

# THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

## NOTES ON NEWS.

MR. PARNELL'S speech at the Eighty Club has some interest for us, although that by no means lies in the long statement of his dealings with Lord Carnarvon. On that head, what does it matter what either Lord Carnarvon or all the Government said to Mr. Parnell when they thought the support of the Irish parliamentary party worth buying, since they now think they can do without it? Does anybody really suppose that the Tory party would be likely to turn Home Rulers without compulsion of some sort. The real interest in Mr. Parnell's speech hangs on the fact that having tried the Tories and found that nothing could be done in that direction, he was able to have recourse to the Liberals, whom he had *compelled* to become Home Rulers: and certainly his game was cleverly played, since the same stone killed both birds; tried the Tories and found them wanting, and drove the Liberals to support the Irish party on pain of having to endure an apparently perpetual Tory majority.

And now Mr. Parnell has to pay the price for this great parliamentary success, for this alliance with the party who a year or two ago were the coercionists, because they were the party in power, the rulers in England. What is the price which he has to pay? In the fewest words, he has to engage himself to the spreading of Whiggery in Ireland: a Whiggery indeed suited to the soil, including if necessary protection of Irish industries, but still Whiggery. He is anxious to show that all the Irish want can be gained by purely constitutional means, and to repudiate all revolutionary and illegal action. And yet he knows perfectly well that but for the revolutionary spirit in the Irish people, but for their many illegal acts, he and his party in parliament would have been nowhere; and as soon as that spirit of revolution dies out in Ireland, Home Rule will become a mere piece of political pedantry.

To tell men that it is "their duty to suffer any thing and to dare any thing *within the law*" is sheer nonsense. Only those can suffer from the criminal law who disobey it. That sounds perhaps like a law-and-order maxim; but what it means is that there is always law enough in a society founded on wrong to make everybody a criminal who does not sit down quietly under his wrongs: or to put it in another way, no one either in Ireland or England can be a good citizen and a law-abiding person.

The Coercion Act is just as constitutional as the parliament which passed it; and parliament will be always ready if necessary at twenty-four hours' notice to pass any other addition to the "Constitution" which will have the effect of keeping people down when they become conscious that they are wronged, as we are only too glad to think that the Irish people is conscious. Let it keep that consciousness till no man in Ireland is wronged, and then it may use Mr. Parnell and not let him use it. But if does less than this it will have changed its tyrant but not its tyranny.

A defence-scare on again—and the defenders all by the ears. Lord Salisbury losing his temper and flying out at Lord Wolseley; the *Telegraph* with posters out calculated to make timid people take a ticket for some station in the north of Scotland, and inquisitive ones rush to Dover with the largest telescopes procurable. What will come of it all? Well, a job or two, or a job or twenty—that most certainly: probably absolutely nothing else. Luckily it is not possible to make the English army a perfect machine like the German one is. Let us be glad of that at least, that its power as a reactionary instrument is limited by our natural tendency to muddle and job.

W. M.

By Baron Huddleston's decision it now appears that the law of libel—that precious safeguard of private character—may be violated with impunity by railway companies, who, if they have obtained a conviction for the so-called fraud of travelling without a ticket, may proceed deliberately to inflict injury and annoyance on a man by posting up his name in every station on their line, and *this even though the conviction is subsequently proved to have been unfounded*. Now the *Commonweal*, or any newspaper, if it published a *single* statement calculated to injure a man's reputation in the world, would immediately have an action lie against it for libel. A more glaring iniquity, therefore, it is impossible to conceive. But we have at least this remedy. Although the modern joint-stock company is the supreme concern of the bourgeois law, we can untiringly proclaim our contempt for this law and for the

spurious morality on which it is based, and we can show our sympathy to the utmost of our power with the unfortunate victims of these rascally prosecutions; in other words, of the despotism of bloodless, soulless Capital in its most brutal form.

