

## The Catholic Record

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LONDON, SATURDAY, AUG. 18, 1928

### LET US HASTEN SLOWLY

A recent despatch from Australia shows that our antipodean cousins are no less interested than ourselves in the forthcoming Imperial Conference. The trend of opinion in Australia is of intimate interest and concern to Canadians. The despatch summarizes Australian views in so far as at least as Mr. Bruce accurately reflects those views; and since it is Mr. Bruce who will represent Australia at the October Conference we may assume that he does not misrepresent Australian sentiment and opinion.

#### The despatch reads:

"S. M. Bruce, premier of the Australian Commonwealth, when explaining today in the House of Representatives the Government's policy in regard to the imperial conference, which opens in London in October, said it was useless to declare that Australia was not concerned in British wars overseas. The Imperial Government's unsatisfactory action toward Turkey last year showed the necessity for keeping the dominions fully informed regarding the British foreign policies before decisions are reached. Australia's decision then not to support Great Britain probably prevented war."

With all this Canadians will agree; but perhaps the Australian and the Canadian representatives would soon find themselves at variance as to the practical means of attaining a common aim. That is where we to assume—that seems to be the necessary inference—that Prime Minister Bruce advocates that the Dominions should always be consulted before the British Parliament and Government reach any decision on matters of foreign policy.

This he makes clearer in the following paragraph:

"Continuing, the prime minister said that Australia should have a voice in the reparations question and the matter of the occupation of the Ruhr by the French. There should be more frequent conferences, not necessarily in Britain. It would be more satisfactory if the dominions were allowed to endorse the British premier's policy before it became an empire policy."

The rest of Mr. Bruce's views on the work of the Conference may be sufficiently indicated by these two sentences: "The question of allowing the Dominions to make treaties on their own behalf with foreign nations must be considered. And the time has come to discuss 'a general scheme to put empire trade on a reciprocity basis.'"

Mr. Bruce takes credit for Australian refusal to support Mr. Lloyd George in his theatrical warlike gesture, his "unsatisfactory action toward Turkey." That action was so "unsatisfactory" that his own British people roundly condemned it; as they condemned the appeal to the Dominions. That appeal by the way was published in the Canadian newspapers together with Premier Massey's fervid acceptance forty-eight hours before it was received by the Canadian Government. Explanation was of course demanded; but we do not remember that any adequate explanation was ever published. So that the fairly obvious one—that it was intended to give the jingo a good start in their effort to stampede the Government—stands in the opinion of many Canadians. If that

was the object it failed conspicuously. It probably had the very opposite effect. In any case, our Australian cousins can not claim all the credit for the Canadian Government promptly informed the British Prime Minister that Parliament was supreme in this matter, adding that if the situation became so serious as to justify so doing the Canadian Parliament would be summoned in special session to consider it. Parliament subsequently ratified the action and policy of the Government.

Canada now enjoys and exercises the right to make treaties with foreign nations. This is one of the distinct and definite advances made in national self-government. People of the writer's generation will remember that Edward Blake advocated the right of Canada to make her own commercial treaties. It was objected that that meant the severance of British connection; that treaty-making was a right inherent exclusively in the sovereign power. Well, we now make our own commercial treaties and British connection is the safer, saner and stronger for the removal of a possible and probable cause for irritation and grievance. We are no longer concerned with pedantic interpretation of sovereign rights; and Mr. Bruce will learn at the Conference that our practical and positive solution precludes serious discussion of "the question of allowing the Dominions to make treaties on their own behalf with foreign nations." As for reciprocity within the Empire Canada has shown the way, the only way compatible with independence.

The Irish delegates—keen students of constitutional development in the Dominions—the newspapers tell us are very desirous to have a definition of autonomy from the Conference.

That is natural and the reasons are easily understood. But the status of the Irish Free State is precisely the status of Canada. This is expressly stated in the Anglo-Irish Treaty. And Mr. Lloyd George pointed out in the House of Commons the transcendent importance of this as a guarantee of Irish independence: "Whatever measure of freedom Dominion status gives to Canada, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa, that will be extended to Ireland, and there will be the guarantee, contained in the mere fact that the status is the same, that wherever there is an attempt at encroaching upon the rights of Ireland, every Dominion will begin to feel that its own position is in jeopardy. That is a guarantee which is of infinite value to Ireland."

