

Current Topics

Class-War

At the root of all modern troubles is the reign of the triple lust—concupiscence of the eyes, pride of life, and concupiscence of the flesh. Vainly have the politicians promised that the war would bring about the renovation and the reconstruction of society and the end of the evils from which the war itself sprang. We need but use our eyes in order to see that in the world around us the radical causes of man's enmity to man, the lusts that render man as a wolf towards his brother men, are raging stronger than ever. Profiteering was never so shameless and corrupt as during the war. Nay, it was officially protected and promoted by the very members of the Governments. The soldiers who fought were exploited, patriotism was made a catch-cry by men who would sell their country ten times over for gold, by men who actually did sell their country and who in some instances were actually rewarded for their crimes by being promoted to a seat in the Government. In the cities, and even at the Front, on the threshold of death, lust reigned and played havoc—spiritually and temporally—with the soldiers. Chicanery and jobbery and dishonesty on the part of the capitalists aroused deep and not unreasonable hatred among the workers, who saw through the false promises and the lying speeches of the profiteers and made up their minds long ago that as far as their interests were concerned the posing of politicians and their eloquent war-pledges were sheer moonshine. Thus it is that at the end of the war we are, not at all unlikely, on the threshold of another war between class and class, between the deluded and betrayed workers and the faithless jobbers in high places. The world is far from being at rest. The menace has already been realised in Russia, and no man can tell how far it is likely to spread. Against the extreme corruption of capitalists the extreme folly of Socialism of an international and unpatriotic type has been stirred up. Among the workers of every country are many who are set determinedly against all existing forms of Government, which with no little reason they believe hostile to human liberty and to the rights of man. Only he who thinks that a kingdom divided against itself can stand can hope for the realisation of the fair war-promises and for the renovation of conditions and the righting of wrongs of which we were told so much by official recruiting agents. There can be no domestic peace as things are. No man can convince the extreme Socialists that they will ever obtain justice under a capitalistic government; no man will convince us that the tyranny of the *Internationale* is anything better than that of profiteers. But on the whole it is the profiteers who are the danger to the States. It is their heartless dishonesty that aroused Bolshevism and their exploitation of human lives that deepened the hatred of the workers. When all is said against the Bolsheviks it remains true that they are but hitting back. In the welter one cannot see a single sign that the principles of Christianity are guiding either party, and here again the blame is due to the capitalists. They have undermined the faith of the people; they have deliberately exiled God from the schools of the State; they have taught the children in theory as they taught the children's fathers by their own example that the only thing that matters is the getting of gold. And whatever evils may arise will lie at their door as surely as the reign of terror in Russia lies at the door of the tyrants who for ages ground down and oppressed a nation. What we say is true of our own little State as well as of England. We have a Government that was afraid to do its duty by the workers and seemed only intent on holding office at all costs. Our politicians are known to the community to be almost as a whole without principle opportunists. There is little doubt that some of them even stoop to stirring up sectarian strife as a means of securing the votes of bigots for the next election. The day is coming when they will reap as they sowed.

The Italian Popular Party

Recent foreign exchanges enable us to add some new details to what we have already written concerning the new Popular Party in Italy. The attitude in authoritative Catholic circles at first was one that might be expressed in Mr. Asquith's words, "Wait and see." Judgment was reserved as is always the way in Rome until a full knowledge enabled people to speak with assurance. In practice the attitude was to encourage the people to support the Union. A famous writer sums up the popular feeling thus: "If you want a straight word on the matter it is this: Join the Popular Party. If you Catholics do not join it, be sure that all those who hope to win its aid at the elections will. Join it, and make its way secure by your strength." *La Civiltà* quotes with approbation the following passage from a Catholic contemporary:—"The Party has its origin and formation outside the field of militant Catholic action which it neither represents nor expounds. But there will be no antithesis if the moral and social sides of its programme derive force and inspiration from the Catholic nature of the programme which aims at conserving in the Italian people for social good and the general welfare that treasure of Faith which the Gospels and the Church gave to our country. There is nothing mutable or changeable in the ideal of the duties of Catholics who obey the Holy See. The mind of the Pope is clear from the reply made by his Holiness lately to Count Dalle Torre, President of the Union: We Catholics act within the limits of organisations approved by the Holy See, and in strict obedience to the same. The new Party will act freely, in the political sphere especially where many excellent Catholics are now deputies." The occasion of the reply to Count Dalle Torre to which reference is here made was when, on March 3, the Union representatives were received in audience and the Count read an address to the Pope, expressive of the highest sentiments of filial devotion and obedience, emphasising particularly how happy they were to be able to co-operate with the Holy Father in the work of social regeneration so dear to his heart. We give the text of the Pope's reply as published in the *Irish Catholic*; and readers will gather from his words how he welcomes the promise of the new Party:—

His Holiness replied that his was the joy of the husbandman who sees his seed fallen on good ground. Scarcely had the echo of the Christmas Eve allocution died down when the President of the Popular Union was before the Pontifical throne to offer the Holy See the services of thousands of zealous Catholic social workers united in a common faith and apostleship and pledged to a programme extending beyond any mere material or political interests. The promptness showed the goodness of the ground. The Convention following so soon on the promise showed the sincerity of the resolution taken to direct the energies of Catholics to the attainment of their religious and social programme. It was an assurance that the seed had not fallen by the wayside to be trodden under foot or devoured by the birds of the air. The Convention also offered an assurance that the seed of the promise would not be allowed to wither for want of moisture, for the exchange of ideas and mutual encouragement produced by the Convention must have given the young plant firm root in the hearts of the associates. Finally, the Convention must have brought into evidence the difficulties which the Popular Union will have to conquer in order to render its resolution to face a new work efficacious. Care has thus been taken to remove the thorns that might choke the tender plant.

"In praising the work of the Convention and the points of Catholic action indicated by the illustrious President," said his Holiness, "We would wish to bring into relief the particular importance which the problems relative to the school assume in Our eyes, and also those regarding the uplifting of the working classes. The child represents the future of society. The society of the future, as being that which shall be formed of the children of to-day, will be in point of

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