At a recent general conference of the Methodist body, when the subject of "foreign missions" was being discussed, the support of the well-to-do classes for them was openly invoked on the ground that the "gospel" was the best pioneer of the trader. As one of the speakers admirably expressed it, "Commerce follows the Cross." We are glad we can agree at least in one point with the distinguished body in question—"shoddy" goods certainly do follow the "shoddy" creed which is their ideal expression. We are sometimes indignantly assured that Christianity is not hostile to Socialism: however this may be, it seems by its own confession it is very friendly to Capitalism.

E. B. B.

The deference for law-'n'-order shown by the promoters of the Saturday afternoon "conversation meetings" in Trafalgar Square has not prevented the police from getting up a few cases of imaginary offences. Although the experiment may be useful in forcing upon observers the absurdity of the whole affair, it would be idle to hope for anything more from it. If Londoners *want* the right of public meeting they must *win* it. Craven submission to a dictator to begin with, and then shouts of triumph because a partial evasion of his decree does not bring down the bludgeon on their heads, does not look as if they did care much for the "right" they so loudly talk of.

For connecting Christ with Trafalgar Square, our comrade Stewart Headlam has just been punished. He prosecuted the *Record* for libelling his language in the Square, and Baron Huddleston gave the case against him very obviously on the ground that he had said that if Christ came to earth again and went to the Square he would be arrested. This horrified the baron, who could not understand that a member of the Church could have held such "disgusting" ideas; he evidently thinks of Christ in the garb of a bishop—a well-born, well-bred ecclesiastic like Soapy Sam—unable to speak anything but politeness of the high ones of the earth! Poor Christ!

Which was right, the lawyer or the laity? When Mr. Justice Stephens had his watch stolen, a bystander turned himself into an amateur detective and had the wrong man arrested. The magistrate in admitting the mistake said, nevertheless, he had "acted as a good citizen." But the crowd had called him a "sneaking scoundrel," a "b— nark," and so on. According to the ethics of individual enterprise, unlimited competition, and the rest of it, he was unfairly interfering with the survival of the fittest, so that under the commercial system of society he could not be deemed a "good citizen," and so the lawyer was wrong.

But it is on another count that the crowd were right. They were for the most part workmen, unconsciously feeling that they have no real interest in the maintenance of the law, which, as William Joyce puts it, is "a set of rules drawn up to allow men to make money of other people's misfortunes." So that when one of their number gratuitously chipped in to aid the hired upholders of the law, the "moral miracles" who have shown the workmen so clearly and so often that they recognise no master but the money-bag, the healthy instinct of the crowd went against the sneak who had not even the bad excuse that it was his business.

Poor law-'n'-order! Another of its volunteer (!) upholders has "gone over to the other side." Few men have been more "useful to Society" in the orthodox sense than Leone Levi, who had ready at all times an interminable stream of figures to show the happiness of the workman and the goodness of his employer. But he many times, by the way as it were, and despite himself, feathered an arrow for the Socialist quiver, and so "did better than he knew." May he rest in peace!

But Arnold White is yet alive—and kicking. Though his twaddle of sterilisation, etc., brings him the contempt he deserves, on the other hand the noise he makes over the sweating system is helping to draw notice to the fact that the *whole* order of Society to-day is no more nor less than a gigantic sweating system. The extract from the *Star* in another column puts the case very neatly and clearly. We have been alone so long in preaching the truth, it is cheering to see it taken up in a "regular newspaper."

Meanwhile, the *Pall Mall* is still behind, and cannot quite come over to the truth; talks of the anti-Chinese precautions of the colonies, and goes in half-heartedly for the like here.

A little while ago it will be remembered that two girls were imprisoned with hard labour, because they were poor enough to be compelled to sleep in the open-air and resented the tortures of the workhouse. When asked about the sentence, the genial Matthews suggested that it was given to enable the prison chaplain to exert his saving influence. But Cunninghame Graham kept on with his questions, and now the hard labour is remitted, though the poor devils will have to stay out their time—not that this is such an awful hardship in these days, as the prison is much more healthy and comfortable than the “homes” of millions. S.