This guarantee transcends in value, in efficacy, any stipulations of a written document. It was the greatest triumph of the statesmanship of the Irish delegates that they got for Ireland this concrete definition of her future status. Whatever may be said of England's treatment of Ireland, which justifies Irish suspicion and distrust, Irishmen must admit that the genius of British statesmanship has measured up to the task of holding the genuine esteem and affectionate loyalty of her self-governing Dominions.

How was this task—unique in the world's history—successfully accomplished? Precisely by avoiding what Ireland now asks.

The British Constitution is unwritten. The Constitution of the United States defines everything: individual rights, State rights, federal rights and so on. Amendment after amendment was found necessary. Indeed there are those who vigorously assert that amendment clashes with amendment, and that constitutional provisions nullify constitutional rights. But that is another story.

The great outstanding fact of transcendent importance is that the British Constitution is unwritten; it is therefore elastic not rigid; it changes with changed conditions; it modifies and adapts itself to new problems undreamt of by its founders. It is unique; but above all it has stood for centuries the pragmatic test; it works; it suits the genius of British statesmanship; it permeates the life and the institutions of the British people.

It is the secret of the British Commonwealth of Nations—to use a recent but awkward term. Statesmanship or genius or Providence allowed the constitutional relations between the Dominions overseas and the mother country to develop like the British Constitution; they grew,

they changed, they modified and adapted themselves to new conditions and new problems. If our relations with Great Britain had ever been rigidly defined the growth and development of the Dominions themselves and of the Commonwealth as a whole would have been hampered and restricted if not destroyed.

That Canada now makes her own commercial treaties is one of a thousand instances of this natural growth due to the fact that our constitutional relations like the British constitution are hampered by no rigid definition of rights, powers or duties; they are a living thing that refuses to be mummified by the views and opinions of a certain time reduced to exact legal phraseology.

Another instance: the death of Sir Edward Hutton, sometime general Officer Commanding the Canadian Militia, gives occasion to the Globe to recall the following:

"Sir Edward's attempt to frame policies and shape opinion prompted Sir Wilfrid Laurier to put him in his place: 'The Government desire to state that, while they will at all times be prepared to give the most careful consideration to any representations which may be made by the Officer Commanding the Militia, it must be distinctly understood that any such officer, on accepting the position in question, becomes, from that time, an officer in the employment of, and subject in all respects to, the Government of Canada, and that he is to be regarded as the adviser, but not as entitled to control the Department of Militia.'"

Followed the impertinent, insolent and partisan interference of Lord Dundonald—"Keep both hands on the Union Jack" fame.

The Globe thus comments: "The unhappy experiences of the Government with Sir Edward Hutton and Lord Dundonald led to the revision of the Militia Act in 1904, permitting the appointment of a Canadian militia officer as General Officer Commanding, and providing for the creation of a Military Council which, with a Chief of Staff, might take the place of the G. O. C. Lord Aylmer, a Canadian, performed the duties of the G. O. C. until the Council was formed. In Parliament the Conservatives, with a lack of national self-respect which in those days passed for superior loyalty, voted almost unanimously to disqualify any Canadian, unless he had served in the Imperial forces, from holding the position of G. O. C., but when they assumed office they wisely accepted the change. Sir Edward Hutton and Lord Dundonald unconsciously aided in the evolution of Canadian self-government by their refusal to recognize that they were subordinates in this country. The wisdom of the new system has been demonstrated. No tie of any value with Great Britain was broken, and one source of friction, and irritation was removed. That has been the history of every stage in the journey toward our present Dominion status."

Our Irish and Australian friends will be well advised if they heed the obvious lesson. Consultation of the Dominions on British foreign policy is illusory; the British Parliament, often members of the British Cabinet, cannot be consulted before important steps are taken. There is just one fundamental principle that must govern in all cases: the Parliament of each Dominion is supreme. The Imperial Conference is highly desirable and highly useful, but it is only a conference. "Imperial Council" and "Imperial Cabinet" are terms which Canada has definitely rejected. We are quite confident that the Prime Minister of Canada advised by Professor Skelton will safeguard the life-giving principle of the supremacy of the Canadian Parliament in everything that concerns Canada.

