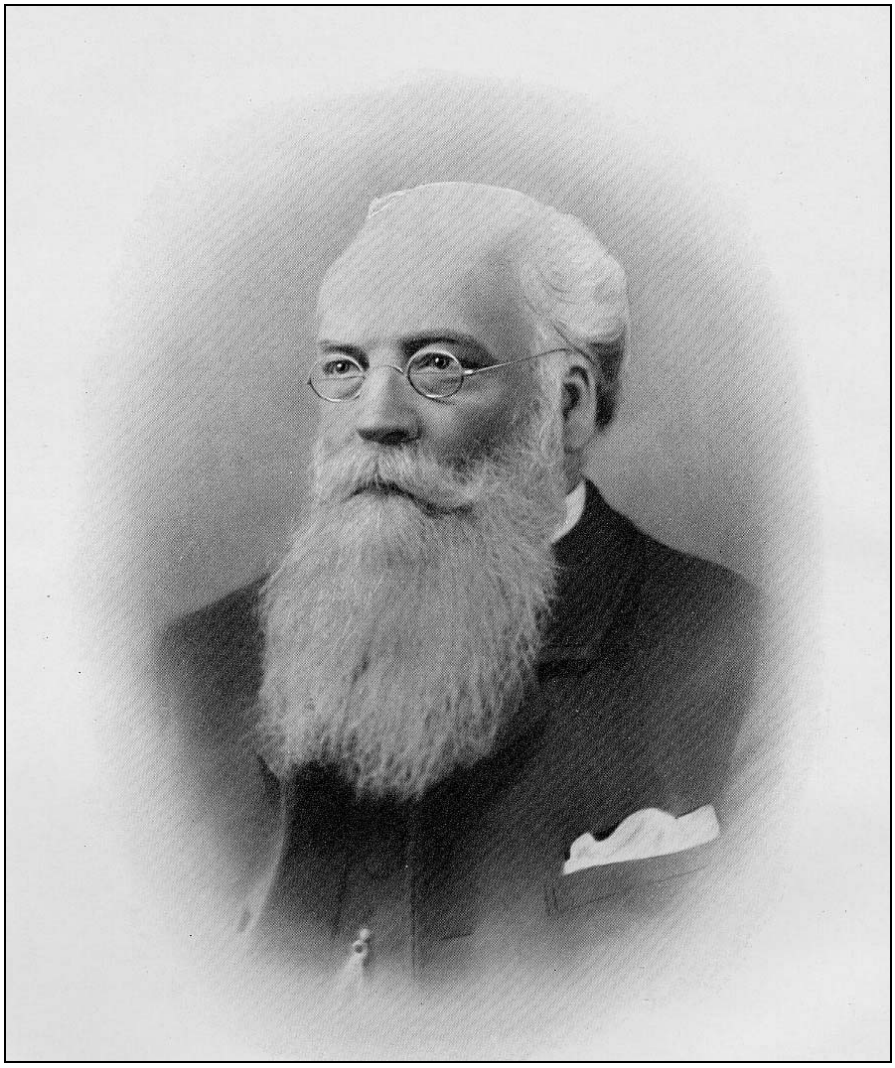
THE HOUSE OF SAGE

1860-1960

THE HOUSE OF **SAGE**

1860-1960

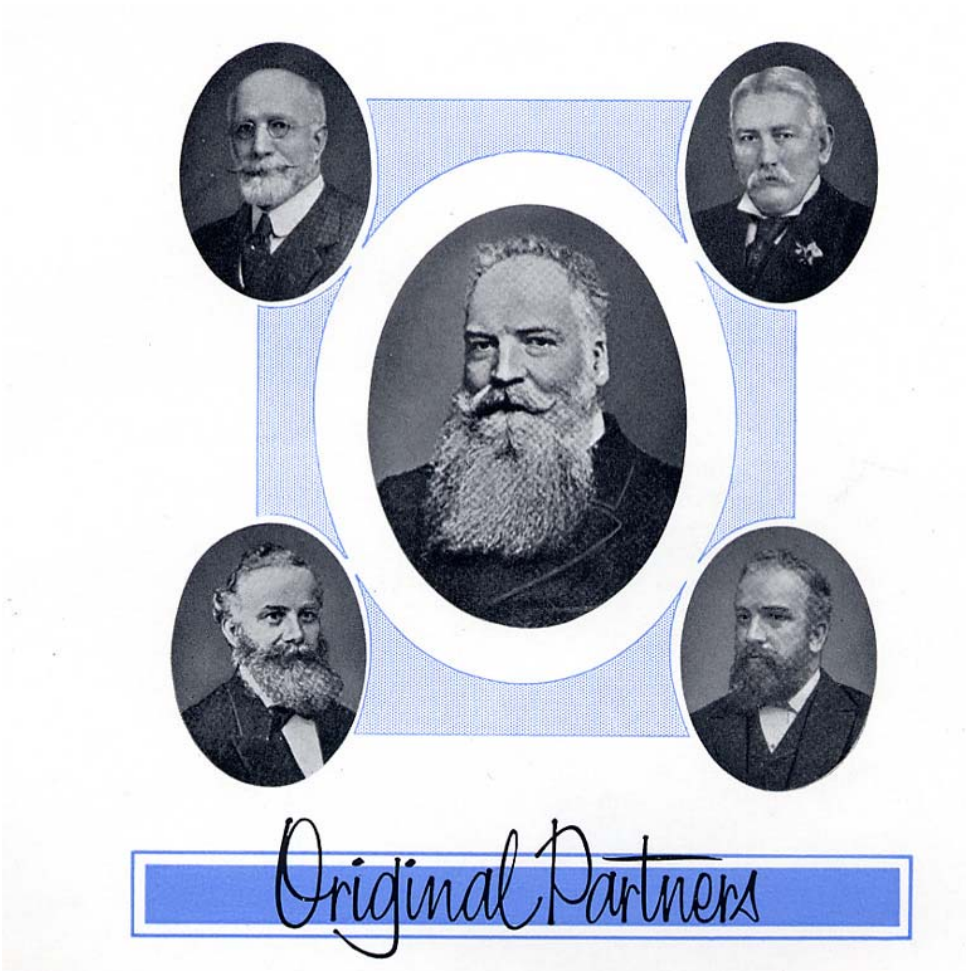
by
DERYCK ABEL



Frederick Sage
Founder of the House of Sage

1860-1960

A Century of Achievement



JESSE HAWES

FREDERICK GEORGE SAGE

FREDERICK SAGE

FREDERICK HAWES

JOSIAH HAWES

DIRECTORS FROM DATE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

1905-6 F. G. SAGE *{Chairman)*, JESSE HAWES *{Deputy Chairman)*, V. R. PAGE, F. CLAREY, F. C. LYNES

1907 F. G. SAGE *{Chairman)*, JESSE HAWES *{Deputy Chairman)*, V. R. PAGE, F. CLAREY, F. C. LYNES, F. DEBENHAM, C. B. CRISP

1908 F. G. SAGE *{Chairman)*, C. B. CRISP, F. DEBENHAM, W. DENNY, G. T. MOODY

1909 F. G. SAGE *{Chairman)*, C. B. CRISP, F. DEBENHAM, W. DENNY, G. T. MOODY, JESSE HAWES

1910-15 F. G. SAGE *{Chairman)*, F. DEBENHAM, W. DENNY, JESSE HAWES, G. T. MOODY

1916-18 F. G. SAGE *{Chairman)*, W. DENNY, JESSE HAWES, G. T. MOODY

1919 F. G. SAGE *{Chairman)*, W. DENNY, JESSE HAWES, G. T. MOODY, G. A. COULSON

1920-24 G. T. MOODY *{Chairman)*, G. A. COULSON *{Managing Director)*, JESSE HAWES, F. STUART SAGE, E. D. HAWES

1925-26 G. T. MOODY *{Chairman)*, G. A. COULSON *{Managing)*, JESSE HAWES, E. D. HAWES

1927-39 G. T. MOODY *{Chairman)*, G. A. COULSON *{Managing)*, E. D. HAWES, F. W. HUMPHREY, S. C. HAWES

1940-43 G. T. MOODY *{Chairman)*, E. D. HAWES *{Managing)*, F. W. HUMPHREY, S. C. HAWES

1944-45 F. W. DOUSE *{Chairman)*, E. D. HAWES *{Managing)*, F. W. HUMPHREY, S. C. HAWES, B. D. HAWES

1946-57 F. W. DOUSE *{Chairman)*, F. W. HUMPHREY *{Managing)*, S. C. HAWES, B. D. HAWES

1958 F. W. DOUSE *{Chairman)*, F. W. HUMPHREY *{Managing)*, S. C. HAWES, B. D. HAWES, A. P. HORTON

1959 F. W. DOUSE *{Chairman)*, F. W. HUMPHREY *{Vice-Chairman)*, B. D. HAWES *{Managing)*, S. C. HAWES, A. P. HORTON

CHAIRMEN

F. G. SAGE	1905-19
G. T. MOODY	1920-43
F. W. DOUSE	1944-

MANAGING DIRECTORS

G. A. COULSON	1923-38
E. DAVID HAWES	1938-46
F. W. HUMPHREY	1946-58
B. D. HAWES	1958-

LIST OF DIRECTORS OF
OVERSEAS SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES

SOUTH AFRICA

FREDERICK SAGE & Co. (SOUTH AFRICA) (PROPRIETARY) LIMITED

Norman W. Gallagher *(Chairman)* C. A. Robinson *{Managing Director)*
F. W. Douse
G. D. Maxwell
P. J. Ridsdale

FREDERICK SAGE & Co. (RHODESIA) LIMITED

Norman W. Gallagher *(Chairman)*
C. A. Rowe *(Managing Director)*
F. J. Ridsdale
F. W. Douse
Sir Thomas Chegwidden, C.E., C.V.O.

SOUTH AMERICA

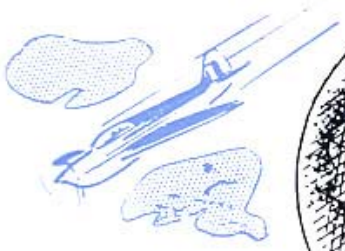
FREDERICK SAGE SOCIEDAD ANONIMA INDUSTRIAL Y COMEKCIAL

Harold M. Taylor
Dr. J. R. Hayzus
A. V. Rosarti
B. J. Wisdom

BELGIUM

FREDERICK SAGE & Co. (BELGIUM) LIMITED

F. W. Douse
P. W. Humphrey
B. D. Hawcs
S. C. Hawes
A. P. Horton
Resident Director: F. Mouchette



Contents

Historical Prelude

THE FOUNDATION of the House of Sage one hundred years ago contributed towards a revolution of the first magnitude. It was a revolution in social habits. For the growth and adoption of new ideas in shops and in shopfitting were transforming social life and softening its earlier asperities to an extent which has never been fully recognised or adequately assessed. In an illuminating comment on the Great Exhibition of I85I in the *Morning Post* of January 29, I884, an anonymous writer saw fit to remark that 'previously to the Exhibition of I85I, showcases were of clumsy construction and wholly destitute of either artistic conception or satisfactory workmanship'. That was nine years before Frederick Sage came upon the scene. Shops were themselves infinitely fewer in the earlier half of the nineteenth century. An indication of the nature of the change may be gauged from a sentence of a redoubtable Victorian, Professor Thorold Rogers, M.P. In his native village, Rogers recorded, the first shop was opened for general trade about the time of his own birth in I823, but for many years afterwards the wants of the villagers continued to be supplied by packmen and pedlars.

