

## Current Topics

### What Mussolini Has Done

Readers of that interesting book, *The Lady Next Door*, will remember how Harold Begbie exploded the legend of the superiority of Belfast, so long maintained by the British press. He told the naked truth about the ugliness of Ulster wherever it was Orange, and he paid a long overdue tribute to the calumniated Catholics for whom British Fair Play had no fairness. Now, at a time when Mussolini's activities in ridding Italy of pests of all kinds, including Masons, are stimulating our old friends, the calumniators of Catholic Ireland, to defame the Italian *Duce*, Harold Begbie once more protests in the name of truth, and tells English readers that he has seen for himself how much Italy has improved and how far cleaner her cities are than those of England, as a result of the Fascist leader's efforts on behalf of his country. Not only is there less indication of vice in the streets, but there is a seriousness and sense of patriotism among the people which it would be well for England to imitate.

### Some Reforms

Besides the institution of the Governorate of Rome, and the *Podestà* in communes having less than 5000 inhabitants, there will be ten Rectors, each charged with the task of supervising, under the Governor, a special department. An Advisory Committee will be composed of representatives of professional orders and trade corporations. It will number eighty, and its members shall be appointed by the Crown. The *Podestà* will be nominated by the Prefects of the Province in which the commune lies. He will be assisted by a council analogous to that advising the Governor. The members of the council shall be nominated by the Prefect from a list of names sent in by the trade or profession to be represented. A reform of the Senate, whereby ultimately it shall become a House of Faculties, mainly elected by trade corporations and professional orders, is contemplated. Parliamentary procedure, it is suggested, should be altered as follows. Bills, after passing through the new department under the Premier for expert approval by the Cabinet, would be discussed in detail by committees of the Senate and Chamber, after which one single general discussion and vote would take place in each House. Bills rejected would not necessitate the resignation of the Cabinet, this only becoming inevitable (except for new elections) should an explicit vote of no confidence be given by both Houses. Representation of corporations and professions will be introduced probably in place of the present system for local government purposes in communes with over 5000 inhabitants.

Energetic measures have been taken by the Government and the Fascist Directory as a sequel to the Florence disturbances. The local Fascist Directory at Florence has been dissolved, and General Balbo has been appointed with full powers to reorganise local

organisation and purge it of unruly members. The Prefect of Florence has been retired because he failed to keep order. A Siennese Fascist Legion has been broken up.

In Rome, where following the Florence disturbances a Fascist band invaded the headquarters of the Grand Orient, wrecking the furniture, the secretary of the Roman Fascist organisation has been dismissed.

These measures have been favorably received by the Opposition press as an earnest of the Government's firm desire to suppress violence and enforce discipline in the Fascist ranks.

### A "Garrison" Plot

It has been stated by Mr. Kevin O'Higgins that persons in Dublin have formed a secret organisation for the purpose of combating anti-British trade tendencies in the Irish Free State, and that an ex-officer, who was canvassing, disclosed the fact that they were first going to concentrate on the new Shannon Hydro-Electric Scheme. It goes without saying that England did not enjoy having Germans called over to Ireland to do work which the British firms were incapable of doing, and it is only natural that the agents in Ireland should be inspired to hinder the progress of the scheme. This, together with the apparent duplicity connected with the Boundary Commission, is not likely to promote better relations between England and Ireland, and of course it will all strengthen the hands of the extreme Republicans and give them useful material for propaganda. The *Weekly Irish News* reports that in the course of a recent speech at Waterford, Mr. O'Higgins, Minister for Justice, referring to the Shannon dispute, said he did not share the view that the rate offered by the contractors was unreasonable, and he disclosed the fact that persons in Dublin have within the last month been canvassed to join or subscribe to a secret organisation "to combat certain anti-British trade tendencies" in the Free State. The agent, an ex-officer, said they were concentrating on the Shannon scheme, which they hoped to render abortive, after which they would "find further fields for useful endeavor." Mr. O'Higgins denied that there were any anti-British tendencies. Other countries have been free to make offers which were advantageous. No rival proposals came from Britain. There was no sentimentalism in it. It was not development by French, Germans, Belgians, or Americans that was objected to, but development would continue despite any force, secret or open. "Enterprise and development are in the air," he said in conclusion. "We have passed out from the ravine. The people know that they own their country and can make what they will of it. No amount of cant about midnight treaties can alter that."

### Mr. MacDonald on Lord Birkenhead

At Liverpool, recently, Mr. MacDonald made a few caustic remarks concerning certain literary activities and, although he

mentioned no names, nobody needed telling that he referred to Lord Birkenhead. The speaker said he had "missed several press opportunities," meaning that he had refused to write well-paid articles for certain papers:—

"He thought the whole idea of selling one's name, and it was nothing else, was absolutely detestable. If you can write nonsense, superficial, commonplace, stuff without style or distinction, and just put your name to it, and if you happen to be the Chief Hangman of your generation, you get £1000 an article for it; whereas if you were a poor journalist you would not get a guinea."

The *Irish Weekly News*, commenting on this, remarked that the Earl of Birkenhead is not, of course, "the Chief Hangman of his generation"; but he was the head of the English legal system. He wrote reams of "superficial, commonplace stuff without style or distinction"; Mr. MacDonald spoke by the book, no doubt, when he said that the "Contributions" thus characterised were paid for at the goodly rate of £1000 an article. But "the poor journalist," even in his poverty, would not put his name to the "pot-boilers" published over the signatures of Lord Birkenhead and other more or less eminent cuckoos of the newspapers in England. It was time that someone who will be listened to spoke frankly about the kind of "enterprise" favored by the new class of press "Napoleons" in Great Britain; and Mr. MacDonald knew his subject, as he has always been, and is, a working journalist.

### The Belgian Bishops and Socialism

The Catholics and Socialists came to a compromise upon which the present administration of Belgium is based. The Bishops, while recognising this, condemn Socialism because of its doctrines, many of which are opposed to the Gospel and to the teachings of the Church on the dignity of the soul and the dignity of Christian men and women, on the essential laws of the conjugal life, and on the respect due to universal justice, and to the fraternity of peoples. They explain that the compromise does not change the respective programmes of the parties or effect their doctrines, but has been arrived at as a basis of administration. Hence a prudent confidence in those who have agreed to govern the country is not to be confounded with a compromise of doctrines. In conclusion, they say:—

"Never has Catholic organisation of social action appeared so necessary as at the present hour.

"Socialism has aided and may still aid in redressing certain abuses against which we protest with the same energy and at least with as much sincerity as its partisans do, but it is not capable of placing social order upon a solid basis.

### The Real Remedy.

"What is wanted is respect for all rights—for the rights of labor and for those of capital as well, the harmonisation of all rights in professional organisations supported by law, the substitution of the reality of nature for the individualistic dreams, and

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