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LONDON GOSSIP.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

LONDON, Dec. 29th, 1920.

This has been rather a bad year for Christmas presents. During the war people at home made Christmas the great occasion for spending all they could afford on their friends at the front or when home on leave, and there was a big lot of organised schemes for group Christmas presents. Last Christmas and the Christmas before there was a mirage of prosperity, and many demobilised young officers who had drawn their gratuity and had more money in hand than they had ever had before spent it royally. This year almost everyone has felt the pinch. The more exclusive and expensive shops and the cheap establishments have done best, but the middle-class shop trade has been very languid. The big country-house parties with their Christmas trees and tenants' and servants' dances, which meant a good deal of Christmas trade, have been very rare this season. Many owners of large houses have migrated to London, and many have drifted abroad. Presents have taken a character of utility such as articles of apparel, gloves, shoes, and silk stockings. Books not expensively bound and mainly memoirs and biographies, and new editions of popular libraries were very popular gifts.

SECOND-HAND BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS.

Second-hand bookshops also did a good trade this Christmas. There are more of them in London than ever before, for so many people through lack of means or of house-room have had to sell cherished books, and their prices are often high—sometimes only a little less than the price of the book's latest editions. Yet people who have never before thought of giving second-hand books as presents know that the gifts will be valued to-day. The recipients would rather have good printing on fine paper and a worn binding that it is still a pleasure to handle than the poorer qualities of paper and binding that are all the publishers can now afford.

NO MORE BUSINESS PREMISES.

The vast amount of building repairs which had to be done after the war is now practically completed. Building of offices and factories, too, is ceasing. It began on the most expensive scale after the Armistice, because people were under the impression that this country was about to capture the trade of the world. Now we are sadder, and wiser. We know that the chance, if there was one, slipped by us while Capital and Labor were squabbling, and that now half of the world has no trade to do, while the British bankers' credit plans for overseas trade, on which Lloyd George put such hopes, suffer from the practical difficulty that the banks have no money on credit to spare, and most of Europe has no goods. For years, therefore, the amount of business premises and factories which we possessed at the Armistice are likely to suffice for all our needs.

FARROW'S BANK FAILURE.

The failure of Farrow's Bank, causing losses estimated at over $8,000,000, mainly to small depositors, is another example of the inevitable fate that always overtakes institutions of this kind, the Birkbeck Bank, the National Penny Bank, and others having gone before in the same way. The failure does not touch ordinary banking at all. These banks belong to an outside circle that pay interest on current occounts and do a lot more things that are not recognized as wise. Farrow's has been in existence for getting on for nine years, false balance sheets being issued during that period to induce depositors to continue putting their money in. The special trouble at the present time is that any man or group of men can open a financial concern, call it a bank, receive deposits, and issue cheque books—this last being apparently the one thing necessary to persuade the ordinary man that the affair is all right. Those who deal with what they love to term "high finance" are accustomed, whenever one of these little concerns goes down, to assume a lofty air and say that the failure is of no consequence. Naturally it would not be to a Rothschild or a Rockefeller, but it is of disastrous consequence to the small and thrifty man, who is the one always in these cases the most hardly hit. When the Liberator went bankrupt close on forty years ago, bringing the London and General Bank down in the crash, thousands of hard-working and saving folk were ruined. The Government, all will allow, has no responsibility for the individual case, but there will be a feeling that it will incur a responsibility if it takes no step in the early future to amend the law of banking, which it now admits to be faulty.

DYING OUT.

The London street hawker has become a romantic figure. Behind that vigorous human, so enthusiastic in his wares, so eulogistic of the virtues of golliwogs, so assertive of the child-amusing qualities of rubber faces which can be twisted into alarming expressions, so vociferously enamoured of the excellence of cardboard gentlemen who politely raise their hats on the pulling of a string, the London sees the dark figure of a great tragedy. And not a domestic one. The sorrows of scant sustenance and monotonous leanness are too well known to possess that romance with which this new tragedy is endowed. It is the tragedy of decay, of elimination, like the Red Indian, he is retreating by degrees into the ranks of the hosts that have been. In 1911—there is a temporal definiteness even in the weaving of abstract sentimentalism—the shrill criss of the hawker smote irksomely on the official ear. The powers were unmoved by the mute appeal of paper dolls with long tongues which could be shot out at will. A special Act was passed whereby only those hawkers who had been standing in the gutters for three years were allowed to continue to do so. The favored merchants became automatically a close corporation, for no more licenses were to be issued. In those days there were 1,700 accredited hawkers, and yearly they kept the interests of clay mice and squeakers before the public. But their numbers are shrinking. There are no more than 800 plying their trade this season. In process of time there will be only three left, then two, then one. And then will come the days when empty kerbs will rouse in the emotional pedestrian memories of the days when he used to fall victim to the temptation to exchange twopence for a jumping jack or a puzzle, which, he was assured, would "cause endless laughter."