### PRESIDENT HARDING

Impressive indeed is the genuine and heart-felt mourning of a great nation for its freely chosen head and chief executive. Hero-worship does not account for surge of national feeling, nor does it enter into it. President Harding was kindly, amiable, gentle; yet he was firm and fearless in following the dictates of his conscience and his judgment. The simple manly dignity with which he discharged the duties of the highest office in the gift of a great nation endeared him to the American people to a degree re-

vealed only by his unexpected death.

An unusual feature of the obsequies of one of the household of the faith is the Requiem Masses publicly offered for the repose of his soul. In St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, Archbishop Hayes, and in Paris Cardinal Dubois offered the Holy Sacrifice for the eternal rest of the late President.

It is a noteworthy recognition of the fact that President Harding was a sincere and God-fearing Christian gentleman.

Such leaders, declared Cardinal O'Connell, as the late Executive and President Coolidge were "nothing short of gifts of heaven to a nation whose people still refuse to follow treacherous ways of civil and spiritual anarchy, but instead amid the confusion of the world's turmoil trust those who trust in God."

### THE WEST AND THE SENATE

The action of the Senate in rejecting the appropriation for three years' railroad construction in the West has given rise to considerable controversy which, like the vote in the Senate, is not altogether along party lines. The \$20,000,000 voted by the Commons was for the express purpose of enabling the Canadian National Railways to build such branch lines as would serve those settlers now too far from railways, to open up these and other areas to further settlement and thus promote the development of the West and serve as feeders for the National railways.

The blocking of this program, at least for a year, was warmly resented by the West, and even in the older provinces the defence of the Senate was weak. The Montreal Star—one of the Senate champions—realizing, perhaps, that it was getting the worst of the argument, has now put forth a really constructive alternative program.

It says: "The reckless National Railway inflationists complain because the Senate would not let them spend millions of our money building branch lines on the prairies. They tell us that they want to take the railway nearer to the farmers."

"It will be far less costly and more sensible to settle the farmers nearer the railways we have got."

"The first need of the nation is POPULATION." "The only way to get population is to bring people into the country and then keep them. To do this we must promise them success before they come, and then ensure their success after they arrive. The last is the hardest part. But it is absolutely essential. A failed immigrant is the worst advertisement the country can have."

"In order to achieve this end, we should always be able to place our new settlers on the best unfilled land in the West. This means, not only the most fertile, but the best located—the nearest to the railways—the most likely to make the man who farms it prosperous."

"We are immediately met with the startling statement that very much of this 'best land' is being held out of use for speculative purposes. The incoming settler will only get it if he can pay a big price for it. If he is a poor man, he must pass it by and go on far less desirable land where he is much more likely to fail."

"The fact that we permit speculators to stand with flaming swords at the gateways of these 'Edens,' and to drive honest, hard-working farmers with their young families out into the 'wilderness,' relatively speaking, farther from markets and railways, makes all the difference in many tragic cases between success and failure. If the settler could enter the speculator's 'paradise' and grow wheat along the railway and near to the elevator, he would very often win through when now, he, as frequently happens, is ground to powder between bad crops, low prices, high freight rates, bank interest, mounting debts and the fatal handicap of trying his level best to farm the less desirable lands."

"He should get the best we have to give—not even the second best. The life of the Dominion is at stake."

While admitting how much Canada owes to the Canadian Pacific Railway the Star points to the fact that this Company alone is holding 4,000,000 acres of agricultural land out of use in the three Prairie Provinces as well as 1,000,-

000 acres in British Columbia. And the C. P. R. is only one of the powerful interests standing in the way of Western development by holding agricultural lands out of use. What is to be done? The Star outlines the course to be followed in the clearest possible terms:

"The Government must take its courage in both hands and COMMANDEER all Western farm lands held out of use, no matter who owns them. Then the Government can sell these lands on easy conditions to the right kind of settlers."

"It will not be necessary to appropriate all of these millions of acres at once. They need only be taken over as they are required. But we should have a resolute and quick-action Government policy which would say to every intending settler:

"Take your choice. We will then step in and get for you the land you want. We will furthermore see that you are equipped and taught to farm it. You will pay the Government for this service as you earn dividends from the land itself."

