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## LONDON GOSSIP.

## PRINCE HENRY AS SOLDIER.

LONDON, Aug. 9, 1920.

Prince Henry is just now undergoing his first serious military training, being attached to the 10th Hussars at Aldershot. It is not intended, however, that he shall become a cavalry officer, and he is to continue in his original regiment, the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Since he is an excellent horseman, and a polo player of no mean skill, it is only appropriate that the mounted arm should claim him for a time. It was decided some time ago that Prince Henry should become the "soldier" of the King's sons, since the Prince of Wales will be too busily engaged to be able to devote much time to soldiering, and the Duke of York is an officer in the Royal Air Force.

## "A GENTLEMAN" IN FRANCE.

The English word "gentleman" is now French. It has received the blessing of the Academy. Flammarion's Dictionary years ago had the word and declared that being a gentleman was the status "claimed by every well-brought-up man in England," whilst "gentry" is defined as "La petite noblesse Anglaise." The Academy says that "gentleman" is an English word sometimes employed in French in the metaphorical and moral sense of the word gentleman. "Gentleman," according to an English tutor in Russia, was a difficult word to make intelligible to Russians in any other sense than that of a class socially superior to the Russian Moujik.

## THAMES PASSENGER STEAMERS.

The saddest place in London during holiday time is the river. The new generation can scarcely be brought to believe that a service of passenger steamers once took their fathers and mothers up and down the Thames, and everybody has forgotten that it was the main artery of Metropolitan communications only one hundred years ago. For a long time there was

terrible competition between the Thames watermen and the hackney coach drivers, the increasing numbers of the latter eventually driving the former from the field. But nobody has ever been able to understand the complete disuse into which the river has fallen of late years, both for business and pleasure, although the rapid development of motor traffic has recently become a powerful factor in the problem. A river service could be made to pay at much lower rates than the railways are now charging, and large numbers of business men living at Battersea, Putney, and Hammer-smith (all suburbs of London lying along the banks of the river) could now be counted upon to give it liberal support.

## THE SCOUT MOVEMENT.

Boy Scouts of nearly every nationality were to be seen all over London last week being taken in groups to see the sights of the Metropolis. Their gathering at Olympia gave a great stimulus to the movement, and it was intended to develop it further not only in these islands but all over the world. General Sir Baden-Powell regards it as an integral part of the League of Nations movement, but he explained that, as far as this country is concerned, the Boy Scout organisation is not adequately endowed financially. A quarter of a million sterling (\$1,250,000) is required for the purpose, and \$500,000 is already in hand. Sir Samuel Waring has promised \$5,000 if another six contributions of a similar amount can be subscribed. Meantime the boys, who came from all parts of the world to the Jamboree at Olympia, gave displays daily of the national recreations. It is noteworthy that the British representatives were younger lads than the majority of those from overseas; while the English, Scottish, and Irish boys were mostly sixteen years of age, or under, the long-distance delegates were in

the majority older by a couple of years.

## NO DRURY LANE PANTOMIME.

For the first time for many years there is to be no pantomime at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (London's premier playhouse) next Christmas. The management has decided that if the present success of Robert Hichens' "The Garden of Allah" continues it will be more profitable to keep it on until next spring. It is possible that an entertainment suitable for children may be presented at matinees only, but the regular pantomime will be suspended until the following year. The very heavy expenses attached to a Drury Lane pantomime in these days carry off most of the profits. An additional reason for carrying on "The Garden of Allah" is that this play appeals to and attracts an entirely new audience, the vast theatre being filled less with regular playgoers than with readers of books and magazines who like to see their heroes and heroines on the stage. The Drury Lane management always felt that it was a mistake to have taken off "The Whip" in favour of a pantomime before the war. Though "The Whip" was filling the house and bringing in large profits, it was taken off in favour of the traditional pantomime, which, in spite of its success, made only a small profit. Double staffs are at present working in all the Drury Lane box offices to cope with the rush for "The Garden of Allah," and the average performance brings in \$4,000—a record sum.

## HOLIDAY BOOKS.

We shall pay yet more for our books next winter. Prices are distinctly going up, and booksellers say they do not see where they are likely to stop. One of the disappointments of this holiday season is the discovery that a half-crown (50 cents) label has replaced the two shilling (50 cents) one which had seemed already as if it ought to be beyond the dreams of avarice. Three of the most popular libraries of reprints of the classics have adopted the new price, and probably other libraries will come into line. Curiously enough, while Dickens and Scott and Plato have gone up, many of the most popular living writers remain for the present at two shillings. I am told that among the cheap books the ones selling best for holiday reading are those by Gertrude Page, Olive Wadley, and Zane Grey, and the whole appalling Tarzan series. Of more expensive books Joseph Conrad's new "Rescue" is the best seller, but this proof of the discretion of the public is counterbalanced by the fact that Ethel M. Dell is as popular as ever. The lending libraries are very busy—one of the pre-Bank holiday sights was the number of queues waiting at the library counters—but in spite of the advanced prices the sale of books has not diminished.

