

KROPOTKIN'S SPEECH

(Memorial Hall, October 21st).

The execution of Ferrer has provoked in Europe and America a general feeling of indignation.

Even at St. Petersburg, under the bayonets of Nicholas II. a big indignation meeting was held at the University.

Were it not for the state of siege, scores of similar meetings would have been held all over Russia.

This striking, spontaneous outburst of anti-clerical feeling has filled with awe the ruling classes everywhere, and especially in this country. For the last few days the Conservative Press of London has ventilated its fears and it is trying to throw cold water on the movement of indignation.

The Conservative papers are afraid of that indignation movement, and they do not conceal their fears.

The *Morning Post* in its leader of October 18th, says:—

"The significance of all this lies in the evidence which it supplies, that in several countries of Western Europe there is growing a class accustomed to feel itself hostile to Society and the State, ready to give vent to that hostility in words and thereby propagate it, regardless of consequences."

The *Daily Telegraph* is still more outspoken:—

"There has been nothing in our time"—we read in its leader of October 21st—"more instructive of its sort than the way in which the revolutionary and ruffianly elements"—it is you, friends, who are the ruffians—"have combined to exploit the Ferrer tragedy. There has been in all this a characteristic mixture of frantic excitability, histrionic calculation, and of that sheer, subversive violence always ready to emerge" and so on.

"There is an evil spirit abroad"—the *Telegraph* continues—"a spirit of virulent vituperation and menacing incitement . . ."

"The Tsar was attacked"—laments the *Daily Telegraph*—"in every land, just as Italian Socialists are attacking him now, just as the 'Reds' of every shade in every country are assailing King Alfonso and his Ministers. . . . Sentimental perversity can no further go, and it will destroy any society which indulges in it."

Well, friends, it is only this "sentimental perversity" which spared you the shame of seeing Nicholas II. and his hangmen parading in the streets of London.

They learn nothing, these gentlemen—always at one with reaction, with the hangmen all over the world.

We have seen it just lately. When, on the occasion of the visit of the Tsar, a handful of brave men in Parliament and in the Press protested against the admission of the hanging Tsar to these shores—what a chorus of blame came from the Conservative Press!

Let the hangman be a Sultan, or a Tsar, or a most Christian King, they are always ready to support him.

The arguments of the Conservative Press are twofold. One is, that the British Government has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of Spain.

No right—they say, except when it is to annex a Cyprus, to occupy an Egypt, or to conquer a Pretoria.

Friends! But is this the conception of the *British* nation?

No, I, an alien, loudly protest against this calumny.

I know that the rule of the Conservatives for the last twenty years has done everything to destroy the good reputation of the *people of Britain*.

But the feeling remains, and last Sunday it has shewn what it thought of the bloodthirsty priesthood of Spain.

The British nation has over and over again interfered with the internal affairs of Belgium, Italy, Austria, France, in the Dreyfus affair, Turkey, nay Spain itself.

Not more than eight years ago, a British statesman in Trafalgar Square saw the Spanish Ambassador to ask him what truth there was in the statement of a Spaniard, released from Montjuich, who stated that he had been tortured in the Bastille of Alphonso XIII.

The Spanish Ambassador agreed first, and refused next day, to have that man examined by two English and two Spanish doctors.

However, two English doctors examined him, and reported to a Trafalgar Square meeting the nature of the horrible wounds inflicted on that man by the Montjuich Inquisition.

The agitation in England, Germany, and France became thereupon so violent, that finally sixteen men condemned to hard labour on the strength of testimony obtained in Montjuich under torture, were released.

We greeted them here, two of them had been tortured.

The Conservative papers and Sir Edward Grey speak of no interference.

But were not the official festivities given to that perjurer Nicholas II. an interference in the internal struggle that goes on in Russia?

The result of this patting on the back of Nicholas II. you have seen to-day in the papers.

A province is torn from Finland, whose constitution and integrity Nicholas II. had sworn on his oath to maintain.

The second argument of the Conservative Press is this: "Ferrer was a bloodythirsty revolutionist and an Atheist who wanted to destroy everything in Spain."

If I had the time and the strength to tell you all that the Spanish Government have done in Barcelona for the last twelve years—Barcelona is the most intelligent centre of Spain for the development of its working class—if I could tell you all their infamies, you would rise in a fury, and say that it is a pity that the

Barcelona uprising has not already overthrown that shameless Government.