The Toronto Globe which has vigorously combated the pessimistic views and prognostications of the Montreal Star welcomes this latest article in the "Whisper of Death" series as "some medicine at last," and concedes that the Star here "aims at a definite, constructive policy." We think our readers will agree that the policy not only "aims" at being definite and constructive, but is all that and feasible as well. It proposes a solution of the greatest of Canadian political problems. If the interest of the people be sufficiently aroused to force the question into practical politics perhaps the Senate's action may prove to be a felix culpa.

In any case the Senate's action in this matter suggests another consideration. It is idle to deny that there is a distinct and menacing line of cleavage between the East and the West. There is a pretty general feeling that Western interests do not receive due consideration. That feeling will naturally be accentuated by the Senate's rejection of the Railway appropriation. It has been pointed out that the Maritime provinces with a population of a little over one million have twenty-four senators while the Western provinces with nearly two and a half millions have but eighteen Senators. That is one grievance that could be easily remedied. Increased representation in the Senate would moreover in some measure make up for the fact that the West is often under-represented in the House of Commons. After each decennial census the number of representatives is readjusted according to population. But such readjustment often does not come into effect for two, three, four or even five years after the census is taken. The western provinces, with their ever-growing population are the ones that suffer. It is the fashion in certain quarters to belittle the Senate, as impotent; but from time to time those who profess to hold the Senate in so slight esteem become violently angry at its power.

Be that as it may, be the gracious, wise and statesmanlike thing to do is to give the western provinces just, even generous representation in the Senate.

### SAFETY FIRST

By THE OBSERVER

We are in need of some special courses in moral "Safety First" philosophy. Our fathers and mothers were strong on this, but we are fast losing sight of it as a principle of conduct. The old folks were not in favor of taking chances in matters of temptation and sin. We are today in some danger of forgetting that there are such things as occasions of sin.

This is very noticeable in the relations of parents and children. The old-fashioned parents were always in fear for their children, lest they fall into grave sins, but the parents of the present day seem to think their offspring are some sort of super-children, who cannot be hurt by anything the devil can devise for their undoing. It is a study in fatuity, this delusion that children cannot be hurt; that they can feast their young eyes on filthy pictures, read all sorts of vicious trash, run the streets at night, get all excited over sensational things and yet suffer no injury.

Parents are in a curious state of mind about their children at the present time. I have known parents

to get angry at the calm remonstrances of a parish priest as though their children were made of some more than common clay or had some special assurance of more than ordinary protection against the evils which have been filling hell with souls since hell was first made.

Children are supposed to be sin-proof now, if we are to judge the sentiments of their parents from the absolutely silly way they expose them to sin or the occasions of sin.

But it is not only in regard to those who are still in childhood that a few safety first rules are needed. I have seen mothers look on with an amused smile whilst their young daughters wriggled about a dance floor in the grasp of a man in a sensual dance that, a few years ago, would not have been permitted a place on a vaudeville program in a nickel theater. What is the matter with such mothers? Why do they not see in what a dangerous position they are putting their daughters? The explanation is, that they are under the influence of the delusion that their daughters are above the danger of sin. Do they not need to learn a few safety first rules?

If you dare to criticize a play or a book nowadays, you are at once told that you are insulting people who are as good as yourself. What, Sir, do you presume to say that these most respectable people are likely to fall into sinful ways? Well, if they are made of flesh and blood, they are liable to all human sins; and if there are any people in this world, or if there ever were any since God made the world, who are or ever were exempt from sin or the danger of sin, I have not yet heard tell of them. Anyone who knows of any such people will find a ready interested hearing whenever he is ready to tell us about them. Until then, we are doing the best we can, and going according to the whole experience and history of the human race when we insist upon the fact that all human beings are liable to fall into sin; and that the temptations of the devil are made without any exception.

As I have said, the Catholics of a former age, had a very clear perception of the necessity of being on guard against the occasions and temptations to sin. The delusion that young folks are exempt because they have the honor to have such wonderful and wise parents, was not current amongst the Catholics of the last generation; and it is as plain as can be that it has arisen from a too-good opinion of ourselves. Our admiration for ourselves finds expression in a perfectly silly worship of our children. We consider them exempt from ordinary human frailties, not because we have taken special pains to make them good, but merely because they are our children and as such we will not admit that they could do anything worthy of blame.

