

# THE COMMONWEAL

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## NOTES ON PASSING EVENTS.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL'S speeches at Bradford were perhaps principally important because he said nothing very new in them. As at Dartford, he thought it necessary to wave the Jingo flag, while warning people against supposing that its waving meant anything at all; and if a Tory audience ever takes the trouble to think, the hearts of some of his hearers must have sunk with forebodings of dull times in foreign politics as far as the Tory Government is concerned. As to home politics, he began the course of explaining away his threat of three acres and a cow, which clearly lies before him. As to that notable scheme, indeed, he spoke more truth than he intended to speak when he claimed it as a Tory measure—which indeed it would be if it could be passed and enforced. He tried to reinforce his hopes of a revival of trade, based at Dartford on those two articles (not very filling at the price) pepper and quicksilver, by a conversation with a railway official. All this, however, was but half-hearted, and, as at Dartford, it was quite clear that the part of the political game which he was really interested in was the Irish question.

Of course he felt, first, that neither the Tory Government nor any other could really deal with the economical condition of Britain; and next, that the less they dealt with it the better he would be pleased; and thirdly, that he had done quite enough to give the Whig-Liberal-Radicals an excuse for supporting him: while on the other hand that, as far as Parliament is concerned, it is possible for the Government to block the way to Home Rule and the beginnings of expropriation in Ireland. Accordingly he hinted at the possibility of a new Coercion Bill, and entirely repudiated anything like concession to Home Rule, poking great fun at the *Daily News*, which he or some of his party had hounded with much success; and finally he waxed eloquent and eager over his intention of clapping the muzzle on the Home Rulers; showing by his reservation of this subject to the last that it was the one matter of real importance that he had to deal with.

He showed with much frankness how he had changed his opinion on this point; that he had resisted the application of the muzzle as unconstitutional when Mr. Gladstone proposed it, only because the then small Irish party had to be dealt with; but that as he saw that the Home Rule party was growing strong, and formed at least a respectable minority, he began to be concerned, and at last saw the necessity for silencing arbitrarily an opponent who was listened to by the people at large. In short, this latter part of Lord Randolph's speech, which has not been so much noticed as it deserved to be, is a model of impudence and brutality, and implies probably a fair appreciation on the speaker's part of the qualities of the audience whom he was addressing. It was no insult to them; but it would have been a dire insult to any other audience than the rump of a ridiculous party, with no chance of sustaining their worn-out theories in practice.

And yet, cynically as Lord Randolph put his proposals, his firm resolve to carry them out shows that he has grasped the true idea of Constitutionalism face to face with Revolution; for in spite of Mr. Parnell's respectable Parliamentary methods the Irish claim is revolutionary, and will be dealt with accordingly; Constitutionalism will not put up with Revolution in its midst, and will not find it difficult to lay hand on some weapon old or new in its armoury to put it down. In all probability Lord Randolph will find himself well supported in his attack on the Home Rulers in Parliament. What will the Home Rulers outside Parliament do?

Russia seems, having counted the cost, to have made up her mind to lay hands on Bulgaria, on the grounds that no great harm can come of it, since England has now with many big words declared that the quarrel is none of hers. The stroke once struck, the "conscience of Europe" will not be very uneasy at the robbery; nor as far as any of the respectable powers go can they afford to be very sensitive, as each of the said powers would do as Russia is going to do, if opportunity served it. Certainly England with her pockets crammed with stolen goods, would cut but a poor figure as the defender of injured innocence—at any rate if she were beaten.

The three great Absolutist powers, unless they are forced to fall out, seem on the surface as strong as ever; the true development of nations,

the harmonious and free development of their varied qualities, still awaits the time when "national life" in the sense in which we now use the words has come to an end, and the setting up a standard of rivalry, striving after an approach to the monopoly of a market under the name of patriotism, will have come to be looked upon as a monstrous folly, remembered only to be ridiculed. WILLIAM MORRIS.

## THE UNEMPLOYED.

THE title of this contribution refers to two widely different classes in society—one at the top ever seeking to escape labour, and one at the bottom ever engaged in a vain search for labour. The rich unemployed, falsely styled the upper classes, have called to their aid the French word *ennui* to describe the languor bred by sheer pampered idleness; the poor unemployed find the word *starvation* express their condition. Not always the actual deprivation which gives occasion for those annual returns of death from starvation, which forms one of the strongest counts in an indictment against the present system, but the slow lingering stunting which, allied with anxiety for the morrow, brings strong men down to weakness and hurries the old, young, and weakly to premature graves. Whilst the wealthy are asking where and how to vary their pleasures, and the journals which pander to them are discussing the merits of the brothel stage-displays they affect, thousands are facing a fate in preference to which summary execution would be humane. Week by week the roll of pauper and suicide deaths mounts up, whilst the rich are canvassing the qualities of their cellars and viands, or the lachrymose details of three-volume novels.

The unemployed have at the present moment many champions, who were silent when some few years back a band of men strove to draw attention, not only to the distresses of the unemployed, but to the normal wretched state of the mass who constitute the fringe of labour, and who ought certainly to have the largest share of sympathy from the true revolutionist. The noisiest always secure the greatest attention, and the present agitation anent the unemployed receives its chief impetus from a totally different cause than that ascribed by the capitalistic press, which with singular blindness attributes all the commotion to the unfortunates of our bastard civilisation, those whom they describe as "social wreckage." On the contrary, it is because the wave of commercial depression has reached a higher grade of workers that the present outcry is heard. It may be writing with bitterness, but not without truth, to state that this class has looked upon the gradual development of machinery in the hands of capitalists, and the consequent displacement of hand labour and increase of pauperism, prostitution, and crime, with great indifference. They have joined chorus in the harsh epithets which the upper thief class has bestowed upon the lower; and the often involuntary idler of their own class receives from them his full share of censure, whilst they ignore the profligacy and luxurious living of the idle rich, who prey upon all. They have passed without protest and often with approval, on the ground "that it makes good for trade," the criminal atrocities committed by our troops abroad in order to make fresh markets for the shoddy products they think are goods. But now the fear of starvation is before them, they clamour for a huge system of out-door relief in a tone that is at once pitiable and degrading.

No, sapient writers of the daily bond-grabbing press, it is the very "genuine working men" whom you are so fond of distinguishing from the "residuum," who are now your chief trouble, and who are not likely longer to bestow much attention upon your favourite dodge of erecting the meetings of coteries of ex-beer-duty, ex-fair-trade, ex-almost-everything agitators, and the renegade Socialist, into representative gatherings.

The aristocratic snob, some specimens of which are turned out fresh