The Official Journal of the Socialist League

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Notes on News.

The agitation against the Coercion Bill is going on quite as briskly as might have been expected; but of course it is not the kind of opposition which will prevent a parliamentary majority from passing the Bill. Whether the Government will venture to put it to the vote, when passed, is another matter. The popular opposition, respectable as it is, does not seem to be of that volume and energy which implies a threat of consequences beyond the ballot-box; and as to the vote, the agitation is disunited by the Tories because they know that a very large portion of the agitators have not got it, in spite of the assertion of our "light and leading" friend the Spectator that "every man has the vote or could have it if he would,"—an assertion, by the way, which those who do not know that estimable journal might suppose to be either a joke or a deliberate lie, but which I may assure our readers is made in good faith, and in the exercise of that curious fatuity which is the chief characteristic of that "official organ" of the Prigs.

This much may at least be said about the anti-coercion agitation (no doubt it has been said often already, but may well be said oftener), that the wall which parted the Irish from the English democracy has been thrown down. Here at least, if no other is, tension—that kind of union which comes of men respecting each other's rights.

Nor should the Tories hug themselves too much on their majority. There are not lacking signs that the pendulum will swing Gladstonianwards at the next election. The defeat of the Unionists on the Birmingham Caucus, Mr. Trevelyan's anti-coercion letter, the "raising of Cain" at Barrow, and so forth, are the kind of things that go before the fall of a big parliamentary majority. Of course it goes without saying that a great many Liberal M.P.'s—those chiefy who are not marked for office—will be bitterly disappointed at their success. If only the Irish would keep their tail, and accept some "compromise," and then never be heard of again, how glad would these gentlemen be! Liberalism might then be purified of its last tint of reality.

The way in which the coercitionist press tries to belittle the quite successful Easter Monday demonstration is a good example of the by-ways of party guidance. The Standard may be taken as the type of those optimists, or rather would-be optimists, whose folly betrays the fact that they are miserably disappointed with our success. One point is worth noting which is expressed in the following sentence in the Standard: "The preponderance in the huge crowd of the class which needs no oratory, honest or dishonest, to whet its animosity to law and order was a sinister symptom." Now even well-natured its foaming-at-the-mouth disappointment can the Standard pretend to take exception to the orderly and very orderly crowd of Easter Monday: it is agreed on all hands that there was an entire absence of the horseplay which generally winds up these Hyde Park demonstrations. So while the Standard means is that the revolutionists and their sympathisers were in the majority there—why, the coercitionist press makes a handle of this fact against the Gladstonites.

Well, well: times are changed, it seems, since the last Hyde Park demonstration which I attended—the Franchise one—where the banner of the Labour Emancipation League was destroyed, and our comrade John Burns hustled by a Radical mob, because he had said a few words of blasphemy against Mr. John Bright. Would the Easter Monday crowd have hustled any one who had taken the trouble to call in question the infallibility of the Quaker pope?

It is much to be hoped that all friends of freedom will rally to our meeting in Hyde Park on the 24th, to sympathise with the Northumberland Miners. A stronger case for sympathy and help could scarcely be put before the public, as the readers of Commonweal must already have noted. It would be shame to us in London indeed if working men here were to allow the political prize-fight to absorb all their attention, when such worthy men as these are suffering so unworthily and struggling so hard against the tyranny of our idiotic system of sham society.

The Pull Mall Gazette, while it has done good service in some directions is certainly curiously inconsistent. It has most vigorously assailed the attitude against coercion in Ireland, and apparently is prepared to go on doing so; nevertheless in the very same issue which contains an attack (most justly deserved) on Mr. Chamberlain for his newly-developed love of the free compulsion form of frontier, it is known as the Crimes Bill, contains also a letter, printed with all the honours and obviously with editorial approval, from Madame de Norfolke, the acknowledged agent for quite the completed form of coercion yet known in this world—the modern Government of Russia. This is really rather too grotesque.

On the other hand I read in the Daily News that the whole Russian press condemns the Coercion Act!!! It really is too quaint.

Mr. Duggall, asked Mr. Labouchere if he was prepared to repeat in the House his saying in Hyde Park that the policy of the Government was one of the ruffianism of Bill Sykes. "Beyond all question," quoth Mr. Labouchere. This is a pleasant hearing, after the usual explanations and eating of words which are the lot of orators of the House. But then Mr. Labouchere has been always careful to show that he is not a fool; as careful as most M.P.'s are to show the contrary—though certainly they need not labour hard at that business.

Apropos of this subject, Mr. Conyngham should learn to understand that a man should not be too greedy of humble-pie if he wishes to retain any respect from those who in any way profess to be fighting the popular cause. Explanation on the top of apology is not enough. We really want Sam Weller to characterise this excess in the banquet of humility!

William Morris.

Socialist Campaign in the North.

For some weeks the readers of the Commonweal have been informed of the progress of Socialism in Northumberland—how we have been holding large meetings in Newcastle and in the villages in the neighbour-hood, and how eagerly the people have bought pamphlets and papers that they might study our doctrines at their leisure. In order to bring the agitation to a point it was resolved to hold a demonstration in the centre of the colliery district and to put resolutions to the meeting pledging the men to adopt the principles of Socialism. On the morning of Easter Monday the Socialist missionaries from London proceeded from Newcastle to the colliery villages, and addressed meetings and meetings to workers all over the district. Every one of these places they were received in the most hearty manner. One thing was very striking—namely, that the strongest supporters of Socialism were usually the most respected men in the villages. It is usual for Cockney journalists to call our supposed Easter Sunday crowd of "rage do-wells" but the press here admits that we have got hold of the very best of the people. After the local meetings were over, the procesion were addressed and the meeting-place, in many cases from six to eight miles from coercion yet known in this world—the modern Government of Russia. This is really rather too grotesque.

The weather was of the most favourable kind, and the fresh air and bands preceded the marches being tedious. At the meeting-place, which was a field lent by a kindly farmer, Mr. Hardman, the Socialist League had a representative distributing broadcast the manifesto of their Strike Committee, which was eagerly read by the men. At about two o'clock the processions came in sight; from all points of the compass the banners were seen floating in the air, and the sound of the miners' bands greeted the ear. Some few or five constables put in an appearance, but they looked rather sheepish. They felt, no doubt, that they were a little out of place, as it was hard to see what five policemen could have done against ten thousand determined men. A large wagon was borrowed from a neighbouring farm, and this served as a mobile form. It was immediately loaded with a troop of reporters, who pretty nigh took up all the room. Fielding was appointed chairman, and as soon as he stood up the meeting became quiet and attentive, in which state it remained until its close. An amusing incident however took place with regard to the reporters. The crowd did not know who the army of eminently respectable-dressed men who were in the wagon beside the speakers. But the moment Fielding wound up came in sight—of course, the reporters got under weigh. The crowd stopped the proceedings to turn the reporters out. On these gentlemen remonstrating, the spokesman of the crowd stated that the reason they wanted them out of it was because they gave in bogus reports; but he said if the reporters would faithfully promise to give a full and accurate report, or none at all, they would let them