

## Current Topics

### The Kaiser

Two facts are worth remembering among so many surmises and rumors. First, there is danger of Bolshevism spreading in Germany. It has been announced in the United States that it is spreading. Second, we will recall that Lord Milner, the German member of the British Cabinet, warned the people that it would be unwise to do away with the old German Government at present, precisely in view of the fact that the Bolsheviks are a menace to Oligarchy in all countries. Premising so much, we may be able to see through the cloudland of cables issued to us by a paternal Harmsworth press just now. It is a little more than possible that certain people who are interested in maintaining Oligarchy still, and in keeping small nations under an iron rule, might find it advisable to have the old Kaiser back again with his hands fettered. Possibly a figurehead Kaiser would please them better than a Bolshevik Government that would not understand why people like Carson should get special treatment when it comes to dealing with traitors. Of course the Harmsworth papers have been saying unkind things about the Kaiser and a *volte face* would be hailed with ridicule. But *volte face* is no new thing for that press. We have not forgotten the time when Carson and his friends spoke proudly of the promised aid of a "powerful Continental Monarch" who would help the Orangemen to kick the King's Crown into the Boyne. We have not forgotten how the London papers, in 1913 even, spoke of Wilhelm as the greatest Sovereign in Europe and the only one fit to compare with Victoria, as far as a blameless life goes. We do not believe that the German people, and particularly the Catholic people of Bavaria, who are supported by the Austrians in their movement against Prussianism, will ever have the Kaiser back. But, putting two and two together now, it seems that certain old friends of the wandering William would not be averse to kissing his imperial toe once more.

### Ireland

Letters from Ireland tell us that things are very bad indeed there as far as the Government is concerned. There is no such thing as liberty of speech and action, except in Orangedom. If a man is not careful about how he winks he may find himself in gaol. To speak French within hearing of an ignorant policeman who might make a "mental note" and swear that he heard Irish spoken is a terrible danger. It is not safe even to drive a cow to a fair. If a crowd gathers to look at a dog-fight they are certain of free quarters, at the expense of the Government, for an indefinite period. We have heard from returned men that among the English people intense indignation prevailed as a result of the arrest of the Sinn Feiners, on a trumped up charge that nobody believed. It is considered certain that, although a trial was denied these men, they will be kept in gaol until after the General Election. To any man who has followed Lloyd George's career that conclusion is eminently safe. At the present time the testimony of de Valera would be disconcerting and uncomfortable for Mr. George. And that seems reason enough to have the man kept in gaol! Lloyd George is what is called a good business man. Witness the Marconi case. Lately we saw a sentence in *Everyman*, a paper read by Englishmen who have brains, and edited by Dr. Sarolea, of Edinburgh University. The sentence was merely a reminder that we are now professed believers in the truth that a people has the right to choose its own form of Government. It was followed by a hint to the effect that most people seemed blind to the stupidity of those who, in the light of that truth, declared that the efforts of the Irish people to govern themselves amount to treason. Even from the point of view of a Jingo paper like the *London Tablet* that argument is a hard nut to crack. From the Irish point of view it is superfluous. Ireland's view was

ably stated by Dr. Coffey of Maynooth, when he said that England's title to rule Ireland was founded on the guilty contract known as the Union, and that as the people had in every generation rejected the Union, England had not a shadow of legal right to rule Ireland, any more than Germany had to rule Belgium. That in a nutshell is Ireland's case. Ireland still waits. England still oppresses a small nation and denies to a people the right of self-determination.

### The Epidemic

War and pestilence usually go hand in hand. It was one of the marvels of the recent war that there was so little disease of an epidemic kind among the soldiers; and for that great credit is due to the medical corps attached to the different armies. Now the war is over and the epidemic has come. Meagre details arrive to tell us of its ravages in other countries. A paper stated that in South Africa the number of deaths was 50,000. We know only too well how much New Zealand has already suffered, and if blame is due to anyone we have no doubt that it will in due time be apportioned by those whose province it is to investigate the matter. It is remarkable that among the prophecies of the French girl, who came like another Joan of Arc to recall men's minds to God in miraculous ways, it was foretold that a terrible epidemic would follow the war. And it has come with a vengeance. People are prone to blame the authorities. But they can but do their best, and to err is human. Let it be remembered that owing to the absence of a large number of doctors and nurses the enemy found us weak and unprepared; and under the circumstances all that could be done was done. No praise of ours is adequate for the splendid work of the nuns in various centres. In Auckland, where the scourge was heaviest, the heroic efforts of the religious communities helped in great measure to defeat the disease. From Wellington and Christchurch we are constantly hearing glowing appreciations of the work of the Sisters. In Dunedin our nuns have responded to the call of charity with that eagerness and self-sacrifice which comes so naturally to these devoted servants of God and of His people. No less credit is due to the Catholic priests who have been tireless in their attention to the sick, and who, in very many cases, have been martyrs to their devotion to duty. A time like this tests real charity. And the people are not slow to see who manifests it. We will not dwell on this point further than to say that from many quarters already we have heard it said by admirers of the selfless devotion of our workers: "Are these, then, the people who have been subjected to such vile attacks for the past years?" God has in this striking way vindicated His servants and singled them out for a work of danger that brings the best testimony to their sterling worth. It is not the men and women who were most distinguished for blatant patriotism, on public platforms and at street corners, that are found readiest now to prove the depth of their love for their afflicted brethren. We are tempted to ask, what part has the P.P.A. played in the work of self-sacrifice? Where are those who were so ready to tour the country calumniating the devoted Catholic nuns who now stand in the breach and face the danger cheerfully? Where now are the Catholic shirkers of whom we heard so much from that tribe that sent so few volunteers to the war and does so little in this war against an enemy to face which requires the truest sort of heroism? However, our workers want no reward on earth. The ladies who have gone out of their convents, and who may be found scrubbing floors and cleaning up infected homes, nursing sufferers, and cooking for the sick, do what they are doing so well because they have learnt that the love of God and the love of the neighbor is the one motive that really matters. Where the moth cannot eat nor the rust consume their reward is safe. "By this sign shall it be known that ye are My disciples, that ye have love, one for another." And by that sign, too, it shall be now made manifest who are the real followers of Christ. May God, who in His mysterious ways justifies His servants before men, avert the danger and comfort the afflicted.

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