

The Struggle for Freedom [Nov, 1887]

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BRITAIN

THE UNEMPLOYED OF LONDON.—Towards the middle of last month the increasing number of Londoners who could get no work to do began to assemble day by day in Trafalgar Square to discuss their situation and endeavor to force the property-monopolists to allow them to labor. On October 19 they marched in procession, with black flags flying, to wait on Sir James Ingram at Bow Street Police Court, where that respectable magistrate informed them that they were "making a theatrical exhibition," and that "the law provided a sufficient maintenance for persons who chose to avail themselves of it." Asked if he would give them food and shelter in prison if they sacked bakers' shops, he replied that they were "exceedingly impertinent," and "deserved no compassion." Even this brutality unfortunately stirred the people to no further action than a march through the city. On October 14 they walked in procession to the Mansion House, and were set upon and beaten and kicked by the police. The next day the police violently attacked the meeting in Trafalgar Square, hustling, striking, charging, and trampling the people, and this policy of provocation and brutality continued until, on the 19th, the unemployed were finally driven out of the Square and betook themselves to Hyde Park, whither they were pursued by the constables, horse and foot. For four days the conflict was carried on in and round the park. On one occasion the gates were closed on the people and the mounted police charged the crowd thus hemmed in and helpless. On other days they principally signalized themselves by attacking the unemployed as they returned from the day's meeting, severely injuring many and arresting all who showed special energy and manhood in resisting. The police-courts have been crowded day by day with "rioters." One case may suffice to illustrate the "justice" they obtained. W. Macdonald, carpenter, charged at Marlborough Street with riotous conduct and assaulting the police, for calling on the people to defend themselves with stones and striking a constable was asked what he had to say for himself. He replied: "Very little. I intended going home quietly after the meeting, but no sooner had I left the park than a crowd of policemen came rushing round the corner and knocked me down. I jumped to my feet and went for the first policeman I saw, and that happened to be the sergeant. If it had been any other man besides one in policeman's clothes I would have done the same." The magistrate: "Three months hard labor." But when a workman, who had seen a number of police raining blows on one man and called out, "What scandalous conduct! are you Englishmen?" and thereupon been seized by the beard and beaten with a truncheon, brought a charge of assault against a constable the case was dismissed by police magistrate Newton, with the remark "Whatever treatment the complainant has received, he only met with his deserts."

But in spite of police-court terrorism and sentences of hard labor by the dozen, the people defended themselves with sticks and stones and their fists, and held their meetings just the same; and on Sunday, October 23rd they returned to Trafalgar Square in a solid mass, filling the huge square to overflowing, and afterwards marching in procession to Westminster Abbey.

Coercion in London has failed. There has been an outcry in the middle-class Liberal press against the brutality of the police, for the middle-class also have an interest in vindicating the right of public meeting. The Government dare not try coercion in London and Ireland too, and so the unemployed may hold meetings as they please. But a man can't support his family on public meetings, and the men are not much nearer employment. They have been to the Home Office, the Mansion House, the police courts, Westminster Abbey, and found everywhere the so-called servants of the people and administrators of their affairs declaring themselves powerless to help in this extremity.

Meanwhile Sir Charles Warren has ordered the arrest of every homeless person who refuses to go to the workhouse, and has issued a proclamation warning the humane people who have been providing the starving with bread and coffee not to feed them again.

How much longer will the sufferers wait before they lay hands for themselves on the ample supply of food and clothes ready for them in London?

