NOTES ON PASSING EVENTS.

Mr. Justice Grantham, in charging the Grand Jury at Norwich, apropos of the events which so unaccountably delivered two of our comrades to the tender mercies of that strange specimen of humanity, the Special Fool in a high place, sung a song of triumph over that glorious institution, the workhouse. Oddly enough, in the issue of the day before the same paper that gave us the solemn wisdom of this genus, there is printed a paragraph which is a good commentary on that blessing of modern times—that refuge for the unlucky which, according to his lordship, affords such a firm and satisfactory stand-point from which to aim at the conquest of health and wealth—the workhouse. We give the passage in full:

"WATERLOO—CALS AND THEIR FOOL.—James Harding and George Wright were placed in the dock charged with refusing to work while casual pavers in Wandsworth workhouse.—George Chehalis, the superintendent, said the prisoners were admitted on a few days' notice, and that nobody set them to work. Both refused to work.—The prisoner Wright said he could not work on the food given to him. He had dry bread, and was put in this devise. He would not work till night, and when called, did not work for the Queen of England.—The superintendent said the wards were heated. The food consisted of eight ounces of bread for breakfast, half-a-pound with 1½ ounces of cheese as dinner, and eight ounces of bread with hot water to drink for supper.—Mr. Bennett: Not any cocoa, nor anything of the kind.—No.—The prisoner said hot water was brought to him and bled cold. A roll of hot water was brought in as if to a horse.—The witness stated that the diet was given by direction of the Local Government Board.—Mr. Bennett said his opinion, and any few Socialist meetings (he might draw up his carriage at the edge of the crowd) to hear those who want to have money without working for it pretty sharply denounced by these very willing of the working-classes. He would there learn that the living on other people without working is the very thing we demand to be abolished, though it must be admitted that at present it is the very foundation of that society of which his lordship is so starting an ornament.

It was announced last week that the Government were going to make a new departure in coercion, and would bring forward a regular gaging Bill, which would serve for arranging Irish affairs at present, and would also be available for dealing with English, Scotch, or Welsh difficulties, as it was to be made applicable to the whole of the United Kingdom. Socialist organisations, we were told, might expect to be particularly honoured by the notice of this new Act.

This news seemed from the first almost too good to be true; but it seems it was true for the time, and that the Tory Government, on the look out for something to damage their really strong position, had hit on this as a satisfactory one. But unhappily it is as possible for them to go on with the gagging enterprise, as it would stir up the vigorous opposition of the Radicals, and even the Liberals would be shamed into voting against such a measure. Accordingly they are now backing down, and going to begin with the present position, which will only make their gag for Ireland, though even on these terms they have very little chance of getting it through Parliament.

Mr. Goschen is carrying on his candidacy for Liverpool merrily, and in spite of the result of the last election, in which the Liberal candidate was successful, he will probably go in, owing to the servility of all parties towards "a distinguished official," "a man of so much importance," and so forth. Meantime this light of intellectual finance has introduced himself by making a long speech down there which was really remarkable for emptiness, dulness, and twaddle, even among election speeches.

Apropos of Members of Parliament, the following story told by Mr. Labouchere at Spalding on Thursday week is too good to be lost. He said:

"The atmosphere of the House of Commons does not seem to agree with Radicals. They soon want to become fine gentlemen. He remembered a gentleman of the division with regard to the admission of Mr. Bradlaugh. About ten minutes before the division a highly respectable gentleman on the liberal side of the House came to me and said, 'You know I have been thinking this over, and my conscience won't allow me to vote for Bradlaugh.' I replied, 'I have not time enough to talk about your conscience—what do you want?' The gentleman replied, 'No, you are entirely mistaken.' I next asked him, 'Have you got a wife?' and he answered, 'Yes.' Well, do you get asked to these crowds, these receptions, at the Foreign Office? The hon. gentleman added that he had got a wife 'without a doubt' and that they had not, and then I said, 'You go in and vote, and I'll see that you are asked to them in the future,' and in about ten minutes afterwards I polled that he was talking of Bradlaugh.

Walpole, in the good old bawling days, would have been happy if he could have bought his votes as cheap as that.

The Commission on the Depression of Trade has issued its report. It is well viewed heroically in these columns in some detail, so that it may go for the present with a few words. It is a matter of course that the Commissioners try to put the best face possible on the state of things commercial, though they do not succeed very well in the attempt. They say, "There can be no question that the workman is in this country, when fully employed, in almost every respect in a better position than his competitors in foreign countries." The italics are our own. Will the Commissioners pretend that they do not know that even in good years the great mass of working-men in and about London are unemployed for four months out of the twelve? That the whole mass of the great industries have to 'average' their wages, to insure, so to say, against the months that they are "at play," from strikes and lock-outs and the like! Will they say where in Europe or Asia they can find a workman more miserably pinched and resourceless than the south-west country labourer with his income of 10s. a-week when things are going well?

Or need one keep one's patience any longer with those miserable false lifted, pallid, and grey, which the South-west country labourer, a blind society supplies rank its last corruption! It is true that they are not paid to be imaginative; but a little imagination is necessary to most men, if only to keep their bodies from sinking in default of salt. Let them, then, bring their imagination to bear upon the task and try to picture their noble and cultivated selves reduced to the condition of those workmen whose lot they are so contented with. Let them think of themselves as living keeping a home together on 10s. a-week in a Glastonbury cottage, or worse still, on 10s. in a London slum; and if they have really tried to do so and have any honesty left in them, if they can do nothing else, at least let them hold their tongues and live silently on the proceeds of the perpetual robbery which habit has made them look up as a holy right and the cement of society.

MEN VERSUS CLASSES.

The well-intentioned, kind-hearted gentleman who perspires philanthropy all over at the bare thought of the working-classes, is often alarmed at the fact that modern Socialism starts from the idea of an irreconcilable class struggle. "Look at me," he says, "and others like me; we are middle-class men, and yet we have a profound sympathy with the people. It is surely unreasonable to attack a whole class in the way you do when it contains such excellent and noble-hearted representatives." Now, irrespective of the genuineness of the particular person in question or his friends, there is undoubtedly a point touched on which we should not be too peevish in our allowances. Socialists attack the middle-class as the root of all evil. The neophyte knows that he daily comes in contact with middle-class men whom he respects, nay, who may themselves be working for Socialism. On the other hand, he finds that there are plenty of men belonging to the working-class whom he cannot respect. Now, here is a problem for the Socialist! What is the solution?