

The Wide World.

CABLE NEWS IN BRIEF.

IMPERIAL.

THE death and obsequies of King Edward VII. have continued to dominate the Imperial situation, and the trace which followed the accession of King George V. remains unbroken. There has been some talk of compromise till the new King can bring a more ripened judgment to the Councils of State, but the leaders on neither side have said anything which could be construed into overtures of peace. Mr. Asquith has resumed his interrupted holiday in the Middle Sea, and Mr. Balfour has kept his own counsel. The "Times" has supported the suggestion for a compromise, remarking that every right-minded person would prefer at any time a pacific solution of political questions far less important than a revolutionary change in an ancient Constitution, but how much more so now that the Crown had just passed from the most popular and trusted of all Sovereigns into the hands of a comparatively young and necessarily inexperienced successor. It was impossible to place the responsibility upon King George's shoulders which King Edward might have borne. There were grounds for hoping that sane counsels would prevail. Other newspapers remark a more conciliatory spirit on both sides. Mr. Redmond does not think compromise possible, nor does Mr. Keir Hardie, the Labour leader, who, in a rather bitter speech in Wales, hoped the suggestion that had been made to indefinitely postpone the resumption of the fight in which Parliament was engaged would find neither sympathy nor support on either side. The battle must be fought through at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Hardie entered a protest against the glorification of militarism displayed at the Royal funeral, to the exclusion of the Civil side of government. He objected to the enthronement of a fighting man.

The King issued a message to the peoples beyond the seas on Monday, in the course of which he said that, called upon to follow in his father's footsteps, it would be his earnest endeavour to uphold constitutional government, to safeguard in all their fulness the liberties enjoyed throughout the Dominions, and to maintain, upon the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace, the great heritage of the united British Empire.

Mr. Redmond paid his promised visit to Cork on Monday, with the anticipated result of street fighting between the United Irish and All For Ireland League. Beyond a few broken heads no serious damage was occasioned by the riots.

The £40,000 required for Captain Scott's expedition to Antarctica has been collected, and the Terra Nova sails shortly. After calling at the Cape and Australia, she will come on to Lyttelton to make final preparations for the great attempt.

The King of Spain's life was endangered on his return to Madrid from King Edward's funeral, a chance change of plans saving him from the bomb of an assassin, who was waiting for him at the railway station, but whose bomb exploded prematurely. The anarchist, a South American, committed suicide upon arrest.

The Channel was crossed for a second time by aeroplane on Sunday, Count Jacques de Lesseps flying across in a Bleriot monoplane in half an hour.

The new Japanese tariff will be a serious blow to British trade. The rates on many articles have been doubled, and in several instances trebled, and a large majority of those articles are chiefly imported from Britain. The increased rates when enforced will compel many British firms trading with Japan to abandon their business there.

More rioting has taken place in Cork. Many houses were wrecked and one man was killed.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

No hope is entertained for the lost French submarine Pluviose. All attempts at rescue have failed.

The recent riots in China are said to be due in part to the terror of the Chinese at the appearance of the comet.

COMMONWEALTH.

In a recent speech, Mr. Fisher said the Labour party had never doubted the ability of the British fleet to protect Australia, but no nation would ever become great which deputised its defence to other people. Australians must undertake the task themselves. The keel of the Dreadnought cruiser is to be laid next month, and the Paramattas, the first destroyer of the fleet, will run her trials in a few weeks.

The Commonwealth shipping agents have decided to increase the freight rates on frozen meat to five-eighths of a penny per lb from August. The increase will not affect the New Zealand rates.

The Federal Government proposes to subsidise a cable service for Press purposes.

Round the White City.

JAPANESE SCENES AT SHEPHERD'S BUSH.

LONDON, April 22.

Several thousands of New Zealanders will be visiting the Japan-British Exhibition in the course of this year, so that a description of some of the wonders which will be on view at the White City will be of interest.

I spent a forenoon this week in making a tour of the grounds and buildings, and although the Exhibition is still in its unfinished state, it is already possible to see that it is going to be very fine. I believe it will be better than the Franco-British, and far ahead of last year's show. The Japanese Government has taken up this exhibition with characteristic thoroughness, and the money the Japanese are spending and the work they are putting into it are simply astonishing. All the world will flock to see the Japanese gardens and villages, while the Japanese Art Section will show some priceless ancient and modern masterpieces—pictures which have rarely been seen even by the Japanese themselves.

