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“THE LAW” IN IRELAND.

THE Government has struck its stroke and we are to have another State trial on behalf of law and order. Unless a miracle of jury-packing is performed the accused will be acquitted, or at least the jury will not agree; so it is hard to see what the Government can gain unless they are prepared to go head over ears into coercion. Meantime not only are the Tory and other definitely reactionary papers jubilant at this exhibition of firmness, but all the Liberal Press approves with the single exception of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to which must be added that Mr. Labouchere at Birmingham spoke strongly and generously of Mr. Dillon “as one who had come forward to protect the poor and humble Irish against the exactions of the vilest set of Shylocks that ever existed;” and was by no means scared at the illegality of Mr. Dillon’s action.

It is perhaps not certain that this apparent withdrawal of the Liberal party from the Irish alliance is as serious as it looks, because it may mean nothing more than the usual conventional twaddle that Parliamentary people are wont to indulge in; but whether it is merely this kind of petty lying, or a serious attempt to back out of a difficult position and surrender the Gladstonian fort to the enemy, it is discreditable enough to the Liberal party. In the first place these virtuous people are in a mighty hurry to condemn the accused before they have been heard; for, to take the matter on the lowest grounds, is it so sure that the Plan of Campaign is illegal? As the *Pall Mall* leader writer very reasonably points out, just the same kind of decisions as the Judges have made in Mr. Dillon’s case the Judges gave in cases of combination between workmen in the militant days of Trades Unionism.

But we Socialists at least need not trouble ourselves about the legality of proceedings which are necessary acts of self-defence against mere greed and tyranny. And pray what suggestion of action less determined than the Plan of Campaign has the *Daily News*, for instance, to suggest to the tenants whom Lord Clanricarde and others have made up their minds to ruin? It is at least a plan, and has been successful, in some instances at least, in bringing the landlords to such reason as is implied by their taking all they can get and not trying for more. Once more see how very tender the conscience of constitutionalists is; it is the threat against such very doubtful property as the second skin of a cat which has frightened these useful allies of the Irish people. Where will the Liberal “Justice to Ireland” be when property is seriously threatened there?

Indeed it seems probable that the Irish question is drifting into a new phase, which will for a time throw the Irish on their own resources, until both they and the people of England, Scotland, and Wales have begun to learn the true lesson for the oppressed, PROPERTY IS ROBBERY. Surely the events now taking place in Ireland should teach them something in that direction. I have said that the Plan of Campaign may not turn out to be illegal; but I admit that that will only mean its finding a loophole whereby to evade the law. The law which allows rack-rent and backs it up with the full force of the executive, is quite blind to any ruin which may be the result of it. Lord Clanricarde and the other shabby tyrants have, according to law, full right to squeeze the uttermost farthing out of their luckless tenants; and we may be sure of one thing, namely, that if any check is put on that right by laws made by our bourgeois government it will mean just the same kind of kindness which is accorded to sufferers on the rack, who are recovered from their fainting in order that they may be racked again. Those tormented by the rack of usury have sometimes to receive the cup of cold water so that they may live to be squeezed once more for the benefit of the usurers. The latter years of the Irish question must have taught the Irish peasants that in the eyes of Eng-

lish law they are people whose function it is to pay landlords, and who must be helped to do so, sometimes by coercion, sometimes by Acts of Parliament made apparently in their favour, really in favour of the landlords.

When they have got rid of their last illusion, which would seem to be that an English Constitutional party can help them, the day of their redemption will be drawing near.

W. MORRIS.

THE POSITION OF THE WORKING CLASSES. SOCIALISM THE ONLY POSSIBLE REMEDY.

THERE are some persons who assure us that we shall approach a Socialistic change very slowly; that there is no need for hurry; that Socialism is a kind of easy-chair philosophy, to be studied for pastime or kill-time for another generation or two, and to be reduced to practice in the dim and far distant future; that it is very beautiful in theory—too beautiful for our degenerate state; that mankind to-day is too ignorant (themselves especially) for anything so lofty in conception and so grand in principle. There are other credulous creatures who tell us that it is the name that is objectionable; that but for the name numbers would join the movement, or rather some other movement, if only the name were changed. As though it were only the name, and not the principle, to which the plundering classes object. The same cry was raised during the Chartist movement. Cunning, designing knaves assured the workers that a rose would smell as sweet by any other name, just as the principles of the Charter would be just as true under any other name. The enemies of the workers, with a number of half-hearted and misguided so-called friends, started the movement known as the Complete Suffrage movement. It was to contain all that the Charter contained, except the name. The new movement was a failure. The mass of the people refused to give up the name. And as far as the new party was concerned the principle soon followed the name. All disappeared. It was natural it should be so, and quite natural the people should distrust them in the beginning. Such tricks may be played again. But let us come to the position of the working classes.

We are told by many persons, some of whom wish to be called Socialists, as well as by the Manchester School, that the workers have, to a great extent, the power in their own hands to remove at least a great part of the evils that at present afflict society. That if the wage-earning classes would only limit their numbers to the requirements of society that their position would be greatly improved, which would give time for the consideration of Socialistic or other schemes for their permanent improvement. It is very kind of those creatures of good intentions but of very limited views. What a pity it is these kind-hearted creatures do not expand their sympathies and preach the same doctrine to our princes, priests, and peers, to the professional and commercial classes, to all who live on taxes, rents, and profits, who devour the wealth produced by others. How many of these does society really need?

What a change since the close of the last century! In 1751 a Bill was introduced into Parliament to confer certain privileges on all those who married, and thus increased his majesty’s subjects. The Bill was lost. In 1795 the subject was again before Parliament, when it was proposed to subsidise those among the working classes who had large families. During the debate Mr. Pitt argued in favour of a regular allowance to those with large families. He said: “This will make a large family a blessing, not a curse; and it will draw a proper distinction between those who are able to provide for themselves and those who, having enriched their country with a number of children, have a claim upon her assistance” (Wade, p. 597). Here the working-classes were valued as instruments of labour, necessary for the production of wealth, and on whose labour, skill, and perseverance, depended the greatness and glory of the nation. But soon a change took place, and in 1821 we had a different tale. By the latter date, consequent on the wars against the French Republic and afterwards against Napoleon, the nation’s burdens had increased to a fearful extent, while on the other hand inventions and improvements in machinery were multiplying with great rapidity. So in 1821 a Parliamentary Committee reported that in many districts there was a redundancy of the working classes, and it recommended emigration. Well, for two generations emigration has been tried, and still there is a redundancy.