In the eighteenth century, the overseas commerce of England prospered and achieved great gain. Her exports of clocks, watches, china, silverware, woollens, locks, picture-frames, books and sedan chairs were renowned in Bombay and Madrid, Constantinople and Boston. Her internal trade likewise expanded. Yet, three centuries after the passing of the Middle Ages, the distribution of goods from the relatively restricted number of her periodic big fairs (like those of Winchester, Boston, Beverley and, above all, Stourbridge, near Cambridge) and her permanent markets (such as those of the West Riding of Yorkshire), each functioning largely in isolation, remained fundamentally medieval in character. Distribution was regional, and London was, as Professor Paul Mantoux has demonstrated, the sole city or town which enjoyed 'permanent business connections with the whole country'.

It was during the twelve-year reign of Queen Anne that shopkeepers increasingly began to ask their architects to enlarge the windows of the ground-floor level. The prints of Hogarth trace such tendencies.

Early in life Frederick Sage, Founder of the House of Sage, grasped, as we shall sec, the implications of the economic revolution in progress around him. He determined to speed its advance. By I840 the age of the great emporium had arrivtrd. Shops and shoppers—tumultuous changes swept them all. To the historian, the shop is old, shopfitting relatively new. The stores of the ancient Roman forum were, as researchers amid the ruins of Pompeii have amply substantiated, similar in many facets to modern shops; they were open to the street and devoid, of course, of glass for enclosure, but they had doubtless been designed to attract the eye and fire the imagination. A similar comment applies to the merchant's display of a complete stock in the covered passage-way or the open market of a Middle Eastern bazaar, ancient or modern, or to the stores in the immediate neighbourhood of a medieval cathedral or to those which dominated a medieval bridge such as the Riaito over the Arno or, until the vast reconstruction of the Second Empire, rhe Pont Ncrf at Paris or, indeed, to the familiar Dutch structure of the sixteenth, seventeemh or eighteenth century, which simultaneously housed a domestic industry and a private home.

Radical changes in business organisation and business policy in the nineteenth century begat buildings far more substantial than ever before. With them came highly specialised stores and comparably specialised display. Three factors now made their impact: first, the expansion of display space; secondly, the employment of new materials, and, thirdly, the intensification of sales techniques provoked and governed by the faster tempo of a new era. The notion of a picture-frame around a shop's windows is today elementary; it was once revolutionary. So, too, with plate glass. Next came the metal mouldings and the glass joints, the deep vestibules, and diverse, elaborate and multitudinous planning requirements which, even on a short frontagej sought to enhance the artifice of lighting and dressing and the evolution of the shop interior as a background.

It is not surprising that from a people which Napoleon dubbed a nation of shopkeepers should arise the first business house to concentrate upon the requirements of shops as a specialised industry. This was certainly the achievement of Frederick Sage and his partners.

Where this industry exists today, it will often be found that it originally had some connection with what is known as a 'Sage man', either as a principal or as an employee.

Sage introduced the industry to Europe, and today important businesses in this industry are conducted in France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and Germany. The story of shopfitting in South Africa and South America will be told in subsequent chapters.

the Founder

"HEAVEN HELPS those who help themselves" is a well-tried maxim, embodying in a small compass the results of vast human experience,' averred Samuel Smiles in his immortal *Self-Help*. 'The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes **the** true source of national vigour and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done for men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity for doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to owr-guidance and ot'er-govern-ment, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless.'

Frederick Sage, the Founder of the House of Sage, would doubtless have subscribed to the doctrine of Samuel Smiles. The fragment of autobiography, which he produced towards the end of his life, bsars witness to the contribution of his parents towards the development of his temperament and character. Frederick Sage was by birth an East Anglian. His father, a journeyman carpenter, was the son of a farmer in Freston, a trim link Suffolk village some miles from Ipswich. Born in I777, he enjoyed, as his son recorded, 'a fair education for the time in which he lived'. After a number of years of apprenticeship to a carpenter in the neighbouring village of Holbrook, he worked for a period as a journeyman carpenter, usually in another village named Falkenham, outside Felixstowe. It was there that the elder Sage met Prudence Pearson, whom he married.

By now Britain was at war with France, Revolutionary and Napoleonic; work was scarce, and there were periods when the elder Sage could nowhere secure employment. Consequently, as a small boy, Frederick Sage was wont, in the summers, to work all day in the fields, rising soon after 5 o'clock and returning home fourteen hours later. The pay ? Three pence per day. In the harvest time the entire family spent the day gleaning. Father's earnings, during these stringent years, seldom amounted when in full work to more than I6J. to 20s. per week. **Each** member of the large family had to do what he could to provide food for so many.

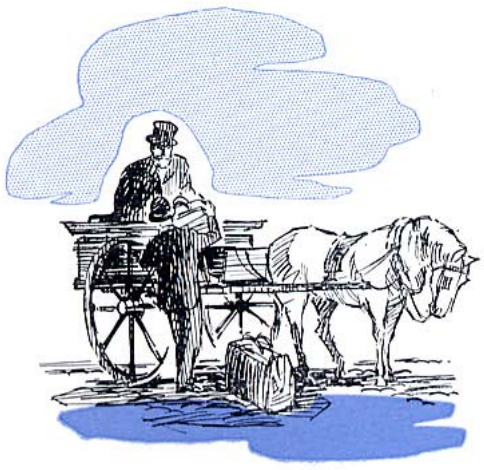
After a while the young lad, versatile as he was, and of an inventive turn of mind, resolved to try his hand at cabinet making, so he repaired to Ipswich to buy a tea-chest from a tea merchant. Soon he was making wall candleboxes, some 9 in. or I0 in. in length, each with a deep back and with hinges and hooks (fashioned from hairpins) to fasten down the lid. The attractive appearance of the smooth brown wood commended itself to the neighbouring cottagers. When these candleboxes were completed, a small surplus of wood furnished the raw material of half a dozen tinder boxes. Ludfers were as yet unknown. Rags were burned and quickly inserted into a box, the lid being shut down in order to retain some of the virtue of the rag. The contemporary practice was to employ a piece of steel, made in the shape of a donkey's shoe, together with a flint stone, to make sparks which fell into the tinder, igniting a match dipped in brimstone.

'I added these boxes to my stock, but was not satisfied with the variety, so I made some footstools out of odd pieces which my father gave me. I also got some pieces of ash wood and split them into pieces about I 3/4 in. wide, I/8 in. thick, and from I0 in. to I ft. long, which I planed up and rounded at the edges and ends— put on my mother's big tea kettle, boiled the water, put in the ash strips and bent them to a convenient shape-—and when finished were sold as busks to stiffen women's stays. My stock then completed, I corded them together, threw them over my shoulder and went through the villages to sell them. . . . The villages were small, the demands for such things small, and my stock was small, so all things seemed to fit. I disposed of most of my stock; the rest was used in our cottage.' The date of these events may be roughly assessed from an inscription in the hymnbook presented to young Frederick Sage by his Sunday school teacher, one of the rector's daughters, who held magisterial sway every sabbath morning in the rectory laundry. It was May, I84I. Sage's parents were Dissenters in an East Anglian community which had long proclaimed itself a stronghold of Nonconformity. When he was deemed big enough to take care of himself, he spent his every Sunday in Ipswich attending the I0.30 and 3 o'clock services at Stoke Green Chapel. This was the chapel of his choice.

Sage's next enterprise was to fashion a wooden frame for a lathe and to visit Messrs. Ransome's historic foundry at Ipswich, where he asked the manager to arrange for some castings to be made 'like the patterns I have in my hand'. The manager, amused and, indeed, quite obviously delighted, forthwith complied. Sage asked the damage. 'How much have you got ?' 'One shilling and threepence.' 'That will do nicely.'

Yet another exploit—a notably ambitious one for a youngster—was the construction of a 'velocipede', a wooden frame on wheels, worked by the feet. This phenomenon had long excited his fertile imagination. Within the space of eighteen months he had his velocipede ready for the ironwork and took his drawings to an Ipswich ironmonger, who warmly felicitated him and proffered an estimate of *£2 12s.* This contraption, painted yellow and black, proved a very respectable affair, and functioned admirably for SCORES of miles.

One Sunday Frederick Sage beheld a large steamer lying in the River Orwell with a board hung on the mast proclaiming that she would sail at 9 o'clock next morning for London. The fare? 4s. Sage decided upon 'just one peep at London[1]. He disembarked at Blackwall, asked for a ticket to Fenchurch Street Station, walked to King William Street, and thence came to London Bridge. 'Here I stood,' he narrated in a charming fragment, 'and could hardly believe that I was really in London. First I was struck with the enormous number of omnibuses, carts, vans, etc., and crowds of people on the pavement, jostling me about, and bustling along, as if they had only another hour to live. The grim darkness above made me feel awe-stricken: I went down the Borough until I came to (what I learned afterwards to be) the Elephant and Castle; here there seemed to be so many streets that I was afraid to venture any further and returned.' And so he secured lodging for the night, at a charge of Is., in an attic some sixty steps high, at a coffee house opposite the old Borough Church. In later years he was never much enamoured of London lodging-houses! Next morning he wandered about until he found himself on Southwark Bridge—the old Southwark Bridge of April, I8I9, which the City Corporation was to purchase in I866 for £800,000 and subsequently to free of tolls. Sage then made his way to Shoreditch Station, and, after three hours, found himself at Bentley Station, with a three-mile walk home.



He decided that no longer would he work in the Suffolk countryside. He repaired to Ipswich yet again. Here he was employed in a builder's yard at I2s. a week, assisting in the construction of a new roof for the church just opposite the prison. Later he joined a builder in Museum Street named Simpson and again his wages in the joiners' shop were I2s. a week. Many years afterwards, in I894, Sage was a visitor to a new Wesley an Methodist Chapel built on the very site on which this builder's shop had stood.

Sage had again begun to think about London. The metropolis had long beckoned. Happily, a clergyman in the neighbouring village of Holbrook was able to advance a solution, and duly reported to Sage that he had received the following letter from Ireland: 'My dear friend, I have had a letter from my London builders who say they can engage the young man I speak of, provided he is not under twenty and not over twenty-four years of age.' Having secured lodgings with a tailor in St. Giles, W.C., Sage, now aged twenty, left home early on a Monday in February in the year I85I. His father put his belongings into their donkey-can and drove him to Bentley Station on the Great Eastern Railway to catch what was then designated the Parliamentary train. First he worked in a builder's yard barely a stone's throw away from his lodgings and afterwards, for some three years, with another builder at premises in Portpool Lane, Gray's Inn Road—premises of which he was in due course to become proprietor. All this time he was studying at an evening school in Red Lion Square and, determined to rise early in the morning to work in his room, he fashioned his own mechanical device—termed, by his evening schoolmaster, the *Sins Sussitato Bedstead*—to throw him out of bed.

Some while after these events, Sage found himself captivated by the beauty of Miss Whiting, a young lady who attended the Baptist Chapel where he worshipped. He decided to introduce himself by letter. Expecting to meet the young lady of his choice, he was seen only by her father, who questioned him as to his calling, showed him the door and told him 'not to come there any more on that errand'.

But Miss Whiting defied her father and later sought his consent to their union. The banns were published, and an old Islington friend of the family arranged for the wedding to be held from his house. Mr. Whiting came with his wife. He signed the book and, after the breakfast was over, two carriages and pairs of greys took them to the Crystal Palace. But there was no honeymoon, and Sage returned to his work next morning at *6* o'clock.

