



Politics in East Wilts

On Saturday last, Mr. Fyffe had the opportunity, and he availed himself of it to the fullest extent, of criticising Mr. Long's recent speeches. Mr. Fyffe was not alone. He was aided and abetted by Mr. T. Harris of Calne and Mr. Winterbottom, MP. As Lord Bacon wisely remarked, a friend can say much for one that one cannot well say for one's self. And so Mr. Winterbottom did for Mr. Fyffe that which Mr. Fyffe at Enford last spring declared he would never do himself - endeavour to incite class hate and prejudice for the purpose of getting votes. But more of this later on: we shall take the speeches at Rowde in the order in which they were delivered. Mr. Harris made some few remarks by way of introducing the little "political talk" which he said they had come there to have, "Oh," he said, "I do long to see another government in office." Mr. Harris can be very candid at times. There were, he said, a great many measures he wanted to see carried. Very probably. But Mr. Harris is no juvenile, and his memory doubtless carried him back to the time when he did see "another government" in office. He has a very short memory if he does not recall the years 1880-1885. Very likely he has a short memory. It is wonderful how sadly recollection fades in the minds of those Radicals when it suits their card. We do not forget so readily the regime of "another government." We do not forget the anarchy that prevailed in Ireland, the mob riots in Trafalgar Square, the humiliating apology to Austria, the disgraceful surrender after discreditable defeat in South Africa, the long, disastrous and bloody war in the Soudan, which cost us millions of money and thousands of gallant lives including that of the hero Gordon. We do not forget that in Ireland an abominable conspiracy goaded the people into lawlessness, and that while a man was stabbed to death in one place by the police, a young girl was shot dead in another. We do not forget how that abominable conspiracy spread over the country for two years, marking its progress everywhere by foul tortures and midnight murders until it culminated in a crime that startled the world, when Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke had their throats cut in the broad light of day, in the peoples' park in Dublin. We do not forget that this abominable conspiracy was hatched and grew up strong and lusty under "another government" - that other government which Mr. Harris does so long to see in office. It is convenient for the swindler who has been entrusted with and has betrayed his employer's interests to forget his crime: it is not wise, and it is not convenient for the employer to forget.

But it is positively delightful to observe how an all-pervading conviction of his own goodness and his party's goodness takes root and grows in the amiable mind of Mr. Harris. Mr. Sullivan, who visited Devizes a year ago, was declared by home to be "Goodness Itself," and a little later on Mr. Winterbottom exclaimed "Fancy putting such a man as that on a plank bed!" and his sturdy Radical hearers made believe to be very indignant. Just mark the unscrupulous, the unprincipled, the palpable political hypocrisy which underlies these statements. Who was it first put this incarnation of sweetness and light, Mr. T. D. Sullivan, in prison? It is of course irony pushed to hyperbole to describe Mr. T.D Sullivan as "Goodness Itself." But be Mr. Sullivan's merits and demerits what they may, Mr. Gladstone has the honour of being the first to put this new found saint Mr. Harris on a plank bed. Mr. Harris declared that the Liberals hated coercion and oppression, and that the present was the worst government he could call to mind. What a remarkably servile memory Mr. Harris possesses! We wonder if he can call to mind a time when nearly every Nationalist Member of Parliament was put in prison - put in prison without trial and on the sworn evidence of a constable, that they were "reasonably suspected" of designs subversive of Mr. Gladstone's orders. We wonder if

he can call to mind a time when Mr. Parnell himself was on a plank bed, when martial law was proclaimed in Dublin, when jurymen were assassinated in the streets, and when any citizen found out after eight o'clock was liable to be arrested without warrant by the meanest constable in the police force. We wonder if he can call to mind a time when the Grand Old Man described the embodiment of "Goodness Itself" and his fellows as men steeped to the lips in treason, and when they were imprisoned wholesale without the chance of a trial or a hearing in open court. If he cannot, then we take a sincere pleasure in jogging his memory on the point. Now, when Parnellites break the law openly, when they are arrested openly, not on the "reasonable suspicion" of a constable, but on a specific charge, when they are tried in open court and justly convicted of breaking the law, Mr. Harris discovers that such proceedings are worse government than he can remember. This eminently complacent partisan appears like a great many, in fact like most of his sturdy fellow Radicals, to think that whatever Mr. Gladstone does is necessarily right, and whatever Lord Salisbury does necessarily wrong. That is Mr. Harris's logic: we hope it is not contagious in Calne.