COERCION AND REVOLT IN IRELAND.—The revolt of the Irish people against foreign dictatorship and land monopoly grows daily more effective. The Government attempt to put down public meeting by violence at Michelstown; the coroners jury on the shin bring in a verdict of willful murder against the policemen who fired on the crowd. To cover their discredit, the human bloodhound of the police, the ex-convict Calligan, receives money from Head-Constable Whelehan to incite some peasant to a "moonlighting outrage" Whelehan is killed by the Moonlighters, and the infamous treachery of Calligan and his employers revealed at the inquest. The brutal emergency men, hired to enforce the rights of property, shoot dead John Kinsella, who is preparing to defend his and his neighbors' cattle from distraint — i.e., legal robbery ~ the coroner's jury bring in a verdict of willful murder against the whole gang. The Government proclaim⁹ the meetings of the National League larger and more enthusiastic meetings of the League, and of protest against the authorities, are held all over the country; the people, taking humorous delight in their ingenuity in tricking the police (*vide* the torchlight meeting at midnight, in Woodford attended by the English Radicals, so closely watched by detectives, and by thousands of Irish from all the country round, while the authorities were snoring; when a few hours after all were over, police and soldiers made their appearance with beer barrels and other creature comforts for the custodians of a town in a state of siege !) Unable to prevent meetings, the Castle attempts to muzzle the agitators in the Press and prosecutes the editors of *United Ireland* and *The Nation* for recounting the history of the said prohibited assemblies, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, editor of *The Nation*, attends the police court in state, and, amid the acclamations of the city, the charge against him is dismissed on the ground that there is no legal proof that the forbidden meeting ever really took place! The latest exploit of the constabulary, in forcibly dragging the Englishman, Wilfred Blunt, off the platform at a proclaimed meeting, and treating his wife, who defended him, with brutal violence, is scarcely likely to restore respect for authority. Meanwhile the cruel evictions continue, in spite of the new Land Act; and the peasant men, women, and children, resist as bravely as ever. Those that are arrested under the Crimes Act are dragged to prison for two or four or six months' hard labor; but they go as heroes celebrating a triumph, amid the acclamations of a crowd rendered more enthusiastic and more revolutionary by each arrest. Before long we may hope, the prisons will be attacked and the prisoners rescued. The magistrates offered to save one young girl from "the disgrace of imprisonment" on her promise of future submission. "It is no disgrace to go to prison for Ireland," she retorted, and, amid the cheers of the listeners, indignantly declined the offered release. "You are the best little girl in Ireland," exclaimed the counsel, as the angry magistrates "cleared the court;" but Ireland is rich in brave women. At Gweedore, one old woman of seventy, with her son and daughter and two girls, held her hut until it was actually tumbled about her ears against a squad of emergency men, backed by fifty police armed with truncheons and fifty more with firearms. No wonder that one constable, who had a human heart somewhere concealed beneath his uniform, flung away his rifle, and refused the further disgrace of serving the Government. Even the children are inspired by their parents' courage. The other day nine boys and girls held their father's cottage for some time against the bailiff's men, and four of the boys afterwards ensconced themselves in a loft and held out, in spite of

loaded guns pointed at them, until they were dragged off to prison by main force. At Kilrush the police used their rifles against the men threatened with eviction, and were bravely attacked by the crowd, who carried on the fight with stones until the evening. A pity the Irish peasants are so inadequately armed; but, as it is, their brave spirit of revolt is inspiring a glowing sympathy and emulation among the Kelts and English of the larger island.

LONDON.-An House Rent League has been formed; on the model of the Irish National League, to force landlords to make "reasonable reductions." It is to be hoped that its members will shortly perceive that the only *reasonable* reduction of a landlord's claims to unearned increment is to refuse to acknowledge them altogether.

EVICCTIONS AT BROXBURN.-Our Dorsetshire correspondent explained last month how cruel a hold over laborers lives is obtained by farmers who provide cottage room as part payment of wages. The heartless evictions of the families of 43 miners on strike at Broxburn is another example of the way in which the lives of the propertyless wage-workers are at the mercy of merciless property borders. "Thanks to the competition of the capitalists in oil," says the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "the dividend of the Company has suddenly run down from 22 to 15 percent, and to save themselves from the stark staring ruin of 15 percent. they are insisting that their miners shall suffer a reduction amounting as regards one class to 10 percent, and as regards another class to 10 percent." And as the company have a legal right to the mining plant, the miners can do nothing but starve themselves to punish their masters, unless, indeed, they pluck up courage to take possession of the mines and lead the way in the Revolution.

