

# Sir Austen Chamberlain

*A British Foreign Minister Who Sees Imperial Prosperity in International Peace*

*By T. J. C. Martyn*

SIR JOSEPH AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, His Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to give him his full name and title, is one of the many enigmas in British politics. On the one hand his youthful carriage, debonair appearance, and charming manner belie the sixty-four years he carries so easily. Indeed, to many people in England, partly because his name still recalls memories of his illustrious father, 'Owd Joe' Chamberlain, and partly because he has only within comparatively recent years become a luminary in British politics, Sir Austen Chamberlain is still regarded in most respects as a young man.

On the other hand, Sir Austen is the product of the old order of politicians, with the saving grace of a modern outlook and an extraordinary background of long accumulated knowledge and experience. It is doubtful if there has ever been a Foreign Secretary in all British history so well trained for the onerous duties of his high position. There have been Foreign Secretaries of greater force and stronger personality, but none has brought greater tact and understanding to bear upon the ever intricate problems of British foreign policy. It is because of this and because of his alert appearance that the mind immediately warms to the conception of a man old in experience, young in outlook, and modern in sympathy despite his years and his Victorian antecedents.

The paradox strikes more deeply, perhaps. It begins in his personal appearance. In his right eye he wears a monocle, commonly held to be a symbol of aristocratic lineage; but in his case it denotes no more than weak vision, for certainly not a duke, not an earl, nor

even a baron is numbered among his ancestors. He is a political proletarian, and a very distinguished one. Of blue blood there is not a trace, despite his noble bearing. It is true that he might have been a peer many years ago, but although the King has offered to create him an earl, he has steadfastly refused to



*Photo Wide World*

## JOSEPH AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

ALERT AND ELEGANT at sixty-four, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer who argues for international stability in coldly realistic tones, this fall he enters his fifth year as King George's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

be elevated to the peerage. One suspects that his attitude was not governed so much by personal dislike of honors, since he has given way to King George's insistent demand that he accept the blue ribbon of the Order of the Garter, as by a reluctance to retire from the active forum of politics in the House of Commons into the somnolent, red-plush environment of the House of Lords.

Sir Austen Chamberlain is the son of the late Joseph Chamberlain, that wealthy maker of screws and other useful

things, whose immaculate attire, orchids, and fiery speeches were sensations in the age of long skirts and numerous petticoats. In Sir Austen's case the orchid is missing, but its place is usually taken by a gardenia, a white carnation, or some other small and inexpensive flower. His speech lacks his father's fire, but makes up

for that quality by its easy flowing precision. More than any other Minister's, his speeches are gems of pure thought, plain and to the point, without any vacuity whatever. On the occasion of his first speech in the House of Commons, some thirty-five years ago, Gladstone — at one time possibly Joseph Chamberlain's bitterest enemy — crossed the floor to congratulate the latter on his son's remarkable beginning. It is recorded that 'Joe,' tears in his eyes, thanked the Grand Old Man with a silent grip of the hand. It only remains to be said that Sir Austen has more than justified the promise of that first speech.

Austen was the apple of his father's eye. He was deliberately reared for politics, and no expense was spared in securing for him the best training and tuition. His father, determined to give his son all the advantages that he himself had lacked, sent him to Rugby and later to Trinity College, Cambridge. For years after his graduation he traveled abroad, studying at the École Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris and the University of Berlin, and perfecting his knowledge of foreign languages. He had unrivaled opportunities to study at first hand political and social conditions in Germany, France, Italy, and Spain, and to-day speaks the languages of all four countries perfectly. Through his father's wide connections he had the privilege of meeting the great men of



the day, not least of whom was Bismarck.

When Austen Chamberlain entered Parliament in 1892, it was entirely natural that he should at first suffer from comparison with his famous father, to whom his resemblance is much less marked than that of his brother, Neville. The latter, despite the absence of an eyeglass and the presence of a moustache, has both a mental similarity and a physical resemblance to Joseph Chamberlain that is striking. Austen, with the monocle and the elegant manner which he inherited from his father, invited criticism. But though his critics could find in him little of his father's oratorical fire and genius, they were compelled to recognize his extraordinary ability in other directions.

