

Our Weekly London Letter

By SIR JOHN FOSTER FRASER
Our Special London Correspondent

Lloyd George Loses His Grip. — Prince of Wales is Thin and Hates to See His Own Smiling Photographs. — The "Keep to the Left" Rule in London Traffic. — Good Feeling Between France and England Strengthened by Adoption of Verdun by British. — Outlook in South America, and Interest in Great Exhibition of Brazilians at Rio de Janeiro to Celebrate Centenary of Their Independence as a Republic.

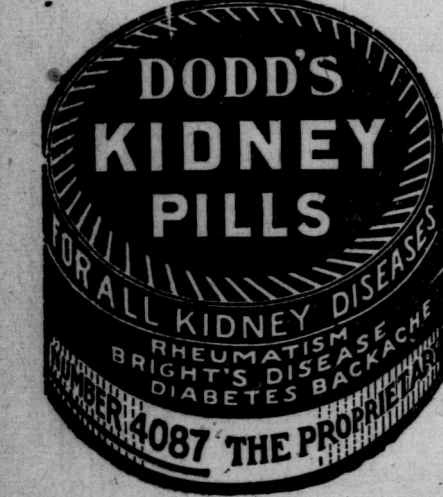
The prime minister has been away from the House of Commons so often and so long engaged in the purpose of straightening out a world which persists in remaining crooked that his influence at Westminster has considerably waned. The prime minister is the first figure in Parliament, but as he has for some years been carrying the main weight of the administration upon his own shoulders, Mr. Lloyd George delegated the position of leader of the House to Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain has done exceedingly well, though rather at the expense of the prime minister's own reputation. Our big politicians never read their speeches, and certainly a man like Mr. Lloyd George, although he may have in mind the outline of his argument, is invariably dependent upon the inspiration of the moment for the success of his remarks. It cannot be said, however, that his last two or three House of Commons speeches have had much fair about them. So he is now in much closer attendance during debates, recovering the lost grip he had on the assembly. As prime minister he is the head of the Government, but Mr. Chamberlain is leader of the House and when one of them is away the amusing, interesting problem is who is deputizing for the other?

THE HEALTH OF THE PRINCE

Whatever the cause, the Prince of Wales has returned from his travels in Asia looking much thinner than formerly — and certainly he has no weight to spare. Whether it is the climate of the tropics or the excessive strain of attending a whole procession of official functions day after day for so many months, he certainly looks weary. Yet it cannot be so, for he is off playing polo several mornings each week, and rarely an evening passes without his attending a dance — for this is the height of the London season. I rather think that the prince has for a long time had quite sufficient to do in the way of ceremonial functions. Since his return he has been denying practically every invitation to take part in a public affair, for he really wants, as he has freely admitted to his friends, a few months to do very much as he likes, like any other young man of means. I was told by an intimate friend that the prince declared he was sick of seeing photographs of himself always smiling. He wants to be popular and amiable, but he is tired of the smiling picture. Indeed, I understand now that he is home and past 28 years of age, he desires to investigate social problems in our great industrial centers.

MOUNT EVEREST

Of course, we are sorry that the highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, in the Himalayas, has not been climbed, although this year a special expedition made a second attempt. However, some of our climbers reached as high as 26,800 feet, which is only some 2,000 feet from the summit; and yet, owing to exhaustion and the rarity of the air, although they used oxygen, they were obliged to turn back. The



I think I mentioned a week or two ago that the strained relationship between France and ourselves had softened, and even developed into a charming regard. Perhaps the fact that London has made Verdun its god-child and become responsible for the complete rehabilitation of that brave but broken city, has had something to do with the burst of enthusiasm. Any way, thousands of French people are now in London. We had M. Poincaré and madam over here for a few days, and the French prime minister delivered an amusing speech in broken English. The bishop of Verdun has been preaching in Westminster Cathedral; the tricolor has been fluttering from many buildings; Georges Carpentier has been giving exhibition matches on behalf of the Verdun fund, but I think the great triumph was when the president sent over to London the band of the Garde Republicaine to give a Sunday after-

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noon concert to over 10,000 people in our Albert Hall. I have seen that big hall enthusiastically crowded on many occasions, but never such an uproar in demonstration as when the French people insisted on singing the British National Anthem, and with sparse knowledge of the words did our best to respond with "The Marseillaise." Whether these international demonstrations are very much good I do not know, but I must say they are most enjoyable.

BRITAIN AND SOUTH AMERICA

There has been considerable discussion here in regard to the great exhibition which the Brazilians are opening at Rio de Janeiro to celebrate the centenary of their independence as a republic. Britain was invited to be an exhibitor, but our commercial men were somewhat hesitant because there are some debts which the Brazilians have not seen their ability to pay us. It was not a matter of inability to send the money, but a repudiation of the debts which caused so much ill-feeling that it was proposed, so far as Britain is concerned, to boycott the exhibition. The British navy was invited to the beautiful harbor of Rio. This was declined, chiefly on the ground of expense, but really, as a continuation of the boycott. Many people, however, in this country take a wider view of international matters than just considering how they are affected by them, and started an agitation that Britain should send two of its finest warships to the September celebrations. Britain has many commercial interests throughout the whole of the South American republic, with hundreds of millions of money invested, and from a business point of view the Government was brought to see the advisability of giving them the friendliest of countenances to the Brazilian festivities. Indeed, just now, not only is our shipping service to South America being enlarged and accelerated, but a considerable amount of the trade which was lost during the war is now being recovered for Europe. So two of our finest warships are getting up steam to go to Brazil.

