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ONE PENNY.

MOVES IN THE GAME POLITICAL.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN in making his declaration of independence at Lambeth, took a step which was both more important to the Liberal Party than its organs chose to admit, and also very important, it would seem, to his own career. The curious person who occasionally writes—what shall I call it?—Gladstonian Toryism—in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, was indeed much perturbed by what he at least perceived to be something like revolt on Mr. Chamberlain's part; but all the other Liberal and Radical papers assumed, naturally enough, that he only intended to stick to his declaration if he found it convenient to do so; according to the custom of politicians of this epoch.

There will, however, probably be no occasion for Mr. Chamberlain to withdraw from his position. Mr. Gladstone, who was called upon to find a cry and a programme for the Liberal Party which should differentiate it from the Tories, found the task too much for him, and put forth a manifesto which was enough to make the boldest (Liberal) tremble. Verbosity is a mild word to apply to its style, evasion feebly characterises its matter. The result is that if the great moderate or reasonably reactionary party is formed soon enough for Mr. Gladstone to take a part in it, he may be its figure-head; otherwise he is at present the leader's cloak of the Liberal Party, Mr. Chamberlain being the leader, though under perilous conditions.

It is clear that is so, for in all the speeches of the great men of the Liberal Party which have followed the Lambeth declaration, when we get away from the nightmare of apologies for filibustering, thinly-veiled admissions of failure, and somewhat ignominious party attacks on the enemy, we find one thing clear, that they dare not face Mr. Chamberlain with a repudiation of his three "advanced" propositions; the Liberal Party is practically committed to them—such as they are.

The stout Gladstonian, Lord Roseberry, indeed, turned round on Mr. Chamberlain in a way not quite new with our territorial rulers, and showed that he thought the manufacturing interest also might be made to tremble at the word "ransom," by declaring for a legal limitation of the working day. I will not insult his lordship's intelligence by supposing that he thinks it possible to carry out this bold threat so long as Capitalism exists; so that his threat was a safe one to make; yet that he made it, is another straw which shows which way the wind is blowing.

The fact is, I suppose, that after the first surprise at Mr. Chamberlain's declarations, the Liberal leaders set to work to look at his propositions, and found them after all not so desperately Socialistic; the taxation business might be made to mean anything or nothing; the land-allotment scheme would not work, would be a dead letter if carried; and as to Free Education, why it is not a great strain on the intellect to admit the uselessness of trying to skin a cat twice over.

Mr. Chamberlain has surely won his terrible Socialist reputation rather cheaply. He enunciated certain maxims that caught the ear of the people, who were almost touchingly moved by them, so anxious are they now getting to hear of something more hopeful than the worn-out Liberal catch-words. Compelled to suggest something immediate and practical, he has been able to set nothing before the public but schemes which are insignificant or likely to be hampered into impracticability by the very party for whose benefit he has concocted them.

There remains this residuum of significance in the reception of Mr. Chamberlain's plans of "reform." They are *thought* to be progressive or even Socialistic, and it is because they are so thought of that Mr. Chamberlain is so heartily cheered by the rank and file of the Radical Party, and so heartily cursed by the Tories and Moderates—when these latter dare. This certainly is a hopeful sign.

Lord Salisbury has also had his say, and he also has had little success in his attempt at a Tory platform. He won a cheap victory, indeed, in criticising Mr. Chamberlain's feeble outburst towards peasant proprietorship; and finally put his foot down on Disestablishment. Doubtless he is sincere in this, as he like Mr. Gladstone, belongs to the unsavoury type of ecclesiastical layman hard to find out of England. Doubtless, also, he believes that the Liberal party will be divided over this small matter; which is certain, and one might hope points to the

waning power of the Protestant Nonconformists, the great bulwark of the bourgeoisie in England.

If one may judge of Lord R. Churchill from his recent election manifesto, it would seem that his Tory Democracy had run off him like water off a duck's back, and left him a clean-washed Tory. I should feel inclined to praise him for this if I could think it would last longer than the next convenient opportunity for getting on his Tory-Democratic skin again. Anyhow he is more likely to be a success if he sticks to his Toryism till the great Moderate Party is formed.

It is significant of the necessity felt for the formation of the said Moderate Party, that Mr. Goschen's carefully measured and clever clap-trap at Edinburgh was received with such applause by the Liberal Press. Mr. Goschen is the very type of that moderatism, and I should think would be its founder, though not its leader.

Mr. John Bright has actually chanted one more song of triumph over the abolition of the Corn-laws. Surely this must be "positively the last time," as the theatres have it.

There—it sickens one to have to wade through this grimy sea of opportunism. What a spectacle of shuffling, lies, vacillation and imbecility does this Game Political offer to us? I cannot conclude without an earnest appeal to those Socialists, of whatever section, who may be drawn towards the vortex of Parliamentarism, to think better of it while there is yet time. If we ally ourselves to any of the present parties they will only use us as a cat's-paw; and on the other hand, if by any chance a Socialist candidate slips through into Parliament, he will only do so at the expense of leaving his principles behind him; he will certainly not be returned as a Socialist, but as something else: what else it is hard to say. As I have written before in these columns, Parliament is going just the way we would have it go. Our masters are feeling very uncomfortable under the awkward burden of GOVERNMENT, and do not know what to do, since their sole aim is to govern from above. Do not let us help them by taking part in their game. Whatever concessions may be necessary to the progress of Revolution can be wrung out of them at least as easily by extra-Parliamentary pressure, which can be exercised without losing one particle of those principles which are the treasure and the hope of Revolutionary Socialists.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

CONSCIENCE AND COMMERCE.

WE often come across a species of virtuous indignation which is apt to be aroused by some tale of the woes of a railway company whom the wicked passenger "defrauds" by travelling without having previously paid his fare. "Strange," it is said (and we find the sentiment commonly repeated whenever the subject comes up, in the Press) "that a man who would scorn to rob his neighbour in his individual capacity, yet will not hesitate to 'defraud' a company;" for it is acknowledged to be by such persons that the bulk of these "frauds" (so-called) are perpetrated. The inconsistency of such a proceeding is then enlarged upon with all due emphasis.

This, in itself, comparatively unimportant incident of modern life, opens up a curious ethico-economical problem. Two things are quite clear. One is that a considerable section of persons instinctively feel a difference between their moral relations to individual men and women and their relations to a joint-stock company. The other is that the ordinary bourgeois intellect cannot see any reason for this distinction, and having possibly a sense of the instability to commercial relations which would ensue from its recognition, adopts the high moral tone. Yet it is doubtful if even the most hardened Bourgeois does not really feel that there is a difference between stealing a neighbour's coat and "defrauding" a joint-stock company, unwilling as he may be to acknowledge it.

Now the question is on what is this feeling of distinction based. It must have some explanation. We may as well state at once our conviction that it is based on the fact that in the one case there is a *real* moral relation involved while in the other there is only a *fictitious* one—a fact which inherited moral instinct recognises, but the reason sophisticated by the economic forms of modern society and the artificial morality necessary to them, refuses to admit.

We do not intend entering upon any elaborate discussion on the basis of Ethics. But we suppose that every one will concede that the