

Current Topics

"Gaiters and Gas"

We take this opportunity of expressing our thanks to the Directors, to the Manager, and to the Editor of the *Otago Daily Times* for the high compliment paid to the Catholic Church, to Ireland, and to ourselves, in their columns, by the frequent vituperation of the exposed falsifier of history, "Civis." The following is apparently the red rag which started "Civis" in his latest exhibition of senile John Bullism:—

"Paris, June 16 (delayed).—The Irish-American Commission has notified the American Delegation to the Peace Conference that the United States Senate's resolution requesting a hearing for De Valera, Griffiths, and Count Plunkett has been presented to the Peace Conference. The Irish-American Commission demands a sweeping and disinterested inquiry into its report on English outrages in Ireland."

How it compares with what the New Zealand Pig-gott says of Irish feeling in America!

Meditation on Peace

The leader of the German Centre Party uttered a truism when he said recently that if Germany was forced to sign the present peace terms, or anything like them, "a war which we cannot prevent, and which the Entente shall have difficulty in coping with, will be the result." Germany's signing under compulsion is a far different thing from laying a foundation of peace and goodwill on the lines of justice and universal brotherhood. France signed in the same way after 1870, and France went into the future with hatred in her heart for her conqueror, a hatred that is bearing fruit now in what is superior for a future war. It is certain that the "statesmen" who are sitting round the table in Paris are absolutely unfit for their position. They have gone on adding mistake to mistake, and disgusting people by the glaring contradictions between their acts and their high promises. It is small wonder that the Labor Executive of Great Britain, at a recent meeting, declared "that the agreed opinion of the executive of the Labor Party is that the Allied Peace Proposals are very defective from the standpoint of world's peace, and bear evidence of compromise influenced by capitalist imperialism, which still dominates the European States." Germany signs now with "a mental reservation"—as the English one day signed another treaty in Limerick.

Peace in the Empire

At least there is peace in the Empire! As an indication that there is, consider that in the House of Commons, last month, Mr. Bonar Law—a typical peacemaker—said that the Government was considering whether or no it ought to prosecute the *Daily Herald* for publishing the text of a military document instructing the commanding officers to send in reports as to the sentiments of the troops under their commands as to the feeling with regard to industrial disputes. A typical question asked was, "Would the troops assist in strike-breaking?" The War Office admits the responsibility for the document. There is no need for comment on this sign of peace. It is as eloquent of the sort of peace that is coming as all the fireworks that will be squandered in Australasia. We recall a few facts that tell of how peace is felt in Ireland: Armed soldiers and machine-guns in Dublin streets; boys kidnapped by the police; passports issued by the straight-going and consistent Lloyd George in favor of the American Envoys and then repudiated; Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington (whose husband was murdered by the Government-protected lunatic, Colthurst) refused a passport to the Geneva Conference; Lord French reduced to desperation by the way in which his advice is neglected by men of the Walter Long, Carson, and George type; the Americans' significant remark that they will make the necessary comment on what they saw and experienced in Ireland in the proper place—these things all undoubtedly stand for peace. We

want another word than peace. That does not fit in with the facts just yet. *Panem et circenses* was the cry when the old Roman Empire was speeding to ruin under its incompetent autocrats. And who needs to be told that history repeats itself?

What We Fought For

"The destruction or disruption of the German people has never been a war-aim with us from the first day of the war to this."

"We are not fighting a war of aggression against the German people."

"The sanctity of treaties is to be re-established."

"A territorial settlement to be secured, based on the rights of self-determination or the consent of the governed."—(Lloyd George.)

"Let us, whatever we do, fight for and work towards great and sound principles for the European system. And the first of these principles which we must keep before us is the principle of nationality—that is to say, not the conquest or subjugation of any great community or of any strong race of men, but the setting free of those races which have been subjugated and conquered; and if doubt arises about disputed areas of country we should try to settle their ultimate destination in the reconstruction of Europe which must follow from this war, with a fair regard to the wishes and feelings of the people who live in them."—(Speech by Mr Churchill.)

There we have a brief statement of what we fought for. For the principles thus enunciated men were invited, or forced, to fight. We are told we have won; we are told that we have secured peace; but we were also told that there could be no lasting peace until those principles were secured. What is the conclusion? Has the war bettered the democracy in any way? Have secret treaties been done away with? Has autocracy got its deathblow? Has militarism been destroyed? Has war in the future been made impossible? Before answering, consider that Lloyd George repudiated his pledged war-aims when seeking re-election, and that his programme then was to crush Germany. Consider that the drafting of the League of Nations has been changed into a scheme for the aggrandisement of the five great Powers. Consider that the Peace Conference has proceeded by way of secret diplomacy and secret treaties, just as of old. Consider that the condition of the democracy in all Europe is more unstable than ever it was. Consider that a small minority of alien bigots, protected by the British Government, are allowed to keep Ireland in slavery. Consider that, even while we have talked of peace, we were starving German women and children. Consider that the machinery for securing peace, according to Clemenceau and Lloyd George, is a huge French army and a huge British navy. President Wilson's ideals of justice and clemency as the basis of a lasting peace have been rejected and a policy of conquest, in accordance with the election addresses in which Lloyd George repudiated his pledges to the soldiers, has been adopted instead, with the result that a sullen, defeated foe will go towards the future with determination to retaliate as brutally and as savagely as possible if the occasion ever offers. Consider lastly that what has been done has helped to drive Germany into coalition with Russia, and that we are likely to see one day a union of toiling millions arrayed under the Red Flag in a terrible war against the plutocratic army which has strangled humanity by Red Tape. We are told that this is peace. There are many who cannot close their eyes to the fact that it is ruin. "We only know from particulars gleaned outside the Peace Conference," says the London *Catholic Times*, "that all the old passions have been reasserting themselves. Jealousy, greed for territory, and the ambition of the strongest to make their will the law of right and to suppress whatever was opposed to their interests have been fully in evidence. But of a democratic programme we have heard nothing." Have we then won the war? The plutocrats will say, "Yes." What will the democracy say? Compare the promise with the fulfilment.

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