Mr. Winterbottom, whose claim to public notice rests we believe on the notoriety he attained when he made certain scandalous and sweeping charges against London ballet girls, was in what may well be described as "great form" at Rowde. For reasons perfectly well known to himself had not much to say of Mr. Long, except what was complimentary. But he came to Rowde to do that which Mr. Fyffe, because of pledges already given, could not do for himself. He came to endeavour to prejudice Mr. Long's interest by reviling and traducing the class of which Mr. Long is a member - the Country Squires. The Country Squire is a type of man compared with whom the class to which Mr. Winterbottom belongs is mean and pigmy in the matter of public duties, public generosity, public justice and public rectitude, not to mention private benevolence. Mr. Winterbottom, we understand, amassed money by the profits made by "the hands" who work in his cloth mills, and yet he comes to Rowde and tells the labourers that the farmers are robbing them, because they do not pay higher wages than they can afford, and he adds that all wealth is the result of labour. Then Mr. Winterbottom possess that to which he has no right. He ought at once to surrender his possessions and go into the workhouse. The wealth which enables him to make excursions to Turkey and the East he never worked for; it was produced by the labour of "the hand" who toil in his mills. That is our retort. Let him accept the test of practice which these Radical orators complain so much about, and profess to be ready to accept so gladly. Mr. Winterbottom, like the rest of the tribe, is full of the grand things that are to come to pass when, if ever, Mr. Gladstone gets back to power. All poverty and all misery will be put an end to. There will be no more overcrowding in London or in the country villages, no more low wages, no more ill-clad hungry children or hard-worked men. All will be great, rich, happy and comfortable: the waste place shall be made glad and the desert - even the Wiltshire Downs, will blossom as the rose. All this is to happen when Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Fyffe get into office. Mr. Gladstone was in office four or five years ago, and the happy times the poor enjoyed then must live very vividly in their recollection. If they want a renewal of them then they should by all means support Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Fyffe.

Mr. Winterbottom cannot understand why a farmer should be a Tory. Other Radicals cannot understand why a working-man should be a Tory. It is very difficult for a man who is always on the look-out for an opportunity of enriching himself by advocating the plunder of others to understand how his neighbour can entertain a respect for the tenth commandment - exceedingly difficult. What are the allurements held out by these "lights of the world and demi-gods of fame" to induce poor uneducated labourers to give their votes for them? What but the hope of sharing in the plunder of the landlord and the spoils of the Church - the illusory hope that they are going to be made rich directly they cast their votes for Radicals. They talk of allotments for the labourer, of better homes for the poor! Were not their shamelessness and impudence as boundless as their capacity for misrepresentation and political imposition is limitless, they would not dare to mention such things. The working-classes sent them to office before on pledges and promises relative to these matters and as soon as Mr. Gladstone obtained power the pledges were betrayed and the promises falsified. That was in the spring of 1886. On similar specious and hollow promises they got into office in 1880, and after involving the empire in disgrace and disaster at home and abroad and running up the national expenditure up to £100,000,000, the country in disgust kicked them bag and baggage out of office. They left the Conservative Ministry an Augean stable to cleanse but they have succeeded in cleansing it. The country has had a good time since: all-round prosperity, all-round reduction of national burdens, all-round decrease of taxation both on the houses of the poor and the food of the poor, splendid administration abroad increased efficiency in our public services, increased economy in our public offices; government of the people by the wisest and for the best.

Mr. Winterbottom did his utmost by appealing to the worst principles of his hearers, human avarice and class prejudice, to excite ill-will against Mr. Walter Long. He set upon the Conservative side all the brewers, all the peers, and all the parsons. The Conservatives have no monopoly of either. They no monopoly of those who make a living out of liquor. The man in England has made most out of the liquor traffic is a Home Ruler - a peer of Mr. Gladstone's making; we refer to Lord Burton. But whatever may be said about the brewers being friends of the Conservative party, the latter are not, at all events in East Wilts, patronised by the brewers who swindle the Revenue and cheat the ratepayers by means of fraud. The Conservative party washes its hands of such brewers and leaves them to find a congenial camp with the friends of "Goodness Itself." It is no part of our function to defend the characters of brewers, peers or parsons - they need no defence - but we express an honest conviction when we say that the calling of either is a thousand times more honourable than the truculent calling of an unscrupulous demagogue like Mr. Winterbottom.

