

The Struggle for Freedom [Jun, 1888]

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IRELAND

Since Mr. Balfour's Parliamentary statement to the effect that the National League was a thing of the past, owing to his spirited policy of windy proclamations and jail cramming, there have been held more than twenty public meetings of the defunct League, most of them "monster demonstrations." The weekly business meetings, too, of the various branches have by no means fallen off, on the contrary fresh numbers are added every day. It would appear that there is still enough vitality in the combination to bring tumbling down that exceedingly rotten structure, English Government in Ireland.

The lying boast of Balfour's is backed every other day in Irish Courts of Justice by the evidence of policemen, who, in swearing against prisoners as having attended League meetings, are careful to add time lesson they have learned by rote, that, "by law," there is no such thing as the aforesaid League. This extraordinary kind of testimony suffices for "Patent Convictors," who have only to reel off sentences dictated beforehand from the Castle.

The *Times*, however, cannot help confessing that "the machinery has been put together with infinite skill by past masters in conspiracy, and that to undo it will yet require mouth patience and labor, for the work of civilization in Ireland has not been successfully completed." Surely this is a printers error. Instead of civilization one ought to read "extermination." What else can be meant when six thousand families having been served with writs, are but awaiting their landlords or time Governments convenience to be evicted; when every time the awaiting steamers touch at Queenstown they take on board their vast contingents of exiles from Erin, when those who dare to stay in the old country, and to join hands in a righteous resistance to fraud and violence, are hunted down, fined, imprisoned, bludgeoned, and bayoneted? If these be English means of civilization, one can scarcely wonder that Irishmen prefer to be their own civilizing agents. Which is the better index of the advance of civilization, a medieval war-engine battering down the walls of some humble home, or neighbors gathering from eight miles round to till the fields belonging to that plucky Campaigner Keating of Ballydavid. Look at that picture and on this, taken from United Ireland, 5th May: Three hundred men and lads voluntarily engaged in erecting a substantial cottage for Michael O'Donnell at Camp, within sight of the one from which he had been evicted. At Coolnarisky, Queen's County, Major Fitzmaurice stands by to see Michael Brennan, aged 78. and his four children, stricken with measles, turned out on the road-ride. The unfortunate tenant vainly prays for respite until his little ones are at least convalescent. They are not even permitted time to dress. The father is arrested after the eviction under a Chancery Court warrant, while the children lie huddled together, undressed, in the yard. Fitzmaurice shows his compassion by advising their uncle to "gather them up and send them to the union."

Is civilization in Ireland to show itself in time shape of the O'Grady, who reigns in solitary grandeur over his 1,800 acres, from which he has just cleared off the last batch of tenants?

In addition to what we Anarchists must call barbarity, pigheadedness is not an infrequent characteristic of time civilized class in Ireland. Take, for example, the case of a tenant who grew fainthearted, and backed out of the protection of the League, offering to pay the rent demanded. He was rewarded by being served with a bill of costs amounting to £130, including such items as £66 IOs. for the Property Defense Association, and £4 IOs. for police refreshments.

A fine way to encourage others to keep their necks out of the noose! Let it be remembered when Crown Prosecutor Ronan, or any other, says, "It is a melancholy thing that the Irish farmers should be so silly and foolish as to persevere in attending meetings with apparently no other

object than that of getting put in jail." Luckily falterers are few amid far between. The people, for the most part, are of the same metal as those of Collon, Tullyallen, who were actually ashamed that their huge League meeting was allowed to pass without being proclaimed.

To be sure it is not every day that the Government can catch the Leaguers in a deathtrap, as they did on 7th April at Ennis. The bold front of the peasantry and their leaders then, unarmed save for here and there a blackthorn, must have since made the Government pause about attempting to bludgeon a meeting in more open ground. Especially so, as sympathy with the Nationalists is decidedly on the increase among the soldiers, witness their joining over and over again in the cheers for popular leaders. At Clare, 19th May, the artillery militia stoutly refused to serve under Colonel O'Callaghan, of Bodyke infamy, and greeted their would-be commander with three groans, supplemented by as many cheers for O'Brien. Prior to this a large number of militiamen had been stripped of their uniforms and disbanded at Roscommon for having shown sympathy with political prisoners.

For the past two months the word of order has been "increased severity." The magistrates, in their zeal to curry favor, rather overdid it, and so brought a hornets nest about the ears of their chief in the House of Commons.

In the Appeal Courts, instead of remission, reduction, or at the worst, confirmation of the sentences, the Castle hacks doubled them, as in the cases of the priests, M'Fadden and Stephens, and Mr. Blaine, M.P., and added hard labor where it had not been already given.

