The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

NOTES ON NEWS.

The Government have got through the first stage of this new coercion adventure with no very triumphant success, though only one Liberal Unionist voted for Mr. Morley's amendment; Mr. Bright in his character of definite Tory voting for the government as a matter of course. There was nothing very remarkable in the debate that preceded the division. Mr. Gladstone spoke bold words as to the opposition which his party were prepared to make to the bill, and it is to be hoped that they will be made good; but one must see it done before one can believe that it will mean much of which was to triumph the cry of "obstruction"; as if it were not the business of any minority in the House of Commons to obstruct the passing of any measure that they thoroughly condemn.

A great part of Mr. Gladstone's elaborate speech was taken up with trying to prove that his coercion bill was quite a different thing, and put forward under quite different circumstances from the 1886 Act, and the orthodox Liberal papers were in ecstacies over his success in this attempt. But a reasonable man would think this ingenuity wasted: the Coercion Act on one hand and the action of the National League on the other, is a very different thing when the Liberal Government passed their Coercion Act. To speak plainly, all this side of the debate pro and con was simple fallacy; the absurdity of Birmingham the stupidity of never making an admission, which is a habit in Parliament nowadays. Really, Mr. Bright, you are not ashamed of changing his mind with the example of Mr. Bright before him, who has become a Tory simply because he could not change his, when things were changing around him.

It would be refreshing to find somebody who would say, when one of his own specie to the relation of his present to his past opinion, "Yes; I did think that, but I have changed my opinion now," but that seems to be as rare a bird as the man that will say "Yes; I said so-and-so, and I meant it then and mean it now." And it would take a strong anted to find a man in Parliament who could say either of those things.

As to Mr. Chamberlain, he seems determined to go deeper and deeper into the mire: and surely a man who had been away from the country for two years, and had not seen any newspapers during that time, if he had never thought of any of Mr. Chamberlain's present speeches, would be likely to say, "Pshaw! what Chamberlain is to me, the loyalty of which is a great refreshment as the Joseph Chamberlain who, when I left England, was going about the country making demi-semi-socialistic speeches!"

The thoughtful soul may, if it pleases, debate with itself whether the German or English people have scored in the game of skullduggery by the last two exhibitions of that art, the celebration of the Kaiser's birthday, or the Queen's visit to Birmingham. Certainly, the German transaction was on the larger scale, and so more offensive, and there appears to have been an outpouring of sentiment on the occasion, not easy for a man to understand, if he chance not to belong to that parish; neither is the unmanufactured drill sentiment which was worshipped by the German population—(What were all the Socialist voters about, by the way!)—a very worthy idol. Still, the man is a kind of a real king, and respectable, at any rate, the memory of a set of desperate battlers, and, 'tis said, does his business of being seen with much midstaility, and his position altogether is not so preposterous as that of our own poor fellow, which does not do its business even of being seen (if that mattered at all) and cannot do anything else of a public kind without being called over the coals for it as an unconstitutional act.

Doubtless, also, a good deal of the enthusiasm at Berlin was of police creation, and it is to be thought that the Birmingham loyalty was more genuine of its kind, and at the bottom of it, probably, lay the hope of the quickening of business a little. Finally, when we take into consideration that England is a Radical town, I think the palm must be given to the English professors of skullduggery: their faith is pure, and shines brighter through the wrappings of individual character, political creed, and other accidents than that of any other nation.

W. M.

In the April number of Harper's Magazine is an article on "Wages in Europe and America," the outcome of which seems to be in agreement with our constant assertion that in all civilised countries, the workman is in much the same position. What slight differences there are are due to the labourer's position in different countries arise from an altered standard of living.

Everywhere the worker is pushed down as far as he can go, and kept down there as long as he will stay.

A letter in the Spectator well illustrates the unreasonable fatuity of the average bourgeois. He has been giving particulars of the terrible condition of the Austrian workers, and winds up by saying that we in London (Socialists) have must be to thankful for."

Does he mean workmen when he says Socialists? And imply that so long as someone is worse off than ourselves, we should be unfailingly happy?; as no doubt he would be did he lose an eye, another losing both.

Or, are his words to be literally taken? In that case, he is decidedly illogical, being a bourgeois; for the only feature in the evil case of the Austrian workmen that can please a Socialist is their restiveness under it, and the conviction forced upon us that the capitalists of Austria and Germany are arming the revolution well by making their workers' lives intolerable.

H. H. S.

DESPOTISM AND NIHILOISM IN RUSSIA.

The world has once more been startled by another attempt at assassination. The despot is once more alarmed, and the press, as usual, calls for vengeance on the so-called miscreants who attempted to kill even an Emperor. That words of congratulation should be sent to the Emperor with lightning speed need not surprise any one. The same with regard to the blind fury of the hireling press of this and other countries. Yet, it would be best to look at the matter with greater calmness, and think well what the situation is. Let us deal first with the question on the ground of principle.

What is an Emperor? Simply a usurper. One who claims the right to rule in violation of the principle of equal liberty, in violation of the principle of the right of the free citizens of a republic. Usurpation can never be the basis of legitimate authority. It can never command the respect of the thoughtful. It will never receive the respect of the free man or the free woman, or even of all classes. Its very existence implies the assassination of the dignity, the liberty, and the independence of a whole people. It implies the degradation and slavery of millions of human beings. Usurpation is the basis of absolute despotic cut-throat; it involves despotic tyranny. Where usurpation exists liberty is impossible. All the rights of the individual, the liberty of thought, of speech, of free association, are all sacrificed to the supremacy of the usurper. And what is a usurper? A despot, a tyrant, from principle. Behind him on his throne of blood and a rebel against the principle of eternal justice, a traitor to the principle of human brotherhood. He is at war with the people over whom he claims to rule. As a traitor to the holy principle of equal liberty, he is at war with humanity. As a traitor and a rebel he should be every where treated as an outlaw. Usurpation is despotism in all its naked deformity. None but slaves can tolerate it. None but tyrants can recognize it. None but carnivores can sympathize with it. The glory of usurpation and the grandeur of its satirumla depend on the plunder and the degradation of the people. And from the curse and scourge of usurpation the people are in duty bound, severally or collectively, to deliver themselves.

We read of the Imperialism of ancient Rome, and of the religious royalty of the middle ages; we have had the Imperialism of Napoleon the Great, and we have the Imperialism of the German Kaiser; but in the Imperialism of Russia we have the blasphemous claims of religious royalty and the naked rascality of political despotism. There the usurper rules supreme. His will is law. At his bidding ten thousand victims take their death march to Siberia. At his command a thousand men and women ascend the scaffold, martyrs for the holy principle of human liberty. Behold the CSR of all the Russians on his throne of blood and rapine, surrounded by his almost countless legions of moneymakers and outlaws; behold him the traitor, the rebel, ever at war with the people over whom he claims to rule; at war with humanity, the only true sovereign. If the usurper be the appointed of