

Current Topics

Efficiency

We had a quiet smile last week when reading some remarks made to the Honorable Joseph Hanan during his visit to Dunedin. From what was said it is clear that the High School is far from being efficient and that it is a long way behind time at present. Now, we have in Dunedin a school that is very efficient. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and we challenge any school in New Zealand to show a record equal to that of the Christian Brothers' Schools for last year. What we say of the scholastic record we also say of their record in athletics. Yet a little while ago an attempt was made to prevent boys from taking out scholarships in the Brothers' Schools, and the High School was held up as the proper place to take them out. In the light of facts we pity the Minister. The older we grow the more we wonder what qualifications are required in a Minister of Education. Is it any wonder that a contemporary, when commenting on Mr. Hanan's excuse that the Brothers' Schools were inefficient, dismissed the plea with the sarcastic remark, "Come off the grass, Joe"?

Diplomacy

A little while ago Mr. MacPherson, the son of a Scottish carrier, was sent over to misgovern Ireland in the interests of King Carson and the Welsh wizard. In the House MacPherson stated, when asked some awkward questions about broken pledges and torn scraps of paper, that owing to the great unrest and turmoil in Ireland, self-government could not be thought of just now. Then came on the scene a group of American envoys, anxious to know why John Bull (per Mr. MacPherson) was still out-Hunning the Hun. The Americans told the whole world that Ireland was in a terrible state, but they went further and said that the remedy was to clear MacPherson and his gang—his Colthursts and his Sheridans and his Pigotts—out of Ireland, where they were causing nothing but sorrow and suffering to an oppressed people. Thereupon the Scot turned a somersault as actively as the Welsh lawyer ever did. "No, no," says Mac, "it's all exaggerated. Ireland is not so bad at all." We shall see that Mac had to tell many more lies before he was done. Don't forget that this is British diplomacy. Could one expect Lloyd George, who betrayed John Redmond and broke his word to Horace Plunket and sold every man who ever trusted him, to send anybody more decent than MacPherson to govern the Irish who once were foolish enough to think that an English Government was serious when it talked of the right of small nations to self-determination? God save England from such men.

Russia

The news about Russia, meagre as it is, must be received with caution. Our cables are certainly controlled by persons who are not likely to be fair to the Bolsheviks, and we might as well expect justice towards Sinn Féin as impartiality towards the present Russian Government. From French and Italian Socialist papers we are able to learn a little of what is to be said for the *de facto* rulers. According to the Paris *Humanité*, it would seem that Lenin has had a struggle with Trotsky which ended in compelling the latter to recognise the presence and policies of the Mensheviks in the Soviet Government. Tchicherin, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, succeeded in persuading Lenin to send messages to the Soviets in Central Europe urging them to avoid Bolshevik tactics and to be more conciliatory. The Italian papers say that President Wilson has found out how much the Russian situation has been distorted by a systematic policy of misrepresentation and that he has sent unofficial investigators to Moscow and Petrograd to find out the truth. From the Italian press we also learn that President Wilson will oppose to the last

any imperialistic attempt to overthrow the Lenin combination, which he believes represents the will of the majority of the people. Lenin is reported to have said that he is of opinion that the French, British, and Italians will make a desperate effort to overthrow the Soviet republic by force of arms as soon as the President leaves Europe for the United States. The Scandinavian *Socialdemokraten* gives, as reliable, the news that Lenin holds that the intervention of foreign powers has now become too difficult to be practical, and that Russia will go on disarming the bourgeoisie and arming the proletariat until a classless state is assured. He is reported as saying that it was impossible to exterminate capital without civil war, and that the whole history of the revolution is explained by that.

Germany

On the 20th we were informed that Scheidemann had resigned and that Germany would sign the treaty. On the 22nd we learned that the Germans did not yet sign, but that they sank 46 battleships. We shall learn more later. The nominal Government at Berlin did not rule Germany by any means. Erbert and Scheidemann could not send couriers to Brunswick without the permission of Soviet republics in the way. In Prussia alone there are five Soviet republics which demand the immediate socialisation of labor and the recognition of the councils of soldiers and workers. The former kingdom of Prussia is now a republic with a Cabinet composed mainly of Majority Socialists. In Bavaria the Bolsheviks of Munich expelled the Moderate Socialists, who migrated to Bamberg, where they exercise their authority as best they can. The peasants in various districts have refused to recognise the new Soviet Government, and have risen against it—whether in combination with the Hoffman coalition or not is not known. Strikes are the order of the day throughout Germany. Rioting and looting are common, and disorder reigns everywhere. It is said that thoughtful Germans have resigned themselves to a long period of chaos and anarchy, and that the hope of any sound reconstruction within a reasonably short time is very slender. Among the peasants are still many who are attached to the Hohenzollerns and they have contributed to the general disorder by manifestations in favor of the Kaiser. Most of the trouble is due to the activities of the Extreme Socialists and the Bolsheviks. Hardly less than a million rioters, representing with their families about five million souls, are engaged in rioting. From Ruhr to Silesia Central Germany is shaken with the frenzy of the turmoil, and Weimar is surrounded by towns in revolt. Whatever semblance of order there is is due to the employment of military force, which however does not check the movement towards extreme Socialism. Reviewing the situation one cannot help feeling sorry for the world that is to come when our Peace Conference, instead of trying to find means to remedy all this disorder and to build up a stable Germany, is actually embarked on measures calculated to unite the turbulent elements in Prussia and Bavaria with the Russian terrorists. Germany may sign, but peace is still far away.

MacPherson's Foolishness

MacPherson was more than three parts a fool to take over the Irish Secretaryship at all. Had he a spark of intelligence or imagination he might have known that a blockhead whose remarks concerning certain sexual problems of the soldiers no decent paper would publish would be a failure among a people who put the highest value on purity. Of course it is just possible that the Lloyd George Government did select him because his ebullitions marked him as likely to be particularly unacceptable to the Irish people to drive whom to rebellion is the aim of many English and Orange Tories. Anyhow MacPherson went to Ireland and never in all the sordid history of Castle misrule was such an arrant nincompoop at its head. His denial of the report of the Irish-American envoys has set the

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