

THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON PASSING EVENTS.

MR. Parnell must have been in some anxiety lest his Bill, cut down so fine as it was, should be accepted by the Tory Government. But the master of the Government, Lord Hartington, has a sort of wooden Whig courage, and was not likely to allow them to revolt, and the so-called Unionist-Liberals were still less able to give him trouble; so that Mr. Parnell's victory in the form of a defeat was pretty safe from the first. He has shown his sympathy with the Irish peasant, he has re-established his party in its position of being worth dealing with, even by a government so strong as this one of the Whig in the Tory's skin; nay, it may even come to a matter of necessity with them to deal with him; and finally he will be able to say, "You see how moderate my Bill was, so much so that the very Tories were almost ready to accept it, and here is my Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain who wouldn't let them." Not a bad arrangement on his part, certainly; but then the risk of it! Suppose the Bill had to pass, what *would* he have done then?

Parliamentary leaders must get used to be dragged through the dung-hill of lies and intrigue, or they will be of little service to their party; and clearly Mr. Parnell has a quite philosophical indifference to such trifles. If he can keep it up to the end he will deserve canonisation as a Parliamentary saint; and in sober earnest such toughness and steadiness of purpose are worthy of commendation, even if there is little else in the man. But a pity it is that the end aimed at is just a parliament in Dublin, where all will have to begin again—with Mr. Parnell on which side, the right or the wrong?

All this while, does it ever strike the many progressive politicians who are so anxious about the welfare of the Irish peasants (as they certainly should be) that their interest in the sufferings of people who are turned out of house and home because they cannot pay their rents should not be limited to the other side of St. George's Channel or to "interesting" people like the Highlanders of the west and the islemen? Might not suspension of evictions become an English, nay, a London question, before long? I invite gentlemen who think these matters can have nothing to do with "prosperous England" to stand before some broker's shop in a poor neighbourhood, and see if their imaginations will carry them far enough to fit some tale of sordid misery to a few of the wretched wares that are hung up there for sale.

There have been some useful articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* lately. The doughty champion of the Ten Commandments (whoever he may be) appears to be taking a holiday just now, and the semi-Socialist writers on the staff are taking advantage of that fact. The article on the Scotch miners will probably be laid aside rather hastily by the optimist bourgeois if he comes across it, for the facts given in it have a very threatening look even to the most short-sighted. It is true that its writer deplors that the worst features of the Socialistic faith are finding acceptance among the workmen there, with their noble earnings of 12s. 6d. a-week for the privilege of working in a slice of hell; but he does not seem astonished at that fact, but rather looks upon it as a matter of course that when men are much ground down they should be inclined to turn towards Socialism as their hope. So curiously have the times changed since Socialism was, as we used to be told, a very few years ago, quite unknown among the British working classes.

"A Month in Search of Work" will be another discomfort to our optimist bourgeois friend, if he should stumble on it, especially if he has read any article that hints at the number of men out of work even now before the winter comes on, and exercises the multiplication-table a little. Mr. Hyndman and Mr. Champion, also, have both been allowed a run in the columns of the *Pall Mall*; and there has been a paragraph on the street-speaking question which is not without intelligence, though the writer perhaps looks through religious spectacles on the subject.

Our readers will have noticed several letters amongst our correspondence on the subject of Vegetarianism, one or two of which were written in a somewhat aggrieved tone, apropos of attacks by Socialists on that doctrine, if one may call it so, though several comrades and friends of ours are vegetarians. It seems to me that there is no need either to attack a vegetarian or to confer a vote of thanks on him, so long as he is one because he chooses to be so on any grounds that please him-

self, whether he makes it a matter of health, or economy, or sentiment. But a man can hardly be a sound Socialist who puts forward vegetarianism as a solution of the difficulties between labour and capital, as some people do, and as one may think very severe capitalists would like to do, if the régime were not to be applied to themselves; and again, there are people who are vegetarians on ascetic grounds, and who would be as tyrannical as other ascetics if they had the chance of being so. I do not mean to say that Socialist vegetarians are likely to fall into these traps; they only make themselves liable to the sneer of an anti-Socialist acquaintance of mine, who said to me one day "All you Socialists have each of you another fad besides Socialism."

The first number of *Freedom* has appeared, published by the English Anarchist-Socialists, and is to appear monthly. In spite of its small size, it is well worth a penny, as the matter is very well written and thoughtful, and must interest all Socialists, whatever their opinions may be.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

TITHE AND TITHE RENT-CHARGE.

II.

As tithes form the chief source of income of the regular clergy, our object is to show that with very rare exceptions tithes are not the result of the free-will offerings of our pious ancestors; that before and since the Reformation, their payment has been enforced by law, and in most cases by laws of the most stringent character. We have seen further that the great bulk of the land now paying tithes has been brought into cultivation since the Reformation, and made subject to the payment of tithes by the 5th sec. of the 2 and 3 Ed. VI., ch. 13. By the 5th sec. all corn and hay were to be subject to the payment of tithe, and the clergy had the right to go on to the lands and there claim the tenth part of the produce.

But the farmers began to cultivate hemp, and flax, and madder, as well as different kinds of corn, and the clergy at once claimed tithe on those articles. The tithe, however, was very difficult to determine, but the tithe must be paid. How to solve the difficulty was not so easy. The Government stepped in to the aid of the clergy and against the public, and the 3 W. and M., ch. 3, and the 11 and 12 W. C., ch. 16, were passed to solve the difficulty, by fixing a ground-rent charge of 5s. per acre of all land sown with hemp, flax, or madder. In the reign of Geo. II. an Act was passed (31 Geo. II., ch. 12) for encouraging the growth of madder and ascertaining the tithe thereon. It is not our intention to attempt to enumerate all the various Acts passed to enforce the payment of tithe, but we may here observe that Mr. Leonard Shelford, of the Middle Temple, in his explanatory Notes to the Tithe Commutation Act, states at p. 272 that from 1757 (30 Geo. II.) to 1830, over 2000 Acts were passed affecting the payment of tithes.

By the year 1830 tithe was paid on the following articles: wheat, barley, oats, rye, mullet, peas, beans, tares, sapporn, hemp, flax, hay, turnips, every kind of garden produce, fruit of every kind, wood and underwood, hops, potatoes, etc.; milk, wool, the young of animals, fowls, eggs, barren cattle, the honey of bees, mills, pasture land, etc. The tenth part of all these had to go to the parson for the glory of God. But whether for the glory of God or not, great discontent prevailed, and thousands refused to pay their tithes. In every part of England there was one general feeling of indignation at the rapacity of the clergy. From 1820 that indignation increased from year to year, till the refusal to pay tithes became almost universal. In 1833, in the parish of Abbey Holm, Westmorland, 300 prosecutions for tithes took place. In Leyland, Lancashire, 488 prosecutions; in Standish and Eccleston, same county, the numbers were 362 and 245 respectively. In Lancashire alone the prosecutions reached in that one year 1319. In the parish of Kendal hundreds of prosecutions took place, and had the rector succeeded in making good his claims his income would have been increased by £10,000 a-year. In the county of Glamorgan thousands of prosecutions took place, and the Solicitor-General for England estimated the cost of the prosecutions at £2,000,000 sterling. Agitation ran high, and the greatest indignation prevailed. The parson must have his tithe as Shylock had his pound of flesh. It is the law of the land, a part of our glorious constitution, that tithes must be paid, and the law must be obeyed. In Ireland the tithe-war became more fierce than in England. Thousands of prosecutions there took