

Current Topics

The Decimal System

Britons have a comfortable faith that in all crises they are sure to "muddle through" somehow: weight and gravitation have carried them through fairly often when if incompetency and stupidity had their deserts the end should have come. Carlyle used to say that the British attitude towards so reasonable a thing as the metric system was characteristic of the innate stupidity of John Bull, who could with perfect peace of mind pursue a course which he admitted to be perfectly ridiculous. Sometimes, after wasting some millions of men and money, he wakes up: often he does not. However there are signs that he is beginning to realise that even an old-fashioned person like himself ought to adopt the metric system in place of the present involved and wearying scheme which fetters his calculations. Nowadays every schoolboy learns the decimal system and knows how it simplifies calculations for the children of Italy, Germany, or France. Suggestions made for the application of the system to our coinage divide themselves into three main groups according as the sovereign, the shilling, or the half-penny is the unit.

Systems

Those who would retain the sovereign make the florin the unity, calling it 100 cents. The shilling thus become 50 cents, and sixpence 25 cents. The penny should be then increased in value to 5 cents., or 1.2 of our present pennies. The scheme which would make the shilling the unit should discard the sovereign, reckoning in half-sovereigns, shillings, and pennies, instead of in sovereigns, florins, and cents. It should also increase the value of a penny from 1-12th to 1-10th of a shilling. It is urged that to adopt this reform would be an immense help to Britain in the commercial struggle after the war is over. Obviously if applied to the coinage it should also be adopted for weights and measures. Mr. Stead says that the present system means that a British schoolboy wastes 40 days in the year through wrestling with the present unwieldy system. But in certain schools we wot of as many weeks are wasted in the name of education.

Some Irish Statistics

	£	s.	d.
Annual over-taxation in 1896 ...	2,775,000	0	0
Total taxation in 1896 ...	8,034,384	0	0
Total taxation in 1916 ...	17,457,000	0	0
Taxation per head in 1916 ...	4	4	0
Since the war the taxation of Ireland has been increased by ...	6,322,000	0	0
Since the war the taxation per head has been increased by ...	2	8	11
Since the Union, Ireland has been plundered by England to the following extent:—			
Over-taxation from 1801 to 1896...£	300,000,000		
Over-taxation from 1896 to 1916...	60,000,000		
Absentee rents ...	1,000,000,000		
Total of which not a penny has ever been paid back ...	£1,360,000,000		

The Brotherhood of Man

Humani nil a me alienum puto, said the old Roman: and deep beneath the passing storms of hate and passion men are brothers when misfortune and hardship plough down to their elemental humanity. We recommend those who are busy winning the war by singing hymns of hate to read the following story from the trenches, told by S. Stapleton, in the *Contemporary Review*:—

"Poor devil; unnerved by shell-shock," was the comment passed as a wounded German was being carried out on a stretcher sobbing as if his heart would break. It was not the roar of the artillery and the burst-

ing of high explosives that had unnerved him but the self-sacrifice of a Dublin Fusilier, who in succouring him lost his own life. At the hospital the German related that on recovering his senses after being shot he found the Dublin Fusilier trying to staunch the wound in his shattered leg, from which blood was flowing profusely. The Irishman undid the field-dressing, consisting of bandage and antiseptic preparation, which he had wrapped round his own wound, and applied it to the German as he appeared to be in danger of bleeding to death. Before the two men were discovered by a British stretcher party the Dublin Fusilier had passed away. He developed blood-poisoning through his exposed wound. The German, on hearing the news broke down and wept bitterly."

Mr McCallum on Hananism

Our friend is having a rather rough passage in Parliament lately. A number of representatives evidently do not agree with the Elliotts and others who seem to think that Mr. Hanan is a success, and who make the welkin ring with their cheers everytime the Minister repeats solemnly, "The system must be maintained." The growing dissatisfaction with the performances of Mr. Hanan are in striking contrast to the foolish chorus of approbation from those who do not care what becomes of the youth of New Zealand provided that Catholics get no fair play. Mr. McCallum called the attention of the Government to the unrest and annoyance caused to Catholics by Hanan's subservience to the people by whose grace he is in his present position, and to the unfairness of his treatment of Catholic children whom he penalised because of their faith. Very appropriate was Mr. McCallum's remark that Mr. Hanan had little faith in anyone but himself. However, Mr. Hanan is assured of office no matter what blunders he makes so long as he panders to the no-Popery gang who are just as qualified to speak on education as he is to legislate on it. As far as one can see now he has absolutely nothing to recommend him except that he is ready to sell the interests of the youth of New Zealand, not for a mess of pottage, but for the favor of peripatetic gas bags. Every new day brings forth new proof of the sad state of morality and ignorance of religion in the country. What about these things? Eat and drink for to-morrow we die, would seem to be the gospel according to Hanan.

Spreading the Light

In Dunedin we are going ahead. Here is a church notice worthy of Elliott:

GREAT HYMNS FROM HISTORIC SOURCES
BREAKING THE PAPAL CHAINS
ORANGEMEN AND PROTESTANTS, AND
ALL WHO LOVE THE TRUTH, COME!

Of course no Catholics need apply. What a pity! In that abode of light and sweetness one would surely learn many things not found in the Bible or in any other book ever written by a man who imbibed the elementary lessons of the Bible. These people have a new Bible. The old Bible foretold persecutions for the Church: theirs tells them how to persecute it. And there will be surely sidelights anent the doings of the "Jesuit Spy Gerlach," who, we are told, is in the South of Ireland. As it is also said that he is a friend of the Kaiser's we fail to understand why he is not staying with the only other friend the Kaiser has in Ireland, Edward Carson, gun-runner and traitor. These things will pay as long as there are fools in the world, and *rem, quocumque modo rem* is the motto: get the money anyhow, and what matter how. Orangemen and Protestants! Dr. Rentoul's remarks on the Orangemen should be enough to make any self-respecting Protestant run from an Orange Lodge as from a mad bull. No Catholic ever stigmatised the bigots and blasphemers in such contemptuous words as did this dignitary of the Presbyterian Church in Melbourne. A North of Ireland Protestant once told us that his best reasons for not being an Orangeman were that he had too much respect for himself as an Irishman and as a Protestant. We wonder what he thinks after the late

FOR UP-TO-DATE FOOTWEAR GO TO

LOFTS

'Phone 3227.

BOOT IMPORTERS,

172 PRINCES ST., DUNEDIN