

Current Topics

Gladstone's Grandson

Gladstone's grandson, Mr. W. G. C. Gladstone, M.P., was killed on the battlefield in Flanders in the middle of April, when acting as a lieutenant in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Young Gladstone, who, by the way, was an enthusiastic and valued supporter of the Irish Nationalist cause, possessed an attractive personality, and gave promise of a very successful political career. His early and tragic cutting off naturally suggested comparison and contrast with the long years of service of his illustrious ancestor; and the subject has received feeling and adequate treatment from the London press. The following lines, entitled 'From Generation to Generation,' appeared in the *Times*:—

'One gave long years with heart and brain,
One, youth's brief fiery blow
For freedom: whence the greater gain
Only the high gods know.'

Still more happy and apropos is the comment of the *Westminster Gazette*. 'What better epitaph,' this paper finely asks, 'could there be for the grandson of Mr. Gladstone than the noble words which his illustrious ancestor used about the cause to which this country has now pledged its honor and the lives of its soldiers:

"We felt called upon to enlist ourselves on the part of the British nation as advocates and as champions of the integrity and independence of Belgium. And if we had gone to war we should have gone to war for freedom, we should have gone to war for public right, we should have gone to war to save human happiness from being invaded by tyrannous and lawless power. That is what I call a good cause, gentlemen. And though I detest war, and there are no epithets too strong, if you could supply me with them, that I will not endeavor to heap upon its head, in such a war as that, while the breath of my body is continued to me, I am ready to engage. I am ready to support it, I am ready to give all the help and aid I can to those who carry this country into it." "I am ready," says the grandson thirty-five years later, "to give my life."

The Desire for Peace

Every sane and humane mortal on this planet must earnestly desire peace; but the fact has quietly and seriously to be faced that a merely make-shift and patched-up peace, without a decisive issue to the struggle, would be worse than useless, and would, in point of fact, be a very grave calamity. It would mean that the colossal sacrifices made by all the belligerents had been made in vain, and that the weary round of bloodshed and violence, of destruction and rapine, would be begun again at the earliest possible opportunity. All the competent observers of the war situation, and of the whole trend and scope of German policy and aspirations, are in absolute agreement on this point. It has been admirably stated and stressed in a recent illuminating article by Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Writing in *Land and Water*, Mr. Belloc takes stock in a masterly way of the present mood of Germany, and declares that the directing minds of that country know that victory in the original sense is quite impossible, but that the German people do not know it, and that Germany is now working for a draw, with the unmistakable purpose of renewing operations as soon as the necessary further preparation has been made. 'One thing is certain,' concludes Mr. Belloc, and his words should be heeded, 'if he (Germany) gets his inconclusive peace, then, without doubt, it will be but a truce so far as this country is concerned. And whatever a settlement might do for the satisfaction of the Continent, it would leave the German Empire at least determined and able to pursue, at no very distant date, its task of undermining the supremacy of Great Britain at sea and the whole international position of these islands.'

The same great fact—that war between the Triple Entente and Germany must necessarily be a fight to a finish, and that an inconclusive peace would be futile, and, to Britain at least, probably fatal—was perceived by General von Bernhardt long before the war commenced, and on this point his vision was clear and sure and true. In his *Germany and the Next War*, published in 1911, this exponent of German aims and anticipations writes: 'Such a war—for us more than for any other nation—must be a war for our political and national existence. This must be so, for our opponents can only attain their political aims by almost annihilating us by land and by sea. If the victory is only half won, they would have to expect continuous renewals of the contest, which would be contrary to their interests. They know that well enough, and therefore avoid the contest, since we shall certainly defend ourselves with the utmost bitterness and obstinacy. If, notwithstanding, circumstances make the war inevitable, then the intention of our enemies to crush us to the ground, and our own resolve to maintain our position victoriously, will make it a war of desperation. A war fought and lost under such circumstances would destroy our laboriously gained political importance, would jeopardise the whole future of our nation, would throw us back for centuries, would shake the influence of German thought in the civilised world, and thus check the general progress of mankind in its healthy development, for which a flourishing Germany is the essential condition. Our next war will be fought for the highest interests of our country and of mankind. This will invest it with importance in the world's history. "World power or downfall!" will be our rallying cry. Keeping this before us, we must prepare for war with the confident intention of conquering, and with the iron resolve to persevere to the end, come what may.' In other words, an indecisive peace means that hell will be again let loose upon the world—and if possible an even worse hell than before—as soon as ever Germany can get her diabolical machinery in working order again; and they are the real friends of peace and of humanity who desire such a termination to the present struggle as shall render such a calamity impossible. As the French Premier aptly said, in reference to the sacrifices now being made by France and her Allies, 'it is no precarious peace that can spring from these hecatombs.'

The Irish-American Press

There is, it is generally known, some difference of opinion amongst American Irishmen in regard to the policy of the Irish National Party in relation to the war; and it is not easy for an outsider accurately to gauge—or at all events to be sure that he is accurately gauging—whether the pro or anti-Redmond view preponderates. His difficulty arises from the fact, first, that he can only estimate Irish-American opinion as it is reflected in the Irish-American press; secondly, that he sees only a very small section of that press; and thirdly, that he has no means of knowing whether the papers which come under his notice are really those which carry weight in the Republic. He is therefore glad and thankful to get a lead from those on the spot who are entitled to speak with authority on the subject. In this latter category must certainly be placed that widely known and exceptionally high-class magazine, the *Ave Maria*. The *Ave Maria* has never taken an extreme or partisan view on the subject of the war: it is one of the few of our American exchanges that has made some approach to being really neutral and really fair in its attitude. It is, therefore, entitled to be listened to with extreme respect when it makes a definite and decisive pronouncement in regard to the prevailing or at any rate dominant view in Irish-American circles in respect to Mr. Redmond's war policy. Such a declaration we have in the April issue just to hand, and it will be read with general and genuine interest by the Irish people in this part of the world.

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In a book recently published in America there appears, under the caption 'The Irish-American Press,'