

THE COMMONWEALTH

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES.

Mr. CHAMPION's address at the Church Congress was as well received as could be expected, although very naturally a meeting largely composed of officials, was much disturbed at his attack on the head official, the Queen. A more or less friendly critic remarked that Socialism proposed to give plenty and wealth to everybody, but neglected their spiritual condition. To a non-ecclesiastical mind a good foundation for a sound spiritual condition would appear to be the common-place virtue called honesty, and, unless the Church Congress is much belied by the reporters, that virtue seems to be too common-place to be noticed by these providers for the spiritual life of the nation. The spirit of the meeting, especially during the discussion of that most spiritual question of tithes, was decidedly in accordance with the ancient motto, Get all you can, and keep what you get.

A Mr. Grier said, however, with much truth, that the English people, from the days of Hengist and Horsa to those of Lord Randolph Churchill and Burmah, was always ready to take everything they could lay their hands on. Well, the proverb, "Like people, like priest," is a good one, but Mr. Grier must remember it has two edges; and I must come back to my text and say that the most spiritual persons *ought* to be the most honest—though they seldom are.

One genius said that he feared that behind the apparently-innocent appearance of Socialism the livid spectre of Communism lay hid. This reminds me of an agreeable scene enacted at a rather stormy open-air meeting at which I was present, when a furious opponent said, "Why, at this rate you will be approving of the deeds of the Paris Commune." Whereat a reverend and much respected comrade sprang forward and addressed this retailer of stale news much as follows: "Sir, you have made a most remarkable discovery, a most remarkable discovery! Sir, I beg to congratulate you on your remarkable discovery! Sir, you are a fool!"

Mr. Arch, in addressing a great meeting of field-labourers, has been lamenting the sacking of Messrs. Fenwick and Burt, and, taking his cue from the respectable Liberal papers, has been telling them that it is probably a piece of treachery—the work of Tory intrigue and so forth. Why does Mr. Arch talk such nonsense, when he either knows the real facts or can easily find them out if he does not? He need not profess fear of the Northumbrian miners turning Tories; but if he thinks it a misfortune that they should turn Socialists he has considerable cause for fear.

Perhaps no Government ever took so little by an attack on freedom as the present Tory Government have taken in prosecuting Lord Mayor Sullivan; the defeat was so overwhelming that the only excuse the Government prints could find was in the stupidity of their own officials. It has given the Nationalists an opportunity for a most successful demonstration at the cheapest possible price. For the rest, though one finds it hard to help smiling at the spectacle of the Lord Mayor, attended by mace and sword, a prisoner in the police court, yet it is a good augury of the time when local bodies shall find themselves in formal opposition to the stupid centralisation, which a little time ago seemed to be all triumphant.

The news of the "Socialist Disturbance" in New York demands explanation. That the American police should break up a Socialist meeting with the most brutal violence is nothing remarkable, unfortunately, even setting aside their exploits at Chicago, for they are on the whole the most brutal of all the defenders of law and order. But what explanation can there be of Mr. Henry George's followers attacking the Socialists except that that gentleman has rattled and joined the Capitalist camp? Definitely as we Socialists differ from Mr. George, this would be a great disappointment to some of us, since he has always been put forward as a specially honest man and a lover of progress in all forms.

W. M.

During the enquiry into the death of Head-Constable Whelehan this past week, nothing has been so plain as that it was a hatched-up affair arranged by the police. Whether by Governmental instructions, in order to get an "efficient cause" for the coercion policy, or whether it was on their own account, to gain credit, has not been made clear; but what is clear is that unless the informer Callinan had worked up the business nothing would have happened.

In England, police intimidation and domiciliary visits; in Ireland, treachery and stupid official brutality; in "Hail Columbia, happy land!" the same as in Ireland—persecution for opinion and judicial murder; all these things are the bourgeois employing against the great movement which is growing so rapidly everywhere.

But their tools fail them sometimes. Last week a constable at Gweedore refused to fire upon the people; an inspector at Mitchelstown dared to tell the truth and shame—his superiors; many others are leaving or preparing to leave "the force;" even a hardened policeman has some humanity left in him sometimes, and recognises that it is to the oppressed people that he belongs.

Careful propaganda should be made, by all can do so, among soldiers and policemen, and that speedily, for nothing so effectually frightens a government as to find the "strong hand" weakening on which it relies, and the force which rests upon slipping away from it.

It cannot be too much insisted upon that there is inevitable war between "the classes and the masses," and that the army, navy, and police are, by the necessity of their position, against the latter. But they are drawn from the "masses," and may be made to realise that when these gain their end, the extinction of class, there will be more honourable and pleasanter work for them than the Quilp-cum-Judas employment they now follow.

The East London Waterworks Company, which issued its annual report on 14th inst., has earned some notoriety in the past year by reason of the eels in its mains and its intermittent supply, but can show an increase in its revenue of nearly £2,000 for the half-year and a decrease in its expenditure. Thus the company has been prospering while the people whom it serves have had to endure the inconvenience and risks of a short supply during the past summer.

The unfortunate customers of the company have suffered by the drought, but it has rolled in the shekels for the shareholders. The chairman boldly defended the intermittent supply, and threw all the blame on those "who had unadvisedly removed their cisterns, and who neglected to fill a receptacle during the day;" but the collectors of the company apparently have not "neglected" to collect the rates, whether a supply of water was obtained or not.

Instances of this kind of thing are always recurring, and all that can be said is that, so long as the people allow monopoly to control the necessities of life, they must expect to be fleeced. That they should be so patient while profit is made out of their mishaps is not one of the least surprising circumstances of the case.

Those who speak so readily and constantly of the "improved position" of the workers should read the report of the discussion between the Vestry of St. Luke's and the costers of Whitecross Street upon a poll-tax that the former proposed to levy upon the latter. One of the costers said:—

"There is not one of us who don't pay double the rent we did years ago. I pay treble. I have paid for the same accommodation 2s., 4s., 6s., and 9s. 6d. I am not in a position to pay what I am paying now, and ought not to have to pay it. The parish has gone down very much through the pulling down of the houses, and the building of the 'models' has not made it better."

S.

AN APPEAL TO THE MINERS.

ADDRESSED TO THEIR DELEGATES IN CONFERENCE
AT EDINBURGH, OCTOBER 11th, 1887.

FELLOW WORKMEN,—

Though not a miner, I feel that no apology is needed in addressing you on the Labour Question. You are now too fully convinced of the identity of the interests of all workmen to refuse an impartial consideration to arguments, because advanced by one who is not of your own calling. The following words are addressed to you in the hope that they may be the means of inducing you and the half million of mining operatives whom you represent to look deeper into the labour problem than you have been accustomed to do.

The very holding of this Conference, whatever its immediate results may be, is a step in the right direction. The interests of the 520,000