Of Mr. Fyffe's speech we shall say very little. Mr. Long has already replied to it. But there is one singular inaccuracy which should be contradicted. Mr. Fyffe and Mr. Smith-Barry interfered with the arrangements between the tenants and landlord on the Ponsonby estate and upset it. This is diametrically opposed to the fact. Mr. Ponsonby granted his tenants terms which the parish priest described as more than fair, and the tenants accepted them. The National League, not Mr. Smith-Barry, then stepped in and bullied the tenants into repudiating their part of the bargain. It was then that Mr. Smith-Barry, out of a feeling of sympathy for Mr. Ponsonby, who was left alone to fight the League, offered to help him. For this act of humanity to a neighbour, what Mr. Gladstone called the "devilish enginery" of the League, was brought to bear against Mr. Smith-Barry. Mr. Fyffe's statement therefore is a direct travesty of the truth. We do not believe he would knowingly make a false statement, and we are satisfied that it is a mere slip, the result of a vague knowledge of Irish affairs. This far Mr. Fyffe individually has conducted the contest in a way perfectly becoming and perfectly honourable. True, he has held out hopes to the labourers which neither he nor his party will ever be able to justify, but as we have no reason to believe that Mr. Fyffe is insincere we will not speak harshly of him. We believe him to be a very sanguine man, and on this score the victim of a delusion which is dangerously silly. It must, of course, be more or less painful to Mr. Fyffe to be assured that his return to Parliament would, all things considered, be a bad thing for the labourers of East Wilts and the country in general. It would also, we apprehend, be an unfortunate thing for the affairs of University College, Oxford. We hope the latter reflection will, in his certain retirement, prove of some consolation and allay the pain produced by the former assurance. We feel confident that when the general election has come and gone Mr. Fyffe will have many regrets. He will leave in East Wilts buried hopes and take away with him new-born disappointments. In the pursuance of his honourable office of College Bursar we hope his misfortune will be mitigated by the remembrance that he did not waste his time in East Wilts in an altogether purposeless pursuit but that it stands recorded in the files of more than one Wiltshire journal that he helped to build a haystack.

The best reply which can be given to those who assert that Mr. W. H. Long, M.P., is a foe to the interests of the labourers is the speech made by Mr. Blake at Tilshead last Friday evening. That speech has already been published in the Wiltshire Telegraph and appears in this issue of the Devises Gazette. It shows plainly what Mr. Long thinks on the question of allotments. In his case, as in all others, example taches better than precept, and the example he has set is one which Mr. Fyffe, even with the funds of a rich University at his back, and the lands of a rich University under his management, will find it difficult to improve upon. Mr. Fyffe has come to East Wilts to oust Mr. Long and get in the saddle. He has come with the set purpose of getting the labourers' votes. He knows it is useless to appeal to the more intelligent section of the community against Mr. Long, and he has been advised by his Radical henchmen in the division to "go straight of the labourers." He has taken the advice, and in return for their votes he has promised the labourers allotments, which by some occult process are to increase in the area with accelerated velocity directly he gets into Parliament. Mr. Fyffe has already vaguely intimated that in case he is returned to Parliament there will be first Home Rule, then free education, and following this free food, free drinks, free tobacco, free everything. Of this programme there is hardly a single item except allotments and free education about which the labourers care much. They have already in Wilts plenty of allotments, and, thanks to the present Government, means of acquiring plenty more. The as to free education. Mr. Long and the Government are in favour of that, and they mean to carry a Bill for the purpose of securing it as soon as possible. Mr. Long is also in favour of removing all taxes from the necessaries of the poor - that is all that the Conservatives have already removed. So that the best thing Mr. Fyffe can do is to

return at once to Oxford. He certainly is not wanted by anybody in East Wilts except the Radical caucus, who have grossly misled him as to the state of public feeling in the constituency.

Mr. Long's family have always been known in Wiltshire as good landlords, and that Mr. Long himself has done much to add to that reputation is plain from the speech of Mr. Blake, who is one of Mr. Long's tenants. Not only has he provided his labourers with ample allotments, but he has in a time of pinch and great depression "re-trenched," as Mr. Blake put it, in order to meet his tenants and bear in a generous manner his full share of the bad times through which English agriculture has lately been passing. We trust steps will be taken to make well and widely known throughout the constituency the manner in which Mr. Long has treated both his tenants and his labourers. An ounce of fact in this case is worth a ton of fiction, and when the labourers once learn that the man whom Radicals traduce as their foe and as a person who wants to keep them down is one of the best landlords in Wiltshire and is universally respected by his own labourers, they will be slow to be "gammoned" by Radical agitators who care as much for their interests as the monkey did for the cat when he promised her the roasted chestnuts if she would permit him the use of her paws to take them from the fire. No better reply can be made to the slanders of the Radical agents throughout the division than that made by Mr. Long himself: "if the Radicals want to know my opinion as to how labourers should be treated let them go to my own place and ask my labourers for a character. "Mr. Fyffe made a great mistake when he first undertook to contest the constituency. He has got to fight against a man who is not only an able and clever antagonist, but a man who is extremely popular with his own party, who holds a high official position, commands the respect and regard of his neighbours, his tenants and employees, and is looked up to as a good all-round man and popular landlord.

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