

Current Topics

Our Boys and Sinn Fein

A few little notes that we do not find cabled out by Harmsworth-George-Carson and Company may not be inappropriate. In Limerick during the war some New Zealand and Australian soldiers found themselves in a congenial company of Sinn Feiners. Sinn Fein songs were of course sung. A "Tommy" officer ordered the singers to stop, in the name of D.O.R.A. Nobody took any notice of "Tommy." He went to the barracks and brought out the British army. The Sinn Feiners advised the visitors to get away. But the visitors stayed and did their bit in good style when the impertinent officer and his men were in no gentle manner ejected from the building. Later, when "Tomnies" broke loose in Dublin and attacked the Sinn Fein headquarters, a number of Colonial soldiers again joined in the fray, on the side of Sinn Fein, with such good effect that "Tommy" was not seen out of his den for days afterwards. As a consequence, it was represented that the presence of Australian and New Zealand men on leave was not desirable in Ireland. The boys were only honest in their purpose of helping a persecuted small nation. Independent lads like ours have no sympathy with the hypocrisy which invited them to fight for Poland and to oppress Ireland. These little items, and the warm, cordial receptions that our Militarists do *not* get when they go to meet the returning men are just straws that show how the wind blows. The time will come when the Democracy of the Empire will isolate itself severely from the gang of Prussians, with their broken pledges, their torn scraps of paper, their lying promises, their mercenary jobbery, their protection and promotion of murderers. What a scramble of politicians climbing over the fence we shall then see!

The Easter Orange

Easter is a feast of joy and peace everywhere outside of an Orange Lodge. For some recondite astrological reason the Easter moon sets all the King Bilibians stark staring mad, and they gather together somewhere or other to convince the rest of us that there are worse things than a civil war in a monkeys' cage at the Zoo. This year Ashburton was the rendezvous. When you recall that Mr. Nosworthy represents Ashburton you will agree that it is just the right place for the grand Easter panjandrum of the descendants of that select band concerning whose first coming to Ireland, Stewart, the son himself of one of the ministers who came over, writes: "From Scotland came many, and from England not a few, yet all of them generally the scum of both nations, who from debt or breaking or fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, came hither, hoping to be without fear of man's justice." And although the Ashburton political luminary said he was not an Orangeman he made it clear that he was very much at home in the company of the descendants of that gang of which Stewart speaks. Nay, he made a speech at them. It was not a speech worth hearing for its wisdom or for its sweetness or light, but it showed that he is a *homo univocis* in all the idiotic bigotry and all the retrograde politics for which Orangeism stands and that if it were safe for him he would probably attack every Catholic he meets in the street. However, as Catholics breed athletes, there is no danger that his bigotry will prevail over his common sense for the present. It ought not to be forgotten that with Mr. Nosworthy and the Orangemen was also associated that kindred spirit whom Mr. Fraser denounced from the Bench as a low cad and who received for his dirty methods a castigation in Parliament such as no common criminal ever yet got in New Zealand. They were all there; and it is easy to guess what sort of things they said and did while the full moon rode above their intellectual heads. The press gave them a fair amount of prominence and we are pleased to say that we and

many others enjoyed a good laugh over their antics last week. Barnum had a vogue in his day; William-son has it now; but the L.O.L. is bidding strong to be the most successful serio-comic show that has ever starred under the Southern Cross yet. The air of solemnity, the energumenous gestures, the calm fatuity of the performers deceive many people and lead them to think that the whole thing is not a joke, but as soon as it dawns on all that they are really only the King William Mountebanks they will draw crowded houses in every theatre of the Dominion. Ah, well; it is good that we can laugh in these strenuous times. But it has a pathetic side too. One cannot help feeling pity for the poor old things that forget they are men and Christians in their eagerness to throw back to the Zoo.

Ireland

In Ireland the Sinn Feiners are still waiting hopefully for the Peace Conference to make it clear that there was some truth in the war aims for which the Allies called on men to go forth to meet death; the hope that English statesmen have any honesty or truthfulness has long since been dispelled, but relying on the imperative calls which the American States individually and the United States Congress have made on President Wilson to vindicate the right of that small nation whose children formed a huge proportion of the American armies, the Irish people are confident that England will be whipped into humanity just as Prussia has been. In the meantime England is carrying on the same old policy of frightfulness in Ireland. What we were told was done by Prussia in Belgium is actually done by England in Ireland. Every means is tried to drive the people to desperation. Justice, humanity, truth, and morality are outraged by English officials. The people suffer in silence knowing that such a state of things cannot last and that the God of Justice will avenge them yet. A well-informed writer tells us in a private letter: "One thing is certain, the present situation in Ireland cannot last much longer. Only we at home know the things we have seen and heard since 1916. Talk not of Prussianism and militarism! I tremble to think what may happen. There is a limit to human endurance. You cannot imprison a whole nation. Dumb-driven cattle can cause trouble at times. Maddened men are not amenable to reason. It would appear as if the law against cruelty to animals does not apply as regards cruelty to human beings in Ireland. No wonder Lord French got sick of the atrocious business." This is how England, the mealy-mouthed champion of small nations, the hoary calumniator of all her foes, whose diplomacy is a thing of scorn and whose word is worth less than any scrap of paper, is now keeping her war pledges. And in so doing she is hastening her destruction. Her crimes in Ireland have set America aflame. The freemen of Australia and New Zealand who were ready to join hands with Sinn Fein in kicking the cowardly Tomnies off the streets of Dublin will want to know why Prussianism which they fought to destroy should still be a monopoly of English Tories and Orange robbers. The blood of Sheehy-Skeffington, the blood of the women and children who were murdered at Batchelor's Walk, the blood of the Dublin girls found murdered with English soldiers' buttons in their dead hands, the blood of Thomas Ashe and of every other victim of British brutality in Ireland, is calling for vengeance day and night. If the Peace Congress does not give Ireland her rights the Irish all over the world will never rest until the criminals are punished exactly as the Prussians were for no greater crimes against small nations. For Ireland there may be bad days ahead if President Wilson is not true to his pledges; but for England the days to come will be days of dark and shameful tribulation in the mills of God if the Congress does not do something to remove the heritage of hate from the hearts of 25,000,000 Irishmen and Irishwomen all over the world. Ireland asks merely that England keep her own pledge. And it seems that to keep her word or to be true to a scrap of paper

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