 21% were under the age for the standard in which they were found, 47% were of the normal age for the standard, and 32% were over the age for the standard. The underage children are the bright intelligent scholars who are ahead of their years in education, while the overage, that is, over one third of the whole number, are those who were either mentally slow or who did not commence to attend school at the proper age.

The experts remark that "The tremendous burden of teaching when children are spread over such wide range of ages, is surely clear even to the ordinary layman. To those who are satisfactorily trained and who recognize the large number of problems involved in teaching which are not apparent to the layman, the task of conducting the teaching of the boys and girls in St. John's, becomes, under present conditions an insuperable one."

With the 2817 children scattered among 14 schools it is almost impossible to deal with this situation. Were the children brought together, in say, four large schools, the various standards could each be divided into three grades, one grade to contain the underage, one for the normal pupils, and the third for the overage. Thus the peculiar condition existing in each grade could be specially dealt with by the teacher. The educational experts believe that the children of St. John's can only secure fair and just treatment with respect to classification and grading through the consolidation of the present school systems, and through the erection of large building units which will permit children of like ability to be taught together.

In regard to school attendance, the experts took a single page in each of four school registers selected at random. In one case it was found that the absences of scholars were 45% of the school time, in the second case the absences were 40%, in the third case 35%, and in the fourth case 21%.

The Government have undertaken a most necessary work in the establishment of a normal college for the training of teachers. While it will be of very great benefit in future years, the results cannot be what they should, so long as the present conditions persist.

The authorities and the superintendents in Newfoundland are to be congratulated upon the results that have been achieved at so little cost. Last year the average cost, per pupil, throughout Newfoundland was about \$9.00 which was an increase over the cost in previous years.

We have certainly not erred on the side of extravagance. In St. John's the elementary schools showed an expenditure of about \$10.23 per pupil, while the colleges showed an average of \$36.00 per pupil. The respective figures in other counties range from \$30.00 to \$50.00 for elementary pupils and from \$60.00 to \$120.00 for high-school pupils.

The present situation in St. John's, including the inadequate plants, the defective equipment, the lack of proper maintenance, and the failure to attract boys and girls to school, is, in a very large measure due to the fact that enough money is not being spent on the schools to interest men and women in their proper development.—COM.

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