Next Saturday, it transpired that Sage was one of several men discharged from the works. He secured work early on the Monday, but suffered the same experience a year later. It was then that he made up his mind 'to make a desperate effort' to start in business on his own account. He had some cards printed. These bore the legend: Frederick Sage, Upper North Place, Gray's Inn Road, Speaking Tube Manufacturer. His capital ? Twenty shillings in hand—part of last week's wages. He spent a day leaving his cards at different City warehouses, and next morning a letter arrived from a firm in Noble Street, E.C., requesting an estimate for a speaking tube from one warehouse to another beside it. His correspondents accepted the estimate on the spot. Chalk marks on the floor gave Sage the impression that they might also require fixtures, counters and drawers. Would they consider an estimate? They questioned whether he could undertake that class of work, of which there was no mention on his card. He replied that that was his legitimate business and that he undertook tubing only when slack. They indicated their requirements. Sage took all measurements, made a drawing at home, wrote out the specification, made up the estimate, and thereupon returned with it to Noble Street.

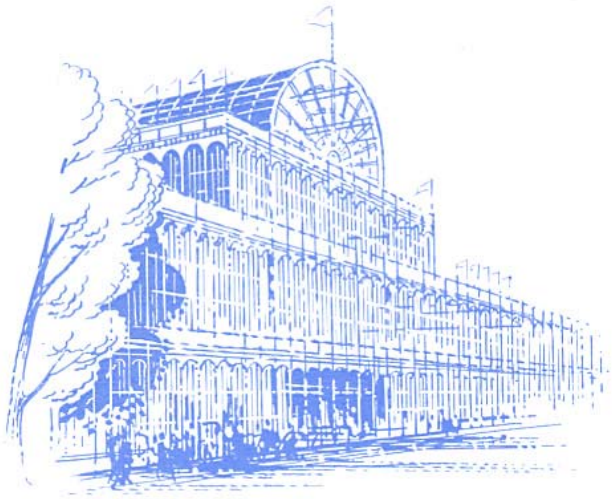
Everything was approved: Sage could now go ahead. But there was one condition: he must sign a contract to complete the work in ten days under a penalty of £I for each day that the work remained incomplete after that date. The estimate? £150. He signed the contract. 'Now you must do your part,' Sage told his wife that evening. 'I want £20 to buy the timber with and, while I go out to find a workshop and workmen, you must go to some friends and borrow the money. Suppose you go to four and borrow £5 from each, telling them that they might depend on my returning it within a fortnight.' He found his workshop, his work benches, his workmen and his £20. Early next day he secured the materials he required from the timber merchants. Within seven or eight days he had delivered a substantial portion of the order, enough to secure a payment of £50 on account which enabled him to pay wages and have something to spare.

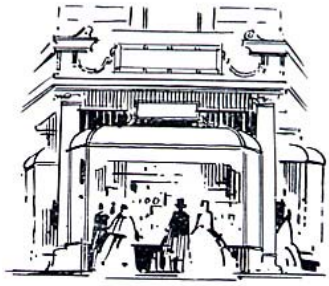
The contract was, however, completed one day over the time. £1 was deducted. He informed his clients that the paint would not dry quickly enough to permit completion in time. Moreover, said he, his tender was a low one for such a quantity. They rejoined that his estimate was the highest. Why, then, had they given him the order? The reply was that they had thought him to be in a large way of business and able to complete the work in time. 'I took the cheque and thanked them, thinking what they had told me was worth a £1, for I had no idea I was able to make such an impression.' He was thus enabled, even while discharging the workmen, to retain the workshop, although he would doubtless be 'closely run for cash' for some little while.

It was, however, an assignment in the West End in a wholly different sphere of business that established him. He had revised the inscription on his cards. They now bore the proud legend: Frederick Sage, Shop Fitter, etc.: Licensed Valuer to the Trade. The proprietor of a long-established company of linen drapers in the West End invited him to value all its fixtures and everything it used in the course of business. Sage, although unacquainted with the usages of the trade, came to the conclusion that he must ask 5 per cent on the first £I00 value and 2 1/2, per cent on each £I00 beyond—which he subsequently discovered to be the customary charge. He also learned afterwards that the old gentleman was taking his eldest son into partnership and that the valuation was for family purposes in order that he might make a fair distribution of his property. Sage compiled 'a good size volume': his commission came to about £32. He paid his clerk for his week's work and enjoyed a solid £30 capital to work upon, which he could call his own. 'When the old gentleman handed me his cheque he said, "No wonder you gentlemen can ride in your carriages, earning money like this". Poor old chap, he little knew what was passing in my mind, and how grateful I felt to handle a cheque with such figures on. I had never been in possession of such a sum before to call my own.'

'This,' Sage added in the very last sentence of his fragment of autobiography, 'gave me a splendid start.' And so indeed it did. 'To act with faith and enthusiasm', America's Adlai Stevenson has opined, 'is the condition of acting greatly.' Here was a precept which inspired the life and service of Frederick Sage.

A reproduction of a cover from an early catalogue, issued by Fredk. Sage & Co. Ltd.





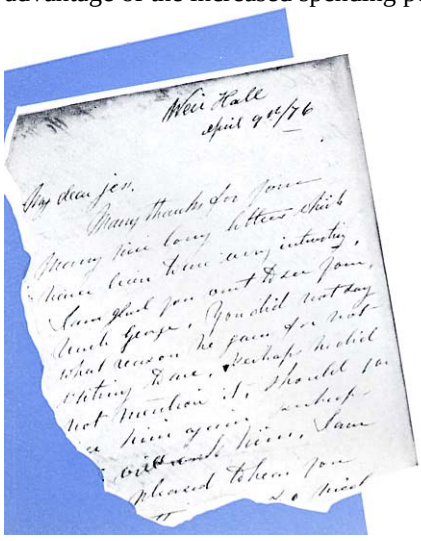
Age of Expansion

IL NOUS FAUT de I'audace, encore de I'audace, toujours de I'audace.

The motto of Edouard Danton during the young French Republic's struggle against the ancient monarchies of Prussia and Austria, as William Henry Beable has cogently observed in *Romance of Great Businesses,* could have likewise been the motto of Frederick Sage and of the House which he founded. *Toujours de I'audace* was an intrinsic quality of his character and temperament. He established himself in Hatton Garden and there founded, in the vital year I860, the House of Frederick Sage and Company. A few years later he took into the business his three nephews, Frederick, Josiah and Jesse Hawes, together with his only son, Frederick George Sage. They eventually formed a Partnership, with the main control in the hands of the Founder.

In Hatton Garden, as was to be expected, the House extended the framework of its business activities to embrace jewellers' showcases and, throughout the seventies, the youthful Jesse Hawes in turn expanded its scope from jewellery cases to general shopfitting. The atmosphere was always one of'no hullaballoo' but of 'getting on with the job'—a spirit and approach which appealed to customers and employees alike.

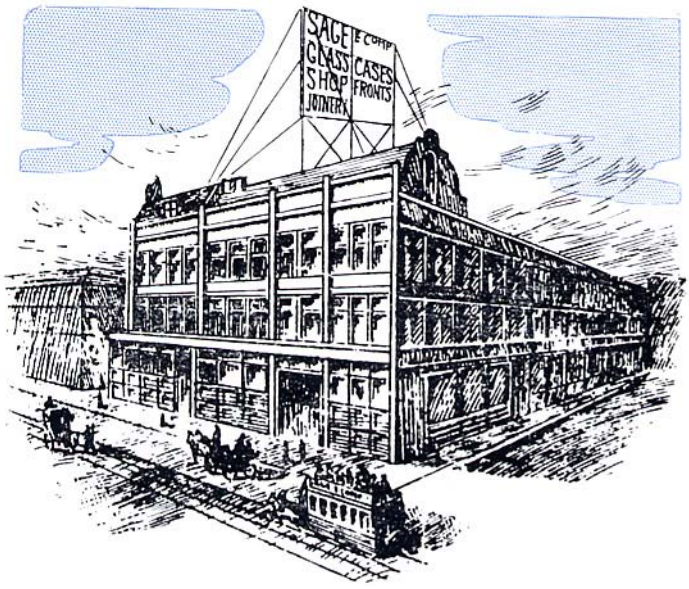
In I862, the third year of the Palmerston-Russell-Gladstone Triumvirate, the adoption of the limited liability principle by a new Limited Liability Companies Act consolidated the legislation of nearly twenty years and reinforced Gladstone's Joint Stock Companies Regulation Act of I844. It furnished facilities for acquiring capital for the expansion of well-established concerns. The House of Sage took full advantage of the increased spending powers of the houses with which it was doing business.



In the middle and later sixties, handsome shop-fronts had begun to appear in the leading shopping centers of the metropolis and its suburbs and in every significant city and borough throughout the provinces. The Great Exhibitions, in the France of the Third Republic and in the United States of the post-Civil War era, opened up new avenues for the ever-expanding activities of the House. Its name soon became famous on the Continent of Europe and throughout the North Atlantic mercantile community.

The sole surviving letter of Frederick Sage dates from this epoch. Written from Weir Hall in rural Edmonton, on April 9, I876, it was addressed to his

nephew, Jesse Hawes, who was at that time superintending the installation of the showcases at the Philadelphia Exhibition. The letter admirably exemplifies the affectionate relationship between uncle and nephew. It also contains more than one illuminating nuance, for it touches upon what are now termed industrial relations or, in the case of a hint about the reporter from *The Times*, public relations. It refers *en passant* to such current projects as the wall-cases for the South Kensington Scientific Exhibition, shop fittings for Queen Victoria Street in the City of London, the historic Paris Exhibition and cases for a forthcoming Museum for far-flung Brisbane.



A fragment of this original letter is illustrated on this page. An allusion in the letter to *The Times* newspaper reveals Frederick Sage as well-practised in the arts of publicity and, in connection with the Paris Exhibition of I877, a Sage advertisement of a whole column in *The Times* was currently hailed as a forward-looking innovation. And so it was. The House had already achieved an enviable reputation for its power of attracting some of the most skilled workmen in the trade, and throughout the decades little has disturbed the friendly, co-operative team—nay, family spirit which has long prevailed between employers and employees, a spirit epitomised, as it were, in an inscribed testimonial of nearly ninety years ago. Frederick Sage was justly proud of his testimonial, on which his workmen formally expressed their appreciation of his initiative as 'an enlightened employer' in reducing the weekly hours of labour from 561/2 to 5I.

The Hatton Garden premises, having admirably served their purpose, proved inadequate. Gray's Inn Road, the old Gray's Inn Lane of another century, an artery which stretched from Battle-Bridge, latterly King's Cross, to Holborn Bars, was in process of clearance. Crumbling tenements had long disfigured this section of the oldtime Manor of Gray's, of which the Benchers of the Inn had secured the lease as long ago as I370, seven years before the demise of King Edward III.

But these tenements were removed under the Cross Act of I875, and Frederick Sage resolved to erect a handsome new structure in what was almost a new street. This became the abode of the Company until I94I. 'Every article connected with the fittings and furniture of shops, whether in wood, metal or glass, is now manufactured by Mr. Sage,' reported a *Morning Post* feature writer in an article entitled 'Old Gray's Inn Lane' on January 29, I884, 'and the various processes of working up hard woods, brass and iron, polishing and shaping plate glass, to the lining with velvet and satin of the dainty cases which contain the gems displayed in Regent Street and Bond Street, may here be witnessed."

The *Morning Post* also paid eloquent tribute in this feature to the choice specimens of hard-wood joinery, to the special basement for timber, to the steam and gas engines, and to the machinery for sawing, planing, moulding, mortising, tenoning, dovetailing wood, and grinding, polishing and bevelling plate-glass.

The expansion of she business continued year by year. Showrooms of striking distinction in Gray's Inn Road, together with the factories in Portpool Lane and Baldwins Gardens on the City of London side of Gray's Inn Road, occupied a floor space totalling approximately a third of a million sq. ft.

On September 28,I899, shortly before the outbreak of the Boer War, Frederick Sage died. His son, Frederick George Sage, and the three nephews, Frederick Hawes, Josiah Hawes and Jesse Hawes, continued to control the business.