IT IS a well worn axiom that there are no political issues — there are only economic problems. His recognition of this fact won Joseph Chamberlain over to the Conservative Party; and on this principle he based his belief in the imperial ideal. Convinced that the golden link of royalist sentiment was not enough to keep a sprawling empire together, he was courageous enough to revive the slumbering bugaboo of a protective tariff; but his bold plan thus to lay an economic foundation for the empire by the inauguration of preferential tariffs for the dominions and colonies cost him his place in the Government.

It was at this juncture that his son, Austen, became Chancellor of the Exchequer, technically a higher position than the father had ever held and one that the son was again to hold under Lloyd George's second coalition government. His budgets of 1904 and 1905 were noteworthy only for the absence of revolutionary features; it was not until his second tenure of the office that he cautiously began to put his father's fiscal doctrines into effect, reducing by one sixth the duties levied upon articles of general consumption imported from British possessions overseas. The principle of imperial preference was thus to become a fiscal policy from which even the Labor Government of Ramsay MacDonald was not wholly able to depart, and which has been strongly supported by the present Chancellor, Winston Churchill.

The abrogation of free trade principles, wherever they affect adversely the empire's development, is the keystone of Austen Chamberlain's political creed. We may say that tariff-protection was inevitable in a war-torn world, in which each country leaned toward economic self-sufficiency because it feared an

international conflict. But this may be only another way of praising the foresight of Joseph Chamberlain and the common sense of his son. The effect of our own Fordney-McCumber Tariff on British tariff policy has been to accentuate if not accelerate the trend to imperial preference.

In a large sense Sir Austen is a social reformer and as such he has sounded the reveille of democratic conservatism in Great Britain. But his conception of reform differs widely from the socialistic conception. In theory the socialists' object is 'without regard to tradition or the future, to give immediately everything to all.' In practice, the theory is made to fit the formula: 'To give as much as possible, in as short a time as possible, to the greatest possible number of people.' Sir Austen's tenet drives a wedge in between these views. He says, in effect, 'To give as much as possible, to the greatest possible number of people, with due regard to tradition and the future, in proportion to their contribution to the national prosperity.' In other words, since the government is a spending agency, there can be no money for social reforms until British trade produces it, and, in his opinion, the surest way of promoting British prosperity is by development of the empire, which

can best be accomplished by a system of protective tariffs.

An understanding of his outlook on the domestic scene is imperative to a comprehension of the aims of his foreign policy. This was, perhaps, most strikingly brought out at a recent session of the League of Nations. No one, the writer thinks, would call Sir Austen Chamberlain an enemy of the League; yet there is obviously a limit to his friendship, and that limit is the wide-flung frontiers of the British Empire. 'Not even for this great League of Nations,' he said with characteristic bluntness, 'will I risk the disruption of that smaller but older League of the British Empire.' Strange words and nasty medicine for the League to swallow; but a clear-cut statement of indisputable veracity. No wonder his enemies incline to regard him as a die-hard Tory.

What are the aims of British foreign policy as expounded by Sir Austen? It is, of course, only possible to give a generalized answer. His fundamental aim is, by protecting the security and freedom of action of the empire; to stimulate trade on the soundest lines possible, and thereby to increase imperial prosperity. That is the basis of his every effort in international relations. It is the ultimate object of every foreign



Photo Wide World

#### BEFORE LOCARNO

BRIAND OF FRANCE, Lady Chamberlain, and Sir Austen Chamberlain awaiting the German members of the famous boat party on Lake Maggiore that led up to the Locarno Treaties, Sir Austen's greatest contribution to European stability.

minister. But it is a policy that is not always apparent and not always understood. Like the empire itself it contains a host of contradictions. Locarno, for example, was the outcome of a desire for stable Continental conditions predicated upon the assumption of a beneficial effect on British trade. Again we see the son still carrying on the father's principles in his foreign policy.