We go further than that.—If they do fall into serious sin, we are not disposed to be as stern with them as we ought to be. We are disposed to excuse them; not merely to pardon them in the spirit in which God pardons them in the Confessional, but to brazen out their fault; whereas we should perceive our own share in not doing all we could have done to keep them out of temptation; and make the first fault a point of departure for a better future.

Safety first is blazoned at the present moment all over the world. There is a world-wide chorus of "Beware," and "Take Care;" and there are learned articles written and oratorical efforts made in educational campaigns to make the public aware how much the world loses every time a human life is lost unnecessarily. All very well and good; but is not the soul more than the body? If it is, why not treat it as more than the body? Why is it that our civilization is given up almost wholly to the betterment, real or imaginary, of the body; and that at this very time when the world is filled with warnings and safety first rules for the prevention of harm to the body, the soul is supposed to be in no need whatever of any protection?

The reason is fundamental in the human heart of man as corrupted. The devil planted a germ in the hearts of our first parents, when he induced them to prefer themselves to God; and ever since that day, man has been trying, not always consciously, but always trying, to get rid of God, and to make himself and his poor weak human nature the supreme good.

### NOTES AND COMMENTS

INSTANCES of appreciation of conversions to the Catholic Faith are sufficiently rare among Protestants to call for remark when they do occur. Such an instance appears in a review of Giovanni Papini's "Life of Christ," in the columns of our Anglican contemporary, the Canadian Churchman. Papini, it should be added, was one of those violent atheists who since the occupation of Rome by the Italian troops in 1870 have vied with one another in the virulence of their assaults not only upon the Papacy but upon every person, institution and thing bearing the Christian name.

THIS MAN, Papini, describes himself as one who in the "proud and feverish days" of his "integral and perfect atheism," "affronted Christ as few men before him have ever done." Now, at once as atonement for the past and to advance the cause which his conversion has made his own, he has written this "Life of Christ" which has aroused so much interest throughout Europe and America.

CONVERSION, with Papini, meant a complete reversal of his past. "Once the most violent hater of men and of God," says the Churchman reviewer, "he is now a passionate lover of his kind and of Christ." His spiritual history had been an incessant rebellion against everything. Critics have called him a "philosophical prestidigitator," a "fickle futurist," a "preconscious pragmatist." Of himself he has in the depth of his self abasement written that he was the "scoundrel of literature," the "blackguard of journalists," the "Barabbas of art," the "thug of philosophy," the "bully of politics" and the "Apache of culture"—"one intricately involved in all the entanglements of the intellectual under-world."

THE GREAT WAR it was (and if it has nothing else to its credit it has this) that it brought this man to the foot of the Cross. He had written a blasphemous book, "Memoirs of God." In his reparative "Life of Christ," he refers to it thus: "Some years ago the author of this book wrote another to describe the miserable life of a man who wished for a moment to become God. Now, in the maturity of his years and of his consciousness, he has tried to write the life of a God who made Himself man."

ON THE outbreak of the War Papini confesses that he laughed, the laugh of the cynical prophet who saw in it confirmation of all that he had predicted of Christianity as a force utterly unequal to the solution of human problems. "But," says the Churchman in this regard, "the hunger of his hitherto disregarded soul soon sent him to the quiet of the hills to think the tragedy through to some more satisfying answer. Why? Why should the race be thus? Here in the simple life of the Italian peasants he saw religion as he had never seen it before. On a Sunday evening [and here, let us remark, there is food for reflection for those possessed of the foolish idea that the Scriptures are a sealed book to Catholics, and especially Italian Catholics] they would ask him to read the New Testament to them and he did not refuse. In the Gospels and in his Mother Church he found his Saviour."

"WHATEVER our view of the Papacy as a world force," concludes the reviewer, "who is not glad that this son of Italy returned to his Lord, not by some strange new by-path (italics ours) but through the Church of his baptism and of his own race? The book before us is his Pentecostal sermon to his fellows to receive Him whom they have been rejecting and crucifying"—yes, rejecting and crucifying Christ with an animus which perhaps even the misguided Jews of two thousand years ago did not possess. We have italicized the words "strange, new by-path" as applying with peculiar significance to those forms of religion which have departed from the one sure path within which, (to slightly paraphrase Scripture), even fools cannot err.

THE INCREASING multiplication of the automobile leads a writer in the Portland Oregonian to moralize on the effect it is likely to have upon the race at large. We would appear to be tending to the point where it will be considered that the