

THE COMMONWEAL

The Official Journal of the SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

VOL. 4.—No. 134.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1888.

WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

THE Government have got what they wanted in the matter of the Irish Inquisition; but it is rather more than doubtful if they do not find they have got more than they know what to do with. We need not trouble ourselves as to any "revelations" concerning Mr. Parnell and other Irish members; the best that the enquiry can do for the coercionists is to show that the Irish are determined at any cost to get rid of English landlord tyranny (would that we could say of all exploiting tyranny!), and also that they have every reason for their determination. If the knowledge of this turns the public opinion of this country, all that one can say is that it is the opinion of a public of fools and wanton oppressors.

Meanwhile what has come to light about Mr. Mandeville's treatment in Tullamore Jail will put a spoke in the wheel of Balfour's lot, and deservedly so. He was tortured as far as it was thought he could bear, and his tormentors went a little too far—and killed him. Do not let us forget, however, that the point of his ill-treatment was that he was to be made to feel that he was being treated like ordinary offenders, and that this means that "ordinary offenders" are habitually tortured in our jails. With all its pretences to humanity (for our present prison system is the result of philanthropy), our modern sham society is forced to find some substitute for the rack and the thumb-screw.

Nay, it is not only "convicted felons" that are treated as no man has a right to treat another, whatever his fault may be, but people arrested by Warren's modern miracles in blue, whether they have done anything or nothing, must be taught that they had best not be suspected of wrong-doing. The committee on the accommodation provided for prisoners has let some light on a very dark place. Dark very literally. "The cells with very few exceptions imperfectly lighted, many quite dark. . . . The offices of nature must be performed under conditions of disgusting publicity. . . . Generally eight and sometimes twelve prisoners in a cell 12 ft. by 15 ft., the space not nearly so insufficient as in many cases"; and so on, and so on. In Manchester City Court, rooms 21 ft. by 15 ft., and others 15 ft. by 14 ft., as many as thirty men have been shoved into the larger rooms, and twenty women in the smaller. Hull as bad or worse; Liverpool and Sheffield as bad as the worst.

Truly "Society" is in a bad way, if it wants so much taking care of! For my part when I consider the recklessness with which charges are made against poor people, I cannot help feeling some gratitude towards Balfour and Warren, and such like fools, for now and then shutting up one of the well-to-do. One almost feels as if one would like to do a good turn to those heroes, who are both rather strong in the educational line, by giving them a little education gratis, first in the elegant waiting rooms of the police court, and next in the salubrious and cool solitude of Pentonville or Tullamore. Yet, after all, even so I doubt if one could knock remorse or consideration into such blockheads.

Luckless Italians are being swindled into emigrating to America by emigration agents, and finding themselves workless and destitute when they get there. The Italian vice-consul says that 5000 Italians have applied to his consulate this year for assistance, and that there were 2000 destitute in New York now. So it goes on; in high places as in low; for indeed I don't see much difference but hypocrisy, between the agents above-mentioned and the delicate gentlemen and ladies who are so anxious to get rid of our poor people lest they should take money of their pockets at home. Let us see your backs at any rate: if you thrive afterwards well and good; if not, your discontent will annoy and frighten us no longer.

But what's this? I read in the *Daily News* that people in the United States are extremely irritated with Colonel Ingersoll because he has stated that, "The second generations of Germans and Irish in America are thoroughly patriotic." This irritation is felt because people

are so sensitive about immigration. Heavens! this is sensitiveness so great it is hard to understand. But at any rate, you transporters of the British and Irish, you had better look out, for clearly this door is going to be shut against your troublesome people soon. How would it be if you let them earn their livings at home, as they could so easily do if it were not for your idle lives which they have to keep?
W. M.

A somewhat belated copy of the *West Cumberland Times* recently came to my hands, and among other items (of news) was a report of the usual monthly meeting of the "Wigton Union Rural Sanitary Authority." One of the chief matters to discuss was a letter from some lawyers at Carlisle, who, writing on behalf of Lord Leconfield, the lord of the manor, that all the earth thereabouts and all the minerals under the earth were "reserved to his lordship with full power to work the same"; that therefore certain arrangements made by the Board to supply a place called Fletchertown with water from a small stream flowing over the land could not be agreed to by his lordship, as the water may be required by his lordship to work the said minerals. Fletchertown might go thirsty for all his lordship cared, for in the event of the water being diverted "he will take such steps as he may be advised."

"The letter was read with scornful emphasis by the chairman, special prominence being given to the name of Lord Leconfield." Somebody called him a "glutton," but that is not very serious; but a Mr. Moore (more power to him!) made a remark which—in view of the very dangerous state of the public mind—must have attention drawn to it, for it seems almost possible that the *Times* might base another series of "—— and Crime" articles on such a remark as Mr. Moore's, who, according to the report, said, "I wad shut seck fellows as that." Mr. J. Williamson (deprecatingly), "No." Mr. Moore, "Ah, but I wad."

Now this sort of talk is very sad. There was for just a moment a hope that the clumsy printer—printers make good scapegoats—had left out the word "up," meaning simply that the speaker would "shut up" such as the dog-in-the-manger monopolist lord, as any other wild beast would be "shut up"; but when he repeats his remark with an added emphasis which comes from the use of the word "wad," one regretfully comes to the conclusion that this sort of talk must be "noticed."

Such talk as this of "shutting" our various monopolists and exploiters is a very short step from the republishing of such works as "Killing no Murder" and "The Gospel of the Dagger," and is much to be deprecated—just now—when there are so many more potent "resources of civilisation" available to rid the world of "seck" vermin, much as they deserve "shutting" (up).

There is also a further objection in my mind against 'shutting'; it is much too merciful. When one recalls the round of agonies and tortures suffered by so many thousands of workers at the bidding of our Leconfields, the blood turns to flame to think there is a chance of such wrong never being fairly avenged, which could only be by making the monopolists and sweaters go through a few years of the same suffering.

If any reader of the *Weal* lives anywhere in the West Cumberland district, let him turn his attention to Mr. Moore or any others who talk like him of using such harsh measures to a "real live lord"; 'tis rankest blasphemy.

Something of a fleet has been got together somehow, and naturally the usual big line appears on the Contents Bills, "Ironclads in Collision." Certainly, what else are they for and what else can you expect?
T. S.