

Current Topics

Ollapodrida

The saddest sight in America, according to the *Catholic World*, is to see a Catholic buying a paper of the Hearst type immediately after Mass, and going away to devour it as a jackal devours a decomposing carcass in the jungle. Have we no Catholics in New Zealand who imitate our American friends?

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Perhaps, the *Catholic World* continues, the priest at the altar had just read the warning against "fornication and all uncleanness and obscenity and foolishness and scurrility." Then, forgetting the solemn message of these words for his soul, the imitator of the jackal rushes to purchase a weekly paper which tells him all about these very enormities which bar a man from the Kingdom of Heaven. Some of our New Zealand friends do likewise.

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An Irish review tells us that the one defect in Irish Catholicism throughout the world is that the people will not read Catholic literature. The *Tablet* has been repeating that fact for some years past, and we are glad that somebody else has discovered it. Our people have the most wonderful faith in the world, but in organisation and discipline they are far behind the German and the English Catholic. The latter know the importance of reading Catholic books and periodicals and they are hungry for more knowledge concerning the faith which is in them. In some parishes every family used to take a Catholic paper, but that is the exception, while it ought to be not only the rule but a matter of course. The Catholic child in the Catholic school, is one axiom for parents; and the second is this: A Catholic paper in every Catholic home.

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Philip Gibbs, like many another observer, is deploring the danger of the downfall of the British Empire. He speaks of it in the usual British style when he says: "The world will lose its strongest rock of defence against brutality and tyranny and the ethics of the jungle," if the Empire goes. The Editor of the *Catholic World* thinks otherwise: "I cannot agree with Sir Philip that the British Empire is 'the strongest defence against the brutality and tyranny and the ethics of the jungle.' Rather if I read history aright brutality and tyranny and the ethics of the jungle were largely employed in the upbuilding of that Empire." That cruel remark reminds us of the poem, "The Flag of England," written by that clever British statesman, Labouchere, and (it was said) used by the Germans as an alternative to the 'ymn of 'ate.

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People in the United States sometimes discuss the probability of Governor Smith's becoming President. The *New York Times* is right when it says that, notwithstanding his suitability from every point of view there is a fatal barrier: "In one respect he would seem to be superior to either of them (Tilden or Cleveland), politically. He enjoys an immense personal popularity. . . It is

in truth a common saying heard from his party followers and from his political opponents, that but for one thing Governor Smith would be an irresistible candidate for the Presidency.

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"Everybody knows what that supposedly fatal obstacle is. It is his religious belief. He is a Catholic, and the quiet assumption is that no Catholic can be elected President of the United States. The stultifying implications of this hateful intolerance are such that no public man dares to avow them openly. They are merely to be whispered about. But they exist just the same, a shameful reproach to all our American professions though they be."

It seems to us that there is somewhat of a similar shameful reproach to that will o' the wisp known as British Fair Play.

Finance and the Boundary Problem

It was a mistake ever to draw a boundary line between six counties in which a number of Orangemen happen to live and the rest of Ireland. That was but one more *damnosa hereditas* left to Ireland by the wily and unscrupulous Lloyd George. But we believe that to make a new boundary at present would be but adding mistake to mistake and aggravating already bitter feelings. Had the British Government kept the pledges made to Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, the matter would have been settled, but unfortunately, these two Irishmen were only just two more Irishmen who were blind to all the lessons of the history of their country. They trusted the promises of British statesmen at a time when, as an Ulster Protestant had written, no foreign statesman could trust the word of a British statesman without danger to his country. John MacNeill found out that the Commission was not going to take any account of the pledges which induced Ireland's representatives to sign the Treaty, and he resigned in order to give his Government a free hand. Had the Commission gone on there would have been very bad blood, and perhaps a deal of it spilled. The best policy was to let sleeping dogs lie; in other words to draw no new boundary line but to give North and South a chance of coming together and obliterating the old one.

Who Gains?

Sir James Craig is pleased, but the *Northern Whig* is angry, denouncing the agreement as another victory for Sinn Fein. The British Government congratulates itself on turning the awkward corner adroitly, but the *Morning Post* is furious. Winston Churchill regards the agreement as a magnificent piece of work, but Lord Carson says it was a gift of £300,000,000 to the Free State. President Cosgrave is pleased with what has happened, but Eamonn de Valera condemns it as another sample of British treachery. What are we to think of such a medley of opinions from all interested parties? Our opinion is that the clear gain is that present trouble has been avoided by dropping the Commission and holding up

permanently its decisions. And this gain benefits all three parties, without loss to any of them. But is there not a financial loss of millions of pounds to England? There is no such loss, and we shall try to explain why we believe this to be the fact.

Facts and Figures

Article V of the Treaty ran thus:

The Irish Free State shall assume liability for the service of the Public Debt of the United Kingdom as existing at the date thereof, and towards the payment of war pensions as existing at that date in such proportion as may be fair and equitable, having regard to any just claims on the part of Ireland by way of set off or counterclaim, the amount of such sums being determined, in default of agreement, by the arbitration of one or more independent persons, being citizens of the British Empire.

Here there are two things stated. First, Ireland was bound by the Treaty to shoulder her share of the burden of the Public Debt and of war pensions; secondly, as an offset against that, Ireland's just claims were to be recognised in determining the amount of her liability. The question, then, is what was the Public Debt, and what were Ireland's just claims. Only when we consider these two factors and see how the one affects the other can we determine whether Ireland now benefits to the extent of many millions or not.

The Public Debt

England's Public Debt in the middle of the year 1918 amounted to a round sum of six thousand million pounds. The estimate for the following year would put it up almost to eight thousand millions. In March, 1920, the gross Debt was £7,879,000,000. That, may be taken as the amount on which Ireland's share was to be calculated, as it embraces terminable annuities. Ireland was to be saddled with a twenty-fifth part of this sum, which, at 5½ per cent. every year, as interest and sinking fund, would mean a nice total of seventeen millions annually on a debt of three hundred millions. This amounts to a tax of three pounds a year per head of the population, or a tax of eighteen pounds on every family. It looked a serious matter, and it was no wonder that several voices were raised to denounce the men who agreed to sign such a bargain. But, Ireland had no intention of paying such a sum either at present or in the future. She remembered the offset of her just claims and knew what they were.

Ireland's Claims

The Royal Commission of 1894 found that Ireland was being overtaxed every year by England, to the amount of at least two and a quarter million pounds. This over-taxation had then been going on for sixty years. The Royal Commission also found that compensation was due to Ireland for this extortion, but not a penny of compensation was ever paid. Hence we may add thirty more years to the period for which the plundering holds good. For the sixty years in question, and for the thirty years since, on the admis-

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