SAID IBN SAUD
HELPING FRENCH

Many Rumors Regarding This Arabian Figure

TAKES BRITISH SUBSIDY

Said to Be Acting Against King of Hadjaz

LONDON, July 31.—In a recent article on the Wahabi movement in Arabia attention was directed to the important role of Ibn Saud, the Wahabi Sultan of Nejd, in the drama now being staged in the Middle East.

If there is any truth in a recent Cairo rumor, Ibn Saud has made a sensational reappearance in the center of the stage. Although in receipt of a British subsidy and pledged to good behavior, Ibn Saud is said to have made an alliance with the French—one plainly directed against the British protégés who now rule in the Hedjaz and in the mandated territories of Transjordan and Mesopotamia. It even is alleged that he has undertaken expressly to oppose with all his resources establishment of an Arab confederation under the aegis of Great Britain.

RUMORS WERE CONTRADICTED.

These rumors have been contradicted semi-officially and should be received with reserve. They emanate apparently from the Syrian committee in Cairo, an anti-French organization which naturally would do its best to discredit in British eyes the French policy in the East.

Similarly, the committee is associated with the Sherifian solution of the Arab problem. It believes, in other words, in an Arab confederation under the leadership of the Sherif of Mecca (now King Hussein of the Hedjaz) and his family. Ibn Saud for long has been at feud with the Sherifian family.

The Syrian committee accordingly can be trusted to give currency to the rumors tending to show that Ibn Saud is disloyal to Great Britain. So long, therefore, as the reports emanating from the committee remain unconfirmed, they should be accepted as much less than their face value, if at all.

At the same time, it must be admitted that the French have good reason to desire the co-operation of Ibn Saud. From the outset they have been implacably hostile to the Sherifian family.

They have never forgotten or forgiven King Faisal's attempt to keep them out of Syria—an attempt which ended in the summer of 1920 with his forcible expulsion from Damascus and the French occupation of that city. Selection of King Faisal as sovereign of Mesopotamia was much resented by the French.

So, too, was the appointment of his brother Abdullah as viceroy of Transjordan.

With two princes of the Sherifian house as their neighbors, the French feel none too comfortable in Syria, itself in a state of unrest.

SUPPORT MIGHT PROVE VALUABLE
In Ibn Saud, the French may have thought they could find a valuable counterpoise. By supporting him against his rivals, they not only would keep Faisal and Abdullah too busy to be a menace to them in Syria, but would impair fatally the prestige and frustrate the ambitions of the Sherifian house as a whole.

Such are the motives by which French policy may have been actuated. Whether the French have in fact made serious overtures to Ibn Saud for an anti-Sherifian — and, incidentally, an anti-British — alliance, remains to be seen. Nor should it be too hastily assumed that if such overtures have been made, Ibn Saud has responded to them. He has not a little to lose—not only his much-prized subsidy of £5,000 a month, but the good will of Great Britain, and by no means an insignificant asset in the Middle East.

All that can be said at the moment is that if Ibn Saud has, in fact, been bought by the French, the immediate result will be two-fold—a further weakening of King Faisal's position in Mesopotamia (and what is still more serious) the opening of a new era of Anglo-French rivalry in an area in which it is especially important that the powers should work in close co-operation.

"FISH HOT DOGS" THE LATEST DELICACY

SKYSCRAPERS FOR LONDON POSSIBLE

City May Permit Buildings 140 Feet High

CONCESSIONS TO FIRMS

At Present Building Laws Are Most Conservative

LONDON, July 31.—The London County Council has made some concessions to the demand of West End business firms that they be allowed to erect loftier and more commodious stores, but these concessions fall far short of permitting the construction in London of buildings modeled after American skyscrapers.

"The concessions as to height asked for was 120 feet maximum on favorable sites," explained the secretary of the Retail Distributors' Association, which had been the prime mover in the matter. "We have been authorized to put up buildings that are 80 feet high to the ceilings of the topmost floor, and, on favorable sites, the municipality may permit buildings to be erected that are 100 or even 140 feet high."

"The London County Council has conceded greater space for department stores, but the old regulations restricted cubic capacity to 200,000 feet. This was imposed because the old-fashioned methods of displaying wares in the magnificent wings of a congested nature increased the risk of fire."

"The concession of a cubic capacity of 600,000 feet, which has now been made, or a limit of 40,000 square feet floor space for any one department, will enable us to secure floor space equal to that of any of the magnificent stores in America, with one or two exceptions."

How far London is from having attained the sky-scraper stage will be

realized when it is understood that the highest building in London is Whitehall Court, the home of the National Liberal Club, which is 110 feet high. The highest building in the country is in Liverpool, and is 420 feet high to the top of the tower, but the actual main building is only 210 feet high. The next highest is a steamship company building, also in Liverpool, and is 140 feet high.

