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NOTES ON PASSING EVENTS.

Mr. Gladstone, in hopes of passing a resolution in favour of the principle of his Bill, did last week almost climb down from the heights of that principle, and at first it was thought that the Chamberlain Radicals would accept the compromise to the extent of remaining neutral in the division; but these hopes have been overthrown, the Chamberlainites decided to vote against the Bill, and on Tuesday night their leader made his manifesto in the House of Commons. So, in all probability, the Bill will be finally thrown out. Will there be a dissolution then? is the question which the Press generally is answering in the affirmative; and yet, strange to say, it does not seem quite certain. As things have gone it would be a piece of imbecility to avoid it, which would brand all Mr. Gladstone's proceedings in this matter with the same mark. There would in any case have had to be a dissolution in the autumn had the autumn Session come off; and also in any case the two opposed camps of the once Liberal party would have had to meet face to face. Mr. Gladstone's attempt at compromise will give him an advantage in the struggle, because he can now say truly that what the Chamberlainites object to is real Home Rule.

Mr. Chamberlain's speech makes that clear: the independence of Ireland is what he is fighting against; and he was not ashamed to emphasise this fact by an outburst of Jingo platitude in the midst of his speech. His disclaimer of stirring up religious animosity between the two sections of Irishmen is futile; for whether he wills it or not, his line of conduct is certainly helping to excite this animosity. Mr. Chamberlain must know, one would think, what the Ulster opposition means at bottom, that if civil war has to be in Ireland, though the excuse may be the supremacy of Catholic or Protestant, the real cause will be Landlordism, for and against. If Mr. Chamberlain does not know that, the Tories who cheered him, the Tory press which (surely to his grief) praises his "manliness" and his patriotism, know it well enough.

Mr. Auberon Herbert has, amongst others, written his manifesto on the Irish Question. To the politicians playing the above-mentioned game, for and against, he will be quite insignificant; but he is a straightforward and honest man according to his lights, and wields a somewhat sharp pen. It may be worth while, therefore, to call attention to one or two points in his late letter to the *Pall Mall*, for the advantage of those who may be impressed by his quite genuine contempt of the "circular dodgers" of Parliamentary life, and may be inclined to follow him accordingly. His anxiety for the Irish minority of Ulster is no doubt genuine; nor perhaps is he disturbed by the obvious question of how to deal with the minority in Ulster when you have settled the matter of the minority in Ireland. He is perhaps prepared with some scheme which does not go as far as free and federated communes, to the consideration of which the difficulty leads us. But after all it is clear that his defence of the Irish minority is based on his assumption of the eternal and indefeasible rights of private property—that is, of class robbery.

His "view of justice and great human rights" does not embrace the freedom of all men to live naturally and without artificial restraints: freedom to fleece and be fleeced is all the freedom he admits. Ireland, he says practically, may be free—nay, *should* be free—if she will but pay for her own land. To whom, we ask, and what for? The answer is clear: "To the rich; so that the rich may still be rich and the poor poor." If Irish independence can mean that—if Ireland means it—she is striking strokes in the water indeed. It is only in the hope that through that independence she is groping her way to Freedom that to us Irish independence is worth thinking about.

So goes on merrily the political disruption of our present system. Far more grim than this bad joke of Parliament and representation is the process of its economical break up. All over the country an attempt is being made to stimulate trade by the huge advertisements called exhibitions; and royalty is playing its due part in a commercial country by opening these, and so killing, if possible, two birds with one stone—exciting loyalty on one hand, and trying to get it to spend money on the other. The success on the commercial side is not yet great, and trade is still "dull"—a word which covers something of the same suffering as the conventional phrases used in describing a battle

do. "The enemy annoyed our advance much:" we all know, if we choose to think, the kind of misery that such phrases cover, and in our commercial war it is, I repeat, much the same.

Here are a few sentences taken from a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*: "In the meantime they have no food and no furniture or clothing left to sell or pawn." "Man, wife, and six children: husband steady and hard-working, but very little work for a long time; wife recently confined; no fire; no food in the house; no clothing left." "Widow and two little children; when in work earns 9s. a-week; one of the children ill with inflammation of the lungs." "*This man can now get work, but through prolonged starving is too weak for it.*" "The people are growing more feeble and spiritless, because, though we keep them from starving to death, *we cannot pay their rent.*" "Some men who were specimens of manly vigour a few months ago are almost like skeletons, and I know several whose prolonged suffering under the Poor Law has, I believe, made them insane."

These are a few phrases taken from one letter as to Manchester. Multiply them by thinking of other great centres such as Glasgow, where the distress is terrifying the authorities even, and then consider what "dull trade" means—a thing which is one of the ordinary incidents of our commercial system, since the introduction of the "great industries." Only remember that though the phrases above quoted are an amplification of "dull trade," they are still conventional: no language can express the sufferings brought on by our artificial famine. And every one of these men—nay, the women also—could earn a comfortable living if he or she were only allowed to do so.

The writer of the letter in the *Manchester Guardian* says "something must be done with these men: you must either feed them or shoot them." There is a third alternative, as the rich men of this generation will probably find out if they persist in their present course; but let that pass. "You *cannot* feed them; they can only feed themselves." The writer dimly feels this, and as a remedy suggests emigration, with help from the State of various kinds. The "bones of one's mind" fairly ache at the thought of the number of times this "remedy" has been met and disposed of. When will well-intentioned men like this writer understand that when our "State" nurses emigration, and when private capitalists suggest the nursing and egg on poor men to emigrate, their intention is only to get rid temporarily of *their* responsibility and trouble over the people thrown out of work by the system of artificial famine—which they are determined to uphold—so that it may work the smoother? Men are expatriated, so that fresh men may be bred for compulsory expatriation. Let us think of organised emigration when we shall be able to find freedom before us and leave freedom behind us; not till then.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE "BLOODY WEEK."

THE Socialists of Paris have recently celebrated the fall of the Commune, and the massacre of its valiant defenders. It may sound strange to talk of celebrating an event of this nature save by the enemies of the "cause." But we use the term advisedly. The phrase "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," has never been exemplified more strongly than in the powerful impetus, amounting almost to a new birth, which the Socialist movement acquired from the date when the Commune of Paris was extinguished in blood and flame. How many converts to Socialism may be traced to the heroic struggle of May, 1871, will probably never be known.

Yet how indifferent were the working-classes of this country at the time! We can vividly recall to-day how inexplicable it seemed to us that everybody in London should be going about their business or pleasure as though nothing were happening, while this colossal tragedy was being enacted within ten hours' journey of them. One more instance of the strange lack of all proportion in the relative importance attached to historical events by those contemporary with them. To the Englishman of May, 1871, the suit of the Tichborne claimant was an event of vastly greater interest than the inauguration of the final stage of the great class struggle being fought out on the banks of the Seine. This seems ridiculous even now, yet such was the case. But what produced the most lasting impression upon the present writer was the hideous and terrible abyss of brutality and villainy