## SOCIALISM IN A PALACE.

THE *Commonweal* of 28th April contained comrade Mark Manly's experience of a Socialist at a Primrose League banquet. This week we have to chronicle a more startling incident—that of Socialism being preached in a palace. The scene took place at the palatial residence of Lieut. Colonel Thorneycroft, Tettenhall Towers, near Wolverhampton, upon the occasion of the gathering of the Tettenhall Branch of the Primrose League in his private theatre. The theatre itself, to fully describe, would require the artistic abilities of our comrade William Morris. We therefore content ourselves with saying that its walls were graced by some of the most beautiful specimens of oak carvings, together with relics of bygone times in the shape of old armour and trophies of the chase. Added to this the massive building itself, together with the graceful artificial lights provided, falling, as they did, on an audience composed of every phase of society from the aristocratic idler up to the hard-handed artisan, rendered the scene at once charming and unique. The object of the gathering was to discuss the question of “How best to improve trade for the benefit of the working classes.” The intentions of the gallant colonel were evidently of the purest, for he had invited some twenty or thirty different leading men among the working classes to attend and take part in the discussion. Great praise is due to him for so bold a step. Among others who attended and took part were Mr. R. Juggins, agent for the trades' unionists of Darlaston and district; Mr. Homer, Cradley Heath Chainmakers; Mr. Cocking, of the Wolverhampton Compositors' Society; and William Haydn Sanders, as delegate of the Walsall Branch of the Socialist League. It is almost needless to say that Colonel Thorneycroft's views are those of a Fair Trader. In his opinion a prohibitive tax on all manufactured or partly manufactured goods imported into this country is nearly all that is required to give six days' work a week to the working classes, with a couple of hours' daily toil thrown in by the children, in order to help keep the family. This is the blessing they deduce from the application of Fair Trade, and this it was that the meeting was asked to assist in bringing about. To the great surprise of all, Mr. Juggins gave his personal support to the proposition, although in his speech he clearly admitted that the gunlock-makers and nut-bolt forgers, and also the chainmakers, were working sixty hours per week for wages varying from 7s. up to 15s. per week, although they had no foreign competition to encounter in those trades, and yet he was so blind and dead to economic facts that he failed to see that such a proposition as Fair Trade in no wise affected those whom he represented. He was followed by Mr. Homer, the “heaven-sent leader” of the Cradley Heath chainmakers, who, with shame and regret be it said, had no better news to tell the audience than that there were plenty of men among his class, the workers, whom he knew, who were able to earn for themselves and family a living, and yet were too idle and drunken to do so. It never seemed to dawn on this “heaven-sent leader's” mind that the present system breeds these wastrels, and that so long as it is retained wastrels there ever must be. It is noteworthy that none of the rich idlers present denounced any of their class for living luxurious and licentious lives, and we hope this will be a lesson for even Mr. Homer on a future occasion. He concluded by inveighing against overtime and advocating the eight hours system. Comrade Sanders was then called upon, and, in a vigorous, eloquent, and able speech, in which he demolished all ideas of ever improving the condition of the workers by political change, said that the salvation of the workers would not be brought about by simply demolishing the House of Lords, the throne, or the church, free education, free sale of land, and such-like political tinkering. All these things had been carried out generations ago in other countries and had failed, for workers of America, France, Germany, and other countries were under the heel of the capitalist, as here. The evil did not lie in overtime, nor was the remedy Free Trade or Fair Trade. As for work, we (the workers) did too much already, and the idea imagined by Colonel Thorneycroft, that working men wanted six days' work a week, was entirely wrong. They wanted less work, more leisure, and the full fruits of their labour. To-day working men built splendid houses and palaces for the rich, and miserable huts and slums for themselves. They made beautiful clothes for the rich, and shoddy clothes for themselves. They tilled the soil which produced beautiful food, and yet lived on garbage and rubbish. Everywhere we saw those who worked hardest fared the hardest.

