

The Struggle for Freedom

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IRELAND

The gains and losses during the past four weeks in Ireland have been pretty equally balanced. For although there are fifty landlords making terms with their tenants to every five still holding out for their old spoils, it must be always remembered that the "good" landlords are "simply the shrewder ones, who know that half a loaf is better than no bread." When Clanricarde's agent sends forth peremptory orders to pay up, and sit at the receipt of custom the whole of an appointed day, but goes home at evensong with an empty cash-box under his arm, his master, the usurer, can only vent his spleen by turning out on the bleak road-side some miserable fellow-creature, but that puts nothing in his pockets. Pousonby when he cannot get his plunder, gains little by incurring heavy liabilities for law costs, gangs of bailiffs and a battering-ram. What did it profit Dr. Roberts of Carnarvon, that dragging-out of a poor witless invalid, to lie naked, save for a sheet, in the keen March wind, whilst the walls that had sheltered him for many years were being leveled to the ground? Ross Mahon, of Ballinasloe, refused to take 16s. in the pound in '86, but now he makes haste to secure the 10s. 8d. allowed by the Commissioners who have judged between him and his oppressed tenantry. Sir Henry Burke, wise too in his generation, finds it to his advantage not only to take what is offered him, but to also pay all lam -costs and E160 down toward defraying the cost of maintenance of those whom he wrongfully and stupidly evicted some months ago.

The Ulster Protestant farmers, having vainly trusted themselves to the tender mercies of their land leeches, now decide that there is no other salvation than the Plan of Campaign. At a recent meeting in Armagh held in anticipation of a visit from the Sherriff and his merry men, a large number pledged themselves to sell everything as fast as they could and to put the proceeds into their own pockets.

At most of the County Sessions the judges have been presented with white gloves to betoken absence of grave crime but the the Patent Convictors have dispatched 141 criminals too jail. Of these 47 were convicted of unlawful assembly (a convenient charge covering a multitude of doings: it applied, for instance, to the procession of generous peasants who collected 250 cart loads of food and fuel for the starving families of the Miltown-Malbay prisoners.) For declining business transactions with the police 22 got term of from two to four months with hard labor. For boycotting and inciting to resistance, 23 came within reach of the law; for speech-making, 22; carrying arms, 6; lighting bonfires and shouting "Down with Salisbury and Balfour 6; granting out-door relief to evicted tenants, 3 (Poor Law Guardians sentenced to refund sums expended or go to jail); laughing at the police, 5 (this crime seems on the increase); selling United Ireland, only 1 (but he got three months for it); for conduct not approved by a Head Constable, 2; alleged assault, 1; intimidation, 3; taking repossession, 1; refusing to report or misreport a priest's speech, 1 (a constable).

The Miltown-Malbay prisoners, thirteen in number, have been put to a severe test in Limerick jail. They were separately tempted to sign a promise to supply the wants of the police (a refusal to do so had been their offense) instant liberation to be the reward of this denial of their cause. But these poor tradesmen one and all stoutly declined to so purchase freedom, holding firm when taken into the presence of Colonel Turner, who rated them soundly for their obstinacy.

Chief Baron Palles persists in administering justice. He has quashed the sentence of two months on Edward Walsh, editor of Wexford People, pronouncing it to be utterly illegal and ruling that the Crown should pay all costs.

The scandalous attempts of the Government to back up the rack-renters in their desire to render the Land Act perfectly useless to the tenants is manifested in the prohibition of all meetings called by the leaders of the people. Balfour and Co. know full well that Win. O'Brien and his confreres will do again what was done so successfully at Mitchelstown, i.e., advise the people to hold out against eviction, and to force their wrongs before the Land Commissioners. The prohibition at Youghal had for net results three meetings instead of one for the people, and a broken head for Captain Plunkett of "Don't-hesitate-to-shoot" notoriety.

ITALY

The most important news of the month comes from Rome, where demonstrations of unemployed masons have taken place. Police and soldiers attacked them but the men stood firm, and could not be dispersed. The Italian Government used reinforcements from the provinces to be sent to the already strong garrison of the capital. For almost a week the unemployed kept parading the streets with their hungry faces, and were almost unmolested in their raids upon bakers' carts and shops, which they emptied for the benefit of the hungriest among themselves. The temper of the men was shown in their reception of a peace manifesto issued by a trade union, and torn of the walls by the unionists themselves; and still more when a number of men refused the work offered by the municipality, saying that they would stand by each other, and not allow themselves to be bribed into division. It was not until 4000 of them had been arrested, by daily or rather nightly police raids upon their dwelling houses, and work was provided for the others, that the agitation temporarily subsided. Of the arrested men, the larger part have been conveyed to their native places in the provinces; others are being prosecuted, among them many Socialists and Anarchists, who have in the whole course of the affair promptly and bravely acted up to their duty as sentries of Revolution. They issued and placarded manifesto after manifesto to keep up the spirit of the strikers, and were themselves in the midst of the affray. Radical and labor representatives, on the contrary, made themselves conspicuous by their absence.

Similar agitations are reported from Catania and Caltagirone in Sicily; whilst in Aquila the people have marched to the cry "We want land," to take possession of a large tenement of a local landlord, and in Sardinia they have attacked the directors of the National Bank.

From Reggio, Calabria, we receive the "Operaio", the first Anarchist or Socialist paper ever published in that very important part of Italy. We have received also the Naples "Humanitas" appearing now as a clandestine paper.

A most ominous sign is the recent change in the attitude of that fraction of Anarchists who some time back seceded from the bulk of the party to try parliamentary tactics. The organ of this fraction, the Forli Rivendicazione, now calls on the Socialist deputies to withdraw, as those methods do not lead to Revolution. Indeed they do not!

The solidarity and energy of our Venice comrades have been strengthened by Government prosecutions, and they have continued the publication of the Ottantanove in the forced absence of its editor. The March number appeared on red paper, containing a vindication of the Paris Commune, together with documents relating to it. The paper of course has been seized; and the next one has appeared blank as a testimonial of the Italian freedom of the press. The reactionary Government has even the length of prohibiting at Milan the celebration of the anniversary of the Commune. March 18th is usually a day on which Italian policemen are very busy in hunting

down our comrades who meet in secret, tearing revolutionary manifestos off the walls, pulling down red and black banners ingeniously planted on public monuments by demonstrating Socialists, and making arrests. But in spite of all their exertions which, we are glad to see, increase with every year both in intensity and extent—and perhaps a little thanks to those exertions—Revolutionary Socialism is making wondrous progress in Italy, It has its devoted expounders and finds eager listeners not only in the limited area of one or two provinces, as was the case a few years ago, but from the Venetian marshes to the half civilized country places of Calabria and Sicily.

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