## THE EX-EMPERE EUGENIE'S PROPERTY.

The publication of the ex-Empere Eugenie's will is expected with much interest, although it is not thought likely that there will be important public bequests. The ex-Empere gave liberally to charity in her lifetime, and she had very few possessions which were historical in a national sense. The famous black pearls which she wore during the Empire were sold to Lord Ilchester soon after she reached England as a fugitive, and they are now, I think, in the possession of the Dowager Lady Ilchester. Her jewels are expected to go to her nieces, the Spanish property to her Spanish relatives, and Prince Napoleon is understood to be her heir to the main property. It is believed that Lord Revelstoke is one of the trustees, her affairs having been chiefly managed by the Barings since she came to England. Her estate at Farnborough, in Kent, is expected to go to Prince Napoleon, who will probably let the place. Although very wealthy, the ex-Empere might have been one of the wealthiest in Europe if she had carried out the intention she expressed thirty years ago of buying the whole district at Cap Martin, where she had her villa.

## RESTORING THE ABBEY.

Though only \$560,770 of the \$2,750,000 required for the restoration of Westminster Abbey has so far been forthcoming, the Dean of Westminster has put in hand the work of repair. For the present only the most vitally necessary work is being undertaken, but when more money rolls in the scope of the operations will be extended in different directions according to the particular urgency of each part. At the moment a network of scaffolding is being built up between the two magnificent towers, and as soon as this task—itsself a difficult and complicated one—is completed, the workmen will commence the much more perilous operation of removing the decayed stonework corroded during the centuries by the acid of the air. The unusual danger attaching to this task is imparted by the mass of pinnacles and flying buttresses with which the beautiful old building is enriched.

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## The Mystery of Playing Cards.

## THEIR ORIGIN REMAINS UNKNOWN.

The man who asks, "What are trumps?" often has little suspicion of the romance that lies hidden in the cards he holds in his hand. What was the origin of these oblongs of cardboard, with their pictured kings and queens, their red array of hearts, and their sinister-looking spades? Frankly, nobody knows.

Some declare they were cradled in the East and transported to Europe from India or China; others, that the Arabs, Saracens, or Moors first introduced them by way of Spain; while a few credit the nomad gipsies with first revealing their magic to the Continent.

The wisest men declare that such stories are mythical. They say that the first pack of cards made its bow to Europe about the year 1350; but how or whence they came they do not know.

Italy seems to have been the scene of their debut. We know that in 1377 the Swiss were playing games of cards; and that Charles VI. of

France was staking his gold on them in 1392.

But the cards which lured fourteenth-century gamblers to the table differed materially from the pack we know so well to-day. The Venetian pack, for example, consisted of seventy-eight cards—twenty-two of them marked with emblems of various kinds; and fifty-six with numerals, divided into four suits of fourteen cards each. Each of these suits contained four court cards—kings, queens, knights, and knaves, and ten cards numbered from one to ten.

## Reducing the Pack.

Gradually this unwieldy pack underwent salutary changes. The twenty-two "emblematic" cards (with pictures illustrating various conditions of life and human vicissitudes) were dropped; and of the remaining fifty-six cards, four disappeared, thus reducing the pack to its present number—fifty-two.

The suits of numeral cards have always been four; but the signs or names differed among various nations. Thus the packs Venice first saw bore for marks cups and clubs (batons), money and swords—the cups representing Faith; clubs, Cour-

age; money, Charity; and swords, Justice.

The Germans, however, thought they could improve on these symbols, and substituted hearts, bells, leaves, and acorns; while the French adopted spades, hearts, clubs, and diamonds.

The index-pips at the corners were introduced by Dr. Normandy as recently as 1860; and the double-headed court-cards are also a comparatively modern innovation.

For more than three centuries playing-cards have paid their toll to the Exchequer—ever since 1615 each gross of packs paid a modest 5s. in duty. A century later, a duty of 6d. was imposed on each pack. In later years the toll grew, by sixpenny increases, to as much as half a crown a pack in 1801; and from that "bad eminence" it has since been reduced by stages.

And what a fascinating story one could tell of the gambling to which these cards gave rise—how, for example, King "Hal" lost a small fortune at "Pope Julius's game" to Anne Boleyn; how Lady Castlemaine, one of Charles II's favourites, won £25,000 in a single night and lost £15,000 the next night; and how Marie Antoinette squandered £300,000 in a single year's gambling.—Tit-Bits.

## Siren Language.

The casual visitor at one of the big ports may often wonder what siren calls mean, as the ships pass in and out.

There is a code which enables all that is necessary to be said to all whom it may concern. The tug-boats are the biggest chatter-boxes. One tug fast ahead and another astern, most of the time concealed from each other's sight by the ship they are taking to her berth, they will rattle away as readily as you please, the one telling the other what to do, and perhaps each in turn pleading with the pilot on the liner's bridge to stop his

engines, go ahead or astern, and do half-a-dozen things.

Should certain contingencies arise, a single blast by the tug astern will throw the forward boat out of action two blasts will advise her to "go ahead faster."

The sirens of the big shipping liners mostly have individual notes, and they have calls of their own when nearing port.

The Cunarder announces her approach by three long blasts, the White Star and Allan liner by three, Dominion four, while Leylands vessels run to six sounded in three two's, with a marked interval between each pair. Boats of the African line have a threefold call, one long and two short, Johnsons are quite garrulous with eight, Alexandra tugs five, and Rags tugs two long and two short, while the Cock boats adhere to their old formula of Cock-a-doodle-do.

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