

## Current Topics

### Prussianism

One day in a moment of fierce wrath, aroused by the contemplation of the atrocities committed by his countrymen in Ireland, G. K. Chesterton scornfully asked Englishmen whether it was Prussia or Prussianism they were fighting. Indeed, when we recall the hysterics of the white-feather brigade over alleged and unproved atrocities and corpse-factories and witness the equanimity with which they regard proved and attested crimes against women and children in Ireland, there is little reason to hesitate about the answer to Mr. Chesterton. From the *Dublin Leader* we reproduce two extracts which will convince any honest reader that the Georges and the Carsons and the Isaacs are as brutal as the Huus were said to be. First, when the war was over, the Allies, chiefly through the British fleet, set themselves to force Germany by starving women and children to sign peace terms which were a flagrant departure from those proposed to Germany at the time of the Armistice. Rantzau's words, quoted in the *Leader*, will go down to history as the scathing indictment of Mr. George and his peers, which they undoubtedly are:—

"Crimes in war may not be excusable, but they are committed in the struggle for victory, and in the defence of national existence, and passions are aroused which make the conscience of the people blunt."

That, perhaps, he alleged as a palliation for undeniable acts of Prussianism committed by Germany. Then he goes on to speak of the calculated and cold-blooded crimes of the Allies:—

"The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who have perished since November 11, by reason of the blockade, were killed with cold-blooded deliberation after our adversaries had conquered, and victory been assured to them. Think of that when you speak of guilt and punishment."

Did we fight Prussia or Prussianism? Did a single one of our "day-lies" utter a single word of honest protest against the massacre in cold blood of German women and children *after the war*? Now comes another extract. Here is what Mr. Ryan, of the Irish-American Delegation, has to say about the sort of Prussianism which we fought to build up:—

"I saw and heard of police brutality, and witnessed in Dublin and Westport military displays that rivalled Prussianism. . . . These are the common, ordinary incidents of British rule in Ireland."

Yet, not a word of protest from those pious Christian women who plucked white feathers and sent boys to slaughter in their eagerness to put down Prussianism when it was done by others. If the worst and vilest sort of hypocrite is the one who denounces in others the crimes which he commits himself, our Imperialists stand before the throne of God as the incarnation of hypocrisy. There would be some hope for them if they could feel shame; but they are beyond that. So, too, is the Empire, of which with such awful symbolism the head to-day is the Marconi-jobber, Mr. George. There is an old saying that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. What can you make of an Empire such as ours? The scourge of God has been unavailing. Humility, truth, charity, and self-knowledge are farther removed from the people than ever. And those "Fourteen Points"—well, a writer in *New Ireland* was not so far wrong when he said that they had been condensed by the Peace Conference into one point, the Point of the Bayonet! The blatant bard of Empire was right:—

As it was in the beginning,  
So is now official sinning,  
And shall be for evermore. Amen.

### Superstitious Uses

The London *Month* calls attention to certain superstitious forms of prayer which are not infrequently circulated among the ignorant for the sake of gain by

unscrupulous persons. He also adds that some such leaflets found their way among the soldiers who for one reason or another were ready to welcome superstition in various forms. One prayer was supposed to bear with it a promise that all sorts of immunities and temporal blessings would be the reward of those who used it and a threat of God's displeasure upon the incredulous was also associated with it. It was alleged that it was found on Our Lord's grave in the year 303, or in 803, or in 1003. The promises run as follows:—

"Those who repeat it devoutly, or hear it repeated every day and keep it with them shall never die a sudden death. Poison shall not affect them. If said over a woman in labor, she shall be safely delivered: when the child is born say the prayer and he or she shall not meet disaster. If laid on a person in fits they (?) shall recover or be relieved. They who repeat it in any house shall be blessed by our Lord, and they who laugh at it shall suffer. They who keep it about them shall fear neither lightning nor thunder. They who repeat it every day shall have three days' warning of their death."

Another form purported to contain revelations made to St. Brigid by Our Lord. It ran as follows:—

1. When I was apprehended in the garden I received 30 cuffs and 820 blows.
2. Going to the house of Annas I got 7 falls.
3. They gave me 540 blows on the breast.
4. They gave me 5 cruel blows on the shoulders.
5. They raised me by the hair of my head 630 times.
6. They gave me 30 blows on the mouth.
7. With anguish I sighed 888 times.
8. They drew me by the head 308 times.
9. They gave me 6666 stripes with whips.
10. I was bound to a pillar and they spat on my face 68 times.
11. They put a crown of thorns on my head.
12. The soldiers gave me 558 stripes with whips.
13. Falling upon my cross I received mortal wounds.
14. They gave me gall and vinegar to drink.
15. When I was hanging on the cross I received 5 large wounds.

After this catalogue come a number of promises of favors to all who say certain prayers. Plenary indulgences galore are guaranteed. It is not necessary to say that these leaflets bear no evidence of authenticity and that as a rule they are devoid even of the imprint of the publisher. An ordinarily-instructed Catholic would of course reject them at once with the scorn they merit, but unfortunately some weak-minded persons are always more willing to receive such impostures than to avail themselves of the real opportunities for saving their souls which our Holy Church gives to all her children. It is worth noting that Father Keating states that he believes there is no serious evidence for the computations sometimes introduced into books of devotion and attributed to St. Brigid. "Even the clause often introduced at the public recitation of the Rosary, 'The number of stripes they gave Him being above 5000, as was revealed to St. Brigid,' was declared as long ago as the seventeenth century, by Gonsalvo Durantus, the editor of her *Revelations*, to be altogether without authority." Surely there are enough lawful devotions for all persons. For our part we believe strongly in the importance of concentrating on the essentials—the simple prayers of our childhood, the Holy Mass, the Blessed Eucharist, and Our Lady. Many will always be drawn by minor attractive exercises, but the main things should come first and everything not sound should be jealously avoided.

### Democracy

Democracy is a Greek word that we are very fond of at present. There is so much truth in the old French saying, *Avec du grec on a toujours raison*, that we are too much inclined to take even the word itself for granted. Mr. Wells is a writer with whom some people will never agree because he holds some principles that they do not agree with; but notwithstanding

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