

Current Topics

Merrie England

All is now well with Merrie England these days. We are told by one writer that the approach to London is through a river of dead ships. Another complains that large business firms have lost millions in one year. A third mourns the vanished hopes of commercial supremacy for which many people believe the war was waged. The *Manchester Guardian* said last July:

"Last month's foreign trade returns are the worst this year. May's figures were worse than April's, and April's than those of March. The whole falling off might be naturally attributed to the cumulative effect of the mining stoppage, but there is more in it than that." Alas! there is. There is this in it: Lloyd George and his Yiddish masters have ruined the Empire. The man whose agility as a twister aroused the wonder of Lansing, the disgust of Keynes, the contempt of Clemenceau, has done his work well, and Merrie England is broken and bankrupt and old John Cow is the sad man of Europe to-day. As a further proof of what he has done to England take this extract from the *Times*:

"The shipbuilding industry is in a deplorable condition. According to Lloyd's Register the amount of merchant tonnage under construction at the end of June was 3,530,047 tons. This shows a reduction of about 269,000 tons as compared with the total at the end of March. From these figures it might be inferred that the industry is still enjoying a burst of activity; but unfortunately that is not the case. One-third of the total represents the vessels on which work has been suspended in consequence of the decline in the demand for tonnage, the joiners' strike, and the coal dispute.

The condition of the shipping and ship-building is a trustworthy guide to the degree of Britain's prosperity. So long as ships are rusting at the quays and the demand for new tonnage is small, the state of national finance cannot be satisfactory."

Sick and Sad

John Cow is sick and sad. His crimes are weighing heavy on him—not on his conscience but on his purse. His breach of faith with small nations, his after-war atrocities are coming home to roost now. The *Manchester Guardian* again says:

"It is no exaggeration to say that the British Empire was never in greater danger than it is to-day. The war has left us in very much the position in which the last great war left Austria. She was an empire with great possessions: ruling over diverse races; on guard everywhere, as the great standing conservative interest, against change and the disturbing spirit of freedom. Nobody can study her history without thinking of Seneca's saying that great possessions are a great servitude. . . . We are acting like the Government that brought about the American demand for independence by the way in which it handled a demand for something much less. Faced with a demand from Ireland that required all our resources of judgment and statesmanship, we first allowed a whole year to pass without any serious discussion or proposal, and then after exasperating passion by coercion, we offered her something that seemed illiberal even to Unionists like Lord Donoughmore. . . . We have now to recognise that this policy has failed, and that it has failed in two capital respects. It has failed in the sense that Ireland is at this moment as grossly misgoverned as any country in Europe, and it has failed in the sense that her misgovernment is a powerful and growing menace to our safety. The sort of Ireland that we are producing will be just as much a danger if she is formally part of the Empire, as she could be if she were outside it. We have now to try the other method. Our recent history gives us an excellent example. In 1905 Mr. Balfour's Government drew up a Constitu-

tion for the Transvaal. Mr. Lyttelton, the Colonial Minister, described it in language very much like the language Mr. Lloyd George has used about his scheme for Ireland. 'Although not prepared at present to give full self-government to the colony, they wish to concede the utmost liberty compatible with safety and with the stability of the Administration.' This scheme had no attractions for the Boers. Fortunately next year Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman came into power, and he gave full self-government to both colonies. Mr. Balfour criticised that policy in a speech which, again, resembles closely the speeches in which the Prime Minister criticises the idea of giving Ireland Dominion status. . . . England has saved herself in Canada and in South Africa by the boldness which our Ministers think too dangerous in Ireland. It is significant that Lord Donoughmore was supported yesterday by Lord Buxton, just home from South Africa, and by Lord Bryce, who knows more about the history of empires than any other man in public life. We see in Ireland the results of fear. To-morrow they will be worse. Sooner or later they will be fatal."

An Imperial Earthquake

In a long article on the Conference of the Premiers, in the *London Nation*, a person who noticed the immense amount of piffle cabled out here concerning the doings and sayings and gestures of Lord Limavaddy cannot help being impressed by the fact that the man counts for precisely nothing in England—and nothing is about twice as much as he counts for in New Zealand among people who know his capacity. However, there are Prime Ministers who do count, even if our William of Orange be not of them. For one, General Smuts, and for another, Mr. Meighen count, and the report gives us an idea that the smug Imperialists who invited the Dominion big-wigs to their tea-party got the shock of their lives when they found that Mr. Massey was the only puppet to dance when they called the tune: for even Hughes did not keep time all the time. A few quotations from the article mentioned will throw some light on the matter:

"At the Conference of 1917 there was passed an important constitutional resolution which recognised the right of the Dominions to be fully consulted when matters of foreign policy affecting their real interests were to be decided. When the thorny and delicate question of the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance came up for settlement, Mr. Meighen, backed by General Smuts, boldly sought to give effect to the spirit of this resolution, and the result was consternation in the inner closets of the Foreign Office."

The secret diplomatists of Merrie England had their own private reasons for renewing the Alliance, and they expected no opposition from their guests. Indeed, Mr. Massey who changed his tactics since 1917 is not mentioned as having a mind of his own on the subject. But Smuts and Meighen had, and hence the tears shed by the Downing Street gentlemen who in a panic at the prospect of a breach of diplomatic unity with the Dominions—or such of them as had sent real live men to represent them—had recourse to Galloper Smith whose record during the days when he rose from being a pestilential rebel to a shady place on the wool-sack gave them hope that he would find a way out of the impasse for them. He did, and the world laughed when it was announced that the Alliance which was so necessary for renewal did not require renewal at all. Here is another passage which tells how the wind blows. Note, again, that although Hughes is regarded as worth mention our Orangeman is still left out as worthless:

"Some of the shrewder Imperialists make keen and anxious notation of the growing tendency of the Dominions to take their own line in many vital matters. They know that Mr. Hughes is neither politically nor physically immortal, that Mr. Meighen's successor is likely to be even less pliable than he has proved, and that General Smuts will never be replaced by an ardent Imperialist. . . . There has been nothing more farcical than the efforts of the British governing classes to assume for themselves a monopoly of affection for the Dominions."