"DRY" REVUE AND "WET" PANTOMIME.

London theatrical enterprises are lucky—or perhaps unlucky—enough to have two powers presiding over their conduct—the Lord Chamberlain and the London County Council. The former authority is responsible for the supervision of legitimate theatres, while the variety houses come under the jurisdiction of the L.C.C. An instance of how this dual control works is provided by the case of the Hippodrome, one of the greatest of West End houses. Having produced revue continuously for the past ten years, the house was technically a music hall, and therefore was ruled by the L.C.C. Year after year it had repeatedly tried to persuade that body to grant it permission to sell alcoholic liquors. But the L.C.C. was deaf to all appeals. The theatre, however, has abandoned revue for pantomime, a change that permits it to throw over the authority of the .C.C. and pass under the control of the Lord Chamberlain. This latter power has granted the desired drink license, and patrons of the house now find themselves permitted to sustain their spirits during four hours of pantomime with strong beverages which were forbidden them as an accompaniment to revue.

ACORN COFFEE.

I had lunch the other day with a friend who has recently returned from France. He had, he said, travelled through to Berlin from Paris, and had an opportunity of tasting the Erasatz substitute coffee, which took the place of the genuine beverage during the war when Germany could no longer obtain shipments of coffee beans. He drank it, he said, for two days on the train before he realized that it was not the real thing, and even when he was told he found it almost impossible to distinguish any difference between it and the coffee served on the average English train. I was incredulous, I admit, and over coffee I suggested that possibly he had not been too critical, and that he had not had much chance of comparison. "You think then," he said, "that you could easily tell the imitation from the real thing." I sipped my coffee, and said I thought I could. "Well," he continued with a smile, "at the present moment you are drinking Ersatz coffee, which I brought home with me." It was not excellent coffee, but I had tasted worse. Roasted acorns, my friend believes, have come to stay in Germany.

MEN'S SWEATER COATS!

Half Price Sale.

Make up your mind to embrace this opportunity. Goobie's motto has always been "Truth in Advertising." It is what keeps us in business. We have had a good Sweater Coat business this past three months and we have about 300 more or less that we intend to clean up so we can have a fresh stock for next fall.

SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$2.00	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$2.50	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$2.94	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$3.00	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$3.20	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$3.37
SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$3.44	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$4.25	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$4.69	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$4.90	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$5.25	SWEATERS. Our Price Now.....$5.60

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The nicest goods in our Surprise Packages you ever saw for only $1.00. We will guarantee you your $ worth in every package. Of course the big inducement for you to buy the packages is that you have a chance of winning one of our big prizes. We have already sent out to lucky winners 1 bbl. Pork, 3 bbls. Flour and 7 tubs Butter.

KINDLY REMEMBER

W. R. GOOBIE is just opposite the Post Office.

Herman Defeated Wilde

Referee Stopped Bout in 17th Round.

LONDON, Jan. 13.—Pete Herman, the United States bantamweight, won over Jimmy Wilde here to-night. The referee stopped the battle and awarded the decision to Herman in the 17th round.

Wilde was sent to the floor three times in the 17th, and the referee stopped the contest to save Wilde, who was helpless.

There was a terrific fight on the ropes in the 15th. Herman, with left to the ribs and right to the jaw, appeared to have Wilde half out, but was unable to finish him before the bell.

Although in the last round Wilde three times had been knocked through the ropes, he was still coming back for more punishment when the referee caught him in his arms, ended the battle and gave the decision to Herman. The fight had been advertised as being for the bantamweight championship of the world.