**D**URING the whole period of Sir Austen's tenure of the Foreign Secretaryship, the continent of Europe has been in a state of political and economic flux. There has been little stabilization and a good deal of Machiavellian intrigue in foreign affairs. The background has been the tragedy of war, the privations and dislocations of peace. The future has been clouded by doubt, jealousies, fear, suspicion, and all too little faith in the attitude of any nation. To accomplish anything in such an atmosphere has required not merely sound judgment but stern realism — and Sir Austen is a realist who does not mince his words.

When he was Foreign Secretary in Mr. Baldwin's first Cabinet, he soon became convinced that British interests at large were best to be served by acting as mediator on the Continent. The greatest obstacle to progress at that time was the unhealthy state of Franco-German relations. If these could be improved, if the outstanding difficulties could be removed, if Germany should be allowed to take her rightful place in the great family of nations, the result could hardly fail to aid Britain to regain her lost markets; for stabilization and normalization on the Continent must surely increase its buying power. To this end Sir Austen was willing to pledge Britain's credit and support in order that the Continent might, in return, buy British goods; and to this end the British envoy in Berlin was instructed to open negotiations with the German Government. The indirect object was to meet French

fears concerning security and at the same time give Germany a breathing space to set her own house in order. It was suggested that Great Britain might guarantee both nations against unprovoked aggression by either. The outcome was the Locarno Treaties.

It would, of course, be a grave injustice to others to give Sir Austen all the credit for the part played by the British at Locarno, for Ramsay MacDonald had an important rôle in the negotiations during his ministry, which was sandwiched in between Mr. Baldwin's first and present administrations. But the lion's share of the praise, so far as Britain is concerned, belongs to Sir Austen.

Similarly at Geneva Sir Austen has kept clear of that finesse which so often marks the utterances of the politicians in Westminster. Realizing that the British Empire is, in many respects, a contradiction in terms, he has been frank to a degree, sincere and firm, dealing solely in the 'cold language of reality,' as one observer put it. Sir Austen, unhappily, speaks with little wit; he indulges in no subtlety, either of humor or of sarcasm, but drives to the point in well-measured words not lacking in the force of logic. Take, for example, his attitude toward the many plans for outlawing war, such as the Polish scheme for League intervention in case of a conflict. He bluntly told the delegates that Britain could not pledge the use of her armed forces in disputes when her interests were not affected. He made the point even clearer. He informed the delegates that no Government in London could receive a mandate from the Dominions to embroil the empire in disputes completely divorced from its interests. To do so, he said, would be to imperil the empire itself by running the risk of sowing seeds of discord and misunderstanding within its frontiers. The argument was decisive: the League knew where Britain stood and therefore knew also where it stood itself.

**S**IR AUSTEN'S attitude, however, is by no means universally defended in England. Even in the Conservative Party there has been some frank criticism of his policy and his outspoken exposition of it. If the Conservative Party were more reactionary, Sir Austen would be a Liberal; as it is, he is a much needed leaven. He stands essentially for industrial reconciliation and social progress at home and for peace and commercial improvement abroad.

At home the Conservatives have not been too successful; abroad Sir Austen has had a struggle to maintain peace. But it is difficult to deny that he has weathered the squalls with remarkable success. If he has been purely nationalistic in his outlook, as he indeed must be, his attitude has been tempered with a strong support for all those international ideals calculated to serve the welfare of the British Empire and therefore, according to Sir Austen's ideas, of mankind. Strong as his support for international comity is, his belief that Anglo-American understanding is the foundation of world peace is even stronger. Strongest of all is his conviction that the British Empire has still its most important work in front of it, work destined to be an imperishable monument.

Both as a statesman and a politician, Sir Austen may be regarded as the flower of the House of Commons, one of those democratic blossoms that age has not withered. Nobody would think, to look at him, that he is much past fifty. His voice is still firm and resonant, his eye steady, and his honor unsullied by the faintest breath of scandal. He can look back at a long and useful career in the public service that few men have equaled and fewer still have surpassed. If he is not coruscatingly brilliant, he has qualities of farsightedness and common sense that more than compensate. If he had done nothing else than lay the foundation stone of the Locarno Treaties, that service to Europe would alone establish his claim to distinction.