At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, the House of Harrods had laid the foundations of its magnificence and the House of Sage fulfilled its requirements; Harrods became the finest establishment in London and in the world. For five full years, from I900 to I905, the House of Sage devoted almost the whole of its resources to Harrods and thereby consolidated its own reputation as the first name among shoplifters. French artisans came over to Knightsbridge to undertake the plaster-work, impeccably authentic as it was, in the Louis Quinze style, and a separate brochure was wholly dedicated to the House of Harrods. The scope, tempo and volume of the expansion may also be gauged

from a magnificently produced Catalogue, boasting II6 quarto pages, and dated July, I902.

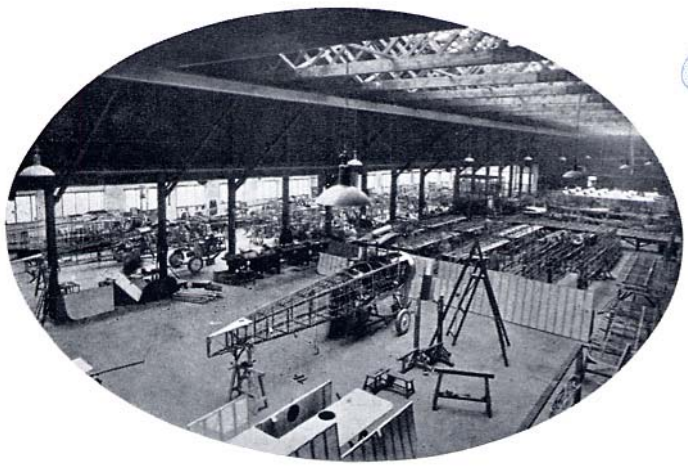
During the same year the House of Sage had most gratefully received the honour of appointment as Showcase Makers to His Majesty King Edward VII, Emperor of India, and later, in I924, the Company was further honoured by being awarded the warrant as Case Makers to Her Majesty Queen Mary.

In the years between I902 and I905 both Frederick and Josiah Hawes died and there now remained only two of the original partners: Frederick George Sage and Jesse Hawes. They decided, therefore, that the time had arrived to convert the partnership into a Limited Liability Company.

Jesse Hawes, from his earliest days, seemed destined to carry the mantle of his uncle as a pioneer and, long before the First World War, in consequence of his efforts, the House of Sage had made its presence felt on the Continent and far beyond. Low costs of production at home and cheap freights had made these advances possible. These developments are depicted in greater detail in a subsequent chapter

. Meanwhile, to cope with the increased volume of trade, especially from abroad, a new factory was built in I9I0 at Peterborough in Northamptonshire, covering an area of I00,000 sq. ft. This site was chosen because it was a significant railway centre with direct railway communication with the main shipping ports in the country.

It is difficult for generations born since the I914 war to comprehend the shock with which that war descended upon the people of Britain. To everyone it seemed a persona! affront. For well nigh a hundred years the British Navy had maintained the peace of the world. That this peace should be disturbed seemed unthinkable. They were soon to discover what a world of dreams they had cherished as



Erection Shop
Peterborough Works

the German armies penetrated Belgium and marched on nearly to the gates of Paris.

Early in I9I5, at a time when the Board comprised F. G. Sage (Chairman), Walter Denny, Jesse Hawes, and Gerald T. Moody, with George A. Coulson as General Manager and David Hawes as Assistant General Manager, the House of Sage, with a spirit reminiscent of the early days of its founder sixty years before, swiftly grasped the opportunity of placing its considerable resources at the disposal of the Government and entered into a contract with the Admiralty for a number of seaplanes designed by the Short Company at Rochester. The first of these machines manufactured by Sage was in the air in three

months—a considerable achievement for a Company with no previous experience of aircraft.

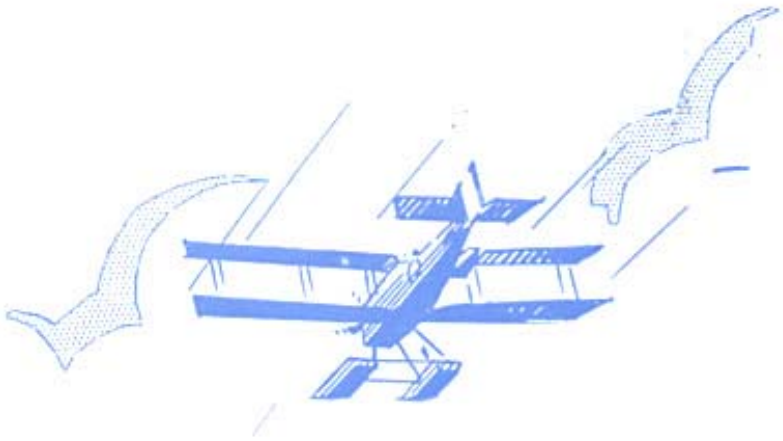
From then on to the end of hostilities the House of Sage vigorously applied itself to production for the war effort. And a most formidable production it became! Short Seaplanes, Avro Training Machines, S.E.5 airframes were produced in great quantities, as also were Cars, Stabilizing planes, rudders and valves for coastal airships, as well as propellers for many types of aeroplane.

At long last hostilities ceased and the vital business of organising for a peace which had seemed so long delayed was set about with vigour.

After years of shortages, the great merchandising houses of London and the provinces looked forward with confidence to better times, but, owing to lack of materials and other difficulties, their demands were not easy to meet. For some while a type of standard fixture made under mass production principles attained some success. Since, however, the British trader is essentially an individualist, such fixtures enjoyed a brief vogue. Circumstances gradually improved and, as the 'twenties advanced, great changes came to pass in some of the vast emporia of London and the provincial cities.

One of the first great shops to be rebuilt was Dickins and Jones in Regent Street, to be followed by Swan & Edgar, Piccadilly Circus, and later D. H. Evans of Oxford Street, and in all these important premises Sage's were entrusted with contracts for shopfronts and entrances and for interior fittings.

There was extensive activity, too, in the provincial cities and in Scotland for the House of Sage.



It was early in this period that the Company was entrusted with the largest contract ever placed with them at one time. This was for the great Italian store, La Rinascente of Milan, which had suffered complete destruction by fire. The contract comprised ornate metal shopfronts and interior fittings for the entire store.

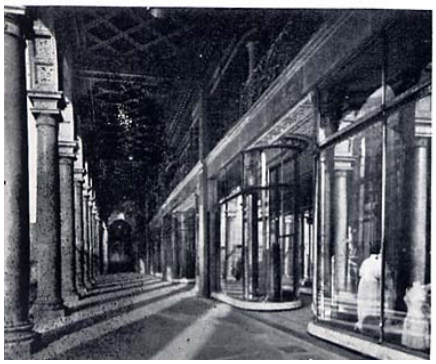
The shopftonts and a large proportion of the interior fittings were manufactured in the London and Peterborough factories. It was, however, a condition of the contract that Sage's should organise for the manufacture of some of the fittings in Milan, and a squad of competent men was sent to Milan to direct the local firms employed on this work and to fix the work sent out from London.

Another major contract was in London, where Messrs. Harrods decided to rebuild the Basil Street section of their great building and Sage's were entrusted with the contract to supply the beautiful bronze metal and granite shopfronts and entrances.

Yet another interesting work for Messrs. Harrods was the Ladies' Hairdressing Department, where plastic was first employed in a large way.

A little before these events, Nash's Quadrant and almost the whole of Regent Street were reconstructed. The magnitude of Sage's contribution to this undertaking is illustrated on page 22.

Views of shop fronts and interior of La Rinascente, Milan, in the early 1920s.



It was immediately after the First World War that it became evident that increased production costs and freight charges were making it impossible to continue the business previously secured on the Continent. To meet this situation, the House decided to set up factories in Paris and in Brussels. A factory had been laid down in South Africa some years before. The loss of trade from all these areas for manufacturing in England made the Peterborough factory redundant. It was sold.

During the 'thirties, business became increasingly difficult. Neville Chamberlain's promise of “Peace in our Time” carried no conviction. In common with other businesses, the House of Sage felt the impact of world events long before the Declaration of War.

The Managing Director, G. A. Coulson, died a month before the outbreak of World War II. His successor was David Hawes.

The abnormal predicament of business presented a challenge which he faced unhesitatingly. The tide of business had been fast receding and then once again the lights were dimmed and the nation was at war.

In the earliest months endeavours to find work to feed the Sage factories attained relatively little success. Eventually, however, the persistent efforts of the Directors and their Representatives on the Staff were rewarded and a contract was secured for metal parts for aeroplane wings.

This was followed by an introduction to the Gloster Aircraft Company which was developing the Albemarle. A contract was secured for wings for that aeroplane.

The production of this section of the aeroplane entailed the erection of expensive jigs for assembly. The threat to which Central London was exposed was such that proposals were put to the main contractors for permission to secure premises outside the centre of London so that these jigs could be erected in a less dangerous area. Permission having been accorded, a building was leased at Harlesden.

And then the blow fell. After many near-misses, both factories and offices occupied by the Company in London were destroyed. On the morning of April I7, I94I, they lay a heap of burning rubble.

There was one exception. It is pathetic to record that at 7 o'clock on that morning the wood-working factory was intact. It had a sprinkler system with a tank containing 35,000 gallons of water. It was hoped that it might resist the intense heat of burning buildings all around it. Such hopes were, alas, ill-founded. German bombs had fractured the pipes feeding the tank. After its 35,000 gallons had been discharged, there was no further supply. By 8 o'clock it was in flames.

A Director was present. His immediate problem was how to deal with the employees. They would shortly be arriving. He found that Holborn Hall, although damaged, could be occupied. He forthwith hired it as an assembly centre. Some early arrivals were posted at points around the destroyed premises to inform the employees of the meeting place.

Pencils and paper were rapidly purchased; tables set up. When most employees had assembled, they were informed that this disaster, catastrophic as it was, was not the end of the House of Sage. In the meantime, as all records were destroyed, they were asked to tell the members of the staff stationed at the tables their names and addresses and what wages were due to them. They were assured, moreover, that wages would be forthcoming on the subsequent Saturday morning.

It was at this time that the Harlesden factory became so valuable, for the draughtsmen and planning department and all the key factory employees were sent there, and at no moment in the history of the House of Sage have the staff and the factory employees responded with so much enthusiasm to the needs of the Company. It was a period of highest endeavour. This endeavour succeeded.

Part of a blitzed Sage
Premises in London

Those who carried the heavy responsibilities of those days remain to this day grateful for the response which the entire personnel gave to their needs. It is at such times that true friends are discovered. One was a shopfitting competitor, once an employee of the company, but at this time owning his business. His offer of the use of his factory at Ilford was gladly accepted, and within a few days a group of employees was also at work there. The destruction had been so complete that no record of the current accounts of the Company remained. It was refreshing evidence of the essential integrity of British business men that creditors and debtors alike rallied round with statements of the Company's position in respect to themselves. These enabled the accounts of the Company to be reconstituted. They tallied remarkably with such information as was available from many of the staff.

Sir Stafford Cripps on a visit to th Sage war-time factories.

The Ministry of Aircraft Production, recognising the ability of the House of Sage to contribute to its needs, swiftly requisitioned a section of Messrs. Hayward's factory at Enfield. It must be recorded that the Directors of Messrs. Hayward's were outstandingly generous in this matter, not only during the war but afterwards, in allowing the Company to continue to occupy this section of their premises for the long period which it took to obtain 'permission' and to fulfil the task of preparing the new factories at Harringay. Five months after the Hayward premises had been secured, the Ministry requisitioned Messrs. Rayners' factory at Edmonton and within a very short time all three factories were working at full strength.

