

## LONDON GOSSIP.

## PRINCE AND THE NAVY.

LONDON, Nov. 1st, 1920.  
The rumour that the Prince of Wales will shortly command a cruiser for a few months is ridiculed in the navy. It certainly implies little knowledge of the conditions in the modern Navy, and of the Prince's association with the Service. He would be the first to admit that he has had no training for the responsibilities of a warship captain. He relinquished active duty afloat as a midshipman in 1911, and he has not served in an executive capacity as lieutenant or commander. His father commanded the Melampus in 1892 and the Crescent in 1898, but that is no precedent, because the King had gone through the ordinary training of a naval officer.

## LIGHTER ARTIFICIAL LIMBS.

The insistent demand among all ex-soldiers who have lost legs, and are compelled to wear artificial limbs, is for the lightest possible leg. At the beginning of the war, nine pounds was the average weight of an artificial leg, but the weight of a leg made of wood has now been reduced to just under five pounds. The Ministry of Pensions is now experimenting with metal limbs lighter than this. On a recent morning it was shown a new leg, made of the aluminium alloy, duralumin, which only weighs 3½ pounds. The leg can be made at very little greater cost than the heavier wooden leg. One ex-soldier, after looking at the leg and agreeing that its lightness was an inestimable advantage, said to me sadly, "If I had a metal leg I should have to find a new way of keeping up my sock. With my wooden leg I use tin-tacks, of course."

## NAME AND ADDRESS WANTED.

During the last few days an old man of a shabby appearance has been dropping in at hospitals and charitable society offices and casually giving "a little donation." This little donation has been invariably notes for \$2.00. The old man's method is freakish. He tells the secretary he would like to help, and producing from a small canvas bag a roll of notes he puts them down and forthwith disappears. If asked for his name by the grateful official he will say (or did to one astonished secretary), "I like your face," and departs quickly. He seems to be nearly eighty years old, and wears a greasy suit, a cloth cap, and broken boots. The only noticeable feature recorded is an inflamed left lower eyelid. One secretary said he expected to get half a crown from the look of him. He speaks like an educated man. The little canvas bag is said to be bursting with bank notes. He is known to have given away more than \$8,000 in this way. The hospitals are all eagerly hoping he will call. Before producing the money he usually stipulates that it shall be used for the benefit of the patients and not for building. Reporters who have been trying to discover the identity of this modern Haroun al Raschid have found out nothing. For the sake of the hospitals it is to be hoped his wish to be unknown will be respected. His own account of himself is simply that he "is getting an old man, without much use for his money." Doubtless he is enjoying the stir he has so innocently caused.

## PICTORIAL CHEQUES.

Hitherto the form of cheque used by private persons, or by firms, has been conventional. Its principal feature has usually been the name of the bank on which it was drawn, and its only decoration the revenue stamp with which it was embossed. An innovation, however, which may become generally adopted is for a firm to have its own cheques printed, and then illustrate them with pictures round the outer edges depicting its trade activities. The idea may even spread to private persons, who would decorate their cheques with their portraits, or, for the enlightenment of sceptical creditors, a photograph of the drawer being received at his bank by an obsequious manager.

## RARE VINTAGES FROM HOTEL CELLARS.

Now that one large London hotel after another is being reopened at the end of the sweeping and furnishing

necessitated by the havoc of years of Government war-time control, the diner-out who loves a glass of good wine is discovering a consequence as unlooked for as it is welcome. When the Government stepped in the hotel proprietors as a rule locked their wine cellars and kept their stocks intact. They are now releasing these pre-war hoards. The result is that diners prepared to pay the cost—and it is noteworthy how many are daily forthcoming—can to-day procure wines of vintages and bottlings which had been absent from London dinner tables for years. This is particularly the case in regard to certain German wines, it being possible now to procure in certain hotels and restaurants bottles which could not be obtained from the largest wholesale houses, as these were sold out long ago, and have not been able to replenish their stocks. As far as the finer and older vintages are concerned, this condition of things will remain, as such comparatively small parcels of them as remain in Germany are the result of the importation here of wines from the Rhine and the Moselle has, however, set in, and very soon those who do not share the poet Coleridge's deep distaste for these vintages, and who do share Bismarck's belief that affairs of the frontier should not be allowed to disturb the digestion, will be drinking again from the old familiar brown and green long bottles as of yore.

