

Current Topics

A Purely Newspaper 'Sensation'

Under the heading, 'A Nun Divorced,' and the sub-heading, 'Strange Case in Melbourne,' many New Zealand papers have published a sensational and grossly incorrect account of the facts in a recent divorce or rather marriage nullity suit heard at Melbourne. The account opens with the statement that 'A Roman Catholic nun was respondent in a divorce suit before Mr. Justice Hodges, in the Divorce Court at Melbourne on the 12th February.' That statement is absolutely false. Before proceeding to give the facts on that particular point we may mention that the lady in question was at the time of the marriage a non-Catholic; that the parties never lived together, but separated the day after the wedding; that even in the statements made in the petitioner's claim there was not the faintest imputation of any sort of impropriety against the respondent; and that there was nothing disclosed derogatory to her character except her unspeakably foolish blunder in the first place in marrying any man 'in a spirit of bravado.'

For the rest, it only remains to be said that the lady was not and is not a nun; and the petitioner was entirely in error in so describing her. In none of the letters put in as evidence did she suggest that she was a nun, or that she had any wish to become one. She merely stated what was the simple truth that she had given up her position at the Girls' High School, Sale, and had gone to Loretto Abbey, Ballarat, 'to teach German and mathematics.' The sensational account of the case, based on the erroneous statement of the petitioner which appeared in the Melbourne and New Zealand press evidently found its way also into the Queensland papers, and Archbishop Duhig set himself to investigate the facts, which he found to be substantially as we have stated them. In an interview with a representative of the *Catholic Advocate*, Brisbane, his Grace stated that he had been surprised to read the report referred to, and that he had immediately set to work to get first hand information about the matter. Continuing, Dr. Duhig said: 'As I surmised, the lady in question is not a professed nun, nor was she ever such. The mistake of calling her a nun arose, no doubt, through the fact that she was a teacher in a Catholic secondary school with the Sisters of the Order of Loretto, who have convents in Sydney, Melbourne, and Ballarat. The lady may have wished to become a nun, but if so she never got past the postulant or petitioning stage to be so. It is well known by Catholics that no one is professed a nun without being first personally examined as to qualifications by the bishop of the diocese or his representative. It is certain that in this case the lady would not have been admitted to membership in any sisterhood, and it is probable that the Sisters with whom she taught knew little or nothing about her private affairs.' It may be added that the petitioner's claim was for a divorce on the ground of desertion or for a declaration that the marriage was null and void on the ground of non-consummation.

Plain Speaking from Sir Edward Grey

Nothing could have been more tactful, and at the same time more plain-spoken and direct, than Sir Edward Grey's handling of the situation arising out of that remarkable legislative achievement of President Wilson's, the Ships Purchase Bill. The object of this measure, as is well known, was nothing more nor less than to enable the German ships interned in American ports to transfer to an American registry and calmly take the seas again under the Stars and Stripes—thus completely depriving Britain of the legitimate advantage gained by her superiority at sea. It was not to be expected for a moment that the Allies would tamely submit to such a flagrant piece of political hanky-

panky; and an intimation was despatched to Washington that the United States would become involved in a serious controversy with Great Britain, France, and Russia if it purchased and operated interned German and Austrian vessels, as proposed under the then pending Bill. A written statement to this effect was sent to Secretary of State Bryan, and is summarised in American papers now to hand. Great Britain, as the nation with which the United States has had occasion most frequently to discuss maritime questions during the war, took the lead in conveying to the United States a clear warning as to the view which the Allies would take of the contemplated action under the pending legislation. Sir Edward Grey informed Secretary Bryan that the British Government would not look with complaisance on the purchase of the interned ships by the American Government. In the British communication on the subject Sir Edward indicated that a mere commercial transaction, such as was involved in the *Dacia* case, was not to be confused with the larger issue of a general release of German and Austrian vessels through their purchase by a Government. He went much further and suggested that the purchase of ships would be intimately related to the question of neutrality. He asserted the British view that if a neutral Power intervened in the course of a war with the result of relieving one of the belligerents from the consequences of the military action of the other belligerent, such intervention in effect would be of an unneutral character.

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The British communication did not mention the United States Government or the pending ship purchase bill specifically, but its purpose and application were clear. The British Government was prepared to hold that the United States would commit an unneutral act if it turned out on the seas under the American flag the German and Austrian vessels then penned in American ports as the result of British superiority on the water. Purchase and operation of these ships in the view of the British Government, would be an act offsetting an advantage which the British had won in the war and would be resented as such by his Majesty's Government. This view was endorsed by the French Government. France had not had occasion to discuss the issue with the United States, but early in the war it took action quite as unmistakable in its meaning as that of Great Britain. Ambassador Jusserand notified Secretary Bryan that the Admiralty rules adopted by the French Government two years ago would be enforced during the war. These rules instructed French commanders to seize as enemy vessels any ships which had been transferred to neutral registry after the beginning of hostilities. This notice by the French Government has never been modified, and these rules are in force to-day, thus insuring the seizure of the first interned vessel sailing under the proposed plan which encountered a French cruiser, and thus absolutely justifying the capture of the *Dacia* as lawful prize. Though the Russian Government is not in a position to act on the seas to any considerable extent at present it was made known that it was in entire accord with the position of the British and the French, and that all three Governments did not intend to look quietly on while action of the United States Government relieved the enemy of one of the misfortunes of the war. Altogether, it was made perfectly clear that there would be serious trouble if the Stars and Stripes were hoisted over interned German ships; and under the circumstances it is easy to understand why President Wilson's pet measure was quietly and unostentatiously dropped.

German Women and the War

It has often been said, as an argument against granting women the franchise, that they would be weak and timid and would vote for a peace-at-any-price policy in time of war. The indications, so far, in the present war hardly confirm that anticipation. In France, in England, and, as we know, in our own over-