

Current Topics

Moving Pictures and Education

Who says that the moving pictures do not create a thirst for knowledge? Recently an American firm of picture producers released a picture entitled "The Ten Commandments," and the *Catholic Herald* of Sacramento has it that thousands of people throughout the States made it their immediate business to find out what are the Ten Commandments. We suppose that the picture will be reproduced here in due course, and then, probably, the hurricane of investigation will be repeated.

The Duty of Voting

It is the general belief that the citizen is not morally bound to exercise his franchise at every opportunity. Dr. John A. Ryan, of the Catholic University of America, disagrees with this view. He says that the public welfare will be cared for in proportion as the citizens are active, interested, and conscientious in the exercise of their political powers. Hence, the person who lightly assumes that it makes no difference whether he votes or not is not a good citizen. It is largely because so many well-meaning persons adopt this lazy attitude that the public welfare suffers from bad officials and bad laws. The citizen is not only bound to cast his vote, but to cast it intelligently and conscientiously. This means that his support at the ballot box should be given only to honest and competent candidates and on behalf of right legislative policies. Hence, the citizen is bound not only to vote for honest and competent men, but to support policies which are for the common good and for justice towards every class of the community. He should not vote for good men who favor wrong policies, nor for candidates merely because they are his friends. He should realise his responsibilities as one of those who decide whether government shall be honest, competent, and just, or whether it shall be lacking in any or all of these qualities. Dr. Ryan's reasoning is sound, and it is unfortunate that to apply the principle in a manner calculated to reap some practical benefit from voting is somewhat difficult to the average voter. In answer to the direction to vote for sound men and sound principles, he replies with a certain amount of logic "first catch your hare." Politicians usually are so spent after their efforts to get into Parliament that they are too tired to do much when they get there. For hundreds of years people have been listening to pre-election eloquence and witnessing post-election stagnation. Consequently, they have, to a certain extent, become fatalists as far as politics are concerned. To say this is not to excuse public apathy but merely to explain it. Some politicians we know are not only the result of public apathy, but they are also the penalty of it.

Jerome K. Jerome Explains

Jerome K. Jerome, writing some time ago in *Common Sense*, throws further light on the matter from the point of view of the voter. In England, he says, the people elect

their representatives—at least that is the theory. In practice this is what happens:—Lord Tomnoddy and Sir Georgius Midas, standing side by side on a platform, say to the free and independent electors of Little Pedlington: "One of us is going to be your representative. You have a free choice. It is a privilege for which your ancestors died that you may elect one of us to rule over you. Now which is it to be?" Some fifty per cent. of the electors—to their credit—having given the candidates one glance, take no more interest in the affair. The other fifty per cent. get quite excited about it. Personally they don't care much for either gentleman. Most of the voters have never seen their gentleman before and have no wish to do so again. One of them promises them "ninepence for fourpence," and the other promises them "homes fit for heroes to dwell in." They make their cross and for the next five years either Lord Tomnoddy or Sir Georgius Midas "represents" and governs them.

Dr. Frank Crane's View

Dr. Frank Crane, whose new book, *Why I Am a Christian*, has convinced the editor of the *Fortnightly Review* that its author is no Christian at all, gives in *Current Opinion* some paradoxical reasons why people should vote. The principal reason for voting, he says, "is that if you don't somebody else will. And unfortunately, that somebody usually belongs to a class that desires some special privilege. Only by the majority of disinterested people voting are they able to out-vote the minority of interested people. Government is principally occupied with two things: First, the capture and punishment of criminals; and second, the raising of taxes to pay itself for doing so. . . . The real reason why you should vote is not because you are interested in Government, but because you are not interested. If you want the Government to confine itself strictly to the business of chasing criminals and maintaining order between various bumptious individuals and classes you should express yourself at the polls. The best thing that the Government can do with business, and with the ordinary affairs of men, is to let them alone. The nearer people come to allowing natural laws to regulate their affairs, the better off they are. If the Government is managed by criminals and chronic office-seekers it is the fault of the voter. If it feels that the majority of citizens is watching it and taking it to task for whatever it does it will be more cautious. It will be less liable to yield to communistic schemes, less liable to enact class legislation, less liable to oppress the majority of the people for the benefit of the few." But all these plans for good government will be little better than expedients until the people develop a public conscience that will enable them to become indignant at villainy. Politicians in general are merely a reflex of the people who elect them. What humanity needs more than political programmes and party interests is a generous dose of Christian principles as a preliminary tonic. Without that nothing will be much good for long.

Honor and Politics

Those who are interested in the Ulster Boundary dispute may sympathise with British statesmen in having to do with an exceedingly difficult problem. There is the legend, of course, that Britain is anxious to wash her hands of Ireland altogether, the only thing preventing her ablutions being her pledges to Ulster coupled with the fear that the North and the South would quarrel if they were left without a referee. Millions of innocent readers of the cables have pictured Right Honorable gentlemen with wet towels around their fevered brows studying the Irish question while London slept, watching with tired eyes the black night give way to the grey dawn, and silently praying that a magician would spring from the gloom with a potent love philtre which they could pour over Ireland to the end that North and South would rush into each other's arms crying: "At last we are united. Give us your blessing and leave us. We shall love and trust each other for ever." But no magician came, and coffee and rolls found the Ministry still playing the patient father trying to promote goodwill between two cantankerous children. It is a touching picture, but the pity of it is that so much good sympathy should be wasted upon so many mountebanks. For the truth, disclosed by the publication of a letter from Mr. Lloyd George to Lord Carson, is that Britain, despite all the display about establishing peace between the North and South, is determined to prevent Ulster, by force of arms if necessary, from entering into any agreement with the rest of Ireland by which the whole country would be united under one Government.

The Letter

The letter was written as far back as 1916, but when we consider it in the light of subsequent events, of subsequent correspondence secret and otherwise, of subsequent admissions and retractions, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that Mr. George's letter to Lord Carson has been accepted by the British Government as the basis of its Irish policy. Following is the shameful document:—

Whitehall Place, S.W.,
May 29th, 1916.

My Dear Carson,

I enclose Greer's draft propositions. We must make it clear THAT AT THE END OF THE PROVISIONAL PERIOD ULSTER DOES NOT WHETHER SHE WILLS IT OR NOT MERGE IN THE REST OF IRELAND.

Ever sincerely,

D. LLOYD GEORGE.

Will you show it to Craig.

This letter was written just at the time when Mr. George was wringing his hands in despair for the benefit of the world at large over the failure of himself and his colleagues to find a basis upon which the North and South of Ireland could arrive at an amicable settlement. Then the next act of the farce was staged with more hand wringing. Sir James Craig and Lord Londonderry with the rest of the gang now appear as Northern

J. J. Ward & Co.

P.O. Box 112. Telephone 693.

(Late of J. H. Kirk and Co.) Cash Buyers: Wool, Sheepskins, Rabbitskins, Calfskins, Hides, and Tallow. Cheques posted same day as consignments arrive in Store.

LIVEN STREET Invercargill

Inland & Cable address: "Reward"
Code: Bentley's Fifth Edition.