

THE COMMONWEAL

The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

VOL. 3.—No. 68.

SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 1887.

WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

THE great event of the last few days has been the attempt on the part of the *Times* newspaper to climb a step higher towards the place of irresponsible dictator of the United Kingdom by dint of what can only be called a piece of cowardly slander; and the name will apply whether the "accusation" is true or false, since a print that could plot an anonymous accusation of this kind has no longer anything to lose as to character or honour.

As to its truth or falsity, it certainly seems out of character with Mr. Parnell's astucy that he should have written such a document at the time; and that all the more as the killing of Cavendish and Burke was obviously aimed at the very party of which Mr. Parnell is the leader, in order to break up the alliance which was being formed between the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Gladstonites: it was a sore blow to Mr. Parnell. But if it would have been stupid to write such a note then, what can one say of Mr. Parnell if his denial of it now is false? Simply that he is the stupidest man that ever pretended to lead a party; which is far from being a likely story.

As to the challenge thrown out to Mr. Parnell by the Tory party to attack the *Times* in the law-courts under penalty of being considered guilty, this is illustrating our friend Bax's view, expressed in these columns, on the necessity of abolishing the libel law, with a vengeance! So it comes to this, that the enemy of any man, public or private, can trump up an accusation against him, and if the injured man does not submit himself to all the chicanery and uncertainty of a law-court, he is to be held guilty, although nothing whatever is proved against him; and that though his slanderer may have at his back almost unlimited capital to carry on the battle with!

But perhaps the malignity and dirtiness of the *Times*' attack is scarcely equalled by its stupidity. What honest man not blinded by party feeling would think the worse of Mr. Parnell if he had written the letter? Was it not at least a common opinion even in England at the time that Burke had got but what he had long been asking for? And was not this opinion expressed by numbers of people who were shocked at the murder of Cavendish, and thoroughly disapproved of the whole affair; who thought it in fact a disastrous business? I say that this was an opinion often to be met with among persons of by no means extreme opinions at the time.

It must be repeated that the whole business is one of the basest party moves ever made. A baseness in which Lord Hartington must henceforth share after his shuffling with Mr. Dillon the other night: his Whig worshippers must now leave off putting him forward as the soul of honour, as it has been their fashion to do.

It is to be hoped at least that even this dastardly episode may do some good in helping to disgust people with the tyranny of the anonymous press; future ages will scarcely believe the story of our having submitted so long to it. And how puzzled they will be in trying to square the ethics preached throughout society with the conduct of our most respectable, most majestically successful journals.

It is pleasant to turn from these sickening intrigues to the humanity of the Irish police-constables, who have resigned rather than dragoon their fellow-countrymen; as far as it goes it carries out the hope so often expressed by Socialists, that when the uniformed instruments of capitalism come to understand what it really is that they are paid to do, they will refuse to do it. All honour to our Irish friends for showing the way in this matter!

As to the position of the two parties in Parliament since the second reading of the bill, there is not much to be said about it. In spite of his letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Mr. Gladstone seems to be hanging back somewhat; as indeed he is wont to do in a crisis. He seems to think that the chapter of accidents may have something hidden in it which may turn out the Tories without his committing himself any more. The Tories have at least this advantage over their opponents, that they are in, and that the others are not very anxious to take their place. It will be curious to watch the lengths of cowardice that want of confidence in the principles which they profess will drive the Liberals to. Undoubtedly they need have no difficulty in bringing on a disso-

lution if they wish it; and if they shrink from doing what they can to deliver us from the disgrace of the Coercion Bill, they and their leader will earn a title to feebleness and cowardice which one may hope they would seek to avoid—though one cannot help fearing that they will not care much about it.

There may be some meaning in the arrest of the French Commissary on the frontier or there may be none. It scarcely seems possible that such a trifle can really be taken seriously in itself; but it may be a link in a chain of irritations which will lead directly to war. In any case the perturbation it has caused in Paris shows on what ticklish ground the peace of Europe stands. W. M.

Mr. Goschen has brought forth a budget. Such things are usually got up in a sneaking hypocritical way, but, as might have been—and was—expected, the Egyptian juggler has surpassed most of his predecessors in office.

His performance however is far too clumsy to conceal the fact that the British Empire, like all overgrown things is "gone at the knees."

The "poor man's pipe" is a delicious touch of Tory humour, but as a strategical move is rather too late. If the people were already enlisted on the Tory side it would have been a good stroke to have cemented their friendship with a Grecian gift.

But to exasperate the people and put clearly before them in what light they are regarded and then to proffer a pipe of tobacco as a bribe! A pipe is a great soother of the ruffled spirit, but even it will fail to efface the memory of Tory trickery and brutality.

The following figures show the agrarian evictions in Ireland during the past quarter: Ulster, 145 families, 619 persons; Leinster, 143 families, 590 persons; Connaught, 189 families, 953 persons; Munster, 531 families, 2,880 persons. Totals, 1,008 families, 5,042 persons. In Kerry alone 306 families, or 1,766 persons, were evicted. What are the figures for England?

Modern "artists" of the successful type, are never at a loss for a full supply of flunkeyism. They are going in for a grand "Jubilee" costume ball next month, at which they tell us "all artistic London is to be"! Including the Prince of Wales and Sir Frederic Leighton.

What profitable things murder-machines are! The Hotchkiss Gun Company's shares are at 5¼ premium. H. H. S.

THE NORTHUMBERLAND MINERS. DEMONSTRATION IN HYDE PARK.

(Abridged from *London Daily Chronicle*.)

A MEETING was held last Sunday afternoon in Hyde Park, under the auspices of the Socialist League, for the purpose of expressing sympathy with the Northumberland miners "in their resistance to the demands of their employers to further reduce their already starvation wage." The demonstration was fixed for three o'clock at the "Reformers' Tree," but a preliminary meeting was commenced near the Marble Arch entrance to the park, in order to attract a larger audience to the site announced for the demonstration. The promoters of the meeting carried a portable platform, and a red banner inscribed with the title of the League. This preliminary meeting, however, was interrupted by a terrific hailstorm that swept across the park, the banner being utilised as a shield, behind which a large number of persons took refuge from the violence of the elements. When the storm had abated, A. K. Donald, who has recently been on a lecturing tour amongst the Northumberland miners, asked those of the audience who had remained to follow the banner to the Reformers' Tree. At this point a fairly large crowd eventually assembled. The proceedings throughout were most orderly, and the attendance of about 40 or 45 constables, who stood in couples on the fringe of the gathering, seemed somewhat unnecessary.

H. A. BARKER, who presided, opened the meeting, which he said had been called to express deep sympathy with the Northumberland miners who were resisting the tyranny of their employers. The latter had combined to reduce the already starvation wage of the miners