From the 8th April up to the present time 229 men, women, and children have been put through the mockery of a trial, and sentenced to terms ranging from six months to a week. The offenses were mostly of the usual character. For unlawful assembly 83 were tried and imprisoned; assaulting the police, 26 boycotting, or inciting to same, 10; resisting bailiffs, 12; re-taking possession, 6; taking shelter in outhouse of their former home, 2 (a man, of eighty and his wife) selling *United Ireland*, 2 (one of them going to prison for the fifth, time); exhibiting notice of meeting in his window, 1 (six weeks for this crime) groaning the police, 15; laughing at them, 1; stone-throwing, 8 (one an imbecile, another a boy of nine years); using unpeaceful language, 2; intimidation, 12; wearing League cards in hat, 4; refusing evidence, 3; trespass and rescuing cattle, 20; shouting, "Down with evictions," etc., 2; cheering Canon Doyle, 1; playing on a tin whistle, 1 (aged thirteen); rioting 9; carrying bullets 2 (three months each); demeanor not being what it should be, 1 (a month); preventing a land-grabber from carrying a coffin, 1 (five weeks). Finally, it has been decreed that that all children are to be sent to reformatories if allowed by their parents to hoot or cheer.

It is not needful to dwell upon the arrests of Dillon and O'Brien, their mock trials and sentences. The Government may be likened to a blacksmith, who, in striking hard at the good metal beneath his hammer, is welding it to the right shape, and making it all the more durable with every blow.

The Vatican thunder, conjured up to start the people from their stronghold, has roiled harmlessly by. Nowadays a Papal Rescript is not even "a bug to fright a babe withal."

ITALY VICTIMS OF CAPITALISM

In the neighborhood of Urbino, in central Italy, hidden among a chain of mountains, is one of the most ancient Italian sulfur mines, the property of a Mr. Albani. Here, 300 meters under the surface, some hundreds of human creatures—children, women, and men, wander in silence through the galleries, working their lives out for a piece of bread; until exhausted, old before their time, they go to starve in the public street. And there indeed they die of hunger if some charitable people do not find for them a place at this town hospital, where they are allowed to end in peace their martyr's existence. Many of them, however, are spared a part of these troubles : a fall of earth, an escape of gas, an explosion or a fire, so often happens in those profound recesses and snuffs them out by dozens or hundreds, smashing, suffocating, burning them alive; and the happy of the earth do not even hear the cry of agony rising from the victims of these horrid catastrophes.

The wages of the Urbino miners, which are paid fortnightly, are determined not by this hours of work, nor by the quantity of mineral extracted, but by time amount of sulfur contained in the latter, a quantity which is estimated at a glance by the overseer and in the absence of the workman.

The average daily earnings of a miner do not reach one shilling, which is paid partly in money, partly in articles of consumption.

Two years ago the agent of the owner of this mine gave out a stock of meal so bad that the workmen unanimously refused it. The refusal having been communicated to the owner in Milan, this gentleman telegraphed to dismiss immediately whoever persisted in his refusal. The meal was taken, eaten, and it had its effect. Many workmen were ill, some died. An inquest was held, and it was ascertained that the cause of the death of those workmen was the poisonous character of the meal, but no one was prosecuted.

Now to these causes of grievance a new one has been added. The overseers of the mine are paid at the rate of £6 per month each of them, their wages being subtracted from the collective earnings of the workmen. The latter, therefore, maintain that the present number of ten overseers is quite superior to the need of them ; as it is superior to the number usual for hundreds of years past, when this mine worked quite well. If the owner wants more overseers than it is necessary to have, surely he should pay them out of his own profits. The owner, however, seems determined to resist the demand. The mine is closed and guarded by soldiers. The 500 miners on strike wander along the mountain sides, with, hungry downcast faces, the very image of squalor and misery.

We now learn that, unable to bear any more their destitution, they listlessly surrendered.

ANARCHIST PRESS IN ITALY

The first number of time (*Questione. Sociale* has appeared at Florence (fermo in posta) and, of course, has been seized.

At Mantua have appeared three numbers of the *Amico del Popolo*, an Anarchist paper also.

The *Gazzetta Operaia* is republished at Turin as *Nuova Gazzetta Operaia*

At Reggio Emilia *la Giustizia* represents Communist-Anarchism ; whilst the *Operaio* represents it at Reggio Calabria.

The *Ottantanove* pursues its propaganda at Venice, in spite of the Governmental prosecutions. We see with pleasure that at the recent Congress of Venetian baker-shop workmen our comrades were present, and that our principles have been embraced by the largest section of the Italian Federation of Bakershop Workmen.

The Forli *Rivendicazione* has been also once more seized.

At Messina (Sicily) is published the *Riscatto* (via Cavour 400), Communistic-Anarchist.

At Marsala our comrades have published a special paper entitled May 1860 — May 1871, to compare the Italian Revolution with the French Communes.

At Tunisi is published the *Operaio*, organ of our Tunisian and Sicilian comrades.

SPAIN

Our readers will remember the barbarous suppression of the Rio Tinto strike, when the victims of the English Copper Mining Company thieve ventured to protest against the whole district being poisoned by the calcination of copper pyrites in the open air. For this, 800 men and women were murdered by the Spanish troops, and a number arrested. The arrested men have now been released by the Spanish Government, but the English capitalists refuse to allow them to return to the mine. The profit-mongers are furious, because the miners' protest, though timid and hesitating, and at the moment quenched in their blood, has nevertheless had such an effect on public opinion that the Spanish Government, in spite of the howling of the mining shareholders about a decrease of dividends, has found themselves obliged to forbid open-air calcinations for the future.

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