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NOTES ON NEWS.

THERE is no doubt that the Southampton election is a heavy blow for the Government as things go ; and little doubt that the election turned on the compensation clauses in that piece of humbug, the Local Government Bill. This is quite natural, since this question which is, we must suppose, beginning to excite people dreadfully, is after all and considering the bill it has to do with, a small matter compared with the independence of Ireland ; and being a smaller matter, people are sure to take more interest in it, because the whole of their political education tends to turn their thoughts towards mere pettinesses. It is a matter of course that if some piece of mere local politics, especially if it were a personal affair, of little importance to themselves and none at all to anyone else, could have been pushed into the front for the consideration of the good people of Southampton, they would have been more excited still about the election.

However the Government must not console themselves for their defeat on these grounds. On the contrary, the fact that the Southampton electors were thinking less of the Irish question than the Government bill is an unlucky sign for the Ins, and shows that their time for being the Outs is drawing near. The fact is that the Government has been compelled to make a show of doing something besides repressing Ireland and London, and is beginning to reap the harvest of its activity. This is an old story, and will have to be told of every Government in future : they come in on the back of a faction excited about something or another, and are happy and glorious ; and could they remain with no other work than talking bunkum about the defeated faction, they might remain *in* happy and glorious for quite a long time. But there is a conventional idea that they must attempt to do something, and so they turn to ; but as there is nothing to *be* done but an attempt to tinker that which only a few Whig pedants really believe can be tinkered, and which it is the interest of most powerful people should have as many holes as a sieve in it, the first step in their attempt at doing something means their first step towards the door.

The Tories have now taken more than one step in that direction, so that we Socialists will probably soon have to be thinking as to what our prospects will be with Mr. Gladstone in office again ; and the only question of any interest to be asked about this matter is, will the compromise which will in all probability be come to in the Irish matter let that question rest for a while, and so deprive politicians of a satisfactory refuge from the necessity of at least pretending to deal with the general condition of labour ? Of course desperate attempts will be made on both sides to spin out the Irish question. How far will they succeed ? Will Socialism become a matter of practical politics ? If it does it will be very certainly dragged through the mud a great deal ; and it will be especially necessary for all who know what they are striving for, to keep its true ideal steadily before people's eyes.

The Co-operationists have just had a very important congress. It would be impossible to criticise the speeches and addresses delivered there from the curt and garbled reports of the daily press ; but pending the careful consideration of more trustworthy accounts of its proceedings, we cannot fail to note that there was a conflict of opinion there between those who have an ideal of Co-operation and those who have not. Our sympathies are of course on the side of those who have the ideal, especially as their opponents appear to an onlooker to be about as grovelling a set of profit-hunters as ever encumbered the earth. Nevertheless it is necessary to point out to them that they are in a false position, and that Co-operation is certain to drift completely into mere joint-stockery with minutely subdivided shares.

Since the days of Robert Owen the position of Co-operation has been quite changed by the uprising of *revolutionary* Socialism as a result of the application of the doctrine of evolution to human society, and the consequent perception of the class-struggle. The Co-operationists of Robert Owen's time did not perceive the existence of the class-struggle, and their Co-operation was but a part of their ideal of Socialism in the future, and a means to that end in the present. They knew that monopoly of the means of production existed, but they did not know (in spite of Adam Smith) that it was an essential part of the society, political and economic, under which they lived.

But now that a living and militant Socialism has made manifest the

antagonism of the classes, it should be clear to our Co-operationist friends that true co-operation and privilege cannot exist together. The monopolists of the means of production will only allow the Co-operationists to rise out of their class misery *on condition that they themselves shall join the ranks of the privileged, and live on interest, rent, and profit*, thus forming a new class of owners, whose business is in the main keeping down the producers.

It is true, of course, that a great part of this new class would be living by producing, as well as by owning wealth, that they would be exploited as well as exploiters ; but there is nothing new in slaves owning slaves. That condition existed as long ago at least as the time when the 'Odyssey' was written. In that book, Eumeus, an obvious thrall, often complaining of his thralldom, has a thrall of his own, "bought with his own money." Surely the "idealist Co-operators" cannot think this a high ideal to aim at.

If they will only look at the matter with eyes cleared from prejudice they will see that Socialism embraces in its programme whatever is really feasible in their ideal, and that the Socialists and not themselves are the true opponents of the sordid profit-grubbing which they are attacking in their own associations. Meantime, it seems to me that these profit-grubbing Co-operationists are doing a service to the Cause of Labour by pointing out the "Thus far shalt thou go and no further" to those Co-operationists who really have nobler views, and are not engaged in the favourite scheme of the dominant class of today, to wit, the fashioning of a new middle-class out of the working-class, *and at their expense*, as a barrier to revolutionary Socialism.

Perhaps I may as well meet an objection likely to be made, and which was in fact made at a Radical club in my presence, that the Socialists themselves are establishing a Co-operative Society. That society (to which I wish all success) makes it an essential part of its plan that no interest shall be paid on money borrowed, and no dividends of profit made to individual shareholders, which is a demonstration on its part of its views of the impossibility of true co-operation under the present system ; as it implies that it does not think it worth while to start a Co-operationist Society unless those that help it are content to sacrifice the *privilege of capital* which the laws of our modern monopolist Society confers on them.

Lord Salisbury's impudence and insolence really pass all bounds. When we heard that the Government had refused to recognise officially the Paris Exhibition of next year, everybody thought it only meant the usual official apathy and red-tape ; and the matter might surely have been allowed to rest there unless some special fool could have been dug up for the occasion. However, that special fool has been dug up in the person of the most noble himself. He has thought it necessary to give a reason for the refusal, which is an insult to the French nation, and is clearly meant to be. His given reason for not appointing an English Commission to help to organise the Exhibition, is that it is intended to be a commemoration of the French Revolution ! Such an answer almost makes one think that the Government is "riding for a fall." This is the day of panics. Some timid people will be thinking that when the *coup d'état* of Baker the First (Boulangier) comes off, we shall be sending a *corps d'armée* (if we have got it) to help that hero in putting down opposition. Really it quite puts one in spirits to see that our "rulers" can be such blundering blockheads as this.

The Bishop of Limerick has fulminated against the Mayor of that city, who called a meeting to uphold the Plan against the Rescripts, which meeting, with several others, has been successfully held. This as far as it goes is satisfactory, especially when taken together with the condemnation of the Plan by the Protestant Mr. Parnell, since it tends to stiffen whatever of revolutionary or at least progressive in the Irish movement. The cleavage between Whiggery and Revolution is growing wider daily.

W. M.

"THAT BLESSED WORD."

TALKING with a friend some time ago, the observation was made to me, how easy it was to evoke emotion by using traditional channels. My friend went on to relate that he was addressing a public meeting a few days previously and was trying to show that the Liberal Party did not always express sentiments favourable to the cause of labour. In the