

# THE CHANGING FACE OF BRITAIN

## Silly Season Anthology of News from London

Compiled for "The Listener"  
by A.A.

**T**HE Poor Law has gone, and homes for the aged are not to have distasteful names that will make them openly seem like institutions; a busman is an Oxford undergraduate; and the Home Fleet is on the phone. . . .

It's Christmastide, and I have been here three months. For the last two months I have been saving up small scraps of paper — clippings from the London dailies, which all seem to be, in one sense or another, part of the same story. It's the story I heard from a doctor's wife with whom I had a meal soon after I landed.

"It's terrible. Terrible!" she said. "Terrible to think I've got to say you

"Mr. Bevan Missed His Chance" said the *Standard*. "He should have rebuked the member for the Scottish Universities for forgetting what every schoolboy knows: that it was the sailors of Ulysses who had their ears stopped with wax. The hero himself . . . sailed past . . . listening to the sirens' song." (The *Standard* made no reference to its own corroboration of the howler.)

**L**ORD NATHAN, Minister of Civil Aviation, and Mr. Lindgren, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry, cancelled at short notice their engagement to a foreign air lines luncheon in the Savoy, at which they were to have been the guests of honour. The chairman at the luncheon had to announce that they had been unable to come.

The *Times* reported that the reason was that the Trades Union Congress "were not agreeable to the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary attending the luncheon at the Savoy Hotel while an official strike was in progress."

**W**HEN Mr. Arthur Greenwood was asked to resign from the Cabinet by Mr. Attlee, the official letters which passed between them were published in *The Times*. Mr. Attlee's letter began, "Dear

Arthur." Mr. Greenwood's reply began "Dear Clem."

**A** CONSERVATIVE member in the Commons asked whether the Board of Trade knew that women in Somerset with large feet couldn't get boots to fit them. Mr. Belcher, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, said he would look into it, but he said it was difficult to get manufacturers to supply lines that were not easily sold.

Sir T. Moore (Ayr Burghs, Conservative): The Hon. Gentleman is wrong. Is he not aware that owing to the number of hours spent in queues, large feet are now widespread? (Loud laughter.)

### Winter Fuel

**T**HE vicar of the Dickensian village of Cobham, Kent, the Rev. E. L. Brooke-Jones, has asked parishioners to bring logs with them when they come to church to help solve the church heating problem this winter.

Footnote for ignorant Colonial readers: "Logs," in England, means small pieces of wood, about eight inches long and four or five inches in diameter. A coal merchant's office usually has one of these things in its window, labelled "Logs! Unrationed. But order now." The tendency to euphuism can be seen in other departments of the house-warming business. For instance, heaters are here called "electric fires," and central heating installations are, with comparable optimism called "radiators."

**A** NOTE put on a bathroom door by a landlady, ordering her tenants to bath only on Sundays, resulted in a case at Clerkenwell county court in which Judge Konstam, K.C., granted an in-

terim injunction to allow the tenants to use the bathroom on any day of the week.

Application for the injunction was made by Mr. M. Feldman—tenant with his family of rooms at a house in Adolphus Road, Finsbury Park—against his landlady, Mrs. Sarah Goodman, of the same address.

Mrs. S. W. Magnus, counsel for Mrs. Goodman, said "With regard to taking a bath once a week, we have the authority of the Minister of Fuel and Power."

Judge Konstam, "So far as this application is concerned, I don't care about the authority of the Minister of Fuel and Power."

### Bird Life (and Death), 1947

**E**NCOURAGING results have been achieved in preliminary experiments conducted at the R.A.F. station at Shawbury, Shropshire, in the use of peregrine falcons to discourage the congregation of flocks of birds on airfields. A small sum of money has been provided from R.A.F. funds for the experiment (says *The Times*).

The Air Ministry states that the cost of damage to R.A.F. aircraft by birds last year was estimated at £20,000 . . . There have been accidents when pilots have lost control while trying to avoid a bird and it is thought that birds may have caused some of the unexplained air accidents . . . Directing the operations at Shawbury is Mr. Ronald Stevens, of Lydbury North, Shropshire, a noted falconer and a bird fancier of international repute . . . In charge of five falcons at Shawbury, under Mr. Stevens, is AC2 Terrance O'Reilly, whose home is at Slough, Bucks, who had some experience with hawks as a hobby before joining up . . . After further trials at Shawbury the falcons will be moved to an R.A.F. airfield frequented by flocks of seagulls, for further experiments.

