

## Current Topics

### The Convention

The London papers apparently fear that the Convention may result in failure, and their tone was decidedly uneasy in January. "Everybody," says the *Times*, "is still entitled to hope that the last days of the Convention will yet produce unanimity, but it would be sheer folly to ignore the risk of a different result or to minimise the disastrous issue which would follow failure. For this reason we emphasise that the plain duty of the Government is to be prepared for either event. . . . If as we fear the Convention has not yet reached that substantial agreement which would merely require the blessing of the Imperial Parliament, it will, at least, be able to give the Government a new lead in dealing with the problem." The *Times* appeals to the Government to have a plan in readiness, dwelling on the great importance to the Empire and to the war of a settlement which will ensure friendly relations with the United States. Other journals hint that the retirement of Carson was not as voluntary as it has been represented to us—in a word that he was kicked out at the request of President Wilson, who saw clearly what a laughing stock the presence of a German agent in the Government was making of England. News from Amsterdam shows that the Germans are keeping a watchful eye on the trend of events in Dublin. "If Lloyd George is really sincere," says Philip Scheidemann, the leader of the majority Socialists, "how about Ireland, Egypt, and India?" To every one but the Jingo the hypocrisy of claims on behalf of small nations while Ireland is being sacrificed to the Orange bigots is obvious. The latest report hints at a scheme of Home Rule for Wales and Scotland also.

### The Armenians

Whatever truth there may be in the stories about Turkish atrocities in Armenia it is certain that the retailers of such stories have exaggerated them and at times invented them for their own political ends. In the early days of the war we were regaled with awful accounts of what our men suffered at the hands of the Turks. And in plain contradiction with these tales the returned men have uniformly attested to the humanity of the foemen who beat them on Gallipoli. This one fact should make us suspicious regarding charges made in the past. In connection with these charges we have received a pamphlet, published in England by C. F. Dixon-Johnson, who has made a close study of the whole problem, and who finds that the Turks have been cruelly maligned by their political enemies. Of such malignant reports he says: "Their object is simply to bias the public opinion in this country still further against an already misjudged and badly maligned enemy." Very often there have been undeniable Turkish outrages, and in reference to such he says that they were often the results of attacks made by Armenians on the Turks. Speaking of the crushing out of a revolution he writes: "There is not the slightest doubt that unless the revolution had been immediately crushed and further danger removed the Turkish army on the Caucasus would have been exterminated. *The British Government has never hesitated under much less critical conditions to suppress rebellion within its borders with an iron hand and by measures which survived after the time of stress and danger was past, have appeared both harsh and cruel in the extreme.* . . . No apology is needed for showing how a nation with whom we were closely allied for several years and which possesses the same faith as millions of our fellow-subjects, has been condemned on 'evidence' which, when not absolutely false, is grossly and shamefully exaggerated." Like charges have been brought against ourselves within recent times. The Continental press depicted the atrocities of our own soldiers during the South African war in very strong terms. And we cannot deny that one of our own

generals spoke as strongly in condemnation of our inhuman methods as we ever spoke of the doings of the Turks. In that war, said General Butler, England struck at the womb of the nation. And in support of his charge he gave the harrowing statistics of the deaths of women and children in the concentration camps. At that time, too, the London *Times* advocated the "Prussian" policy of speedily ending the war by striking terror into the non-combatant population—an advocacy that has but been put into practice with a vengeance in Belgium. "Odysseus" says that there was peace between the Turks and the Armenians until the advent of Protestant and other missionaries—meddlesome persons who stirred up strife.

### The Ballykelly Reading Room

If you examined very closely the side of the Slieve Coyltha mountain which looks down on the Barrow you might distinguish the city of Ballykelly, which consists of a very old and very small chapel, of a school-house, and a couple of dwelling houses. Probably the most striking things about Ballykelly are the piers of the chapel gate, which are a cross between a round tower and a lime-kiln: they are massive, rugged, ample—like poor Father Tom who built them. But do not run away with the idea that they were the only monuments to the memory of the good sagart. They were not: by the Ballykelly Reading Room his memory is still kept green, not only around the mountain and all through Wexford, but also even in parts of New Zealand. There were perhaps a score or more of members—we do not say readers—in the Reading Room; and we take it as an article of faith that there were books and book-shelves. It was founded at a time when men congregating even to bury their dead were liable to be arrested and thrown into gaol on the information of a "peeler" ready to swear that he saw two men walking to the funeral and keeping step: at a time when a blackthorn stick was enough to give an R.M. a fit of apoplexy, and when to whistle or even to smile probably meant penal servitude. Therefore loyal Father Tom, drawing up the rules for his club, set in bold letters at the top of the card of membership the statement:

WE DO NOT INTEND TO EMBARRASS THE  
BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

Poor old Father Tom got many a good-humored chaffing over that solemn protest, and the high seriousness of the Ballykelly Reading Room is remembered still. We have been forcibly reminded of that humorous incident of Irish life during the past week. In the columns of the *Otago Daily Times*—where else could we expect it?—we read an announcement that the Sydney papers, with a ridiculousness that surpasses that of Ballykelly, decided to snub Archbishop Mannix by ignoring his appearance in Sydney. Yes! the Sydney press, so somnolent, so stupid, so ignorant of the movement of thought outside its own stagnant circle, takes itself so seriously as to imagine that its notice, whether for praise or blame, matters to us a whit more than the fly on her horn matters to a Jersey cow. This is the press which has been telling the men at the front that they are traitors and pro-Germans and shirkers! When did it tell them that? Did it not say it of those who refused to vote for slavery and conscription? And, if you leave out of the reckoning the well-paid officials who would lose their billets if the war ended, the women in Government offices, the nurses, and scores of others who know well that they shall never have to fight, is it not quite true that the boys in the trenches declared by their votes that they wanted no assistance from slave-drivers? *Non tati auxilio* was their verdict: if they went abroad to fight against militarism they would not fight, nor would they vote, to establish militarism in their own country. This, too, in spite of all the whining appeals of a Hughes, and in spite of all the misrepresentations of the press! The press! Is it any wonder it has no influence now? Is it any wonder that in spite of all the coaxing methods of Mr. Hughes and his followers the common sense of the

FOR UP-TO-DATE FOOTWEAR GO TO

**LOFTS**

Phone 3227.

BOOT IMPORTERS,

172 PRINCES ST. DUNEDIN