

# THE COMMONWEAL

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## NOTES ON NEWS.

THE Mid-Lanark election has resulted in a great Whig triumph, which will surely be not altogether unpleasing to the Tories, since it is at once a triumph of respectability over poverty, and a great blow to the prestige of the Irish Parliamentary Party, whose direct interference no doubt largely contributed to the Whig majority; henceforth it will be clear to the British Labour Party that the Irish leaders are simply using the democracy in this island for their own political purposes, and there cannot fail in consequence to be much soreness against the said leaders among the British workers.

We Socialists however appeal earnestly to the workers of Mid-Lanark and others who have suffered by these servile tactics, to take a noble revenge on the leaders, by looking to the Irish people themselves, and being all the more intent on freeing *them* not only from the tyranny of foreign centralisation, but also from the new tyranny that awaits them when they are victorious in the matter of Home Rule; if indeed they ever will get Home Rule until they acknowledge the full force of the class struggle and the identity of the interests of the workers all over the world. Undoubtedly when there is a parliament in Dublin the struggle of the Irish people for freedom will have to be begun again, and it is just because we Socialists want to see the real struggle for freedom begin, that we will do all we can to push on this preliminary stage of Home Rule.

Home Rule by all means; but not as an instrument for the exploitation of the Irish labourer by the Irish capitalist tenant: not as an instrument for the establishment of more factories, for the creation of a fresh Irish proletariat to be robbed for the benefit of national capitalists. Our Home Rule means Home Rule for the Irish people, that is to say *equality* for the Irish people.

✓ A word or two to our own Socialist friends on this unpleasant Mid-Lanark business. They have entered on this electioneering struggle with a people at their back not yet educated into a knowledge of the reasons for the wrongs which they suffer, or the remedies for them, and as a matter of course they have been defeated. Is it too late for them to change their tactics and make up their minds to educate the people in the principles of Socialism before asking them to return Socialists to Parliament? I think Socialists sometimes forget what a great distance there is between them and the mere discontented Radicals who must form the mass of the voters they have any chance of winning over. The Socialist can no more forget his Socialism than he can the elementary facts of science when once learned. So that while *he* continually sees before him at least the first real Socialist measures, his Radical friend sees nothing but the preliminary steps to those measures, and is, in consequence, an easy prey to the false promises of the loose-tongued Whig and the dishing Tory-Democrat.

✓ Of one thing I am sure, that if propaganda by electioneering is practised by any body of Socialists they will have no time for any other means of propaganda: they must begin at once and think of nothing else but getting Socialists into Parliament. The direct education of the people in the principles of Socialism must be the task of other Socialists who do not trouble themselves about Parliament; and unless there is such a body of Socialists our parliamentary friends will find their task an impossible one.

✓ The Pope has now formally banned the Plan of Campaign and boycotting. This is good news indeed, and it is to be hoped that the Irish bishops will find themselves compelled to follow suit: it will be better news still when the parish priests declare against the people. The two curses of a reactionary religion and the national sentiment which has been forced upon Ireland have been a heavy drawback on the necessities and aspirations of the Irish people.

It seems that charity is somewhat at a discount at present; there has been a great falling off lately; the Jubilee last year was bad for it, and so on. This means of course that the rich and well-to-do are determined not to lack their luxuries and comforts whatever happens. In short the more charity is wanted the less of it is to be had. In the long run this will be found out to be the case with all palliatives of our system of robbery. They cannot be applied just at the time when they are needed.

W. M.

On the 25th ult. the shareholders of Reuter's Telegram Company met in solemn conclave to discuss the past year's business and the profit thereon. The chairman lamented the poor report they were forced to make; there had not been the nice profitable war they had hoped for and so their gains were not so high as they might have been. A Mr. Maurice Grant also bewailed their bad luck in only getting a "miserable 5 per cent." "Any cheesemonger's shop in London," said he, "would give better results than that." What a pity that millions of men had not died in agony to add to these idlers' wealth and enable a lie-monger to gain more percentage than a seller of cheese!

The Crofter Commissioners are proving over and over again, if that were needed, how villainously the poor folk have been exploited. An average reduction of 57 per cent. is a very excellent proof, and when we see that 83 per cent. of arrears are struck off also, the whole thing is pretty clear. "The Highfield estate, near the Muir of Ord, has the distinguished honour of topping the list so far," says the *Pall Mall*. "The Brahan estate reductions average 52 per cent., and pass into the second place. The satisfaction of the crofters with these decisions may be readily imagined, because nothing nearly so extensive and sweeping had been expected, though the need for revaluation was evident. The Duchess of Sutherland has been fortunate in escaping the censure implied in a very severe reduction. Thirty per cent., however, as matters go in Strathpeffer Spa will be heartily welcomed by the crofters, and 34 per cent. of arrears will perhaps imply a good deal more. The crofters question is now in a fair way of settlement. It needed heroic treatment, and nothing less would have been of any service." S.

## THE REACTION AND THE RADICALS.

THE other day a friend was remarking to me that the ordinary Liberal and Radical of the Parliamentary type was very slack in his resistance to the Tory supremacy in these days; and in spite of the brags of the Gladstonian press, it must be admitted that this is true, after making all the allowances that can be made for the apparently brisk conflict over Irish matters: for that conflict is really in the hands of the Irish themselves; Mr. Parnell's causing the Irish vote to be cast in favour of the Tories in 1885 forced Mr. Gladstone's hand. Up to that time the Liberals had reckoned on the general support of the Irish Parliamentary Party, but after it they understood that that support must be bought by the yielding to Irish demands; that is in the main the plain story of the Gladstonian conversion. And the terms of the bargain so made have to be kept, as the Irish are at hand to enforce them, and Mr. Gladstone himself as usual puts considerable energy into the work which lies ready to his hand. Hence the appearance of a stout battle between the Ins and Outs in Parliament, which, however, as has often been said, is by no means to the taste of the greater part of the Liberal Gladstonites. They will be heartily glad when it is over, especially if, as is probable, and as Lord Randolph Churchill's conduct the other night indicated, it ends in a compromise.

But the Irish matters shelved for a time and the Liberals get free from their bargain, what is to follow as the immediate future of that respectable party? Who can answer that question that believes in the continued existence of a Liberal party in Great Britain? Mr. Gladstone has in all probability taken his last forward step in politics; and Mr. John Morley, who is considered (Lord help us!) to be the leader of the advanced (respectable) party, has already pretty much declared himself for the sign-post of democracy as it was understood twenty years ago. In fact the future, or indeed the present, of the Liberal party is now prefigured by those uninteresting sea-shores on the south coast of England, where the land having grown wheat and marigold and turnips, and having fallen into inferior pasture, is at last nothing but a flat waste of sand with a few tufts of useless herbs dotted here and there upon it, and so goes dwindling down into the sea in an undramatic inglorious fashion. Having performed mechanically the part that has been forced upon it in the Irish struggle, there is an end of it in mere barren officialism and the hopes of another term or two of do-nothing government. The great obstructionist party will swallow it up, regretted by no one.

Meantime, what about the few Radicals who at present hang on to it, and can hardly be called a party, since so many of them have gone through the same proceedings with the Liberals as the latter have done with the Tories, and been swallowed up by them? Well, the few that can still be called Radicals—that is, men who really wish to move