

Current Topics

Ireland and the League of Nations

The *Manchester Guardian* reports that a delicate situation has arisen in Ireland out of the objection of the British Government to the registration of the Anglo-Irish Treaty with the League of Nations. Several weeks ago we gave reasons why Britain wishes Ireland to be regarded as a purely domestic problem of her own; but according to the statement issued by the Irish Minister for External Affairs, the domestic problem theory has outlived its power to deceive. Mr. Fitzgerald pointed out in his statement that the Covenant of the League sets out the duties undertaken by every member of it. There are no distinctions between the States, he says; none has special privileges and none is exempt from the obligations set forth in the Covenant. He quotes Article 18, and proceeds: "This Article means that every treaty and international engagement entered into after January, 1920, shall be registered. The Irish Free State, as a member of the League, is bound by this Article. As the Treaty is the basis of the Irish Free State's relations with the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, it was pre-eminently our duty to register it. To have failed in this would have been to repudiate the Covenant, which can be done neither by the Free State nor any other member of the League." Mr. Fitzgerald's reading of the Article is correct. Those who doubt may here read the clause for themselves. It reads as follows:—"Every treaty or international engagement entered into hereafter by any member of the League shall be forthwith registered with the Secretariat, and shall as often as possible be published by it. No such treaty or international engagement shall be binding until so registered."

Seeing for Themselves

When the British Trade Union Delegates returned from Russia to picture Muscovite conditions in glowing colors, one English paper described them as "British mugs" who "had no more idea of the true feelings of the Russian people and the real conditions of Russian life than a trainload of bullocks have of England in their journey from the pastures up to Smithfield Market." The *ad interim* report of the delegates is really not worth the paper upon which it is written, to say which is not to reflect upon the honesty of those who wrote it. They would see just as much of Russia as their hosts, the Bolshevik leaders, deemed it wise to let them see. The good old stock challenge, "come and see for yourself," is not always as open as it sounds. For example, many distinguished visitors have looked upon Belfast and returned home "deeply impressed" with all they had seen. They would be escorted to Stormont Castle, and driven to the City Hall; they would be taken to the seats of the big industries, and feasted in Ulster Hall; and then they would be closely shepherded to the railway station. But, says an Irish exchange, no one would dream of taking those visitors to the slum districts.

No Russian Bolshevik in Moscow could improve upon the procedure by which hundreds of visitors to Belfast are "shepherded" by skillful and plausible exponents of the noble science of deluding "mugs."

A Wily Shepherd

The same paper goes on to refer to the time when the onestamious "Mick McQuaid" was getting a goodly bonus per head from the "Joint Stock Papist Souls Conversion Society," with headquarters in London, for every citizen of Connemara "evangelised" under his auspices. An honest Anglican bishop announced his intention of paying a visit to the scene of the great "Evangeliser's" fruitful labors. The society warned their agent in alarm and panic. They knew that the stories of the conversions were impudent fabrications. When the bishop, a generous subscriber, arrived, he thought he had taken Mick by surprise; but the faithful McQuaid promptly undertook to "show him around." With the help of an accomplice, half-a-dozen successful personations of "converts" were effected on the road to the place where an "orphanage," peopled by the children of "murdered converts," had been established—according to the appeals issued by the "J.S.P.S.C.S." Five hundred yards from the road, on the border of a little lake, some twenty or thirty children were standing or seated. When the good bishop turned towards this interesting and pathetic group, McQuaid produced a huge bottle of evil-smelling stuff, which he sprinkled over the prelate and himself with great liberality and fervor, explaining that the poor orphans were stricken with smallpox owing to the diabolical devices of the local unconverted Papists. His Lordship's retreat was accomplished in record time; and he handed £50 to the heroic foster-father of the afflicted "orphanage." Thereafter the pious "evangeliser" salved the small garments in which he had arrayed figures formed from turf-mould, and kicked the "bodies" of the "orphans" into the lake. It is a story that should never be forgotten by the serious pilgrim in search of information.

Lourdes and the Modern Mind

Millions of people throughout the world are the victims of superstition in some particular or other. Some believe in the potency of charms to ward off evil; others in the prophetic nature of dreams; some go in fear and trembling to the fortune-tellers to discover the future; others again will not pass under a ladder, or remove the horse-shoe from the door. The *Manchester Guardian* says that there are at least 15 well-known professional astrologers plying their trade in the West End of London and many lesser-known ones. The writer smiles behind his hand when he says that whatever we may think of astrology, it is fascinating to find that in an age of supposed intense enlightenment what the encyclopedia calls "one of the oldest superstitions" is apparently as active now as it was in the dawn of history. But those who are most careful to observe

all the rites connected with superstitions are the very people who pour most ridicule on the miraculous happenings at Lourdes. Hilafre Belloc referred to this when he spoke at a demonstration in London organised by the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes. The title of his address was "Lourdes and the Modern Mind," and in the course of it he pointed out that the thing that called itself the modern mind denied the miraculous quality of Lourdes. Within living memory it had denied the phenomena. It was now prepared to look for the phenomena everywhere. There was nothing in the way of the abnormal, the unaccustomed, and the strange which it would not swallow except Lourdes. It accepted M. Coué, and was delighted to accept Einstein, but not Lourdes or the Gospel. He suggested that the reason for this inability to believe that the miracles at Lourdes were due to an external power and this *valle-jace* from the old materialism to the new general credulity was to be found in the hostility to the Catholic Church. Mr. Chesterton, who followed, claimed that while Catholics regarded the miracles at Lourdes as due to the will of God, they regarded all natural phenomena as equally the result of His will. "Our vision of this ordinary world is more tinged with mysticism than that of the average transcendentalist, because we say that the same Power that created the spring at Lourdes created the world."

Can Catholics Think?

One of the stock calumnies against the Church is that she does not allow Catholics to think for themselves. A New Zealand Protestant divine delivered a sermon a couple of Sundays ago, and in the course of it he deplored the craze for definition in matters of doctrine. He concluded by advising his congregation to accept the facts without the niceties of logical or theological definition. We shudder to think what would have been said had a Catholic preacher expressed himself so, and we are glad to say that no Catholic preacher would dream of tendering such advice. There is a Mr. Glover, however, who has been writing in the *Daily News* to tell his friends that Catholics cannot think. The poor man has forgotten that it was the thinking of the Catholic General Foch that saved his skin what time his Protestant-thinking Generals were unable to beat the Germans. He evidently does not know that Catholic inspiration is at the root of French literature, which is the work of the clearest thinkers of modern times. It is an old fable, that Catholics cannot think, and as usual it seems to be repeated by a man who has himself the very fault which he would like us to have. As a writer in *Catholic Truth* points out, the only tyranny in Catholic belief is that it prevents a man from thinking wrongly on certain matters. And if this be a tyranny, it is also a tyranny to teach a boy that two and two make four so effectively as to make it impossible for him ever again to think that two and two make five. In fact, Catholics are good thinkers for the very reason that their faith gives them something to think about. You cannot think about anything unless you know

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