

MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT READING

Position of Viceroy of India Discussed

The Troubles in the Rand—"Sir Arthur Balfour" Rings Strangely in the Ear—The Story of a Royal Stocking

(From our own Correspondent.)

London, March 16.—There is much misunderstanding regarding the position of Lord Reading, and much nonsense has been written about his differences with the India office. As a matter of fact the Viceroy and the India office are in principle almost in complete agreement. Both appreciate the grave possibilities of

the Moslem danger, and both are eager for a Turkish settlement which would at least remove some of them. Where misunderstandings have arisen has been in the policy of action. From time to time Whitehall has suggested a certain course to India, but left the decision to the Indian Government as the authority on the spot, and from time to time Lord Reading has delayed action, not because he is opposed to it, but in order that as a new viceroy he might first study the situation for himself, with the result that matters had been far advanced before he made up his mind. In a sense Lord Reading is paying for over-conscientiousness, but so far as the India Office is concerned, never has he been an obstructionist of policy. His relations with the British cabinet have been more equivocal. There have been times when he has pressed the Moslem case with less discretion and by other means than would have been expected from a man of his public experience. If he goes—and the odds are that he will—Lord Reading may be one of the most successful successors.

The Rand Troubles.

The grave menace of the revolutionary outbreak in South Africa affords an object lesson. The comparative pliancy with which it has been received by a war-weary world shows how very sinister has been the depreciation in moral and

social standards since Germany unchained the demons of brute fury in 1914; and it also shows how disastrously, under modern conditions, a gigantic plot can be fomented against established order. Here we have Bolshevik commandoes in major military operations against the community, and the military forces of the state using bombs, aeroplanes and artillery to keep the peace. It is like a chapter from some wild romance by Mr. Wells. What has happened in South Africa, like other dominions overseas, suffering the inevitable collapse following the war's economic exhaustion, is failure to appreciate the lessons already learned in this country of the necessity for reduced wages and higher taxation. The burdens borne by South Africa in this latter respect bear no comparison with ours. And malevolent agitators work on the spirit of discontent and revolt to further their own outrageous ends.

The New K. G.

In the clubs which he most frequents Arthur Balfour has been receiving with a rather warm smile congratulations on his Garter. He seems to feel, like everyone else, that the title scarcely suits him. Arthur Balfour we all knew and loved. "Sir Arthur" suggests a city magistrate or someone who finds it important to have his name figure (as Campbell-Bannerman once said) on the front page

of a company prospectus. It is impossible to resist the suspicion that had he followed his own inclination Arthur Balfour would have remained plain Mr. Balfour to the end of his days. But King George was set on his receiving this signal mark of royal favor. It would have seemed churlish to refuse, and A. J. does not find it easy to be churlish.

People are asking whether he could not have received the Garter, with its wonderful blue sash, without receiving the title. Unfortunately there is no precedent for such a thing where the Order of the Garter is concerned. The only parallel, if parallel it can be called, is the case of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rev. Randall Davidson, who was made a K. C. V. O. in 1902 and later a G. C. V. O., but it was duly pointed out by the Court Circular at the time that he did not receive the accolade, that he would not be knighted, and that Mrs. Davidson would remain plain Mrs. Davidson.

Happily, whatever happens, (even if he were to receive a peerage), A. J. will still be "Arthur" to all his friends. None of his intimates ever thinks of calling him anything else, any more than he himself would ever dream of calling the present Marquis of Salisbury anything but "Jim." Arthur's favorite club nowadays is the Athenaeum, but there was a time when he used to affect the Garrick a great deal. Indeed it would surprise a

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good many people that when he was prime minister that club became the centre of considerable political activity. Many secret political conclaves took place within its walls. A private room was always kept at Mr. Balfour's disposal. Why the Garrick was chosen for the purpose I cannot imagine. Possibly it was about the last place that could be suspected of any such goings-on.

A Hatless House.

I had occasion one day this week to pay a visit to the House of Commons, and I noticed that the practice of wearing hats in the chamber itself is steadily declining. I cannot imagine that it is the presence of Lady Astor in this august assembly which has brought about this change. It is much more likely that it is to be attributed to the growing unpopularity of the silk "topper." Somehow the bowler hat never got acclimated to the green benches of St. Stephen's. When Mr. P.'s first began "correct thing" to take them into the chamber. John Burns used to defy convention, but most men discreetly left their bowlers with a cloak-room attendant, and went about bareheaded for the rest of the day. Tradition dies hard at Westminster—does not the old custom, reminiscent of highwayman and footpad, "Who goes home?" still ring through all the corridors every night at the closing of the house, recalling the days when it was safer for our legislators to go home in parties than singly and alone? Anyhow, the fact remains that not one man in ten now appears to make a practice of wearing his hat in the house. You look down on a sea of bare heads—most of them bald.

Queen Victoria's Stockings.

Among the minor fascinations of unfrequented London are its old curiosity shops. Just off Great Portland Street, in the same thoroughfare as the Middlesex Hospital, there is an admirable one. At the present hour the central attraction is a rather pathetic and shy white stocking, with openwork at the ankle, which hangs in the window full-length and right end up, stuck to the glass by a piece of postage-stamp edging. It bears an inscription on a fragment of yellow paper, obviously penned in faded ink, "Queen Victoria's stocking—with initials V. R. and the Royal Crown." A careful investigation bears out this claim. There are the initials of the great old queen who has been dead these twenty years, though it seems like half a century to us nowadays; and there is the crown, both proudly worked into the fabric of the stocking just above the knee. And only a few hours earlier I had been looking in the splendid apartments of St. James' Palace at the wedding dress of Queen Victoria's granddaughter. Somehow the exhibition of this solitary silk stocking struck me as slightly indecorous. The stocking was so palpably Early Victorian. In the days when ladies wore such stockings as these, Englishwomen had no such things as legs—except at Drury Lane or Covent Garden, of course.