A visitor with no knowledge of the facts would have had no indication of the disaster which had overwhelmed the Company earlier in the year. After a visit to the factories by Sir Stafford Cripps, then Minister of Aircraft Production, a contemporary report justifiably commented: 'An inspection of the factories at that period gave the impression of an organisation which had been running smoothly for years with no suggestion that all had been accomplished within a few months.'

In I943 Gerald T. Moody, who had for twenty-three years been Chairman of the Company, died. F. W. Douse accepted the vacant office of Chairman. The advent of Mr. Douse brought a wealth of financial and business experience to the control of the Company. It was inestimable in confronting the problems attendant upon the cessation of hostilities. This is the theme of our Chapter V.

SAGE Abroad

SOUTH AFRICA

Even before the death of its Founder in I899 the name and reputation of the House of Sage had spread far beyond the borders of Britain. To South Africa, to France, to Germany, and as far away as the United States, one of his partners, Jesse Hawes, had travelled in quest of business.

It was towards the end of the nineteenth century that Jesse Hawes visited South Africa and recommended that an office should be opened in Cape Town to obtain orders and to organise the fixing of the goods sent from London. This went on until I90I-2, when it was decided that new developments taking place there would create enough demand to justify the establishment of a factory. At this time the most active centre was Cape Town. It was here that the Company first occupied premises in Long Street. As the business expanded, more extensive accommodation became necessary, and so land was purchased and a factory was built on the corner of Wall Street and Buitengracht Street.

The House of Sage duly played its part in the International Exhibition of I904-5. Another early Sage project was joinery work for the Carlton Hotel, opened in Johannesburg in I906. Others, in I908, were the equipment of Fischers, jewellers, of Main Street, Port Elizabeth, in Natal, and high-class fittings for the Norwich Union Insurance Company at Cape Town. The largest contract which the Branch had ever secured, while trading from Cape Town, was for Messrs. Chudleigh, Johannesburg, in I9I0. This comprised a total frontage of 300 foot run.

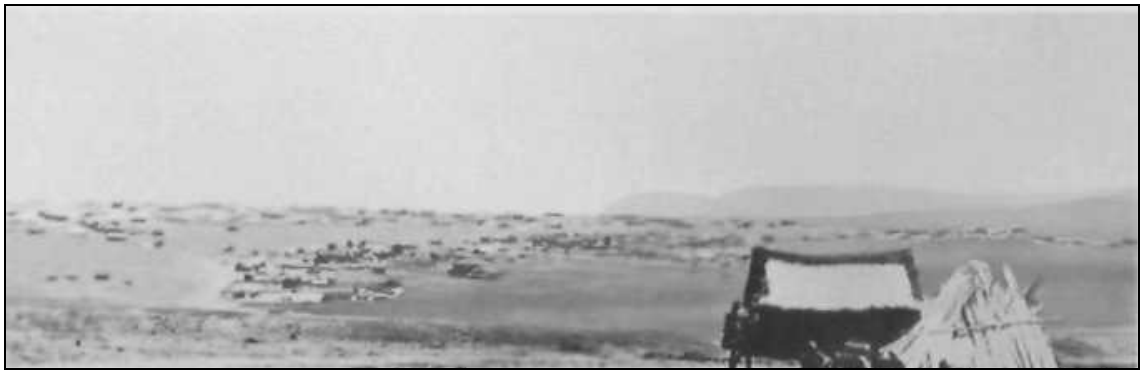
For a long time the Management in South Africa had been urging the London Office to consider moving to Johannesburg, which would (they prophesied) eventually become the more significant business centre. In I9I5 London consented. The Company's office and factory were removed to that city shortly before the opening of a period of extraordinary growth, when, in the space of a few years, Johannesburg was converted from a drab mining camp to the most progressive and the most beautiful city in the Union. The Branch first occupied a site at the corner of President Street and Van Weilligh Street, but fourteen years later, a more modern and commodious factory was built at Heidelberg Road. It was fitted with up-to-date machinery for the production of high-class joinery and architectural metalwork. Soon after the laying down of the new factory Rand development attained its peak. As mine after mine was opened around Johannesburg, new townships were created with modern shops and stores. For the Branch it was a period of great activity.

The Heidelberg Road quarters handled innumerable products of bronze and stainless steel, its fine work in metals ranging, during the next few years, from Barclays Bank in Pretoria, to the noble panels of characteristically South African fauna in the Pretoria and Johannesburg premises of the South African Reserve Bank, Armour-plated glass was introduced for the first time into South Africa. Architectural features in this new material distinguished the Twentieth Century Cinema at Johannesburg. This was opened in the first year of the Second World War. It boasted glass doors, each fitted with an automatic photo-electric cell. A notable job was executed for the Perseverance Building in Port Elizabeth, with an impressive array of decorative work in lifts, based on castings prepared in the shops.

Before the outbreak of the Second World War, Messrs. Ansteys' Store had provided the House of Sage with an opportunity to impart a new note in shopfitting in South Africa.

In I939 the famous Johannesburg enterprise of John Orr and Company furnished the House of Sage with yet another such opportunity. The product was a superb frontage on three streets, the effect duly heightened by island showcases and a new lighting system. This was, furthermore, the era in which the Branch's draw-bench work was being incorporated in some of Johannesburg's leading theatres, among which may be mentioned the Colosseum, the Metro, and the Twentieth Century. Meanwhile, the Branch received an assignment in the old timber-style for the Standard Bank in Church Square at Pretoria.

Came I939. The South African Director-General of War Supplies, Dr. H. J. Van der Bijl, invited Frederick Sage to produce specialized



parts for vehicles and for naval vessels. Although the staff, specialist and general, was depleted by the rally to the colours, it undertook repairs to the Harvard training aircraft together with the mass production of gymnasium equipment.

Came victory and its aftermath. Materials once 'verboten' were again on sale to fulfil the pent-up demand of six abnormal years, and tens of millions of pounds from abroad were henceforth invested both in the Union and in the Rhodesias. A variegated range of post-war assignments has included the offices of the Transvaal and Orange Free State Chamber of Mines, the skyscraper-headquarters of the Anglo-American Corporation in Johannesburg, and the department stores of Messrs. Stuttafords and Messrs. Garlicks, in Adderly Street in Cape Town.

But now trade slackened—too many dollars had been expended; the Government felt compelled to impose import controls on most of the raw materials used by shopfitters. This served to endow the resolute management with an even greater determination to overcome all difficulties. It carried on—but with, for some time, a diminishing volume of trade.

In I947 the London Company resolved that the Branch should become domiciled as a South African Company. Accordingly the new Company, Frederick Sage & Co. (S.A.) (Pty.) Ltd., was formed. The local Managers who had served the Branch so well were appointed to the Board of Directors.

The local Company has already displayed its progressive spirit by forming a subsidiary Company in I955 in Salisbury, Rhodesia, thereby opening up connections with a new territory rich in promise.

The South African business of the House of Sage has a leading and, indeed, enviable reputation in the Union for its high standards and modern outlook. This reputation was earned from its early days and has been consolidated during more than half a century. The credit is due to two remarkable men who have guided its destinies for most of that period.

First, Robert Inncs Abrahams. He was sent to South Africa in the days of the Partnership, and became Resident Director in I908.

Entrance to the Twentieth Century Cinema, Johannesburg

An interior view of one of the departments in the Johannesburg store of Messrs. John Orr & Co., Ltd.

Upon his retirement in I939 his office was assumed by Norman W. Gallagher, who from then brilliantly guided the business through the changing conditions of the next twenty years, and who, when the new Company was formed in I947, became its Director. He resigned his Managing Directorship in November, I959, but happily retains his office as Chairman. He was succeeded as Managing Director by C. A. Robinson.

Interior and exterior views of the Salisburi Store of Messrs. H. M. Barbour (Pty.) Ltd., Rhodesia

GERMANY

Some time before the year I900 Jesse Hawes had visited Germany and had appointed an Agent in Berlin. Very soon enough business was attracted to justify setting up an organisation there. It was to this Branch that Stanley Hawes, a son of Jesse Hawes, was sent to obtain experience in representation and administration abroad.

The Branch had extended its operations into the old-time Austro-Hungarian Empire, obtaining contracts in Vienna and Budapest, as well as in Belgrade, Serbia. The Manager of the Berlin Branch had travelled as far as Finland, securing a contract in what is now Helsinki.

After the Berlin branch had been disbanded, Stanley Hawes continued to foster, with conspicuous success, the contacts that had been made in Austria-Hungary, particularly in Budapest. In I9I2 business became so brisk that F. W. Humphrey, who was in Paris at that time, was sent to Budapest to assist him.

Whilst they were in Budapest an event occurred whose portent neither of them appreciated. The Second Balkan War broke out. If the two young men from Sage's had no appreciation of what this event would lead to, the people of Hungary had no doubt. The endeavour to secure more business became wasted effort.

It is fitting to narrate that it was in Budapest that an important event occurred in the life of Stanley Hawes, for it was there he met and married his charming wife, with whom at the time this book is being written he has enjoyed dose on a half-century of happy married life.

FRANCE

In France, in the early days, the business was mainly located in Paris. Here again the House soon found it essential to have a local establishment to bring through the customs goods dispatched from England and to organise their fixing. As in those days there were no establishments specialising in shopfitting in Europe, shopkeepers were attracted by the English style of shop-equipment and shop-front-building, furnishing as it did more expansive opportunities for display and thus creating enhanced sales.

After World War I, when the Company was confronted with higher production costs, higher freights and higher duties, it was decided to open a factory in Paris.

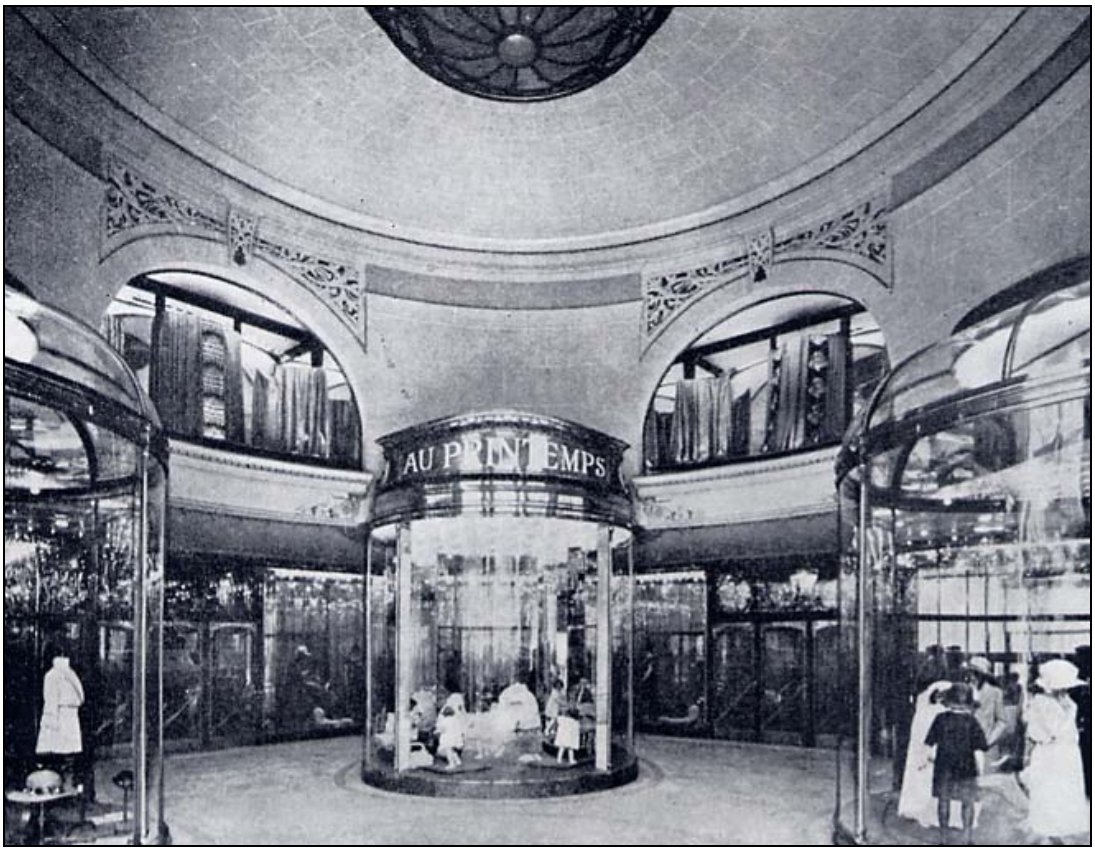
Strange to relate, the first premises secured for the purpose comprised a monastic building. It needed structural changes. At this stage, a chapel was discovered deep down under the building. The altar and many accompanying statues were intact. They were beautifully decorated and in a remarkably fine state of preservation. The effect upon the workmen was such that some gave up their jobs, whilst others insisted that, unless the place were deconsecrated, they could not continue to work there. An obliging priest performed this office. All was well.