**A** PARTRIDGE was caught, after it had flown into the Food Office at Burnham-on-Crouch (says the *Evening Standard*).

### Rules and Regulations

**T**HE correspondence columns of *The Times* are the place to study the Resistance Movement. This letter is from a doctor.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I was confronted a few days ago by a very angry man who wished me to certify that he was the father of twins. It transpired that he was wishful to buy a pram to push out his twins, but had been refused until he produced a certificate. "As if," said he, "I should be such a fool as to waste my money buying a pram for twins if I hadn't got twins."

Yours faithfully,  
C. M. STUBBS.

Another letter comes from George Long, Chairman of Magistrates, Whitchurch, Hampshire. He had just applied for a renewal of his fire-arms certificate, which he had held for many years, and which was granted for house-protection. The application had been returned to him with a written comment: "There is now no need for fire-arms for house-protection."

Seeing the hand of the officious official in this, he writes with indignation, challenging the statement, and pointing out (quite rightly) that scarcely a night passes without a brutal

attack upon elderly people living alone in large houses, or upon night watchmen in charge of valuable property.

**F**ROM the *News Chronicle*: Harry Tickle, proprietor of Tickle's Dairy, was seen taking four bottles of milk into his home in Herbert Rd., Chatham. Today at Chatham he was fined £2 for doing so. It was explained that he could not register with his own firm because he lives outside the area it serves. (Note: There was evidently no suggestion that his offence was supplying himself with excess milk.)

### Jack and his Master

(See also "The Mother of Parliaments, Item No. 2")

**A** CUT of 30 minutes is to be made in the presentation of Handel's *Messiah* by Bristol Choral Society on Saturday evening at the Central Hall, Old Market, to meet the demands of the hall cleaners, who insist that the performance shall be over by 9.0 p.m.—*The Times*.

**D**UNWICH, a village on the Suffolk coast owned by the Barne family for 300 years, has been sold at auction for £53,000. (To Commander F. O. G. Lloyd, of London). Villagers thronged the auction room to see who their new squire would be, and heard the huge house ("Grey Friars") standing in 43 acres of parkland, sold for approximately the value of its bricks and mortar, panelling and trees. Most of them bought their own cottages for £300 or £400 each. Whenever an outsider tried to bid against them there was a roar of "Tenant!" from the 200 villagers. Mr. Jackson-Stops, the auctioneer, congratulated them publicly. "These houses are worth treble what you are paying for them," he declared.

**A**ND the Duke of Norfolk, under pressure of taxation, has offered options to 120 of his tenants. The properties are mostly cottages in the town of Arundel, Sussex, some of which are let at rents of 2s 6d a week.

**M**ARYLEBONE Council has decided that owing to the indignity attached to the title "road sweepers," these council employees shall in future be known as "road orderlies."

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"Owing to the large number of hours spent in queues, large feet are now widespread"

can't have any more of this miserable little joint." She sniffed. A tear formed in one eye. "This isn't England!" she cried. "This little island, that we women would've gone out in the streets and fought for with pitchforks. We'd have fought for this little island!" Down came the tear. She brought out a handkerchief, and went on to say that *They* had thrown out That Wonderful Man that could have saved this little island. "These people!" she said bitterly. Then she leaned low across the table and said to me softly but firmly: "We've got Communism in this country now. You know that, don't you? You can't have what you want now. You can't do what you want now!"

Well, this isn't England then. Or is it? I squeeze the handles of a big blue bulldog clip and release my clippings, and spread them out in little piles, roughly classified. Here they are.

### The Mother of Parliaments

**A** HOWLER has been made in the House of Commons, a howler arising out of misquotation of the *Odyssey*. No one in the House at the time picked it up. Mr. Walter Elliott (Conservative, Scottish Universities) said "Mr. Bevan has asked for his ears to be stopped in case—like Ulysses of old with the sirens—he might be seduced by local authorities to give them too much money." Mr. Bevan—"I can imagine myself in the role of Ulysses, but I cannot imagine Mr. Elliott in the role of siren." (Footnote by the *Evening Standard* that day: "Ulysses had his ears filled with wax so that he might sail past the sirens.") Next day the *Standard* said the exchange between Mr. Bevan and Mr. Elliott was making schoolboys laugh.



An indignity has been removed