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THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

In the resumed debate on the Budget, Mr. Snowden, Socialist Member for Blackburn, bitterly attacked Mr. Asquith's proposals and said that Mr. Asquith had had a magnificent opportunity of showing his capacity, but he had completely disappointed the expectations of the people. The great mass of the nation derived no advantage from the budget, all that was offered them was a number of indefinite promises of old age pensions and that, too, at their own expense. If the Government did not deal with the question of social reform from its very bottom, they would experience the fate of their predecessors.

Mr. Evans, Liberal Member for Mid-Glamorgan-shire, replied amid the cheers of the Ministerialists, that Mr. Snowden's criticisms would have been better had they not been so exaggerated. It was time the Labour party made it clear that not everything that was good was to be ascribed to themselves and everything bad to the Liberal party.

Mr. Birrell, Chief Secretary for Ireland, informed the House that the Bill relating to the formation of an Irish Council would probably be introduced on May 7th.

A NEW PRIVY COUNCILLOR.

Mr. Winston Churchill, Under Secretary of State has been sworn of the Privy Council.

THE COLONIAL PREMIERS.

The banquet given in Westminster Hall in honour of the Colonial Premiers passed off with great éclat. The Prime Minister cordially welcomed the guests, especially General Botha. Mr. Balfour associated himself with the words of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

General Botha proposed the toast of the Houses of Parliament and praised the elasticity and adaptability to circumstances of the English constitution, for which all the Colonies were grateful. The Colonies would follow the example given them and would uphold the authority of the mother of Parliaments to whom they looked up as their protectress and guide.

LABOUR RIOTS IN BARBADOES.

The coal porters on the island of Santa Lucia have been creating disturbances, and it has been found necessary to dispatch troops to the scene of the riots.

A BOGUS TELEPHONE MESSAGE.

An ingenious fraud by telephone has been perpetrated on a motor-garage company at Barnes.

They were rung up on Sunday with the following message:—

"I am the Secretary to the German Embassy. The chauffeur to Count Rhens has met with an accident on the Southampton-road, on his way to town, and will require immediate repairs. The Count is at Brighton, and it will be necessary to have the repairs completed by 9 a.m. on Monday. Please give the chauffeur every attention, and supply him with everything that is necessary."

An hour later a German appeared at the garage, and presented a letter bearing the German coat-of-arms and the address of the German Embassy. He said he had had a collision with a cabman on the Southampton-road, and had settled with him, as he did not want to get into trouble with the police, his licence being already endorsed. He had had to employ two men to repair the axle, which had been broken, and wanted two special tubes, which he described. These were not in stock at the garage, but the chauffeur said he knew where he could get them if he had the money. He wanted £5 for the tubes and £3 for the men he had employed. Eventually he was handed £8, for which he gave a receipt on the German Embassy letter. He said the car was at Hampton Court,

and promised to return later, when he should want two men to assist him to complete the repairs.

As nothing further was heard at the garage of the "distinguished" caller, the affair was reported to Scotland Yard, and two arrests have been made. One of the men arrested is said to be a Boer.

NEWS FROM AMERICA.

THE CENTRAL REPUBLICS.

The *Associated Press* announces that the peace treaty between Nicaragua and Honduras was signed on Wednesday morning at 11 o'clock.

PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITIES.

The *Globe* learns from its New York correspondent that the rumour circulated recently that Mr. Hughes, Governor of New York, would, before long, be talked about in responsible quarters as a "Presidential possibility," has now been endorsed by Col. Watterson, of Kentucky, one of the keenest political observers in America. He is somewhat old-fashioned in his ideas nowadays, but his opinion still stands for something. As Col. Watterson is a Democrat his views as to the Republican party management need not, perhaps, be regarded as of more value than those of any other politician of experience on that side.

But he has also been talking about the position of affairs in the Democratic party, apropos of what may occur at the National Convention in the summer of next year, and in that connection he undoubtedly carries weight, all through the South at any rate. He has a fine scorn for Mr. William Jennings Bryan, who, ever since his return from his last European tour, during which it is alleged he hobnobbed very freely with Trust magnates, plutocrats, and other personages, in whose company no high-souled Democrat ought ever to be seen, has been steadily throwing overboard one principle after another. Mr. Bryan has, in fact, been overdoing the recantation of heresy business, as he will begin to realise before long. Col. Watterson has apparently made up his mind to have nothing to do with Mr. Bryan as Presidential candidate, and it may be predicted today with some amount of confidence that in this determination the Colonel voices the views of the vast majority of Democrats in the South.

Mr. Taft is still the favoured nominee of President Roosevelt and the Administration, although it is thought to be yet too early for any public pronouncement to be made on the subject.

