

LONDON GOSSIP.

LONDON, May 8, 1920.
BUSTY PRINCES.

Princess Mary is rapidly relieving the Queen of many of her less important public engagements. She has promised to speak at several of the May meetings, and is to preside over others. Prince Henry, who has been seen even less in public than the princess, will also be seen in the chair at several of the meetings. Probably Prince George, who is now 18, will accompany him as part of his training. With the Royal Family growing up Buckingham Palace is becoming more and more a center for the younger people of the society set. Many pleasant little dances and parties are being held there. All the royal children are keen dancers. For their benefit a dance is to be given at Windsor Castle during Ascot Week—the first dance given at Windsor for many years.

A GAY SOCIAL SEASON.

The social season, which is just starting in London, already gives promise of being exceptionally brilliant. Maidenhead, Henley, Sonning, and the other fashionable places report a bigger crush than there has been for many years. Houses are fetching fabulous prices. In one case a cottage was booked for Henley Regatta week at \$500, and some people, including the Duchess of Westminster, have found that even lavishly offered cannot procure them houses for the whole season. Few of the more prominent hostesses have yet arranged any entertainments on a large scale, but there is promise of some wonderful gatherings in Derby week. A revival of the once famous Derby Night Balls is being talked of. There is an interesting report that the King intends to revive the old custom of entertaining the Jockey Club to dinner on Derby night, and giving a ball afterwards in honor of the Queen and the Princess. Much has been said about the American invasion, but the manager of one of the largest theatre-bookings agencies says that what impressed him most lately has been the number of Anglo-Indians and people from the East. Bond Street (London's fashionable shopping thoroughfare) tradespeople, and especially the tailors, however, say that business is decidedly slacker of late, and that people are really beginning to count the cost of things.

WAR SLANG AT CAMBRIDGE.

The war has imported much new slang into the universities. Before the war you might damage yourself on a motor bicycle, but to-day you "crash" with the result that your "old bus" becomes a wreck. Anyway, the machine was "a complete dud." Possibly you were exceeding the speed limit and "prog" hears about it. Before the war you would have gone "on the carpet," now you are "for it." A smoking party is a "gas attack." Any articles in your rooms now are "gadgets." You buy the university weekly, which regards all those who do not agree with it as "Bolshevik." It thereby lays itself open to the charge of representing the "wool profiteers." If you agree

with the paper you will probably say "That's the stuff to give the troops." A cafe is a "cafe" (to rhyme with safe.) Unsatisfactory things are "no bon." In short, university slang, instead of being the individual thing it was, has become the ordinary slang of the demobilized.

A GERMAN MINESWEEPER.

The latest German ship to arrive at Leith, the Bielefeld, is rather interesting, although to all outward appearances she is a very ordinary cargo steamer of about 3,000 tons. But during the war she was one of the vessels employed by the Germans as mine-barrage breakers, a peculiar and very unpleasant duty. British mine-laying submarines and destroyers made themselves so useful by planting their fields right in the approaches to their naval ports that even the large German mine-sweeping force proved inadequate. Therefore a number of tramp steamers were commissioned and their holds were scientifically filled with cement and sand separated and kept in strata by tarpaulins. When warships were moving these steamers went ahead with paravane sweeps out and cleared a passage for them. It was estimated that they could withstand the explosion of several mines under their holds without sinking. But the mines did not always explode under the holds, for which reason they are manned entirely with men who had unsatisfactory conduct records.

PRICES IN PETROGRAD.

I have been talking to a Scandinavian gentleman who was held prisoner in Petrograd by the Bolsheviks until about a month ago, when he was released and crossed the Finnish border. He gave me an extraordinary account of the prices now ruling in the former capital of the Czar. A herring cost 700 roubles, a pound of potatoes 200, a pound of butter 2,800 roubles. It cost 50,000 roubles monthly (25,000 on the old basis) to eat one tolerable meal daily. A suit of clothes—second hand—might be had for 100,000 roubles (50,000 on the old basis). In the circumstances it was hardly surprising to learn that most of the University professors were starving, or on the verge of starvation, on 6,000 roubles a month. They only lived by selling their possessions, one by one, at high prices. Indeed, this was the only way in which the bourgeois managed to subsist.

