

Current Topics

The Futility of Politicians

Edward Carpenter may be a dreamer, but even to dreamers in that dark and mysterious hour before awakening, of which Dante sings, there come at times penetrating thoughts. We find many such in Carpenter's dreams, but hardly any one more worthy of remembering just now than this:—"If the present-day diplomatists and Foreign Ministers have sincerely striven for peace, then their utter incapacity and futility have been proved to the hilt, and they must be swept away. If they have not sincerely striven for peace, but only pretended to so strive, then also they must be swept away, for deceit in such a matter is unpardonable. And no doubt the latter alternative is the true one. There has been a pretence of the Governments all round—a pretence of deep concern for humanity and the welfare of mass-peoples committed to their charge; but the real moving power beneath has been *class-interest*—the interest of the great commercial class in each nation, with its acolyte and attendant, the military and aristocratic." Sound sense, dear readers! Away with them!—the incompetents, the jobbers, the profiteers, the false friends, the deceivers of the people, who are now (from their own point of view) satisfied with what they tell us is peace. If any man doubts the truth of Carpenter's words let him ask himself why did Lloyd George delight to honor a man who traded with the enemy in war-time; and why did King George delight to honor the Orange rebels who were trucking with the Kaiser; and why, instead of the fulfilment of previous pledges, we have now a peace framed by a gang of capitalists. If the people were left alone we should never have war. And when war comes the people pay and the plutocrats reap the harvest. Oh, for the dreams of a world-reconstruction! Lloyd George as our Empire Premier is something very symbolic.

The Case Against the Hun

The other day in an American paper we saw a list of crimes made out against the Hun. For these crimes, which were surely abominable, vengeance was demanded, and who shall say unreasonably? We all agree that the criminals ought to be punished severely. (1) Wanton destruction of property—such as was wrought by Maxwell in Dublin; (2) Arrests of civilians—such as is common in Ireland under Lloyd George; (3) Murder of civilians—such as the murder of Sheehy-Skeffington and of the innocent men in King Street; (4) Firing on women and children—such as took place in Bachelor's Walk; (5) Brutal treatment of political prisoners—such as took place in Belfast Gaol; (6) Breaking of solemn pledges—such as Lloyd George's to Redmond, to Plunkett, and to many others—these were a few of the crimes which our American contemporary denounced so justly. We have all denounced them; we have all called for vengeance on the Huns who perpetrated them in Belgium. Unless we are a nation of hypocrites we will denounce our own rulers, Lloyd George, Carson, and the rest of them, and call for justice on them. If you are a true Jingo you will say, "But these things were only done to the Irish, whom it is *our domestic concern* to murder and ill-treat." You make a sad mistake: these things have been done to you; for it is home to your door the retribution and the punishment will surely come. It is you who will suffer in the day when an outraged British people will arise and sweep away the tricksters who have brought international disgrace upon them. The Irish died in great numbers as a result of these crimes; but how many Englishmen live in a shame that is worse than death because of the doings of England's Huns? We know that there are among us many who rejoice at the slow murder of the Irish Catholics—many who are ready to forge and to falsify and to lie in order to blacken Ireland. They and their masters will have their hour.

Conan Doyle's Dotage

We all knew Conan Doyle as the successful author of a long series of glorified Penny Dreadfuls which we read with avidity in our boyhood just as we read about the doings of Deadwood Dick, Captain Kidd, Bluebeard, Henry VIII., Queen Elizabeth, and Cromwell. Having made some money and got a title out of the business, Conan's inventive genius failed, and his vogue ended as pitifully as Kipling's. Possibly too his mind became weak, as is not unusual with the men whom the mob delights to honor. Anyhow, the one-time famous story-teller made up his mind in his old age that he had not only a title from the King, but also a title from heaven to lay down the law for ordinary mortals on all things under the sun and a few others. It is not so long ago since his idiotic views on the sacred subject of marriage were ridiculed by the thinking people—who, in a small minority, are still to be found in the British Empire. To some it was pitiable, to others more callous it was amusing, to hear the creator of Sherlock Holmes speaking *ex cathedra* on theology, but barring himself nobody seemed to take Sir Arthur Conan Doyle more seriously than in the days when he wrote fairy tales about Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson. After a rest he has broken out again. In old age many men and women of "strong minds" are punished by God by being permitted to make themselves ridiculous. People who climbed up a scaffold and looked down patronisingly on the men and women who believe in God and in the Bible often become the victims of the most advanced forms of superstition, and proceed with a garrulosity in keeping with their credulity to preach a Spiritism that is far from spiritual. The successful writer failed as an amateur theologian; his failure as a prophet is equally lamentable. He has recently proclaimed his faith that as many women are remotely suitable to become mediums, Spiritist practices ought to be taken up commonly by the gentle sex. Just as theologians fell upon him when his views about marriage and divorce were circulated, so now medical men who devoted as much time and energy to their professional studies as he did to the manufacture of defective yarns take him to task firmly and tell him some plain truths about the evil effects of Spiritism on its victims. Women and girls in modern cities suffer quite enough from nerves and from neurotic influences already, and it is pointed out to Sir Arthur that what we want is something to counteract rather than further increase the evil effects of present-day conditions on mind and morals. Sir Arthur's proposal would have the effect of introducing tired girls, in need of healthy relaxation after their day's work, to spiritist séances and gatherings of which the inevitable result would be mental and moral collapse. It is the opinion of investigators who are more qualified to pronounce on the subject than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that the exercise of mediumship is almost always "attended by physical exhaustion, very frequently by complete mental prostration, producing a kind of moral paralysis and inertia of the will," and that "sometimes there are cataleptic seizures, contortions of the muscles of the face which are terrible to witness, and which are all of them conditions awakening disgust in all healthy and normally constituted minds—a state of feeling surely removed from anything approaching moral aspiration or elevation." Further, experts tell us that "it is a fact universally acknowledged and admitted by experienced spiritualists that the influence of the séance-room is on the whole debasing, and that it tends to banish all true devotional feeling and true religion." All things considered, it does seem that, if Sir Arthur had his way, we should have in a short time a race of mothers who would rear a generation silly enough and unmoral enough to accept even Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as a prophet and a teacher. The Empire has gone a long way on the road to the Devil, but it is not yet as far as that.

America and Ireland

"Civis," by interpolating into a passage from Lecky the words of a historian whom Lecky condemns

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