

# THE COMMONWEAL

The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

VOL. 4.—No. 119.

SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 1888.

WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

## NOTES ON NEWS.

Mr. Arnold White has been giving evidence before the House of Lords on the sweating system in the East-end, which no doubt will shock the respectabilities of the middle-class—for a little time; until in fact they forget all about it, and then to them these miseries will no longer exist. Probably the fact that the "sweater" is often as poor as or even poorer than the man he employs will come as a surprise to many who do not know the way in which the poor live. Now they know that fact might they not ask themselves the question, Who sweats the sweater? The question asked by a well-to-do person will have to be answered in the manner of the ancient Hebrew chronicler, *Thou art the man.*

Mr. Arnold White proposed remedies. We will not say that there are remedies, but there is a remedy, which Mr. White, it is to be thought would not relish, and that is the freeing of labour from privileged monopoly; all Mr. White can see as desirable to be done is to make a feeble attempt to stop foreign immigration, to crush out the small employer by a tax on workshops, and so forth, and then to stand by and see how much people would starve then—for they certainly would starve. What workmen should remember is that all this "sweating" is necessary in order to that "cheap" production of wares, which is still quoted as such a blessing to the working-classes (though scarcely I think with the same confidence as formerly). These cheap workmen must be cheapened down to their present misery in order that the more expensive ones may still be cheap relatively to the capital employed in buying them; so that this country may be able to compete with others, and other countries with this country; and in spite of all Mr. Arnold White's "remedies," this process will go on, and must go on until the whole cursed system breaks down—or blows up. The horror-stricken supporters of capitalism must not be so unreasonable as to expect to have an omelette without egg-breaking; or a capitalist without propertyless workers, the final expression of whom is this sweated East-end immigrant.

I should like, by the way, to ask of any of our friends that know the "industry" in question, whether Mr. White's confident assertion that all the sweaters are foreigners is strictly true?

Mr. Saunders is going to try the right of free speech by a civil action against Warren & Co., and some think that if the judges are anything but the creatures of reactionary bureaucracy, something ought to come of that: but as a matter of fact, that is just what they are. If they cannot find law for any piece of tyranny which our masters have a mind to, they are not worth their salt, and our masters should dismiss them. But surely they have already abundantly proved that they are worth their salt. They are expensive but necessary to our masters.

A report of a traveller in Siam says of the Nan slaves: "Every man of the lower orders must be enrolled as the slave of some master; but he is allowed to choose whom he will serve, and if he does not like one, he may enroll himself as the slave of another. . . . A slave is fed by his master while he is working for him, but at other times he must feed himself. No purchase money is paid for the slave by his master." Dear me! Siam is a long way off, and supposing one were travelling to see diversities of the condition of workmen, I for one should scarcely think it worth while to go through so much to learn so little as I should have to do if I were to undertake the journey. For the condition of the Nan slaves is just that of the London slaves; except, indeed that the latter do not find it so easy to shift themselves from one master to another as their Siamese brethren do; for there seems a certain flavour of compulsion on the masters to employ in the hotter and happier country. In fact the *Daily News* from which I extracted this good news of a better land, seems impressed by the fact, and says, "We can even imagine many of our less fortunate countrymen envying their prerogative." Would Mr. Arnold White like to take the place of agent for emigration to Nan-land? Or would he not think the workman too free there? The latter, I am afraid.

W. M.

Last week when Parliament discussed the affair at Ennis on the previous Sunday, the usual amount of bunkum was talked, and the result arrived at was of the usual kind—a majority for law-'n'-order, and everybody pleased with themselves and angry with everybody else.

No new facts were brought out. The same old thing had happened; an "illegal" meeting, an unarmed crowd ridden down and beaten and cut about, and nobody to be responsible for it.

For once Balfour dropped his tone of flippant cynicism, and was as near seriousness as his soulless nature would allow. It is true that his seriousness only led to more careful lying than usual, though, careful as he was, not one of his excuses could stand examination. They were founded on the one-sided, warped, and worked-up version of what happened, handed in to him by his underlings in Ireland.

Stones flung after the bloody little drama had begun in the warehouse yard became the cause of all the bother; none was to blame but the "agitators," who called a peaceful public meeting, for the bloodshed that ensued; a meeting which had been held and was quietly dispersing became in his hands a "riotous and dangerous assemblage."

When one read all this in the next morning's paper one was quite prepared to see, as one *did* see, all his lies made clear in another day or two. In the enquiry the police could only produce, even from among themselves, witnesses to swear that two stones fell near Col. Turner, none being seen to strike him, nor did he bear a mark, and that these two were only seen after the soldiers had entered the yard. One police-witness even admitted, "I do not know of any policeman who was assaulted that day or struck!"

But Balfour was not content with what he had already done, and went on to assure the House, on the word of the doctor attending him, that Mr. Hill, the *Irish Times* reporter who was sabred, was not seriously injured. Whereupon the doctor denies that he has ever been communicated with about his patient's injuries by any one whatsoever.

It is almost certain, however, that Balfour is more a fool than a blackguard; that these lies that flow so glibly from his lips are prepared for him by the resident magistrates who do his bidding—and bend him to their will. These upholders of British power and pillars of the Constitution number 75, and in the official return of them published on the 11th it is said that 35 have no legal qualification at all for their posts.

They are good provocative agents, and ready at brutal repression when a chance occurs. Like Segrave of Mitchelstown, and many another, they have failed miserably in all decent endeavours at a civilised livelihood, but having graduated in bull-whacking and nigger-driving, make excellent underlings and tools to a Coercion Government.

Meanwhile, the unhappy country they keep under is "bleeding at every pore," as the newspapers put it; or pouring out its people at every port, as the fact is. Year after year they go forth to become the bitter unrelenting enemies of the British Empire, and yet the remnant left at home fight on as steadily as ever.

But it must be said that were the Irish people "on all sides of the sea" as united and resolute as they say, and as brave withal, they would have swept the world of the curse of English rule, and would not now be kept down by a sneaking cur like Balfour and the unscrupulous paid bullies who are at his back.

Two of the really brave men who stay for nothing in doing their duty, have once more been taken in the legal toils. William O'Brien and John Dillon will most assuredly be condemned by the satraps before whom they are to be tried. They must be carefully watched over or Balfour may carry out his alleged threat, and the inquest will duly result in a verdict of "suicide" or "natural causes" as others have done before.

In England is done by fraud what is done in Ireland by force. The *Pall Mall* recalls with apparent pleasure some words it uttered last year: "The Church has machinery by which every rectory might be made an emigration centre," and smugly remarks that the suggestion is being acted on. 1,000 emigrants so gathered sailed from Liverpool on the 12th for Halifax, and there are more to follow. Who pays the holy men's commission, and do they wait for death before they get it?

S.