The men had agreed to weigh in at 118 pounds, but Herman was 1½ pounds over the stipulated weight. The first five rounds were in favor of Wilde. Then the advantage alternated until the fifteenth, when Herman's weight began to tell on the Welshman.

Herman surprised the crowd by his boxing, which discounted Wilde's aggressiveness. The bantam fought a sportsmanlike contest throughout and was well received by the spectators. He will sail home Saturday and says he hopes again to meet Joe Lynch, to whom he recently lost the world's championship in a bout in Madison Square Garden, New York.

Although defeated, Wilde is still Great Britain's boxing hero, as he is considered to have saved to-night's programme from being a complete fiasco by entering the ring against Herman, notwithstanding the inability of his opponent to make the stipulated weight fifteen minutes before the battle.

Ten thousand persons, including the Prince of Wales and other notables witnessed the contest and evinced enthusiasm throughout the fight.

After the bout to-night Herman said:

"Wilde is the greatest boxer that I have ever seen. I was in better condition for this fight than I have ever been in before."

Bert Kenny, of the United States, and Spalla, of Italy, heavyweights, substituted for Levinsky and Wells, whose bout was called off because of injury, while training yesterday, to Levinsky's right arm. After having been warned several times Kenny was disqualified in the sixth for holding.

Pickles Made in Mansions.

THE STORY OF A GREAT BUSINESS.

Nearly ninety years ago two apprentices in a small chandler's shop in Soho had an opportunity of buying the business.

The mother of one of the boys sold a field to provide part of the money, the shop was purchased, and the two young men settled down to sell pennyworths of treacle, rush-lights, and other things seen in chandlers' shops in those days.

One of the partners was named Crosse and the other Blackwell, and from that small chandler's shop sprang the great jam and pickle making firm.

Blackwell, on account of his knowledge of the markets, did the buying, while Crosse attended to the books and introduced the goods to customers.

Their great chance came when they saw possibilities of doing big things in jam-making. A vast amount of fruit was being wasted, and these two far-seeing young men calculated that they could be of service to the community by preserving as much at their disposal, and by offering it to the public in such a form as to save the housewife all the trouble of preparation.

Recipes From Napoleon's Days.

Their success was such that within two years they moved into more commodious premises in Soho, gradually acquiring, as their business grew, historic houses in that district. Many of the features of those houses have been retained. No. 21, Soho Square, now the registered address of Messrs. Crosse and Blackwell, was once known as the White House.

It was built originally in the reign of James II., and was the resort of dissipated society of the period. The house next door, once the residence of Lady Fauconberg, the third daughter of Oliver Cromwell, was also acquired, and although they have been adapted to modern business conditions, the beautifully carved walls, panels, ceilings, and over-mantels have been retained.

Furthermore, although the site of the Crosse and Blackwell's factories in Soho and Charing Cross Road has been acquired by a wealthy cinema syndicate, the firm removing to Burton-on-Trent, the two houses, so rich in historic associations, will not be sold.

The records of the firm are very interesting Qualliotti, who was at one time chef to Napoleon, joined the firm after the Emperor was banished to St. Helena.

An old employee, in a letter dated 1832, mentions that Signor Q. has made a new pickle. "Piccalily he calls it, and laments that his beloved Empereur can never taste it."

It would seem that Qualliotti was the pioneer of the present-day army rations, for in the same letter it is stated that "his military experiences inspire him with the ambition to adapt his potted meats to military uses, and to that end he is experimenting."

M. Soyer, the famous chef, whose cooking was the attraction at the Reform Club, carried the idea still further after enduring the privations of the Crimean War, and he also provided "C. and B." with many recipes which are still in use.

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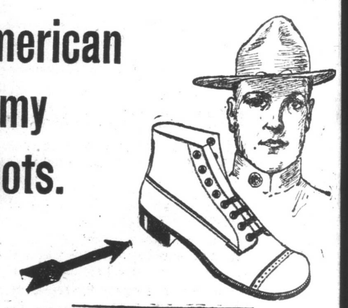

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Corrspondents are requested to accompany contributions with their names, not necesarily for publication but as a guarantee of good faith. In future no correspondence will be considered unless this rule is adhered to. It is also requested that all letters for "Publication" be so marked.

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