It was not long, however, before more extensive premises were required. They were found at the Quai de Jemmapes.

No Sage organisation exists in Paris today, but there remain many monuments to its activities, the fine frontage of the Galeries Lafayette, the Printemps, The Louvre, La Maison Barclay, Kirby Beard, Mappin and Webb, to mention only a few, and countless others both in Paris and in provincial cities.

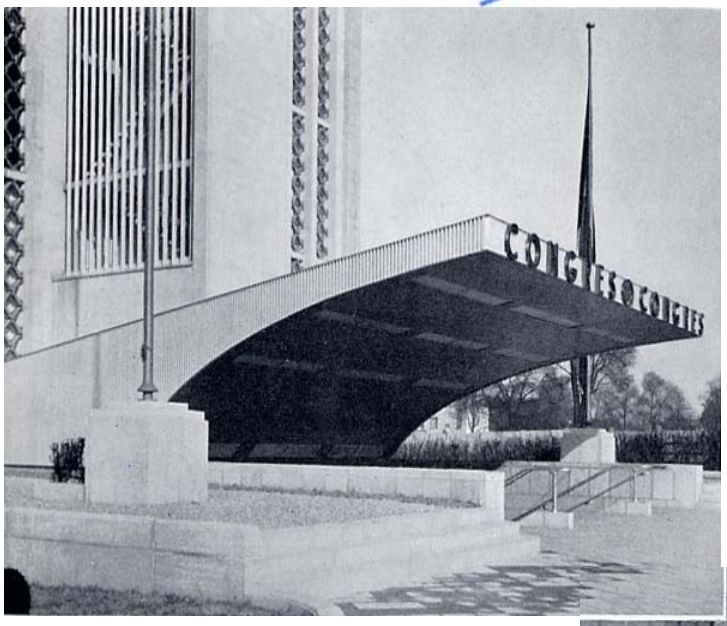
The Paris Branch also undertook a wide range of contracts as far distant as Los Angeles, U.S.A., Algeria, Egypt, Roumania and Turkey.

The Paris Branch was managed by an Englishman; many, too, of the office staff were English, and therefore it was forced to close down during World War II. The times have not been propitious for its reopening.

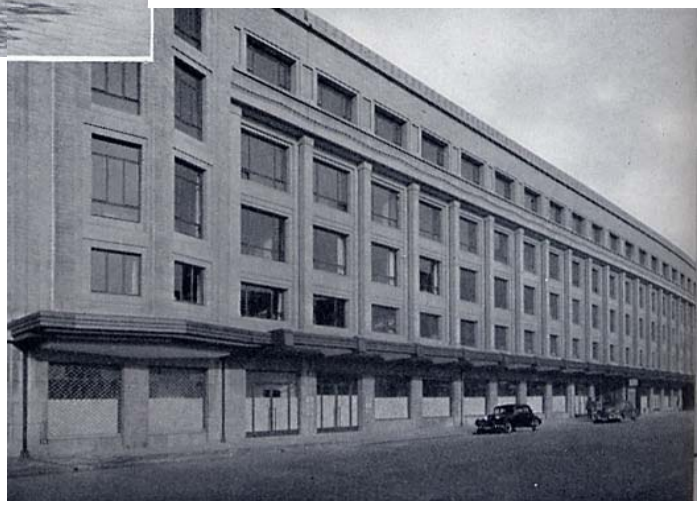


BELGIUM

The business in Brussels began with an inquiry to the Company in London from Messrs. Vaxelaire Claes (Bon Marche) for showcases like those supplied to Messrs. Harrods. This developed into a series of further contracts for shopfronts and interior fittings, not only in their vast premises in Brussels but also at their imposing branches at Antwerp and Liege. Here we may record that in I9I4 men from London were fixing a shop entrance for Messrs. Vaxelaire Claes in Brussels when the Germans marched into the Belgian capital. Baron Vaxelaire helped them to escape. The business had hitherto been transacted through a local office. After the

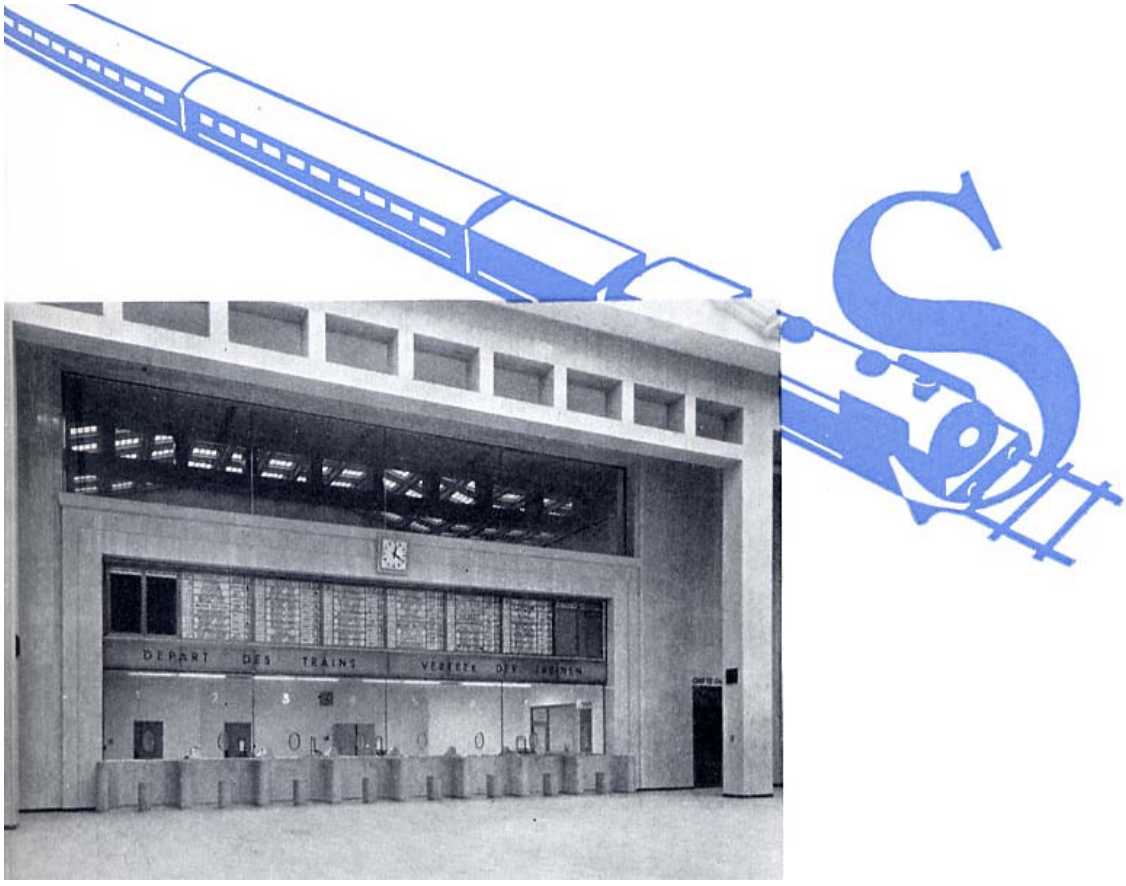


A few views of the Halte Congres & Halte Central, Brussels, indicating the diversity of the work carried out by the House of Sage for this important Belgian project.



I9I4 war, the Company returned. Owing to increased costs in England a factory was laid down, and the Branch carried out many important contracts throughout Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Then once again the darkness of war settled over Europe and gallant Belgium fell to the Nazi aggressor. Communication was impossible between the management in Brussels and the London office during World War II. Even when the conflict had ceased, communication remained impossible until a British Army officer brought the welcome message from the local Director that he and his family were well and that the factory remained intact. It was some time before the Director could come to London to tell the story of the dark days through which they had passed. At last the wheels began to turn again; prosperity returned to Belgium; Brussels began, at no little expense, to embark on vast schemes of improvement, one of which was to link by rail the two principal termini, the Gare du Midi and the Gare du Nord. These new projects, sustained as they were by Belgium's advancing social and economic prosperity, found extensive employment for the Sage Organisation, which produced fine joinery and metalwork for the intermediate stations on this loop line.

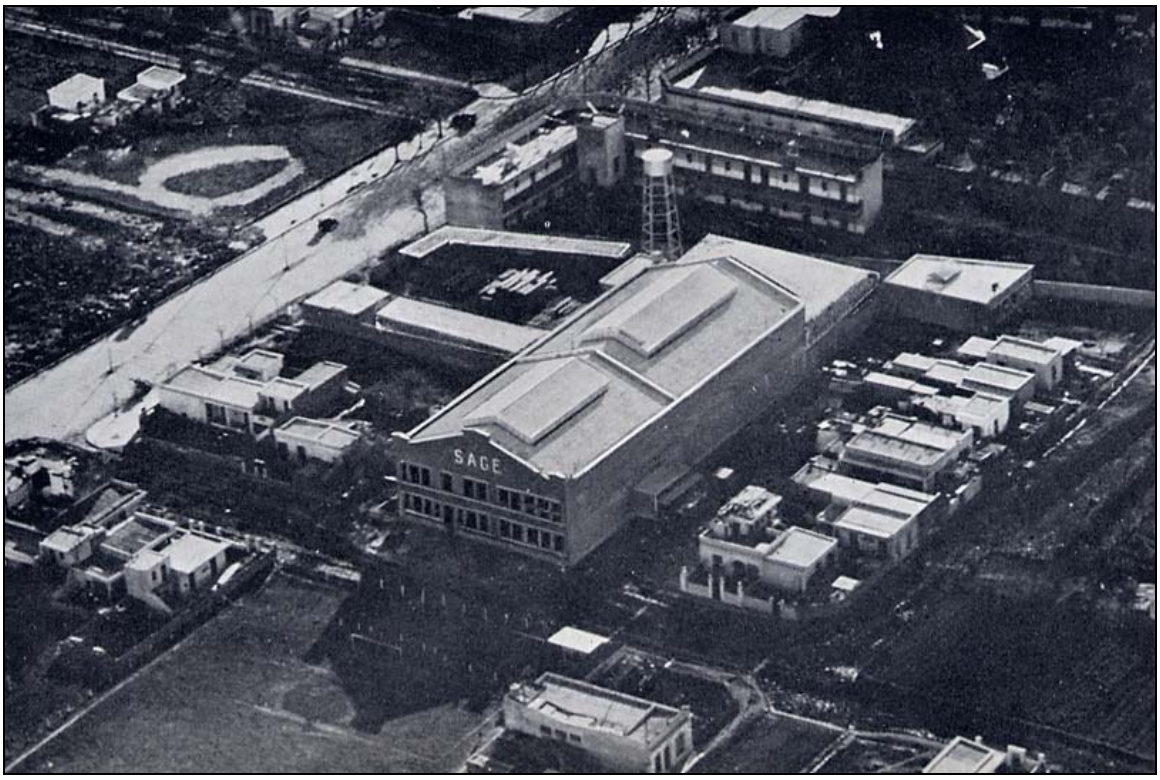


The Latin American history of the House of Sage began all but half a century ago. In the year I9I0 Frederick Sage & Co., Ltd., of London, executed a contract for William Balfour (Balfour Williamson) & Co., Ltd., in the Chilean city of Valparaiso. Everything, of course, had to be shipped to the port. A contingent of skilled workmen was sent to fix the work. At about the same time Sir Richard Burbidge, of Harrods, visited Buenos Aires and decided to open a comparatively small shop to test the possibilities of trading in the Argentine Republic. The fittings for the new shop were manufactured by Sage in London and consigned to Buenos Aires, in time for the squad of fixers, who had completed their work in Chile, to cross to Buenos Aires and carry out the fixing for Harrods' shop.

