

CURRENT TOPICS IN EUROPE.

Were it not so serious, and were there not so many momentous issues at stake, it would be positively amusing to see the amount of gush in which European journals indulge concerning Cretan affairs, while at the same time conditions equally barbarous are affecting large masses of the population of central and western Europe. True it is that Turkish officers have inflicted many atrocities on the hapless inhabitants of that beautiful Mediterranean isle; but there are some alleviating circumstances connected with Cretan affairs which do not extend to the affairs of Central Europe. In Crete there is no pinching cold, no frozen limbs, and no starvation. But when we turn our attention to the inhabitants of more northern latitudes we come face to face with the most intense and almost universal suffering. What pen can describe the untold misery that at present prevails in Austrian Hungary, in Bohemia, in Westphalia, and in Belgium? The government of Germany seems to be awakening to the miseries of the people, as well as to the danger that will certainly menace the Empire if these abuses long continue.

Without doubt the revolution in Brazil is having a powerful reflex action in Europe. The caricatures, representing the Sovereigns of the various nations, as so many skaters skating on thin ice, while every now and then one or another breaks through and disappears, has more foundation in fact than fiction. It is evident that the rejection of the anti-socialist bill in the Reichstag, some two weeks ago, has had a mighty influence over public opinion in Europe. The sufferings of the millions of working people—starving, shivering, dying in their wretchedness—is beginning to influence even the rulers. It was indeed a bold act for the members of the German Reichstag to hurl defiance at the government, and virtually throw the anti-socialist bill back into Prince Bismarck's face. The fact that the prince immediately resigned his position as minister of commerce, which position is so intimately connected with the interests of laboring men, is itself significant. This seems to have been done with the approval of the Emperor, who, while he wishes to retain Prince Bismarck as the leader in the international affairs, seems to wish to inaugurate a different internal policy from that pursued by the Iron Chancellor. The recent proclamations of the Emperor have taken the people as well as the journalists by surprise. The issue of these proclamations without the signature of responsible Ministers is regarded in some quarters as an unconstitutional act, and this feature is much commented upon. There are some who claim that the Emperor is really working in the interests of the laboring classes—that he sympathizes with the suffering he sees around him, and desires to alleviate it as far as possible. There are others who perceive in all this only an attempt to gain the

favor of the voters and thus prevent a socialist triumph at the coming elections.

The socialist-democrats in Germany are a great political force, and all their energies are directed to reforms in the condition of labor. The Emperor of Germany, like many others, no doubt sees that labor is the problem of the day which must sooner or later be solved if a revolution is to be averted.

The internal politics of the British Empire at this time are well worthy of consideration. The surrender of the *Times* in the great Parnell controversy is a very significant straw which shows very plainly the direction of the "popular breeze." As everybody knows, the *Times* newspaper poses itself as the greatest of newspapers. It may be safely asserted that the directors and supporters of the *Times* have a wider political, social and monied influence than those of any other journal on the face of the globe. For many years they have employed the very best journalistic talent available, and sent correspondents to every quarter of the world. At one period a word from the *Times* would elevate or depress stocks in any of the great exchanges or money markets of the world. Happily that time is passed. The influence of the *Times* culminated during the American civil war. The *Times* had ever been ultra-conservative; but it was during that terrible war that it gave vent to its pent-up rage and plainly showed itself to be the foe of democratic institutions, the enemy of the rights of man. Since then the influence of the *Thunderer*, as its friends sometimes styled it, has been decreasing. Society had seen it with the mask off.

The conduct of the *Times* in the famous Parnell controversy has not been such as to win friends. To attempt to drive a political leader from public life, by bringing against him an atrocious charge; to withhold from him all means of testing or disproving it; to trade on it for years, and then when finally exposed, to say that the character they had been at such pains to take away, was only worth forty shillings (\$10). This was not conduct to commend itself to fair-minded men of any party; and in their own interests, the proprietors of the *Times* have done well to desist from it. Although the Parnell commission has not yet made its report, the counsel of the *Times* made an offer to Mr. Parnell to give him twenty-five thousand dollars and pay the costs of the commission. Mr. Parnell's conduct in accepting the *Times*' offer, instead of pressing on the action vindictively, is in keeping with the dignity and magnanimity he has shown throughout. Under the most painful ordeal to which any public man in Great Britain has been subjected during the present century.

Under these circumstances it is not wonderful that what has been known as "Gladstone's policy" is gaining adherents. The recent elec-

tion in Glasgow was virtually a victory for reform, inasmuch as the conservative majority was reduced more than six hundred. It is not surprising, then, to see even Mr. Balfour changing his position and at the very opening of Parliament offering a bill for the purchase of lands, and the alleviation of distress in the thickly populated districts of Ireland. To some it may seem strange that Mr. Balfour, who is mostly known by his stringent rule over Ireland, should be the one to propose a reform measure. But then this is not the first time that politicians have sought to make a virtue of a necessity and have acquiesced in measures they could no longer prevent.

The tenure of land in Ireland is indeed contrary to the spirit of the age; and, to a certain extent, the same may be said of other parts of the British Islands. The British traveler on the Continent can scarcely fail to notice how much more equitable the land is there divided than in his own country. Undoubtedly, at the close of the Cromwellian period, the British people possessed a greater liberty than their continental neighbors. But several events have transpired since then. The reconstruction of the Swiss Republic has made the land tenure better for her people. The French revolution, like a whirlwind, swept away the feudal privileges and territorial claims of clergy and nobles. Napoleon, with his terrible plowshare war, made havoc with the aristocratic ant-hills of German Counts and Barons, and last, but by no means least, Italy threw aside her petty governments, confiscated large tracts of land occupied by the clergy and petty rulers and then divided the patrimony among her children. The consequence is that in regard to the tenure of land Great Britain is far behind her continental neighbors. The boasted freedom of Great Britain is little more than a shadow so long as thirty thousand landowners can say to the remaining thirty millions of their fellow citizens, "This is our land. You shall not till it, nor shall you live upon it without our permission." But the toiling millions of Great Britain and Ireland keep asking, "How did these landowners get possession of this land?" If we go back a few generations we shall find that the crown held this land, in trust as it were, for the use of the common people. Previous to the reign of Henry VIII. the monasteries held possession of nearly one-third of the domain, but they were only permitted to retain possession of it on condition that they might be better able to relieve the poor. The abuses that had crept in under this monastic rule was a pretext for King Henry to take these lands from them. But even this bluff monarch did not dare to touch that which was considered private property in the absolute sense used at the present time. From the earliest days the principle of absolute ownership was unknown. The nobles held the land in trust from the crown, and for