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NOTES ON PASSING EVENTS.

THE dissolution is to be, then. The announcement has already cleared the air: the Hartingtonians and the Chamberlainites are no longer to be separated as favouring different lines of policy—they are a solid phalanx against Home Rule. Nobody takes the trouble to split hairs on this point. The old pretences which hung about the Chamberlainite opposition to the Bill: “Would vote for it if such and such were altered,” “as much a Home Ruler as anyone,” and so forth, have all vanished, and the Tories are chuckling, very naturally, at getting their work done by Radicals; no wonder they are pleased to find that dreadful leader who threw out the ominous hint about “ransom” now leading an auxiliary band to the defence of property, because after all that is what the whole thing means.

Mr. Chamberlain has issued his manifesto also, so that we may be in no sort of doubt on the matter. It is in the main a mere Jingo document, a little coloured by the remains of ideas on the land subject which last year made Mr. Chamberlain so terrible to many people; and also by hints at measures of local self-government, foreshadowing some scheme which certainly in itself might have something to recommend it, but which is now to be used as a bait for attracting Radicals to the Radical reaction which Mr. Chamberlain leads. In this remarkable document Irish Independence is attacked unsparingly; appeals to English prejudice against Ireland are made, though cautiously; the loyalty of the Orangemen is lauded, although they have distinctly declared that it is not Parliament but the sovereign that they owe allegiance to; and although everyone knows that it is supremacy and landlordism that they have been swaggering for. Clearly Mr. Chamberlain thinks that any stick is good enough to beat a Gladstonian dog with, and so to make all safe with his Whig and Tory allies he writes himself down Jingo—as he is.

As a favourer of Socialism no one need regret him much, as the following sentence will show: “There is a consensus of opinion that it is desirable to increase the number of owners of land in Ireland; and I believe that this object, Conservative in the best sense of the word, etc., etc.” There is no need to qualify; peasant proprietorship is Conservative in all senses of the word, as the poor Irish people are, I fear, likely to find out before they become really free.

Mr. Gladstone's manifesto is this time very simple and quite judicious. The whole tactics of the Chamberlainites have enabled him to put the matter to the public cleared of all pretence and intrigue. The real question is, “Shall the Irish have a real opportunity of managing their own affairs?” Mr. Chamberlain says “No” in his manifesto, at some length, but with no lack of distinctness. Lord Salisbury is of the same opinion, only he is partly prepared to accept the consequences, which are simply unlimited coercion. Mr. Gladstone, therefore, is right in saying that the wager of battle is between himself and Lord Salisbury. Mr. Chamberlain is only an ally of the latter: the extravagant praise which he is receiving from the Tory party should teach him that.

The Belfast riots and the slaughter which took place in them are sufficiently miserable; especially in view of the wretched tweedledur and tweedledee of Catholicism and Protestantism which was the occasion for them, whatever or whoever was at the bottom of them. But whatever caused the rioting, it was the police that caused the slaughter; if they had not appeared as the lords of law and order, the men, women and children that they shot, at the moment it may be granted in defence of their lives, would now be alive.

Also, to compare great things with small, we may well think the

crowd that received the conquered and conquering politicians at Westminster after the great division, could have kept order for themselves, at least as well as the police kept it for them. We Socialists shall lose a feather out of our cap if this goes on: we were thinking that it was Socialists who were specially doomed to be hustled by the police, but now it seems it is the whole public who are their enemies. Anyhow it is not a bad thing that “respectable” people engaged in satisfying their curiosity or loyalty in an obviously legal way should understand by experience what it is that we complain of.

The patching-up of Humpty-Dumpty is exercising the minds of the Liberals a good deal. Says the *Daily News*, à propos of the elections: “Opposition to Mr. Bright we should regard as a sort of petty treason, unless, indeed, any Liberal should be foolish enough to put himself up against Mr. Gladstone in Midlothian.” Once a leader always a leader, then, even when the led have got to be a mile in advance of the leader. What doleful nonsense the exigencies of the parliamentary party struggle does give birth to.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

MR. AUBERON HERBERT AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY.

ONE of the disadvantages of being a Socialist is that your friends, loth to give you up as incorrigible, continually remind you of certain hard facts before which they expect your utopian ideas to wither like roses in the smoke of London. Such facts, for example, as that if one man does nothing all day, whilst his neighbour is industrious, the worker will be richer than the idler, and the idler anxious to borrow from the worker. Or that if one worker saves a part of his earnings and another spends all his in drink, the teetotaller will have a hoard when the drinker has nothing but his next day's labour to look to. Or that capitalists provide capital to start railways with. Or that revolutions always end in Cromwell or Napoleon. To the average middle-class man, the moral of these things is so plainly individualistic that he quite honestly feels compelled to believe that a Socialist must be either bestially insensible to the lessons of History, or ignorantly reckless of the laws of Nature. Exactly the same conclusion is arrived at by the Socialist concerning the Individualist, who seems to the Socialist to forget Nature's law that all the industry, skill, labour, valour, wit, temperance, and foresight in the world cannot make anything out of nothing; and to believe that Cromwell crushed the class which rebelled against ship-money, and that Napoleon restored the land of France to the aristocrats, instead of merely chivying the poor cats who had pulled the chestnuts out of the fire for the aspiring plutocracy. But if Socialists and Individualists are ever to get any further than a misunderstanding, they must give each other a little more credit for intelligence, and themselves a little less for infallibility in details, than is implied in their reciprocal reminders of facts that nobody forgets, and considerations that nobody overlooks. I find that when I call myself a Socialist, every Individualist present wastes time by assuming at once that I differ with him on every open question in politics, jurisprudence, art, religion, morals, and manners. And if he burns to convert me, and feels that his personal eloquence is not equal to the task, he often presents me with a bundle of tracts by Mr. Auberon Herbert. I do not resent this; for the tracts—“Anti-Force Papers,” they are called—are readable, and fit into my pocket easily (except No. 2, which is of a size suitable for papering a room, and so keeping the “Anti-Force” doctrine ever before one's eyes). Now, to nine-tenths of the tenets vehemently put forward by Mr. Auberon Herbert in these papers I am already converted. They formulate my own opinions—my Socialist opinions among others—with sufficient exactness. To many of them I have no doubt the Emperor of Russia would subscribe with unctious. Yet I venture to think that neither Tsar nor Socialist are regarded as brethren in the faith by Mr. Auberon Herbert. I cannot bring myself to believe, either, that the Tsar would take me and Mr. Herbert to his bosom without first having us searched for dynamite. And I am quite certain that my only difficulty as to the attitudes of Mr. Herbert and the Tsar towards Liberty arises when I try to decide which is her more dangerous enemy. We three