

# THE COMMONWEALTH

The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

VOL. 2.—No. 27.

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1886.

WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

## THE WHIG-JINGO VICTORY.

MR. GLADSTONE'S appeal to the country has resulted in a complete defeat for the Home Rulers; nay more, in what must be called under the circumstances, a triumph for the actual Tories; under the circumstances that is to say, the extinction of the Tory party of principle and its melting into the Whig party of utilitarian reaction. The present Tory triumph is as good an exemplification of the disappearance of the old Tory party as may be; they are delirious with joy over it; but what does it come to as a mere party victory? They will probably come back to Westminster with at most a very small majority over the so-called Liberals of all shades and Parnellites united, which means that they will rule by the leave of the Whigs.

And they will need the support of their definitely Whig allies, because the Jingo-Radicals are by no means wholly to be counted on, except for the oppression of Ireland; and even in that case they will wish the oppression to be carried out by sly and underhanded methods, while in other matters they will be anxious to prove what good Radicals they are in everything else except the allowing people to govern themselves. Though, perhaps, we can hardly expect Mr. Chamberlain to revert to his hints of demi-semi-Socialism for the next few months.

For the Whigs, however, the triumph is complete. It is true that the seats gained from Gladstone are mostly in the possession of Tories; but the Tories are now mere employés of the Whigs, kept for doing their dirty work. On the other hand the Whigs have once more got the rope firmly round the neck of the Radicals, who a short while ago seemed in danger of breaking away. They may if they choose help in the triumphal march of the Constitutional party to nowhere; but if they do not they can be done without, and if they are restive can be easily throttled out of the way. The Whigs are now in a truly majestic position, which could hardly be bettered by lifting lazy mediocrity in the shape of Lord Hartington into the premiership.

As to what they will do in the present juncture, the completeness of their victory somewhat changes the aspect of things from what it was a week or two ago. This is clear from the tone of Mr. Chamberlain's last speeches, in which he has entirely dropped the mask, and stands forward as the champion of mere oppression à la Poland. It is not improbable that coercion, which the very Tories dropped before the elections, may now be picked up again. The victorious coalitionists cannot do absolutely nothing, however much they may be inclined to; some beneficent measure will be prepared, and the question will then be in what way it shall be crammed down the Irish throat. Shall the resistance to it be met by a challenge to civil war? That is the question which Lord Salisbury will presently have to answer.

Meanwhile the reactionist press, including the perfidious *Pall Mall Gazette*, which hardly takes the trouble to veil its exultation at the Jingo victory, is busy twitting Gladstone with his phrase about the "classes and the masses," asserting that the masses have declared against Home Rule. It is possible (or if you please, probable) that even supposing the "masses" had the vote, they would have voted for the retention of Poland-Ireland, as the last twenty years have shown us how even universal suffrage can be manipulated as long as there are rich people in the country; but to assert that this election could be a test of their opinion is sheer impudence, since the most innocent can compare the number of votes cast with that of the population. The vote is a property vote—a vote of bricks-and-mortar, and not men. A working-man friend says that in London you do not meet one man in five who has a vote. The present writer has seven, although but a professional man, a hanger-on of the privileged class. In short, the

vote, like other boons to the "lower classes," is simply thrown to them to amuse them with the semblance of power, lest they should bethink them and claim the reality of it.

To thinking-people, indeed, these elections should show the powerlessness of the working-classes under our present industrial system, of which our constitutional government is an adjunct and a servant. It is true that the Independence of Ireland is a class question under the present circumstances, since the settlement of it *must* force people to deal with the question of the subsistence of the Irish workers, and so by implication with that of the workers in England and all other countries. In fact, the question is as simple as this: "Shall the Irish people be an appanage, a convenience, to the landlords and capitalists of the British Empire?" On this question it is clear that the "masses" would have the "classes" against them; and it should have been equally clear that, as the electorate is arranged, like everything else in our society, to give all the real power to the classes, the masses would be beaten. The classes have answered the question as they were bound to: "Yes, it is right and proper that Ireland (in common with all the world) should be enthralled for our benefit."

One sees nonsense in the papers about the "New Democracy," the "Two Democracies," and so forth; but, in fact, there is no Democracy or Rule of the People in Great Britain. There is a monstrous bourgeoisie or exploiting class, all the more powerful as it embraces everybody who lives even partially by exploitation, and thus is very numerous, and in the average grossly ignorant. There is also a genuine working class or proletariat, which under the present system has no power, except so far as it can make the danger of its existence felt by the bourgeoisie: nor will it have any power until it makes up its mind, or rather is driven by the march of events, to take to itself *all* power. Outside these two classes there is nothing but a fantastic accidental fringe, which must drift in the long-run into one or the other of the two great classes; though it must be admitted that the members of it have a tendency to "run with the hare and hunt with the hounds," until some great crisis like the present finds them out. WM. MORRIS.

## A PEOPLE'S PALACE.

THE East-End of London has recently been the scene of a most effusive demonstration of loyalty. The occasion of it was the visit of the Prince of Wales and family for the purpose of laying the foundation-stone of what in future is to be known as the "People's Palace." The route was gorgeously bedecked with bunting, mottoes, triumphal arches (well-named), and all the glittering tinsel that could be scraped together to cover up its dirt and ugliness. The people were wild with enthusiasm; everything done that day was for them, all for them: Bands and banners, soldiers and sailors, and ornamental heads of the various departments of this glorious State; all were there. Numbers of children were posted at school windows to cheer their royal highnesses. The demonstration these made, in the opinion of the capitalist *Daily Chronicle*, "speaks volumes for the staunch loyalty of the rising generation." The "horny-handed sons of toil" clapped their hands with joy at the sight of their future king, giving the lie to those who assert that the East-end is "a hot-bed of Socialism and crime."

The stone-laying farce was witnessed by an assemblage consisting of all classes of society, of high degree and no degree, fleeced and fleecers; those of higher degree taking front places as was their right, those of lesser degree back places as was their *duty*. The dutiful and submissive proletarian, as usual, took his place—out of sight.

As the royal party are ushered to the scene of the ceremony, thousands of children sing "God bless the Prince of Wales." (Think of the training and caning it doubtless took to produce this grand effect). The royal song over, a special prayer is read by his grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, more singing, and then the reading of a long address by Sir E. H. Currie, brimming over with false sentiment and fulsome adulation. The only point of interest in it was that forty years ago Mr. Barber Beaumont left the sum of £12,150 to provide