

Current Topics

To Feed Germany: A Novel Proposal

A somewhat novel proposal has been made, presumably by the large and influential German element in the United States, to the effect that the American parcels post system should be utilised for the purpose of supplying food to Germany. Representations have been made to the postal authorities on the matter, and the State Department has been requested by the Post Office Department to aid in determining whether flour and other foodstuffs shipped to Germany through the parcel post are to be considered contraband of war in view of the recent British order in council on the subject. Postmaster-General Burleson has explained that the United States is not sending mail direct to Germany, but that the mail is going through Holland and that Holland has consented to forward the mail to Germany, provided it contains no contraband of war. 'The State Department,' says a New York paper of March 27, 'will probably take the matter up with the Governments involved and render an opinion as to whether the parcels post can be utilised in the manner indicated.' The proposal is interesting, not so much in itself as in the evidence which it affords that the food pinch is really being seriously felt in Germany.

Wagering on the War

According to a London dispatch, dated March 29, which is printed in American papers, betting on the outcome of the war was all the rage in London at that period. Presumably the dispatch does not mean betting in the narrow sense, but refers to the assessment of probabilities and chances as expressed in the terms on which war risks were being offered and accepted. 'Several firms and individuals,' says the dispatch, 'through Lloyd's Exchange have on the board to-day the following 'book' on the duration of hostilities:

'That war will end before May 1, 1915, 3 to 1 against.

'That war will end before June 1, 1915, 2 to 1 against.

'That war will end before September 1, 1915, even money.

'That war will end before December 1, 1915, 10 to 1 on.

'That war will end before March 1, 1916, 15 to 1 on.

'That Germany will take Paris, 25 to 1 against.

'That Germany will take Warsaw, 5 to 1 against.'

If the list has any significance at all, it indicates a strong expectation on the part of the British public that hostilities will have terminated by the end of the present year.

Ireland's Remarkable Record

Mr. John Redmond, in a great recruiting speech delivered in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, the other day, brought the figures for Irish recruiting up to date. The Irish leader pointed out that every Irish soldier who gave his life on the battlefields of Flanders died for Ireland as truly as did any of the heroes of the race in the past. Up to the end of February nearly 100,000 Irishmen from Ireland were with the Army, and, taking Great Britain and the Colonies, the Irish race had at least a quarter of a million sons with the colors. 'I make no claim for Ireland, except that Ireland is doing its duty,' added Mr. Redmond. 'Our record is one of which we can be proud. If we turn for a moment to the record of performances at the front I think we Irishmen can hold up our heads. Sir John French is an Irishman; he springs from good old Irish stock. Admiral Beatty is an Irishman, from the County Wexford. Admiral Carden, who is bombarding the Dardanelles, is an Irishman from Tipperary. The lieutenant commander of the destroyer that sunk the U12 the other day is a Creagh from County Clare. And if we leave

the high in rank and go down to the rank and file I think the name of Michael O'Leary will be for ever associated with the history of this war. If you look at the performances at the front from another point of view and look at the casualty lists and see how whole regiments of Irish troops have been almost wiped out I do not think any man will be found in this country to deny that Ireland is doing her duty.' Recruiting in Ireland is now averaging 4000 a month, and 40,000 Irishmen in Lancashire have also enlisted.

Italy and the War

All the indications would seem to point to Italy entering the war arena at an early date; but all the indications have pointed that way for quite a long time, and yet Italy has not moved. Presumably she is waiting for some decisive effort on the part of the Allies—such as the capture of Constantinople or at least the prospect of assured success at the Dardanelles—to determine the psychological moment for her. Meanwhile every precaution is being taken. Military preparations have been carried out on a colossal scale; food supplies for the soldiers have been accumulated; hospitals for the sick and the wounded have been planned; munitions have been got ready; a considerable portion of the army has been called under arms; and a large loan has been raised. All is in readiness; and it only remains for the Government to press the button which will set the whole machinery in motion.

The action of Italy in the present crisis is matter of special interest to Catholics because of its possible effects on the position of the Holy See. If Italy goes to war, there is danger that the Holy Father will be cut off from communication with a large part of his flock; but that, of course, would only be for a time. According to *Rome*, there is also fear of internal trouble in Italy; and this, says that well-informed journal, 'might be followed by consequences of the utmost gravity.' Meanwhile the Catholic world has reason to be thankful for one providential circumstance which has hitherto rather escaped general notice. It is alluded to by the Most Rev. Dr. McHugh, Lord Bishop of Derry, in his able Lenten Pastoral this year: 'Indeed, Providence seems to have been watching specially over the interests of the Church in the midst of the general upheaval. Had Italy, like her Allies, Austria and Germany, been involved in the war when his Holiness Pope Pius X. died, it would have been morally impossible to hold a Conclave representative of the Universal Church, and the election of a successor would have been surrounded by inconceivable difficulties. But a strong hand and a determined will, trained in obedience to the will of God, was required to steer the barque of Peter through the shallows, the quicksands, and the hidden rocks of the tempestuous sea that rages so furiously at present. And so God provided for the peaceful election of a successor to the Prince of the Apostles in the person of Benedict XV., who has already proved to the world that he will guide his ship in safety through the raging storm.' And we may confidently trust that the Providence which has watched over the interests of the Church in the past will be with her in the times of difficulty that may yet be in store.

The Sinking of the Lusitania

In Germany the sinking of the *Lusitania* will doubtless be hailed as another 'brilliant feat,' and Berlin will once again be beflagged. But outside of that misguided country, it will, we may surely say, be impossible for the most ardent pro-German to advance one word in defence of such an outrage. To sink a huge passenger boat without giving the faintest warning or opportunity of escape to the hundreds of the innocent, non-combatant, travelling public is not war, nor fighting of any honorable kind, but merely constructive murder, and is forbidden by all the recognised laws and usages of naval warfare. At the moment of writing, it would appear that, thanks to the precaution of having the lifeboats swung out in readiness, there has been little or no actual loss of life; but this is merely an accidental