## THE CAGE BIRDS.

England has six hundred cage-bird societies, each of which separately holds two or three members' shows a year, but this year a dozen of the London societies have combined to exhibit a thousand birds at the show at the Passmore Edwards Settlement, canaries outnumber all the other exhibits, but there is a very good if melancholy collection of English native birds, including a nightingale which sings all the year, a bullfinch described by enthusiasts as the finest bullfinch in England, and a beautiful goldfinch which failed to win a prize because it had not learned the properly educated show birds trick of hopping about in a way to show off its best points. The birdmen say that cage birds are more popular than ever, and perhaps even Mr. Galsworthy, the popular playwright, would admit the plea that they are a solace to hundreds of disabled men who love living things but are shut off from all their outdoor interests. The cost of canary food has gone up, and the canaries themselves are now expensive. The singer who hangs on a nail in the kitchen costs three times his pre-war price, and a bird worthy to enter a singing contest may be anything up to \$200. These fine singers have a long training, and the lessons take place in the dark of shuttered cages surrounding the cage of the teacher canary, who sings to them. The judges test them severely and award bad marks for such faults as "ugly interjections," which means breaking from smooth song into chattered notes.

## THE SCEPTRE.

Another of the old London chop-houses that have remained in their original state is about to pass away. The Sceptre is not an 18th century antique like the lamented Baker's Chop-house, but it is a very fine specimen of the early Victorian restaurant, hardly altered at all since it was established by the original Purcell some 90 years ago in that narrow sinuous street, Warwick Street, which follows the line of Regent Street a little to the eastward of it. It is called the Sceptre after a famous racehorse, and the prints on the walls are of racing events. It has a gently curved window with smallish panes of glass and some remains of a reading room with newspapers are in the front part. In its early history it provided the news of the day for its customers as well as good English food and drink. It was one of the last places to give up pewter platters for its chops, and more people drank port with their cheese there than in any other moderately priced restaurant in London. Its port was good and cheap. The lower part had no table cloths, and to fastidious modern eyes suggested a cabman's eating house. The upper part, rather cramped with two awkwardly shaped rooms, has a large armchair in which

MRS. NANCY SHARP, of Los Angeles, who says she received one of the greatest surprises of her life when Tanlac completely restored her health after she had almost lost hope of ever getting well. Declares she suffered for twelve long years.



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Charles Dickens is said to have said—he was certainly one of the patrons of the Sceptre. The elderly waiter never saw Dickens, but he remembers people who had seen him there. It had a curious mixture of customers; young officials of the Admiralty and the War Office, elderly Soho tradesmen, sporting journalists, and old-fashioned theatrical people made the body of it, and usually there were one or two fairly well-known faces at its tables. The old waiter has been 42 years in the place, and some of his customers were there before him. The property is to be put up for sale, and will probably close its doors. There is no chop-house quite like the Sceptre, and its passing will be mourned by old-fashioned Londoners.

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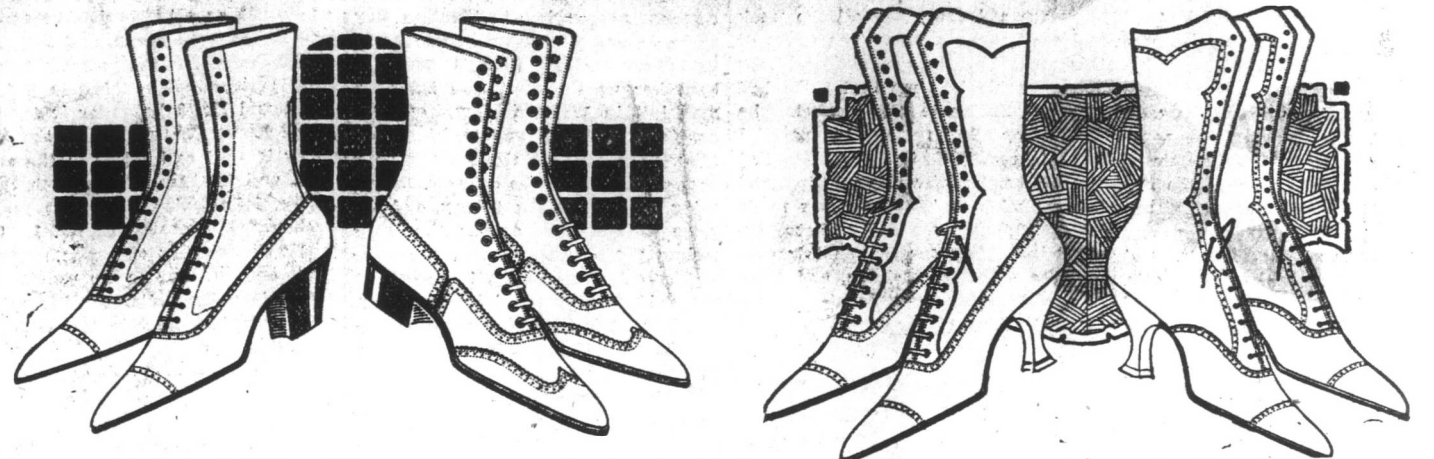
Editor Evening Telegram.  
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