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ONE PENNY.

ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTIONS.

By the time this paper is published, the country will be in the thick of the elections; indeed it may be possible to get some idea by that time as to their possible result, but it must be admitted that before the first few come off, any prophesy on this can be little more than mere guessing.

It seems to me, however, that one may set aside the chance of an actual Tory majority, and that the chances lie between a Liberal majority large enough to swamp the united (?) Tories and Parnellites and a majority too small to carry the Liberal party through in the teeth of such a combination.

We Socialists, I think, need not be over anxious as to which of these events will take place. In the first case of an overwhelming Liberal majority, the Parliament will certainly be one of inaction; although the Parnellites will not have it all their own way, yet they will be strong enough to hamper the Government terribly if they do not give way to their demands. Apart from the Irish Question, it will be the aim of the Government not to stir anything which might divide the Party; some slight and "safe" concessions will probably be made to the demand for Social Reform, and for the rest as near nothing as may be. A Great Whig Liberal majority will exhibit to the eyes of those that can see, more clearly than ever heretofore, "the Representatives of the People" engaged in their natural function of holding together with as little change as possible, the mass of suffering, injustice and chicanery which is dignified with the name of Orderly Society.

Whether the Radicals revolt and break up the party or not in this case, this spectacle of the incompetency of Parliament for anything except repression, will be advantageous to the cause of Revolution; but in the other case of the Tories and Parnellites together outnumbering the Liberals, though the consequences may not be more disruptive of Parliamentary government, they will probably be more dramatic. For not only will some attempt at the solution of the Irish Question be forced on Parliament, but also the Radicals will most likely be driven into forming a separate party, and the Great Moderate Party, upon whose advent I have speculated before, and which I believe will be the final enemy of Revolution, will be definitely formed. Perhaps some of our Radical friends will be surprised when they see who will adhere to it amongst those whom they have considered their own special champions.

Meantime something may be learnt from all the late speech-making and maundering, besides what has been already noted in these columns. And first it must surely strike a Socialist (or indeed anybody else) how strong the tendency is, in our representative system, towards personal government.

What hopes, for example, were hung on Mr. Gladstone's appearance! How he was not only to undo the harm done by Mr. Chamberlain's impatience (save the mark) but also to give spirit and meaning to the whole Liberal attack. There was the man; we were all to wait for him: then we should see!

Well, now the oracle has spoken what has it said? Commonplace and twaddle enough; that we expect as a matter of necessity, just as the ancients expected the verse of the Delphic oracle. What else? An indefinite and indeed oracular bid for the Irish support, received by Mr. Parnell with solemn, one would almost think ironical courtesy and an awkward request to state more definitely what concessions to Home Rulers Mr. Gladstone would be prepared to make.

And next? A declaration against the disestablishment of the churches, English and Scotch; a declaration made necessary in a sense by the obvious dissatisfaction of the Moderate Party, but which taking into consideration the tone of the speech in which it was made, must show clearly to all not blinded by party tactics that Mr. Gladstone has rattled to the Conservatives. Nevertheless, if one is to believe the Liberal and Radical papers, Mr. Gladstone is still the trusted leader of the Party of Progress. Little as a Socialist can sympathise with the hopes of the so-called Radicals, one cannot help hoping, however, for the sake of manliness, that there is some muttered protest in the Radical ranks; but if there is it is inarticulate.

And to think that persons apparently reasonable, should accept as

a proposition having any reason in it that the matter of disestablishment has not yet been long enough before the nation to be made a matter of Parliamentary discussion. Surely when the great Liberal leader said that, a twitch, that might have grown into a sardonic smile but for special self-command, must have come into the solemn mask which has so long been shown to the public.

Worthy people of England, that are so proud of your Representative Government, take note once more how the Parliamentary Machine has been once again used, as it always will be, to sweep aside inconvenient questions. To check all aspirations towards progress; never to pass any law, however much desired by everybody, till the whole country has grown sick and tired of the subject; and then only to pass half of it, so that it becomes worse than useless—this is, it seems, the business of your Representative Parliament that governs you. When will you learn to do your own business yourselves?

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE LESSON OF THE FRENCH ELECTIONS.

As our English elections are so close at hand, a few notes on the past French ones may be useful. The elections of France have been a puzzle to many English Liberals, and a cause of much alarm to many others. English Liberals cannot understand this triumph of the reactionary parties. This we are not surprised at, since they cannot understand even the fall of the Gladstone Cabinet. We are told that the people of France are not fit for liberty, and that ere long there will be the restoration of the Monarchy or the Empire.

The fall of the Opportunists is a blow to Liberal policy, which the Liberals of England did not expect. But when the Liberals of France or of any other country pursue a course of expediency instead of principle; when they equal if they do not excel in deeds of blood those of the most blood-thirsty tyrants, what is there in a name that should save them from the natural consequences of their own rascality? The petty filibustering expeditions of the Ferry Government could not fail to disgust every thinking person; petty wars in which there was neither honour nor glory nor advantage of any kind, and which meant only ruin and disgrace to France. M. Ferry fell as Gladstone fell, but the Brisson Cabinet did not repudiate the Ferry policy. It is still the spirit and the policy of Opportunism which is the curse of French political parties. After the fall of M. Ferry the break-up of the Opportunist party was only a question of time.

The people of France cannot to-day be dazzled and fooled with military glory. Of that they have had more than enough. With a national expenditure of £140,000,000 a-year and an enormous and ever-increasing local expenditure, no wonder the people are tired of piratical expeditions to distant regions. But when English Conservatives predict the early restoration of Imperialism, they forget that the people are still living who suffered and bled under the accursed rule of the arch-traitor Napoleon the Third. That scoundrel found in 1851 the public revenue £50,000,000, and in 1869 he had raised it to £85,000,000. He found at the former period the debt at £221,000,000, and by 1869 had raised it to £573,000,000. The war of 1870 added to that debt another £560,000,000. The people have not forgotten these things, and the country is still suffering from the terrible effects of an enormous debt and a heavy taxation. It is true we are often told that the days of the Third Napoleon were the golden days of France. But let us just look at the composition of the population of Paris in 1869, which numbered about 1,820,000. The gentry numbered 168,980; the professional classes 75,238; the commercial classes 214,341; banking, etc. classes 124,649; military and police 40,557; public functionaries 59,678; and thieves and prostitutes 95,218; making a total of 778,754, living on the vitals of the working classes. Dark for France and dark for the civilised world would be the day when the blood-stained Empire should be restored in France.

But we admit there are dangers and great dangers that threaten the Republic of France. France is essentially a military nation, and the military element has ever to be reckoned with in every crisis. It is a great and a most serious danger. But the greatest of all dangers is the fact that the bulk of the rural population, if not hostile, are at least indifferent to the existence of the Republic. They find themselves crushed to the earth by the weight of taxation, both local and national, and they find as a natural result their interests suffering; and as is the case with the Fair Traders of England, when promised relief by the