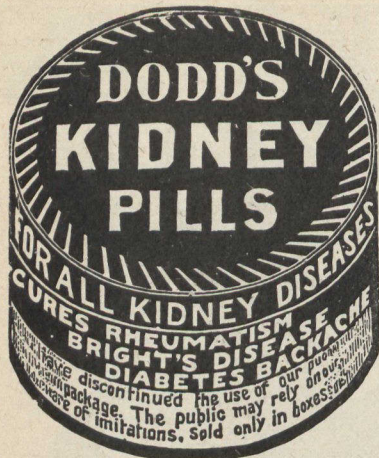


BRITISH NOTES



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London, February 28th, 1908.
THE last week of February was a memorable one in the history of the British Parliament. One would have thought that Mr. McKenna's Education Bill, introduced on Monday, was quite sufficient to occupy the attention of the House of Commons for the whole of the week. But the Government thought otherwise, so they capped the big performance of Monday by introducing what is undoubtedly their greatest measure of the session—the Licensing Bill.

Boldness is certainly the keynote of the Government's proposals with regard to licensing reform, and tribute was paid to the greatness of the occasion by the packed state of the House. Members, unable to find ordinary seats anywhere, sat on the gangway stairs and stood in the doorways and behind the Speaker's chair.

It fell to the lot of Mr. Asquith, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and virtual leader of the House, to introduce this piece de resistance in the Commons. He did it in his usual calm and collected manner, showing very little of the fire and emotion that we usually associate with the great orator, but no man could have been more completely master of his subject and its intricate details. For an hour and a half Mr. Asquith stood and expounded his bill, revealing and amplifying the salient points of the measure to a deeply interested assembly. The most striking proposal in it is the suppression of no fewer than 32,000 public houses, or, in other words, one-third of the total number now in existence in England and Wales. The sweeping nature of this proposal is clearly demonstrated by the following instances: In the centre of the city of Birmingham the application of the Government's scheme will abolish 141 out of 158 licenses. In central Cardiff, 85 out of 108; and in the heart of the city of Nottingham 69 out of 70 licenses. The basis of reduction is, one on-license for every 750 persons in towns, and one for every 400 in country districts. It may be left to the mathematical mind to work out how many people there are to each public house in the country at present, when it involves the sweeping away of 32,000 licenses to bring the number down to the proportion of one in 750, or one in 400, as the case may be.

Of course the temperance people are jubilant over the boldness of the Government's Bill, but they are not alone in praising it. The Archbishop of Canterbury declares that "It is a good bill, and it will have our support"—which is about the least he could have said. The Labour Party, if possible, cheered louder than the Liberals as the Government's intentions were made known, and Mr. Arthur Henderson, chairman of the party, told the house that he had never heard unfolded there a bill which gave him such unqualified satisfaction.

It should be pointed out that the great majority of the public houses in England and Wales are run by the big brewery companies, and the landlords are simply their tenants. The money for compensating the holders of suppressed licenses will be raised, as at present, by a levy on the brewers, to be vested in a national authority. The independent license-holders will, of course, be compensated in full.

ONE rubbed one's eyes vigorously to stand by and witness the marriage of Mr. R. C. Hawkin and Miss Marie Botha, the sister of General Louis Botha, at the old Dutch church in the City of London. Most Englishmen, of course, who know anything

about politics know also Mr. Hawkin, a keen young barrister, and secretary of the Eighty Club, one of the largest and best organised political clubs in England, particularly distinguished for its strong advocacy of Free Trade and the number of young politicians it has reared. The marriage of Mr. Hawkin and Miss Botha aroused extraordinary interest, and the little old church, originally given by King Edward VI. to the Dutch merchants in London, was altogether too small to accommodate the numerous guests. Among these were to be seen the Lord Chancellor (Lord Loreburn), who is president of the Eighty Club; Mr. Asquith, Chancellor of the Exchequer; the Right Hon. Thomas Shaw, the Lord Advocate; Lord Kinaird, Lord Carrington, Lord Courtney, the Bishop of Hereford, the Lord and Lady Mayoress and Sheriffs of the City of London, and a large number of members of Parliament. Part



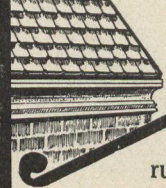
Mrs. R. C. Hawkin, formerly Miss Marie Botha.

of the service was in Dutch, and part in English, and the address was delivered by Dr. Clifford, the veteran nonconformist leader.

THE changes in the fortunes of General Botha within the last six or seven years have formed a striking object lesson in British Imperialism. From being the Commandant in Chief of the Boer forces in South Africa, and undoubtedly the ablest Boer leader, he is now the Right Hon. Louis Botha, first Prime Minister of the Transvaal. Botha was undoubtedly the most picturesque figure at the Colonial Conference, held a few months ago in London. But it seemed to me, who had seen the khaki-clad Boer general during his visit to England just after the war in South Africa—it seemed quite a different person, this frock-coated Transvaal Premier. There was the same sphinx-like countenance, slumbrous and typically Dutch, yet with a suggestion of passion and deep feeling behind it. There were the same well-preserved figure and trim, pointed beard. And yet, somehow, it seemed as if the old Botha, whom one always associated with a uniform and military command, was dead and another person occupied his frame. That was the impression I got as I saw him arrive, with the short and somewhat insignificant Jameson and the striking, white-haired Laurier, with the rest of them, at the Guildhall, where they were feted by the City of London.

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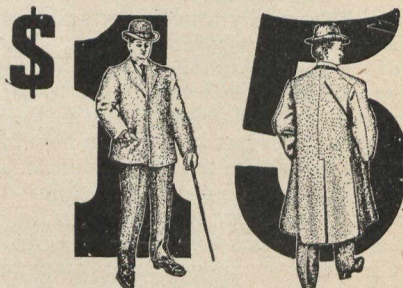
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