In support of his statements he quoted statistics from Mulhall, Leone Levi, Giffen, and others, showing that the total production of

wealth to day was more than enough to provide comforts for all. The national income was £1,250,000,000 per year, and of that sum the workers were said to get £450,000,000, or one pound out of every three. The other £800,000,000 going for rent, interest, and profit; 222,000 families receiving £333,000,000 between them, or an average income of £1,665, *vide* Mulhall's ‘Dictionary of Statistics.’ Men with £33 per week, he said, did not generally work. Here, then, lay the cause of poverty for the workers. The rich men consume, the poor men produce, and the remedy is to be found in a reconstruction of society wherein the rich of to-day shall labour for what they consume and the poor of to-day shall consume what they produce by their own labour. All the means of labour must be nationalised and treated as the common property of all—the land, the mines, factories, machinery, etc., all these must be under the full control of the workers; then they would be regulated so that every one shall have an equal opportunity of working, and the full fruits of his labour when he has worked.

This speech produced a marked impression on all present, and was followed by Mr. Cocking, who put forward as a remedy, taxing of all uncultivated lands, royalties on minerals to go to the State, and reduction in the hours of labour to eight per day.

The discussion was continued by Mr. Staveley Hill, Q.C., M.P., who pointed out that Mr. Juggins failed entirely to put forward any remedy, whilst with Mr. Homer he strongly agreed. As for Mr. Cocking's proposals he expressed his abhorrence, and regarded nationalisation of royalties as confiscation, and contended that Parliament had no right to interfere with private property. As for taxing uncultivated land, the fact was it would not pay to cultivate. With regard to Socialism, Mr. Hill seemed powerless to cope with it, for he admitted that all men were equal in the sight of God and should be in the sight of men, and wisely left comrade Sanders severely alone.

In response to an invitation of the chairman for any of the audience to take part in the discussion, comrade J. T. Deakin took the opportunity of severely criticising Mr. Staveley Hill, M.P., pointing out that Parliament had interfered with private property to the tune of confiscating 40 per cent. of landlord's rents in Ireland during the last few years, and that during the last century the dominant class had confiscated from the people no less than ten million acres of common land, and pointedly asked whether it was not a fact that the rent paid to landlords was the true reason why land would not pay to cultivate? It would grow grain, etc., for the people, but not keep an idle class; and the people when they got common sense would be very unlikely to continue the payment of rent. Labour was the source of all wealth; therefore all wealth belonged to the labourer, and he urged the working-men to organise for the purpose of asserting their rights. This could only come through Socialism, and Socialism would come to displace the present system as surely as past systems had given way to the present.

Mr. Hill, in reply, evaded the points raised; and in closing the meeting Lieut.-Col. Thorneycroft expressed himself pleased with the information elicited, and heartily invited all delegates to be present at the next gathering in a few weeks' time, when our comrades will not fail to attend. J. T. D.

## SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

### CHAPTER XXIII (*concluded*).—SOCIALISM TRIUMPHANT.

It remains to say something on the religious and ethical basis of which the life of Communal Society may be called an expression, although from another aspect the religion may be said to be an expression of that life; the two together forming an harmonious whole.

The word religion has been, and is still in most minds, connected with supernatural beliefs, and consequently the use of the word has been attacked as unjustifiable where this element is absent. But, as we shall proceed to show in a few words, this is rather accessory to it than essential.

In the first instance religion had for its object the continuance and glory of the kinship—Society; whether as clan, tribe, or people, ancestor worship forming the leading feature in its early phases. That in such an epoch religion should have been connected with what we now call superstition was inevitable, since at that time no distinction was drawn between the human and any other form of existence, whether in animal life or in inanimate matters, all being alike considered conscious and intelligent.

Consequently, with the development of material civilisation from the domination of things by persons to that of persons by things, and the consequent falling asunder of Society into two classes, a possessing and dominating class, and a non-possessing and dominated one, arose a condition of Society which gave leisure to the possessing or slaveholding class, the result of which was a possibility of observation and reflection amongst the upper class. As a consequence of this a process of reflection arose among this class which distinguished man as a conscious being from the rest of nature. From this again arose a dual conception of things: on the one hand was man, which was familiar and known, on the other nature, which was mysterious and relatively unknown. In nature itself grew a further distinction between its visible objects now regarded as unconscious things, and a supposed motive power which acted on them from behind, which was conceived of as manlike in character, but above mankind in knowledge and power, and no longer a part of the things themselves, but without them, and moving and controlling them.