A glut of mushrooms, unequaled for years, exists in the rural districts near Folkestone.

MRS. BESANT URGES HOME RULE FOR INDIA

FREMANTLE, Australia, July 31.—Home rule for India, with dominion status, is the objective of the Indian people, according to Mrs. Annie Besant, the well-known theosophist leader, who arrived here recently.

In the course of an interview Mrs. Besant said everything would be well in India, she thought, if Britain only would grant the country home rule.

The people, since Gandhi's imprisonment, were beginning to appreciate that he was not the divine being, able to work miracles, which they had believed him to be. She anticipated that agitation along constitutional lines would replace revolutionary tactics and would bring peace to India within a reasonable time.

The death has occurred at Ramsgate of Mr. Edward Wotton, the senior solicitor of the district and registrar of the Ramsgate County court since 1881.

FALL PROVES FATAL

KITCHENER, July 31.—William J. Crawford, age 50, of 151 East Weber street, to-day fell from a ladder while kalsomining in the King Edward School.

Half an hour after his fall he died without regaining consciousness in the Kitchener and Waterloo Hospital from a fractured skull. The lad was apparently slipped when he leaned far up towards the ceiling. An inquest will not be held.

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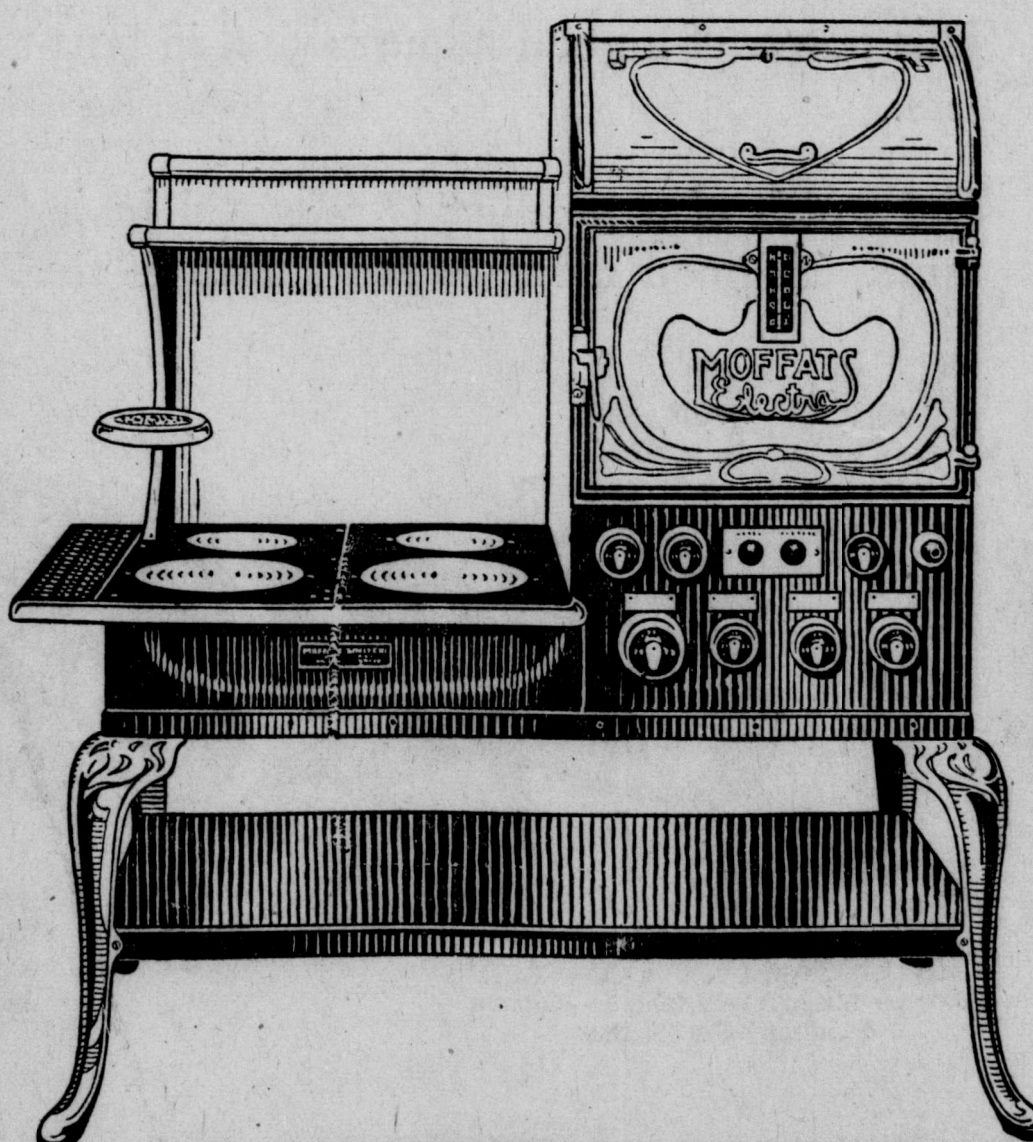
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