ON GETTING GOLD OUT OF FRANCE.

Visitors to France should not forget that the French law now forbids the exportation of gold or silver in any form. The law seems to be applied in a somewhat drastic manner. A correspondent writes that when he was recently embarking at Boulogne on his return to England the French officials took from him all his English silver money above a certain small amount and gave him, instead, French notes to the same amount at the normal rate of exchange. I am told that a well-known peer not long ago had a still stranger experience. He had paid a short visit to France on business, and on his return the French officials at the port from which he crossed said that they must confiscate his watch and chain, because they were made of gold and could not be taken out of the country. The peer naturally protested, and as the officials remained obdurate he opened his mouth, showed them the gold stopping in some of his teeth, and asked them whether they also proposed to take that. This seems to have impressed them. At any rate, after a long discussion, they at least allowed him to keep his watch and chain.

PERSIA AND POLYGAMY.

Polygamy is dying out in Persia. For the last twenty years the practice has been rapidly on the decrease, and is now almost extinct as regards the upper classes, and is just beginning to fall into disfavor with the peasants also. A prominent Persian visiting London was asked what was bringing about the change. "Well," he said, "the expense of keeping four wives nowadays. Besides, there is the jealousy which is becoming more marked a characteristic of Persian wives in proportion as Western ideas and standards permeate the people." Another Western custom that is beginning to infiltrate into Persia, he said, is that of having family names. A year ago, indeed, the Persian Government made it compulsory for people to adopt a surname. Before that only peasants had any common name in the family, the upper classes possessing only one. A man, for instance, might be called Ghafer simply, his son Hassan, with nothing to show their relationship.

THE SPANISH CRISIS.

In Spain Ministerial crisis succeeds Ministerial crisis, attended on most occasions with rumors of impending revolution. Yet although the spirit of faction is very intense in Spain, what with "Blacks" and "Reds" and Catalonian Separatists and Military Juntas, there are two factors which tell against any such upheavals—(1) the

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remarkable financial prosperity of the country, and (2) the universal popularity of King Alfonso, who compels the personal respect of even Republicans like Senor Lerroux. The latter and so-called "Reformists," or very intellectual Radicals, have declared their willingness to support a Liberal Administration under Count

Romanones. The issue is between the latter and a new coalition of the Conservative groups under Senor Mauro or Senor Dato. Should Count Romanones and the Liberals return to power there may be some interesting Spanish developments in connection with the League of Nations.

Tarring and Feathering.

(American Notes and Queries.)

Philologists have long observed that many words popularly known as "Americanisms," are really good old English terms brought over by the Pilgrim Fathers, the early settlers on the James River, Virginia and others, and retained here after being forgotten in the country of their birth. Similarly, not a few Dutch words—bosc, boode, etc.—brought over by the early settlers of New Amsterdam, have spread from their original American habitat, till they have become part of our speech. It is not less interesting to note that certain customs, forgotten in their home land, but retained in America, and therefore characterized as "American," are really imitations from Europe.

Not one of these customs has been regarded as more distinctively "Yankee," than the venerable one of "tarring and feathering," and yet we learn from an early English authority, the historian Hoveden, (living in the 13th century and court chaplain to King Henry III.) that the custom is at least as old as the time of Richard, the Lion Hearted. Hoveden tells that Richard, when setting out on the third Crusade, made sundry enactments for regulation of his fleet, one of which was that "a robber who shall be convicted of theft, shall have his head cropped after the fashion of a champion, and boiling pitch shall be poured thereon, and the feathers of a cushion shall be shaken out on him, so that he may be known, and at the first land at which the ship shall touch, he shall be set on shore." Whether the custom was earlier than that, we have no means of determining, but it is, at least, close on 700 years old.

Fair's Fare.

A musician with a violoncello hailed the driver of a taxi-cab. "Drive me to King's Hall!" he said. When, after a hard tussle, he had wedged himself and his instrument into the limited area of the cab, the driver started off. They reached the hall. The musician alighted, and took out a shilling. "What's this?" demanded the driver. "Your legal fare," said the musician. "Yes, I know it's my legal fare for carrying you," retorted the driver, with a defiant glance at the bulky instrument, "but what about that there fute?"

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