Latest in Lifeboats.

The secretary of the Royal Lifeboat National Institute tells me that they are having built for them what will be the largest motor lifeboat in the world, with several new and important improvements incorporated. The new boat will be some sixty feet long, with fifteen feet beam, and a displacement of forty tons, fitted with twin screws driven by two seventy-five H. P. motors, and practically unsinkable, built almost entirely of double thickness of teak, with steel bulkheads and a hundred buoyant air-cases, each one a separate water-tight compartment. Other novel features include two cabins to hold fifty passengers and total accommodation for 160. One cabin will be fitted with a stove, a vital improvement, which will allow rescued persons—often in a state of exhaustion and collapse from exposure to get warmth and hot food at once. The equipment includes a line-throwing gun and searchlight and a life-saving net, which, stretched amidships when alongside a vessel with high sides, will allow the people on board to jump into the lifeboat with safety. The hundred-mile radius of the new boat will permit a much wider range of work. She will cost about £20,000. To equip the most important stations with this latest type of lifeboat would mean a heavy drain on the resources of the institution.

Breaking New Ground.

There is a strong probability that the Parliamentary Golf Handicap will be played this year over in France. Usually the first two rounds are decided at Deal, Sandwich, Rye, or Littlestone, but an invitation has been received from the Le Touquet Club that our M. P.'s should take a trip over the channel and fight their battles on French soil. Decision in the matter depends on the number of entries received, and the novelty of the idea may possibly promote its success. But the outing will be rather an expensive one for a single day's golf, and it would be interesting to know how our legislators reconcile it with the lip-service they constantly pay to the blessed word "economy."

The Plutoscope.

It is the obvious that is never obvious, and, although millions see and enjoy the "pictures" every day of the week, it has been left to one observant individual to realise that, good as the majority of films may be, and pictorially descriptive of life, there is still something lacking. Take a photograph of any ordinary scene, close one eye, and apply the hand as a telescope to the other, and the view at once becomes stereoscopic. The inventor of this new device has applied this idea by means of a small lens fitted to the projector of a cinema film, where

by the flashing of an ordinary picture on the screen becomes instantly stereoscopic. I was one of the few spectators to witness the showing of an ordinary film, which was immediately reworded and repeated with the new device attached, and the demonstration was remarkable. Apart from its artistic value, the chief recommendation is simplicity, and it is certain that another milestone has been reeled off in the development of the cinema. It has been aptly named the "Plutoscope."

Friends of Mrs. Duffus, Halifax, will hear with regret that she has been quite ill for the last few weeks but they hope soon to be informed of her rapid convalescence.

Those who attended the first night of Mr. Galsworthy's new play, "Loyalties," at the St. Martin's Theatre, predict as successful a run for this social drama as for "The Skin Game." For my part I prefer the latter play immeasurably. "Loyalties" is finely written, superbly staged and acted, as all Galsworthy plays have the good fortune to be, but it seems to me, though exciting and dramatic enough, just a little depressing. It may be said that if "Loyalties" is depressing, the same is true of Hamlet. But there is a difference between being devoured by liquid fire and being stewed over a gas stove. The chief actors in the play are Ernest Milton, Eric Mathurin, Dawson Millward, J. H. Roberts, Cathleen Nesbitt, Meggie Albani—all excellent.

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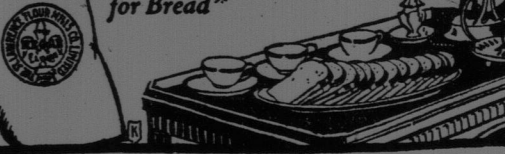
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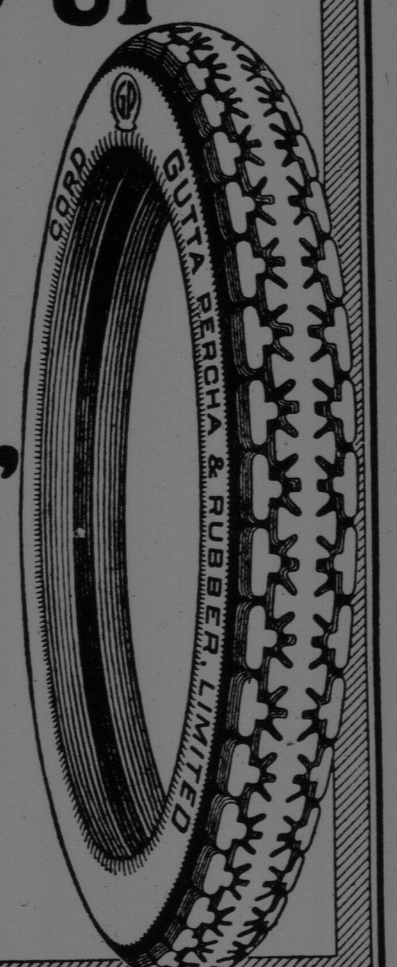
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