By I913 Messrs. Harrods' business in Buenos Aires had justified expansion. Woodman Burbidge visited that city to find a site and to lay the foundations of the great emporium which bears that name.

F. W. Humphrey journeyed to Buenos Aires a week before Woodman Burbidge and to Mr. Burbidge's surprise was on the quay to meet him on his arrival. After much negotiation by Mr. Burbidge (afterwards Sir Woodman Burbidge) a

Aerial VIEW of the Sage Factory in Buenos Aires.



building and site were found; Sage's of London were entrusted with the contract to provide and fix shopfronts and interior fittings for the most impressive store in the southern hemisphere.

The shipping of the shopfronts and fittings was at its height when the First World War broke out. Sad to relate, no fewer than five large consignments went down with vessels sunk by enemy action.

The work carried out at Harrods elicited much attention from businessmen in Buenos Aires and beyond. Many inquiries were received for comparable work. The House of Sage therefore decided to form a company to operate throughout the Argentine Republic.

Fifteen years later a Sage (Buenos Aires) catalogue was to fist Sage installations for approximately I20 Argentine stores.

In the early days the House rented a factory) and, to fulfil the needs of a far-flung State with vast distances between its business centres, the progressive minds of the management designed a standard type of shopfitting which could be delivered from stock, thereby eliminating size-taking and cost of manufacturing to special dimensions.

They were fortunate enough to secure their first order for this type of equipment in the city of Buenos Aires and fitted the famous premises of Tienda

A present-day view of the exterior of the Buenos Aires Store Messrs. Harrods (Bs. As.), Lid.

An interior view of the South American Stores of Messrs. Gath & Chaves, Ltd., Buenos Aires.

Bronze entrance doors to the City Sales Office of The Shell-Mex Argentina, Ltd., in Buenos Aires

San Juan with no little eclat. Confirmed in their conviction that they were on the right lines, they resolved in I928 to issue a catalogue of standard shopfittings— the first of its kind in South America. The response far exceeded expectations. The orders secured by the Branch now demanded more space.

Land was purchased. A modem factory was erected. It was not long, however, before the management was faced with a serious problem of social disturbance. Although the Sage Organisation had rigidly adopted recognised Argentine practices in the sphere of wages and labour conditions, the men in another woodworking organisation went out on strike, and, even although Sage's were already working to the conditions for which the men had gone out on strike, Sage's men gave the strikers their support and went on strike too. Feeling ran high. On October I0,I929, the Resident Director, H. M. Taylor, on leaving the office to go home, was stabbed in the back.

As soon as he was able to travel he was called to London. On complete recovery he valiantly returned to Buenos Aires, where he continues to control the affairs of the Argentine Company.

The decline of the Argentine Company's activities in the years I930-I, provoked by the unhappy circumstances which we have related, paled however into relative insignificance beside the great world depression and from I932 to I938 it became a struggle to survive. It was not until I938 that new advances were achieved, and in that year a metal shop was added to the existing building, and the Company began producing stainless steel and bronze drawn mouldings and—another new development—the laying down of an anodising plant.

The continuous cycle of inflation and the decline of the peso stripped most enterprises of their capital; the net result has been an almost complete absence of shopfitting during the past few years, and an inevitable concentration by the Company upon the premises of banks, insurance companies and factory offices. How long the current fiscal predicament will last is difficult to conjecture. But the House of Sage may be justly proud of its record; it has undertaken shopfronts and installations in no fewer than I4I cities, towns and villages of the Argentine Republic. It has amply fulfilled its intention, proclaimed in the resonant Spanish of the I928 catalogue, to sell showcases throughout the Republic as far north as the Province of Chaco, as far south as Chubut, and from the River de la Plata to the Andes.

Changing Vistas

'WE PEER into a dim future with the evil spirit of war still raging in two hemispheres,' comments a Sage memorandum written during World War II. 'It is not a future of unrelieved and sombre darkness, for the light, which has never been, totally extinguished, begins to shine again perceptibly. Our hope for a New Order and a New World is encouraged and strengthened by the inspiring utterances of our statesmen and leaders in the United Nations who see in the moral and spiritual issues the only hope of conquest over the domination of the evil philosophies of wicked men. It may be that some of us will not live to witness the fulfilment of these things, but we shall at least see the beginning of the laying of the foundations of a better and happier day and can rejoice in the knowledge that our children and our children's children will enjoy the heritage now being prepared for them.'

This Sage writer reflected and expounded the aspirations of millions of his fellow-countrymen. In I960, the changing vistas hold out greater promise than the horizons of I945, and these things, albeit fitfully and painfully, are at long last beginning to come to pass.

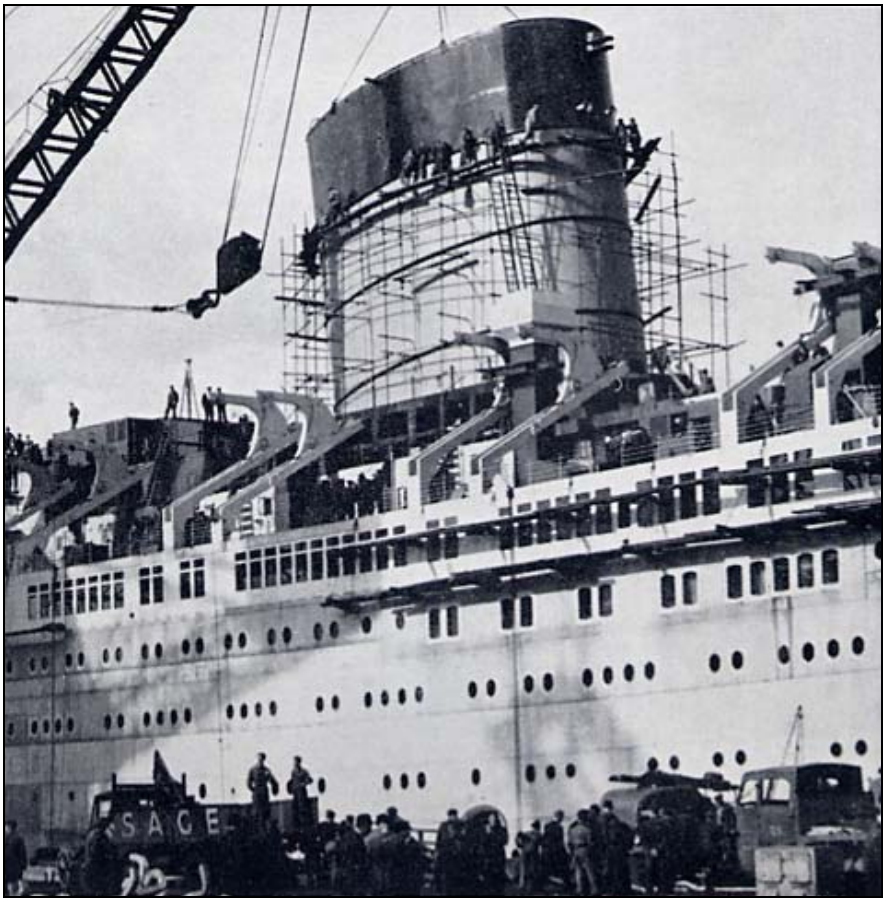
The atmosphere of I945 and of the subsequent six or seven years was admirably depicted in a Statement by the Chairman of the Board of Directors, F. W. Douse, delivered at the Forty-first Annual General Meeting of the Company and published in *The Times* newspaper of August 2I, I946. It was in this Statement that the Chairman, after recording the death in January, I946, of David Hawes, and the appointment of F. W. Humphrey as Managing Director, revealed the contribution of the House of Sage towards the overwhelming victory of the Allied Armada of the Air. From I940 onwards the House had, as we have indicated, almost exclusively concerned itself with the manufacture of sections of five of the aircraft of the years I94I to I945, the Lancaster, Lincoln, Mosquito, Sunderland and Albemarle; as well as the glider¸ Horsa. Thus, the year under review in this statement, concluding, as it did, on September 30, I945, was entirely devoted to work for His Majesty's Government. Immediate prospects embraced the completion of a variety of Government contracts and of a lesser range of outside commitments. The Chairman contemplated, indeed with relish, the 'return to ordinary business', for tremendous activity was inevitable; there was a mass of work waiting to be done, but shortages of materials and of labour alike defied the pent-up demand of six abnormal years. We were, however, 'tied hand and foot'; what could be done could not be done without licences; materials were controlled to the tune of 100 per cent by the Departments of State; stocks were exhausted; everything was in short supply; there was as yet no signal that the Government of the day intended to replenish or even felt the need of replenishing them. Doctrinaire elements which believed in the principle of control for control's sake were politically in the ascendancy, and the Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers) Act of I945 and Supplies and Services (Extended Purposes) Act of I947 expanded the system of restriction and control through delegated legislation and administrative justice which had dominated Britain's wartime political life. Little by little throughout the next few years, the processes of restriction were to some extent eased and softened, thereby brightening the predicament of the nation's business leadership. Meanwhile, however, the House of Sage felt itself sharply restrained in its every attempt to 'reinstate' itself.

However, a different atmosphere gradually emerged. In I945 the Sage Organisation, which had temporarily retained one of its wartime factories, acquired new and not-far-distant premises in Harringay in Ashfield Road, N.4, and, despite difficulties caused or accentuated by delays, inevitably bureaucratic in their origin, succeeded in planning and carrying through several major extensions. It also obtained a factory in Mountain Ash in South Wales for the manufacture of sheet metal and architectural metalwork.

The reconstruction of the Display Offices and Showrooms at Verulam Street, E.C.I, and the acquisition of a Metal Factory in Overbury Road in South Tottenham and of a subsidiary company in Dalston enabled the House of Sage not only to realign the mosaic of I939 but to introduce new patterns.

New advances have been registered year by year. It is a familiar occurrence for the visitor to the Sage factories to witness such variegated work in simultaneous progress as equipment for some of the leading stores in the country, fine joinery and metal work for modern ships being built in the great yards of the north, carving for a church or chapel in process of reconstruction, showcases for museums, or a wholly different type of project, the manufacture of fixtures for self-service stores which have made their mark upon our post-war economic life.

s.s ."GARONIA" at Clydeside in course of construction.



But we may safely predict that, throughout the coming decades, the historian will hail the Sage contribution to the new House of Commons as its most striking achievement in the immediate post-war epoch. The new House of Commons, which restores and revives the main features of its predecessor, thereby pursuing the design of its architect, Sir Giles Gilbert-Scott, and his colleague Adrian Gilbert-Scott, was opened by King George VI on October 26, I950.

Our diagram features the Principal Floor Plan from the architect's original drawing, strikingly illustrating the formidable extent of the work executed by Sage.

