

Current Topics

Cautious 'Patriots'

From time to time we are treated to glowing accounts of the amount to which the 'Ulster Indemnity Fund' has now been 'subscribed.' Such statements are a sheer fraud on the public. No money has really been subscribed for this fund. All that has happened is that certain people have guaranteed to find certain amounts of money if called upon. But many of these cautious patriots, according to the London correspondent of the *Irish News*, have taken the precaution of having their undertakings under-written, which means that they have paid an insurance fee which transfers their liability to the Insurance Company. 'The fee is not high,' says the *News*, 'the Insurance Company not taking a very serious view of the liability.'

The Fool-Proof Flying Machine

Now that we have our own Government aeroplane and aeroplanist—if there is such a word—together with amateur flyers such as Mr. Scotland, who, on Saturday last, gave a delightful display at Dunedin in his Caudron biplane, rising from Tahuna Park like a bird, circling the city again and again, and finally volplaning down to the park again with great ease and precision, the definite and authoritative announcement that Mr. Orville Wright has invented a 'stabiliser' or automatic balancer, which, in his own words, renders flying 'as nearly fool-proof as anything can be,' has more than an academic interest even for distant New Zealand. Mr. Wright has described his invention in a special telegram to the *Daily Mail*. 'The new "stabiliser,"' he says, 'in principle resembles the automatic governor of the steam engine—the action of which is familiar to all. When the engine races the balls of this governor fly up by centrifugal force and throttle the steam valve, reducing the steam and thus lowering the speed. When the engine lags, the balls drop, admitting more steam. So—with modifications—the "stabiliser" works. When the aeroplane rocks or pitches a vane or pendulum moves, throwing into gear a small device driven by power from a windmill revolving with the rush of the aeroplane through the air. This device warps the wings and controls the elevator. The sharper the roll or the pitch the greater the power that is brought into play to correct the movement.'

The most important matter in connection with this announcement is the statement that the invention has worked with complete success when subjected to a fairly severe test. According to the *Daily Mail*, seventeen flights were made by Mr. Orville Wright recently in an aeroplane fitted with the 'stabiliser.' He was closely watched in these flights, and it was noted that he never used his hands except to turn the machine. And this notwithstanding the fact that a gusty wind was blowing. Evidently, the days of safe flying are at last drawing appreciably near.

The Churches and 'Ulsteritis'

Thoughtful and fair-minded Protestants are becoming disgusted and ashamed at the way in which, in Ulster and even in England, the pulpits of their churches are being used in a reactionary attempt to set back the clock of progress and to oppose the cause of freedom and democracy in Ireland. One of the leading and most influential Presbyterian journals in America—to wit, the *Continent*—as quoted in our Presbyterian contemporary, the *Outlook*, thus voices the feeling of democratic American Presbyterians towards the attitude adopted by some of their Ulster brethren. 'It has long,' it says 'been the familiar boast of Presbyterians that Presbyterianism from Reformation days onward has constantly promoted popular rights and self-government—has in fact been the steadiest element in the gradual liberation of English-speaking

peoples from imperialistic rule into the freedom of democratic independence. But the boast dies on one's lips these days. It can't get into voice now. The spectacle of Presbyterian Ulster fighting Home Rule for Ireland is too much for it. Ulster has certainly reversed history.'

In England, about Christmas time, several Anglican dignitaries used their pulpits to trench upon party politics, and in almost express terms threw in their lot with the anti-Home Rule political party. On behalf of democratic members of the State Church, *Reynolds's Paper* enters an emphatic protest against such methods; and under the heading of 'Impudent Clerics' administers a severe castigation to the dignitaries referred to. 'It is time,' it says, 'that some protest should be made against the stream of nauseous cant and transparent humbug which has been poured out of so many Anglican pulpits this Christmastide on the subject of Ulster. Many thousands of genuine Democrats may be counted among those within the fold of the State Church; and in their name it is necessary to repudiate, clearly and emphatically, the wretched partisanship which has induced some of the Anglican bishops to throw in their lot with our discredited landed aristocracy in its impotent struggle against the advance of Democracy. The harangue which the Dean of Westminster preached in that venerable edifice under the guise of a sermon, was nothing but an impudent incursion into party politics. Although its language was carefully chosen, it was an unmistakable repetition of all the balderdash savoring of treason which Sir Edward Carson has inflicted on the public for many months past. "No experiment in the nature of a reconstruction of our Constitution," said the Dean, according to newspaper reports, "could justify the passage of a Bill that must lead to bloodshed." This is the sort of stuff that causes the average Democrat who takes an interest in political controversy almost to despair of the alleged intelligence of those personages who are described in the Anglican Prayer Book as his "pastors and masters." What is the real meaning of this organised attempt to harness the pulpits of the State Church to the very rickety chariot wheels of Lord Londonderry and Sir Edward Carson? Toryism, in its wild impotency and its helpless fury, has not hesitated to drag the Crown into the dust and din of the party arena; and it is now setting its hands to the task of prostituting the pulpits of the State Church for party propaganda. A citizen has no more right to insult the religious beliefs of a Catholic than he has to spurn those of a Primitive Methodist. The present outcry about Ulster which is raised by the Tory leaders and the Tory press, has no more to do with the eternal verities of Romanism or Protestantism than it has with aviation. To the eyes of the Tory the uneasiness of Protestants in Ulster is merely a stick with which to beat the Government. If the Democracy has been strong enough to break the backbone of the peers, it is not likely to yield to the querulous fatuities of curates and canons.'

A Protestant Woman's Testimony

One of the sanest and soundest statements that has so far come under our notice as to the present position of the Home Rule movement, as to the significance, or insignificance, of Carsonism, and as to the possibilities and probabilities of the immediate future, is one which has been furnished by a Protestant woman of Ulster in a recent letter to a Dunedin resident. The lady resides in the province of Ulster, is the wife of a Protestant clergyman, and has, according to the *Dunedin Evening Star*, unusual opportunities of testing the true state of public opinion in the North of Ireland. 'The *Evening Star* has been permitted to make some interesting extracts from her letter, of which we gladly avail ourselves.'

Writing under date January 9 last, the lady says: 'We are certainly making history, and if some of the