The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

NOTES ON NEWS.

The O'Brien incident in New York is worth noting. It must be admitted at once that Mr. O'Brien would have been more justified in taking the pros of the cause of Home Rule—that is, more explicitly, the establishment of a semi-independent Irish parliament at Dublin—if he had identified himself with the Land Nationalists and semi-Socialists of New York. But on the other hand, his refusal has also injured the cause of Irish independence, looking at it from a broader point of view.

The Land Nationalists and other more advanced politicians may well say, if it is a foregone conclusion, that all the Irish Parliamentary Party look forward to an imperfect form of peasant proprietorship—i.e., the creating of a number of small landlords in place of the few big landlords already existing?

Well, as a matter of fact that is the idea of the parliamentary Irishman; and if he went further than that he would be ahead of the ordinary voter in Ireland, at all events. Nor need we wonder at that. The land question is the root of the question of expansion which naturally thrusts itself forward in Ireland; and the share that the cottar tenant has in it is a war between his industry on one side and a poor soil and a poor system of agriculture on the other; and any alleviation of his lot will for the time put him in heaven, as it may, and make him a very conservative and property-loving character. All this, of course, is what the parliamentary Irish politician is reckoning on, and consequently he won't trouble himself to even consider the landless labourer who will still remain after the advent of peasant proprietorship, or indeed the future of the peasant proprietor himself, which will, in two words, be ultimate ruin.

Perhaps sometimes we Socialists have been tempted to envy the simplicity of the one-plank platform of the Irish agitator, but such an incident as this of Father McGlynn versus Mr. O'Brien shows the dull side of it. In fact revolutionists cannot evade the duty of keeping their true aim clearly before them, and asking themselves if it is worth the trouble, and they must accept as a necessary consequence of the carrying out of that duty all the unpopularity and lack of support and jeers at their want of practicality which are sure to encounter if they go straight to their object.

Meantime a Socialist can hardly help chuckling when he thinks that Father McGlynn, who has really made a straight revolutionary hit at that terrible revolutionist Mr. O'Brien, may in his turn find himself denounced as a capitalist-sayer one of these days: may, or certainly will, unless he moves forward with the times. To-day there can be found capitalists everywhere who move to indignation by the spectacle of a certain class of landlords exercising their undoubted legal right over public services, the greater part of landlords, since they are not driven to act so dramatically, are allowed to do as they please without comment. At some future time not far distant there will be found probably respectable persons who will wish to take away this legal power from all landlords. There, however, the respectable people will stay their assistance, for the next step will be the attack on all capital—that is, really, property—and all respectable people have capital in some form or other. Well, so it goes—he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

The triumphant Tories are determined to show us how feeble a barrier Parliament is between any faction that may have crept into power over the minds of the people. By the time of the date on this number of Commonweal the passionate resistance to the Finance Bill will be at an end, and for all practical purposes it might as well have never begun. As to Mr. Smith's urgency resolution it was taken so easily enough by the House, and was clearly looked upon as a matter of little consequence. And indeed it is not of much consequence, considering what Parliament is.

It may well be hoped that one day the people will take possession for their own use of the noble buildings which their forefathers built in the days when they were striving to break the bonds of feudal tyranny, and had not yet foreseen the strainer bonds of capitalism. All Socialists therefore who join in the protest which Mr. Frederick Harrison made at the meeting of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings against the destructive tomfoolery now going on at Westminster Abbey. It is an easy read token of the sincerity of the preservation of the bourgeois, when a building, which is still perhaps, in spite of all the degradations it has suffered, the most beautiful in Great Britain, is to be subjected to the risk of total destruction, and the certainty of great damage for an idiotic piece of Court vanity that nobody, not even the very flunkies themselves, cares a rush for.

Apropos of this grievous nonsense our readers may have noticed some of them perhaps with disapproval, that there has not much been said about the Jubilee (one is really ashamed to write the word) in the pages of the Commonweal. That is to be explained, I suppose, by the mere concept with which Socialists look upon the whole subject. But the "great event" of it is that one may perhaps say as much as this, that the powers that be are determined to use the opportunity to show what a nuisance the monarchy and court can be as a centre of hypocrisy and corruption, and the densest form of waste.