# A Gourmet's Tour of France

By G. B. Stern

Author of the *Malriarch* and *Debonair*

WHEN I was traveling in Brittany for the first time, a good many years ago, I met a middle-aged man who had traveled widely in France, and who seemed eager to spray my tourist ignorance from the fountain of his experience. He sat beside me at meal-time in our hotel at Concarneau, and showered information about the many places he had visited, and the reasons why I, too, must visit them.

All of these reasons were gastronomical; and I, by no means indifferent, even in those days, to the pleasures of the table, was nevertheless faintly shocked by such a materialistic point of view. I was caught in the rainbow spell of Concarneau, with its brilliant multi-colored sails, gathered in a vivid fluttering bouquet in the harbor by day, and floating out softly, one by one, through the rich clear sunlight of the evening; its blue mist of fishing-nets, the *filets bleus* for which Concarneau is famous, stretched out to dry along the masts, or slung over wires erected for that purpose on the shore. I was enchanted by the sound of wooden sabots clattering ceaselessly along the stone-paved jetty, and by the sight of the bright orange and rust and blue canvas of the fishermen's clothes. I was even enchanted by the inescapable smell of fish, and the overpoweringly unhealthy fumes that rose from the harbor at low tide.

From the bright web of this enchantment I listened, slightly repelled, to my companion's information and advice. 'You must not miss X,' he would say, emphatically, 'for at X, at the Grand Hotel, they will give you the most perfect dressed crab obtainable, I really do believe, throughout the world. And from X — yes, it would be just possible in the day — you can hire a car and drive



Courtesy of Kennedy & Company

OLD CORNER, ROUEN  
FROM AN ETCHING BY JOHN TAYLOR ARMS

to the little village of Y, where, at the village inn, they have a cook — well, just ask for river trout, which will be caught for you from the stream on the other side of the road, and you will see why I tell you that, if you go nowhere else in France, you must undoubtedly go to Y.'

I realized that this man carried a mental map of the localities he had visited, which must have resembled the map I have just discovered in my *Guide Michelin*. This map is headed 'La France Gastronomique,' and although not much more than three inches square, it has been compiled, M. Michelin tells us anxiously, with the utmost care. It is divided into provinces with dotted lines, and instead of bearing the names of towns, rivers, and similar unimportant geographical data, it is sown with terms of such rich promise as *truites saumonées*, *fromages de brebis*, *pâtés*, *escargots*, and the like. Such a map, I perceived, existed in the mind of my gourmet friend, as he turned an eager, exploratory palate toward the yet unproved inns of Brit-

tany. Such a map, I am far from being ashamed to say, now exists in my own mind also; and it is this map, temptingly pictorial, which I shall do my best to reproduce in this article for other unashamed gourmets.

Whether my condition of scenic uplift was indeed too high for me to pay much attention to the food I ate, or whether Breton menus are a little too monotonously fishy to be memorable, I cannot say. Whatever the reason, there are few gastronomical pictures in my memories of that part of Brittany, except rows of tiny, strongly-flavored sardines standing on their tails round Concarneau, and some crabs and lobsters, and the fresh tunny-fish which we used to see carried

out of the boats every morning, glittering monsters, with round distended bellies, each one fetching, we were told, a quite incredibly high price. There occurs also the memory of a delicious dish of *petits pois*, eaten on the veranda of the Grand Hôtel at Beg-Meil, and of my friend murmuring to me that he thought the cook must have sat up with them all night, to have achieved such smooth perfection.

Brittany's comparative blankness on my gastronomical chart is amply compensated for by Normandy's plenty. My most grateful memory is of the changeless old town of Honfleur, with its beautiful wooden church, and narrow mediæval houses packed close around the harbor. Yet it was not in Honfleur itself, at the adequate but unexciting Hôtel Cheval Blanc, that I received my gourmet's due; but a few kilometres outside the town, at the Ferme Saint-Siméon, Côte de Grace, which is painted in very bright colors on my visionary map. It is a genuine old Normandy farmhouse, standing withdrawn from the