NORWICH.-Our comrade Mowbray was liberated from Ipswich Jail on the 15th of October. His return to Norwich was a town celebration. The station streets, and Market-place were thronged by the workers to greet the comrade who has not only spoken, but acted and suffered in the common cause.

FRANCE

On Sunday, October 16, a crowded and enthusiastic workman's meeting in the Favie Hall, Paris, unanimously passed resolutions of sympathy with the Chicago Anarchists and indignant protest against their infamous condemnation. The meeting was organized by the Cosmopolitan League and Anarchist groups of Paris. Messages of solidarity were received from a large number of provincial groups, and from sixteen Italian towns.

After the meeting, 300 of our comrades reassembled in the Lechable Rooms in the Boulevard Menilmontant. When they were quietly leaving in small group about, 7 p.m., the police fell upon them with drawn swords (the Parisian police carry a short sword) and wounded not only several of our comrades but some of the passersby. Comrade Meraux (formerly manager of *Le Revolte*) was hurt in the breast and hand. He fired twice at his assailants, wounding one, but was arrested and dragged off with two other friends.

In Paris, as in England and America the situation is intensifying between oppressors and oppressed, and if a man will guard his dignity as a human being he must be prepared to stand armed in self-defense against armed force.

The Anarchist group at Vaison having been somewhat too energetic in addressing meetings and distributing literature in the town and neighborhood, the police suddenly arrested four of our comrades at their work on the 10th Oct To find a charge against three of them baffled even

police ingenuity. One was taken to Orange and two to Avignon and there released; but the chief of police has persuaded their employer to discharge them! Having thus deprived these three Anarchists of their bread, the authorities have committed the fourth as "refractaire."

The Anarchist groups of Paris are preparing for an energetic propagandist campaign among the peasant-proprietors in the country. A new Anarchist group has been formed at Madeleine-lez Lille.

The Government have lately dispatched 500 of the unfortunate victims of social injustice, called criminals, to Cayenne in *iron cages*. The cages are watched by marines with loaded muskets, and fire pumps; arranged so as to throw powerful jets of water over the unhappy wretches on the faintest sign of revolt. Whatever wrong these unfortunates have done to other men, it cannot equal the inhumanity of the guardians of law or order.

GERMANY

Our comrade Neve, who has treacherously betrayed to the German police during a visit to Belgium, and carried across the frontier without a protest from the Belgian workmen, has been rewarded for his lifelong service in the people's cause by a sentence of fifteen years' imprisonment. We trust that long before these years are passed the Social Revolution will have set him free.

The Congress of the Social Democratic Party, held at Zurich, has been chiefly remarkable for its indications of a revolutionary spirit among the rank and file of the party considerably in advance of their leaders and for the absence of thought as to the future political organization of Society betrayed in the resolution defining the attitude of Social Democracy towards Anarchism, which was proposed, but not drawn up, by Liebknecht. It does not appear to have dawned upon the mass of German Socialists that new economic relations between men imply new political relations, and that representative Government cannot be the political counterpart of Socialism.

THE FREE SPEECH CONFLICT IN AMERICA

On October 2nd, a workman's meeting summoned by the Labor organizations of North Hudson co., at the Skating Rink, Union Square, New Jersey, to protest against the judicial murder of the Chicago Anarchists was prohibited, and the 1,500 peaceable people assembled were set upon and clubbed by the police. "No notice was given, no Riot Act was read. The whole affair was a violent brutal and unwarranted police riot."

On October 8th an open-air meeting was summoned by the Socialist Labor Party in Union Square, New York, to discuss the situation in the labor movement. Two or three Georgites made some noisy opposition, whereupon the police charged down in force upon the meeting, clubbing men and women and severely injuring fifty, mostly Socialists, who had been quietly listening.

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