Barcelona has suffered terribly from that Government. It was there that in 1896, they tortured the Anarchists; there that for years in succession their police agents—their Azeffs—deposited bombs in the working men's quarters, killing women and children, and accusing the Anarchists of doing this. Those of you who have read the English papers at that time, know that this was proved at the trial of Rull.

And now, this Government, abhorred and despised, opened a war in Morocco for the enrichment of the capitalists, which would cost scores of millions of pounds and thousands of human lives. This was the beginning of the Barcelona insurrection.

Ferrer is accused by the Conservative Press of having taken a part in the uprising at Barcelona. But Ferrer has written that he took no part whatever in it, and we must believe him.

Well, friends, perhaps we ought to regret it. If he, and scores of men from the 'intellectuals' in Barcelona had taken part in the movement of protest against the war, there would have been perhaps less monasteries burned, but the result might have been that the Montjuich Bastille of the present clerical and military Government would have fallen, perhaps even without the loss of a hundred and thirty men and women of the people, killed by the troops of Alphonso.

Friends, don't be misled by these haters of all liberty and progress.

The truth is that the clericals had sworn Ferrer's death, and they have attained their aim with the abetting of all those who have done their best to discredit the Ferrer movement in favour of Ferrer.

The fact is, that Ferrer was the soul of a great educational movement in Spain. His tastes and education did not lead him into the active agitation, but to educational work.

After his last visit here he sent me two sets of all his publications; one for the British Museum, one for me. It is all educational work of high value, not anti-religious, but severely scientific. Suffice it to say that Elisee Reclus—a man whose character and science Europe respects, wrote the prefaces to several of the educational books published by Ferrer.

To give you some idea of them, I take one of them. It is on the origin of Christianity. It is an analysis of the book of Malvert, *Science and Religion*, and the work of the great explorer of the history of Religions, Burnouf popularised.

The eastern Buddhistic origin of Christianity, and its relation to the worship of the Sun and its son, Agni, the Fire, are told in this booklet in a quite popular language.

And this book ends—with what? With an apology of Anarchism? of Tolstoism? No! With an apology of Protestantism, which I for my account find even too enthusiastic.

"The eloquent appeals of the two new apostles, Luther and Calvin," Ferrer wrote :

"Provoked a true explosion of conscience among the Arians. The Reform tried to reconstitute primitive christianity, freeing it from the extraneous elements which disfigured it. With Protestantism disappeared the sacerdotal hierarchy, . . . and all fetishist worship."

Speaking of the ethics of Protestantism, Ferrer wrote :

"It is a collection of maxims legated by the philosophers of antiquity, supported by a deep observation of man, his needs, his mission, his duties, and his social organisation, for which modern science—hampered as it is by the antagonism of interests, which presupposes the existence of privileged usurpers and of the disinherited ones, compelled to work, to exploitation, and to misery—*was not yet able to substitute a superior ethics which would give satisfaction to both the egotistic and the altruistic feelings on the double basis of social hygiene and solidarity.*"

A few warm words follow, to tell what Protestantism has done for the progressive evolution of mankind.

Then looking forward to centuries to come, Ferrer said :

"Protestantism also will go, like all other religions. When the great number will be better initiated to scientific knowledge, the necessity of an aid from the superior powers will be less felt. The necessity of religions will disappear the day that men will be reasonable enough to regulate themselves and their conduct in a social concord."

And he concluded the book with these words :—

"This magnificent evolution of the human intelligence, full of mysticism at its beginnings, under the veil of religion, has progressed in advance of religion and notwithstanding it. Science tends now to acquire the supreme authority—Science and Truth, of which it is the expression and the revelation. To it will belong in the future the directing power in the world. instead of divinity, Science is the benefactor of the nations and the liberator of mankind."

These are the last words of that remarkable book, "The Origin of Christianity," published in 1906 at Barcelona, and this is the book for the publication of which Ferrer has paid with his life under the bullets of four soldiers in the ditch of the prison of Montjuich.

Now, he is dead, but it is our duty to resume his work, to continue it, to spread it, to attack all the fetishes which keep mankind under the yoke of State, Capitalism, and Superstition