Japan is to be illustrated in every phase, ancient and modern, at work and at play, at war and in industry. Her famous temples and palaces, her tea-houses, her landscapes, are being reproduced with marvellous accuracy of detail.

Then there are the gardens, showing some of the secrets and triumphs of Japanese gardening. Two acres of the ground at Shepherd's Bush have been laid out by Japanese artist gardeners either with full-sized gardens or with "landscapes in miniature," in which the visitor will see beauty in a form hitherto comparatively unknown.

Wonderful naval exhibits, displays of old armour, Japan as she appears in each of the four seasons, what women have achieved in art and poetry and what they have accomplished when stirred by the glow of patriotism; the production of silk from the cocoon to the graceful folding fabric, agriculture in a series of instructive tableaux, and the instruments used by the labourers in that far-away land, will all be on view.

Lastly, there is a charming Japanese Fair with craftsmen at work; a village of Formosans—the once famous head-hunters—and another of the original inhabitants of Japan, Ainos, who still retain the habits and customs of their prehistoric ancestors. There will be Japanese theatres and places where the ancient tea-ceremony will be performed. In fact, the essence of Japanese life and surroundings is being reproduced in the heart of Shepherd's Bush.

The New Court is now being renovated and decorated for the coming exhibition, and should make a good show. Mr. Morrison, the officer in charge, tells me that his preparations are well forward, and he is expecting a big influx of visitors from New Zealand from May onwards. Canada and Australia are not exhibiting this year, so New Zealand has the "Dominions Department" to itself.

Abstinent! On the site where stood the lordly pleasure dome of Australia in the Franco-British Exhibition is now rising—a Japanese village!

Monster Balloon which Caused a Bother,

TRIAL TRIP FROM FRANCE TO LONDON POSTPONED BY FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S EMBARGO.

Immense excitement was caused yesterday, says our London correspondent, writing on April 14, when it became known that France had held up the dirigible airship built for the British Government, and to be taken over subject to her making the flight from Campagne to London, and fulfilling other tests, according to the "Daily Mail," whose telegram is dated Thursday, April 14.

Preparations had been made for an attempted flight from Compiegne to London, and a large garage, costing £5,000, has been privately constructed at Wormwood Scrubs for its reception.

The first announcement of the French Government's decision was made by the "Temps" this evening (April 14), in the following passage:—

"It is absolutely untrue, as has been announced, that the new dirigible balloon, Clement-Bayard, is destined for England. The Clement-Bayard belongs by contract to the French Government, who will take possession of it as soon as the trials are completed."

M. Clement asked to be allowed to communicate with the persons who had commissioned him to build the airship, but he was not released from his pledge of secrecy, and though he lunched with a party of journalists to-day, they only learned what had happened when the "Temps" came out.

The following description of the dirigible airship, written last year, is of interest. Cables have since informed us that the French Government is firm in refusal to part with Clement Bayard II., but the inventor has another built, and this will be handed over.

By navigating the air over land and sea from one capital to another, an airship will clearly demonstrate its utility, both for warfare and for peaceful enterprise. The feat will convince the public, and at the same time it will satisfy the experts. No better condition, therefore, could have been imposed in connection with the option of purchase of the Clement-Bayard II., which is soon, let us hope, to be given a British name. The Parliamentary Aerial Committee were well advised in requiring this evidence of the airship's capacity; and M. Clement, the designer and maker, is entitled to our admiration for his sportsmanlike and businesslike acceptance. On the completion of the airship, about the end of August, the voyage will be made.

And when we bear in mind that the international voyage is not the only condition, but that other demonstrations are to be made in England, not one of us can fail to be impressed with the quite obvious fact that the airship is at last a thing seriously to be reckoned with.

Only five years ago there were but a handful of "mad enthusiasts" who would have predicted so speedily a fulfilment of their dreams; and even up to the present year one constantly heard the sweeping assertion that the dirigible balloon can never be of any real use. Those who were sceptics now believe. Helmholtz, who thirty-five years ago demonstrated with all the convincing power of scientific reasoning that no dirigible balloon would ever be capable of navigating the air in anything other than a still atmosphere, would to-day have to acknowledge his error. And in recent years has not Maxim completely "exploded" the dirigible balloon theory?

In the remote contingency that the Clement-Bayard II. should not quite succeed in all she sets out to do—and even enthusiasts admit the possibility of some mischance—she and her rivals in France and Germany are, without question, in these wonderful times we live in, swiftly creating a new era in the world's history.