Mr. Taft is again doing good work in Cuba, where he is investigating the situation on behalf of Mr. Roosevelt. It is thought probable that he will shortly proceed to Central America, to act as arbitrator between Nicaragua and San Salvador, on the points in dispute in regard to which there is at present a deadlock in the peace negotiations. The fact that Mr. Taft should be so frequently sent on important missions such as these, is thought to be part of President Roosevelt's plan to keep his favourite prominently before the public.

NEWS FROM FRANCE.

THE ORLEANS FÊTES.

It is reported from Orleans that the statement of the Prime Minister, M. Clémenceau, that the Freemasons, should they wish to take part in the Joan of Arc procession must be permitted to do so, has again raised the question of the abandonment of the procession. It is, however, believed that the Freemasons of their own accord will decline to take part in the fête. Should this, however, not be the case, several members of the Common Council intend to resign office.

It is also reported that the Freemasons' Lodge have applied for a place in the procession. M. Clémenceau has informed the Prefect of the Department that should the request of the Freemasons Lodge be refused, he will forbid the officials to take part in the procession.

THE PARIS LABOUR TROUBLES.

M. Clémenceau received a deputation of restaurant-keepers on Wednesday and advised them to recognise the waiters' Syndicate and to treat with it. At his further suggestion the deputation expressed themselves willing to lay the matter in dispute before an arbitrator of the first ward, with a view to its ultimate settlement by arbitration.

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THE JOUIN TRIAL.

The State attorney has determined to lay the protocol of the judgment in the Abbé Jouin action before the Court of Cassation with a view to annulling the remarks denunciatory of the Separation Act.

THE TOULON FIRE.

Most of the newspapers devote detailed articles to the fire at the Toulon naval arsenal and point out that explosions, fires and other catastrophes are far too frequent there.

It is hardly possible to avoid the suspicion that it is not merely a question of pure coincidence, and that even if Tuesday's fire is not to be ascribed to criminal handiwork it must be conceded that these frequent conflagrations give evidence of a most unusual carelessness on the part of the workmen and of a criminal neglect on the part of the officials entrusted with the guarding of the building.

The Minister of Marine received a telegram on Wednesday from the Toulon naval Prefect, according to which the discovery of shavings and a fuse of twisted hemp had no connection with the fire. The results of the enquiry, as obtained hitherto, afford no ground for the assumption that a criminal outrage is involved.

NEWS FROM RUSSIA.

FURTHER OUTRAGES.

On Wednesday morning the Director of the Sebastopol prison, M. Sakharuk, was murdered by two miscreants. They had hidden themselves in a ditch and, firing at M. Sakharuk, wounded him in seven places. When they were pursued they threw bombs, but without result. One of the fugitives shot himself, after having been wounded by a gendarme. The other hid himself in a neighbouring house, was arrested and lodged in gaol.

Two armed men entered the Sebastopol post office on Wednesday and stole credit notes withdrawn from circulation to the value of 100,000 roubles, and specie amounting to 14,000 roubles. The robbers escaped.

THE LABOUR RIOTS IN LODZ.

At a meeting called by about 500 representative workmen to discuss necessary measures against the attacks of armed workmen, it was resolved that workmen have no right to oust their colleagues from factories on account of their political or religious views, and further that no man can be compelled by his workmen associates to join this or that party; also that workmen should be forbidden to carry weapons, and that in every factory a standing Committee composed of workmen of the different parties should be formed and charged with the duty of smoothing points of disagreement. The meeting further expressed itself against a compulsory 1st of May holiday.

A NEW PARIS HOTEL.

A Paris correspondent of a contemporary writes that one of the famous old landmarks in Paris, the celebrated old Hotel Meurice, so well-known to the *habitués* of Paris a generation or more ago, exists no longer; but there has arisen on its ruins a magnificent and palatial structure which is destined to rival in renown even its famous old predecessor. The proprietors have erected on the site a stupendous and imposing structure which will rank second to none in the metropolis of fashion. The new Hotel Meurice in the Rue de Rivoli, overlooking the Tuilleries Gardens, is wanting in no single item which can conduce to the luxury and comfort of its guests. It contains 200 bed and sitting-rooms, 150 private bath-rooms, splendid reception rooms, all furnished in a most tasteful and luxurious style. There is a delightful Palm Court or Winter Garden—cool in summer, warm in winter—while the roof of the noble building has been fitted up as a garden, whence magnificent views can be obtained over Paris. A special feature will be the beautiful restaurant decorated in a lovely Louis XVI. style, which will no doubt become the rendezvous of fashion in Paris. The new Hotel Meurice will be opened at the beginning of next month, under the management of Mr. F. Schwenter, who was for some years at the Savoy Hotel, London.

WEATHER FORECAST FOR TODAY

of the Royal Saxon Meteorological Institute.

Strong westerly winds, variable skies, passing showers, temperature not much altered.