

Current Topics

At Last

It would seem as if the repeated and not undeserved flagellations to which President Wilson has been subjected by candid American papers are at last beginning to have some effect. In Friday's cables we read that 'America has protested to Germany through the Hague Tribunal against the dropping of bombs near relief ships bound for Belgium.' It is a case of better late than never. One cannot help reflecting that had President Wilson only uttered a firm word at the beginning of the war there might have been a very different story to tell, and Belgium might not have been the bruised and mangled nation that she now is.

Some Bishop Grimes Stories

By reason of his long episcopate, his hospitable and sociable nature, and his frequent journeyings in New Zealand, Australia, and abroad, the late Bishop Grimes was one of the best known of our Dominion prelates; and when the flood of reminiscence is properly loosed there will be plenty of stories to tell. Meanwhile, the *Sydney Bulletin* gets in early with a couple of good ones: 'Bishop Grimes, of Christchurch (M.L.), who died this week in Sydney, was a scholarly prelate who built his own monument in a massive Cathedral—one of the finest churches in Maoriland. The work was undertaken at the suggestion of an Irish bishop. While Dr. Grimes was in Ireland in 1898, waiting for some priests and wondering how he would fill in time, this friend proposed that he should collect funds for something or other. "Have you a Cathedral?" he inquired. "No, but we want one badly." "Well, start off?" And he did. So well did he work that the Cathedral was completed twelve years before the amiable old man had finished rebubing sin. One of his topics was about Leo XIII., who appointed him to the new See of Christchurch in 1887. Five years later he went to tell his Holiness how Christchurch was getting on, and had a bad cold when he called. He made his next visit to the Pontiff seven years afterwards. "You had a cold when last I met you—are you now quite well?" came the anxious inquiry. The astonished Bishop said he thought he'd shaken it off, thank you very much.'

The German Fleet

'It's a long, long wait for William's navy,' runs one of the many parodies on 'Tipperary'; and unless Mr. Winston Churchill has up his sleeve some hitherto undisclosed plan for carrying out his intention of 'digging the Germans out,' the indications are that the wait will last a long time yet. In view of the relative superiority of the British fleet, and of past experience, the German ships are not taking any risks; and in this they are, of course, from their own point of view, only acting with ordinary common sense. The German viewpoint as to the considerations which make caution the cue is indicated in a statement made in the course of a lecture delivered at Kiel University early in February by Grand Admiral von Koester, president of the German Navy League, who also throws out a hint as to the sole condition under which the German fleet will accept engagement. 'We are full of the firmest confidence in our fleet,' said Admiral von Koester, 'but we know that a sea-battle means death or victory, and that a destroyed fleet cannot be replaced in the course of the war, even if it lasts for years. We must, therefore, under all conditions be cautious in our procedure and allow ourselves to be incited to no deed which might eventuate in our defeat. For what would be the situation if a sea battle took place to-morrow in which each one of our ships took a hostile ship to the bottom with it, and perhaps some others? Then we should be without a fleet and England could proceed gradually in its attacks against our coasts. And you can be sure after the conduct of England in our colonies that no city would be spared.

Our coast from Emden to Memel would be most severely threatened. Landing attempts, if they were sufficiently well prepared, could succeed at places most uncomfortable for us. Our fleet must protect us under all conditions and may accept battle only when it can reckon on victory.' If naval battle is to be accepted only when a victory for Germany is assured, the day of the great encounter is still a very long way off.

What has Become of them ?

Before the war broke out we heard a very great deal about the readiness and efficiency and formidable fighting capacity of Sir Edward Carson's great Army of Ulster Volunteers. Everything was in order to the last button, as the phrase goes. The 'Army' had had a thorough course of drill and training; it executed the most brilliant manoeuvres; its signalling corps was literally a wonder; and altogether it was a shame what these 'Ulster' warriors would do to their Catholic fellow-countrymen and to the British regulars if the privilege and responsibility of self-government should be thrust upon them. After the war broke out, the Carsonite Volunteers still managed to keep in the lime-light. In the course of time the announcement was made that they had offered for service in considerable numbers; and under conspicuous and applauding headlines the news of this altogether admirable and praiseworthy act was duly trumpeted to the ends of the earth. The Empire breathed more freely to know that although Germany had had considerable advantage in the matter of preparation, the British Army was now to be reinforced by at least one body of troops that was in a state of complete readiness. Yet these men on whom such high hopes were built have not yet gone to the front; and people are wondering what has become of them. The Ulster Volunteers were supposed to have received a thorough training two years before the recruits of the 10th and 16th Irish Divisions, and they have had, of course, an additional six months' training since then, yet the Irish Divisions are now in Europe and the Ulster Volunteers are still at home.

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Both in Parliament and in the press questions are being asked about the matter. Mrs. Alice Stopford Green, in a letter to the *Daily News*, expresses her regret that the Ulster Division is not to fight in the First Army side by side with the 10th and 16th Irish Divisions, and her astonishment that Sir Edward Carson and Lady Londonderry have been more intent on breaking the trace in the Irish controversy than on hurrying the Orangemen to the front. 'The Father of Sons in the 10th and 16th Divisions' writes to the Irish press enquiring the cause of the delay. It seems impossible, however, to get anything like a definite reply. In a recent address on the occasion of a visit to the North of Ireland, Sir Edward Carson spoke of 'home defence,' and now a Nationalist journal suggests that it is only for warfare of this kind that the Ulster Volunteers have enlisted. That, however, is too bad to be true. And now Mr. Swift McNeill, in response to a question in Parliament, has elicited the interesting and authoritative information that Sir Edward Carson's Volunteers 'will not necessarily be the last troops to go to the front.' That is, apparently, all the light that can be got on the matter. It is not very satisfactory—least of all, we should suppose, to the Volunteers themselves. After all the drilling, parades, reviews, and manoeuvres, and after all the hot-air speeches of their proud and fiery leader, to be publicly told that they will not necessarily be the last to take the field is the cruellest of anti-climaxes. Alas! *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

The Fall of Przemysl

The experts have been explaining to us the significance of the fall of Przemysl—how that it opens the way to Cracow and Silesia, releases a large body of Russians for field operations, strengthens the morale of the whole Russian force, etc. But even without their valued assistance the most common-place citizen