Why this particular type of airship? is a question which has often been asked during the last few weeks. Why not a Zeppelin or a Lebaudy? The answer is perfectly simple. The Zeppelin, despite its fine achievements, has no more demonstrated the right to be considered the best type of airship than has the Lebaudy, the Ville de Paris, or the Clement-Bayard.

The Clement-Bayard II. is a fish or torpedo-shaped airship of the non-rigid type. By fish-shaped, or "ichthyoid," as podiatric experts love to call it, is meant having pointed ends, but with the largest diameter far forward of the centre.

The reason for this shape is that it is what is known as "stream-line" form. Driven forward through the air, it offers less resistance than either true spindle-shape or sausage shape. And it is found that there is less resistance when the blunt end is driven forward than when the sharp end is in front. Therefore, the blunt end of the airship is the bow, and the pointed end is the stern.

The total gas-containing capacity of this airship is 227,500 cubic feet. It is therefore about three times the size of the British airship, twice the size of the Ville de Paris, and half the size of the Zeppelin. To fill the Clement-Bayard II. with hydrogen costs not less than £190; or, if the gas be supplied in a compressed state from tubes in which it is kept for reasons of portability, it would cost three times as much. One inflation of gas, however, lasts for a long time. It needs occasional replenishing to make up for the slow percolation of the gas through the fabric.

It is very essential that a dirigible balloon should be kept fully inflated. This is so obvious that it does not call for lengthy explanation here. Directly the wind is able to press a dint or hollow into an airship's gas-container it will exert very much greater power over it. It becomes hopeless to attempt to drive the flabby monster in the face of the wind or even along a cross-wind. It soon becomes as helpless as an ordinary motorless balloon.

Hydrogen is an extremely volatile gas, and will filter through almost anything. But in the rubber cloth employed in the Clement-Bayard II. there has been found a fabric second only to many folds of gold-beaters' skin, and far less costly.

The Clement-Bayard II. is, like most modern non-rigid balloons, provided with an ingenious device for keeping the gas-container taut in varying conditions of the atmosphere, and at different altitudes, without the continual addition of hydrogen gas. It is furnished with what is known as a "balloonet." The "balloonet" is a small air-filled balloon inside and resting on the bottom of the main envelope. As gas is lost, more air is pumped into the balloonet, distending it, and thereby filling up the space and keeping the outer envelope fully distended. Of course, this is only possible within certain limits. The air pumped in is as heavy as the surrounding air, and the necessary apparatus is so much additional weight to carry. But it is this ingenious balloonet which has made non-rigid and semi-rigid dirigible balloons a possibility.

The envelope of the Clement-Bayard II. is made of rubber and cotton cloth, yellow in colour. Unlike ordinary balloon fabric, this has not to be varnished. Yellow, curiously, is the best colour for balloons. It transmits less of the heat of the sun than any other colour, and therefore reduces somewhat the expansion of the gas.

The length of the balloon is 300ft. The car is suspended by ropes distributed throughout the whole length.

This car, or deck, differs from all others in the manner in which it is continued at the rear, curving nearly to the pointed end of the gas-envelope. In place of the first Clement-Bayard's stabilisers (which are bulbous protuberances on the tail, whose purpose is to assist in keeping stability of flight), the new ship is provided with one vertical stabiliser in the form of a plane projecting downwards like a fixed rudder from the pointed rear of the gas-container. This mitigates any tendency of the airship to wobble from side to side. This method of suspending the car, and even the disposition of the weight of the balloonet, all assist in keeping the airship steady.

Details of the New Airship.

Type, non-rigid; capacity, 227,500 cubic feet; balloonet, about 35,000 cubic feet; shape of balloon, fish-shape; length, 300ft.; diameter (greatest), 50ft.; lifting capacity, about 11 tons; motors, two each of 220h.p.; propellers (two-bladed), two; length of propellers, 20ft.; speed, 35-40 miles per hour; flying capacity with 25 passengers, 700 miles; working crew, four; usual working altitude, up to 6000ft.; weight of balloon, car, and engine, etc., 31 tons; cost, minimum, £20,000; cost of inflation and hydrogen gas, about £190; length of working deck, 50ft.

Other Items.

Cost of garage, £5000; distance from Paris to London as the crow flies, 220 miles; wind wanted for voyage, southerly; composition of envelope, rubber and cotton cloth; mechanical innovation, reversing gear; manoeuvring area, minimum, 300 yards square.