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NOTES ON PASSING EVENTS.

It cannot be said that the Irish question is much furthered by the recent speeches in Parliament. Mr. Parnell's speech was able, and so was Mr. Chamberlain's. The real gist of the former was a kind of mild persistence in the original claim for a Dublin Parliament, stated in language so moderate as to give the impression of yielding perhaps to those who do not understand the man and the claims which he represents. Yet, undoubtedly, to Mr. Parnell nothing is worth thinking about except the said Irish Parliament in Dublin. "Give us that, and do what else you like" is practically what he is saying.

As to Mr. Chamberlain, clever and effective as his speech was, it was little else than a piece of Parliamentary fireworks; because at this date we scarcely need to be told that he is a bitter opponent of the establishment of an Irish Parliament at Dublin, and that really was almost all he had to say that bore directly on the question. Mr. Sexton again made several points at Mr. Chamberlain's expense, notably when he "solemnly asked the House which looked most like a foreign country—the country which Lord Aberdeen left the other day, or the country to which Sir Redvers Buller went yesterday." Also his little piece of history of the Donegal peasants was as touching as it was unanswerable. But, after all, what is there in all this? On one side the expression, not at all veiled, of the determination to stand by the land thieves to the last, even if the purse of the British taxpayer has to be dipped into for their solace; and on the other, a covert threat of refusal to pay rent.

By the way, it did always seem pretty certain that the Tories would support a Land Purchase Bill, or measure for safe-guarding the landlords against their loss of other people's property, if only it could dissociate such a piece of consolation from the company of Home Rule; which Mr. Gladstone vainly tried to make respectable by that association.

Mr. Chamberlain in his speech, took occasion to pronounce very decidedly in favour of peasant proprietorship, and alluded to his own proposal of last year as a basis for it. Such twaddle is rather sickening. Thus the ball is kept up in the air between the Tories and the Liberals; the former sedulous to do nothing, the latter to do something which shall amount to not much more than nothing. And all the while both parties must surely know that the real question is whether the Irish *people* shall have their own land to use for their own livelihood. Neither party wants that to come about; the Tories are quite satisfied with things as they are, if only some one else could be got to insure the landlords' rent; the Liberals would like to see one group of exploiters give place to another; and at that point, it seems, they stick hopelessly.

Socialists will not fail to note that Mr. Chamberlain justified his refusal to relieve the Irish peasants who could not pay tribute to their exploiters by pointing out that others were as badly off as they are. He said: "We might address Her Majesty and say that we fear during the coming winter that the depression of trade which has continued so long will lead to a lack of employment, and be productive of much suffering, and that it will endanger social order. *That would be perfectly true*, and my only objection to an addition of that kind to the Address would be that it would be useless and improper to do so, unless the House were determined to deal with the subject-matter, and find a full, complete, and satisfactory remedy." (Ministerial cheers).

Did the Ministerial members know what they were cheering? Surely if words mean anything (and certainly that is rather more than doubtful in a Parliamentary speech), this paragraph means either an incitement to revolution, or a confession of helplessness, which should force the speaker of it into private life as a self-admitted imbecile, or at least a member of a class and a legislative body necessarily imbecile under the circumstances. Mr. Chamberlain assumes the impossibility of the House of Commons finding a remedy for wide-spread destitution among the people. Most certainly he is right in doing so, but it is a curious admission for one to make who is not a confessed Socialist.

For torturing a little boy of eight years old a ship's clerk the other day was punished with a month's imprisonment. It is true that it was done so ingeniously that the doctor said that the boy "was in no danger or his health permanently impaired." True also that the culprit was

the father of the boy, so that the holiness of the family somewhat excuses him in the eyes of that "society" of which he is an ornament. Yet certainly the amusement was cheap, compared with street-preaching.

Mr. Burnett at the Workman's Conference in Paris took upon himself to defend Mr. Broadhurst against the attack made by Grimpe. Judging from the report of it, the defence was mostly of the official and conventional kind usual amongst us on such occasions; but it is worthy of note that he thought it necessary to defend the English trades' unions against the imputation of being hostile to Socialism—a significant symptom enough of the progress of our doctrines.

Mrs. Besant returns to the charge in *Our Corner* in an article called "Why I am a Socialist." It is very brightly and clearly written, and will no doubt have a considerable effect on the as yet unconverted readers of *Our Corner*. Some exception might be taken to the passage in which she points out the instances of State interference apparently on behalf of the workers. But though a centralised State Socialism is not the goal that we aim at, it is true that these approaches to it, forced as they have been on the dominant classes, are tokens of the decrepitude of the present system of wage-slavery. They are a necessary consequence of the upholding of our false "free contract" in an age of increasing democracy. The people must be robbed, but the robbers dare not reduce them to extremity, therefore some of the plunder must be given back to them, and especially to some of the more respectable and helpful of them, so as if possible to gain a body of adherents for the robbers amongst the robbed themselves. This device, conscious or not, is a cunning one, but will fail before coming economical changes, which will bear with them commercial ruin under our present system and consequent Revolution. I should like to say how heartily I agree with Mrs. Besant on the failure of our civilisation. That lies at the bottom of our war with the present and our hope for the future, for those of us who have eyes to see and hearts to understand.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE GOVERNMENT AND IRELAND.

LORD SALISBURY declares the Irish Question is settled—settled by the election of 1886. By others of equally high authority we are told that the Irish Question is not settled, and others again tell us that we shall have some stormy times before we get rid of the Irish difficulty. But Lord Salisbury has spoken, and his word is accepted by tens of thousands of the English people. It is, therefore, necessary to look at the facts of the case, and see how far they agree with Lord Salisbury's words.

Lord Salisbury tells us that an immense majority of the people have declared against an independent Parliament in Ireland. But the majority is not a great one. A majority of seventy or eighty thousand in a national contest, and on such a question, is not immense. It is a mere nothing. Taking the returns as published a few days ago, the total number who voted for Gladstonians was 1,350,336, and for Conservatives 1,106,651, giving Gladstone a majority of 243,685. The Gladstonians elected numbered only 196 to the Conservatives 316. Dividing the votes recorded by the number of members, the Gladstonians received on an average 6890 each, the Conservatives 3502. If we take the total votes recorded for Gladstonians and Conservatives, and divide them between the total members, the average to each would be 4802, and the Gladstonites would have numbered 282, and the Conservatives 230. And if we add the Liberal Unionists to the Conservatives, with the Irish vote Gladstone would have had a working majority of over 60. And this anomalous state of things exists after all our Reform and Redistribution schemes. It is quite true that London has returned 48 Conservatives and 3 Liberal Unionists out of a total of 62, as Lord Salisbury boasts. It is equally true that England as a whole has returned a large majority of Conservatives, and in that respect is far behind Scotland and Wales.

But let us see what Salisbury said at the Mansion House, August 11. After referring to the fact that previous Governments had failed in dealing with the Irish Question, he said: "But I think there is one advantage which we possess over our predecessors, an advantage we shall turn to good use. We come back to office as the bearers of a mandate from the people of this country deciding, and in my belief, finally and irrevocably deciding the question which has wrecked the peace of the neighbouring island." To talk to-day about finality is