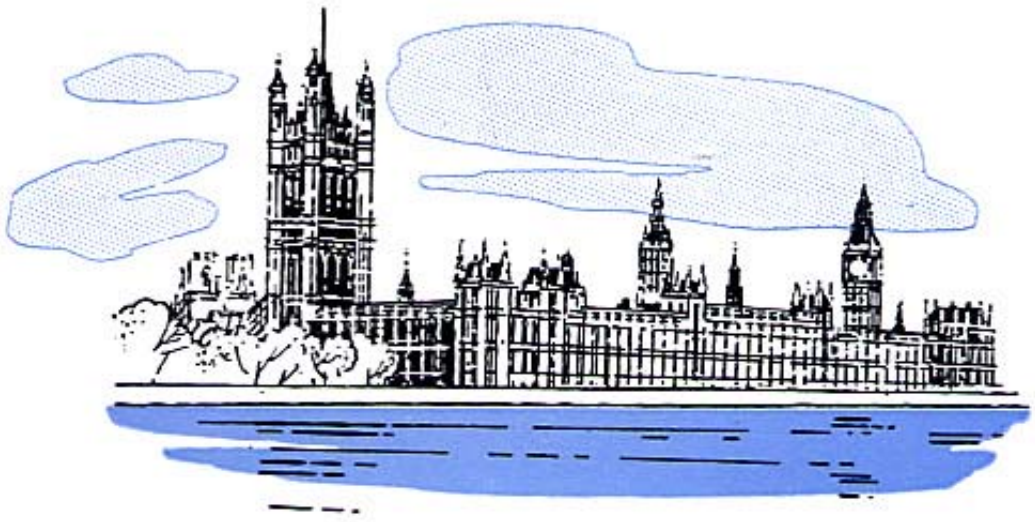
It must be also recorded that the models made in the Sage Studios in London of the carving for the Speaker's Table were sent to Canada, where Canadian craftsmen constructed the table in Canadian oak. Both on the Principal Floor and beyond, the beauty of such artistry defies, nay, beggars formal description; indeed, such skilled handicraft must be seen—and studied—in its Commons setting to be believed.

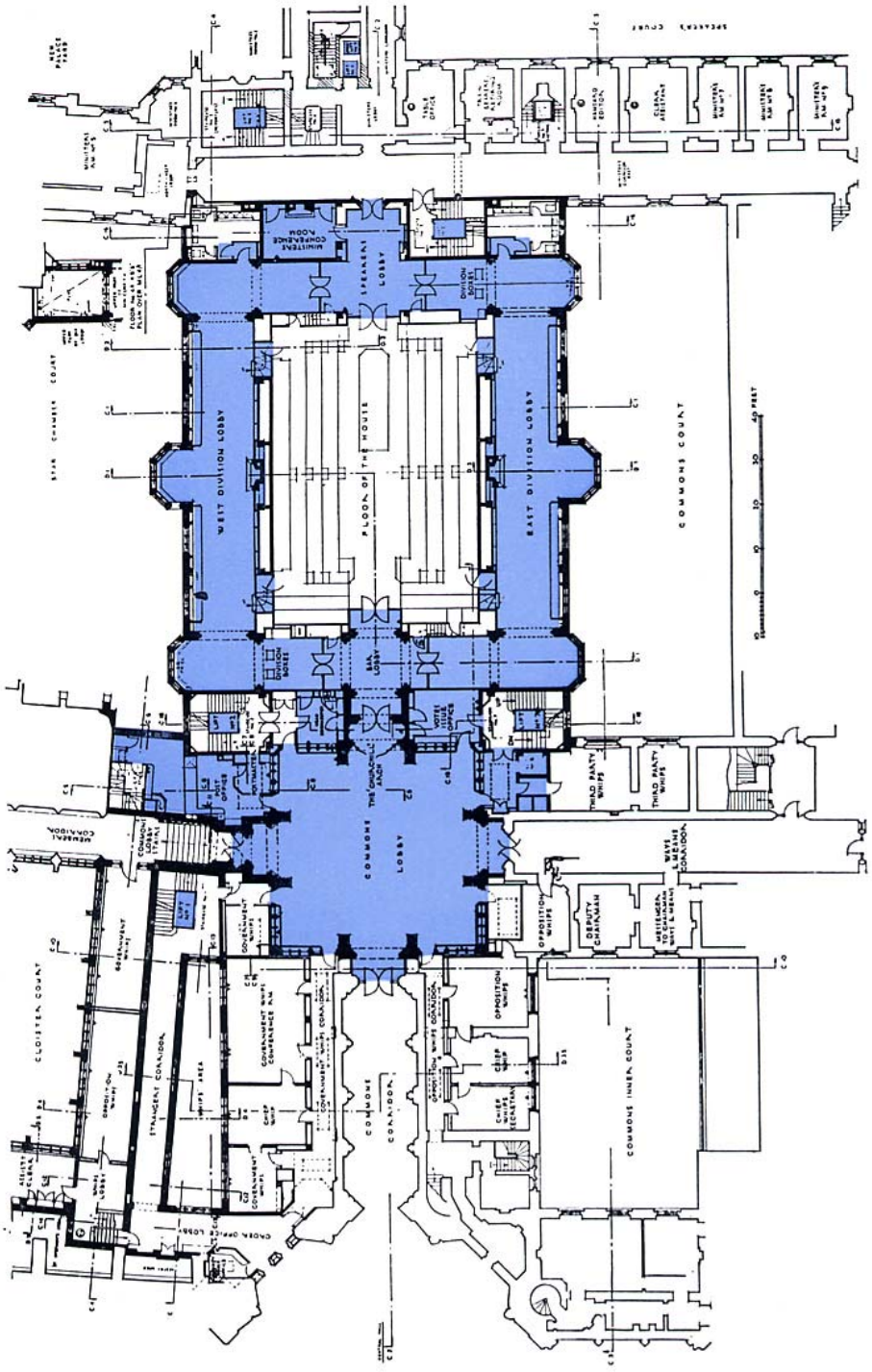
To cite [he words of a page on 'Woodworking Craftsmanship' in *A Souvenir of the Sage Contribution to the New House of Commons* is eminently appropriate:

'Throughout the years, the name of Sage has been synonymous with the highest standard of craftsmanship and its reputation and activities have spread throughout the world. In the Continent of Europe, in the Americas, both north and south, in Africa and beyond are to be found examples of superfine craftsmanship carried out by the various Sage organisations. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that this Company was entrusted by the Ministry of Works with important contracts in connection with the rebuilding of the House of Commons.

'In carrying out this work, the principles of sound joinery, which are traditional in the craft, have not been changed—indeed, they have been enriched. Modern machinery has been brought to the aid of the craftsman to assist his skill in dealing with the beautiful material that has been employed and so, by the use of machinery, the timber has been formed and moulded with the utmost precision, and many of the disabilities under which our forefathers worked have been overcome.

'Scientific research has also played its part by investigation into the structure of the wood to enable it to be seasoned quickly and in a more thorough manner than hitherto. The invention of more scientific adhesives has enabled parts to be brought together with absolute confidence that they will endure and, finally,





Principal Floor Plan from the Architect's original drawing, coloured to show the extent of the work carried out by Sage on this floor

Science has also been helpful in pointing the way to making use of the chemical ingredients of the natural timber to allow it to be toned down to the beautiful colour desired by the architect.

'Crowning all is the wonderful example of the Carver's Art in producing the forms and shapes conceived by the cultured mind of the architect whose mark as an artist is so obvious in all that has been done. With loving care he modelled to the smallest detail the designs his mind had conceived, and with equal care and the utmost fidelity, the craftsmen have wrought the heart of English oak into the forms he desired.

The carved double door hung in the Churchill Arch leading from the Commons Lobby to the Bar of the House.

'No machinery has played any part here; only skill and handicraft alone could produce work so full of beauty, a joy to perform, and, it is hoped, the pride of many generations to come.'

In I958 F. W. Humphrey retired as Managing Director. Bernard Hawes now carries that office. Bernard Hawes is the son of David Hawes, who was the son of Jesse Hawes, and thus a link is again forged between the present managing control of the business and one of the original partners.

We have looked back in retrospect to the founding of a business by a man of broad horizons whose acumen brought congenial employment to hundreds of

The West Division Lobby looking toward the Bar Lobby in the House of Commons.

his fellow men through a century of time. We try to visualise the vast changes that have taken place during that period.

It is said that Frederick Sage travelled to the office or to visit a timber merchant's yard by horse and gig. Today, on the business of the firm, a descendant of his family flies to the Continent or to Africa. The representative operating in Scotland regularly travels to Glasgow by aeroplane.

The great excitement caused by Jesse Hawes when he arrived at the office in a motor car is still in living memory. The car, by the way, was the first to be seen in the northern suburbs of London where he lived.

When the business was founded, telephones were unknown and typewriters had yet to be invented. Such things are the measure of the changes that have taken place through the years. What developments lie ahead it is impossible to conjecture. What is certain is that the House of Sage will remain in step with every movement to promote higher efficiency.

This narrative is but a brief sketch of the activities of the House of Sage and few names have been mentioned. But it is only proper to pay tribute to many fine people who have given their contribution to the firm during the hundred years of its existence—for what has been achieved by the House of Sage is the sum total of their work and experience.

Many names are already forgotten, for all records of the Company were destroyed by a wanton enemy. Some have, none the less, been recorded, for in I950 the Chairman of the Company, F. W. Douse, decided that special honour should be done to those employees who had served the Company for fifty years.

Of this number, the doyen is H. M. Pidgeon, who, at the age of 89, continues to serve the Company part-time. He has served it most faithfully for a period of seventy-four years.

It is worthy of special mention that H. M. Pidgeon's father worked for the firm before him. His son is now in control of an important department of the business. The total service rendered to the Company by these three gentlemen amounts to no less than I55 years.

Showing the late Samuel Holliday Bedford, chief carver of the Sage Organisation, at work of one of the Ceiling Bosses for the Commons Lobby

The following is a list of those who served the Company for fifty years.

1950 F. W. Humphrey (VICE-CHAIRMAN)
F. J. Loates (ESTIMATOR AND REPRESENTATIVE)
F. Moss (TIME KEEPER)
J. Collier (FIXING FOREMAN)
H. M. Pidgeon (PURCHASE MANAGER)
T. Bailey (ESTIMATOR)
F. Dimmock (EXPORT MANAGER)
C. Chisnall (CHIEF BUYER DISPLAY FITTINGS)
1951 F. Robinson (ESTIMATOR)
C. Kettle (FACTORY MANAGER) R. Finney (FIXING FOREMAN)
W. Wayman (STORE KEEPER)
T. Lloyd (EXHIBITION STAND MAKER)
T. Blackley (BLACKSMITH)
1955 S. C. Hawes (DIRECTOR AND PRODUCTION MANAGER)
K. W. Hobbs (CHIEF COSTING CLERK)
A. Radford (HOUSE ARCHITECT)
1957 L. F. Hat field (FIXING FOREMAN)
1958 H. D. Coker (CONFIDENTIAL TYPIST)
1960 H. J. Clarke (MANAGER, DISPLAY FITTINGS)
F. G. Freeman (ASSISTANT SECRETARY)
H. D. Sampson (MAINTENANCE ENGINEER)

If the Founder and his associates were able to visit the House of Sage as it is today, it is safe to assume that they would be astonished at the achievements of the great House they founded and at its faithfulness to the principles they laid down. They would be satisfied that the men and women of today, who so zealously play their part in upholding the traditions the Founders established one hundred years ago, are worthy of the task they have assumed.

And, finally, those who bear the responsibility of directing the policies of the Company in the constantly changing conditions of today are deeply conscious of the loyal and faithful service of those whose duty it is to fulfil their policies.

On this note it is fitting to conclude the Centennial Story of the House of Sage.