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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 new 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 enough 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 be sure that it will be: meanwhile, of course, the Tories raise 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 than this new measure; and the orthodox Liberal papers were in ecstasies 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, are simply acts of war; and it was just the same thing when the Liberal Government passed their Coercion Act. To speak plainly, all this side of the debate *pro* and *con* was simple twaddle; the mere lawyer-like stupidity of never making an admission, which is a habit in Parliament, too. Really, Mr. Gladstone need not be 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 challenged as 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 lantern 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 happened on any of Mr. Chamberlain's present speeches, would be likely to say, "Pray what Chamberlain is that? Is it any relation to 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 flunkeydom 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 sane man to understand, if he chance not to belong to that parish; neither is the superannuated drill-sergeant who 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 represents, at any rate, the memory of a set of desperate battles, and, 'tis said, does his joss-business of being seen with much assiduity, and his position altogether is not so preposterous as that of our own special joss, 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 Birmingham is a Radical town, I think the palm must be given to the English professors of flunkeydom; their faith is purer, 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 agree-

ment with our constant assertion that in all civilized countries, the workman is in much the same position. What slight differences there are between labour'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 unreasoning fatuity of the average bourgeois. The writer has been giving particulars of the terrible condition of the Austrian workers, and winds up by saying that we in London (Socialists) "have much to be 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 elsewhere are serving the revolution well by making their workers' lives intolerable.

H. H. S.

DESPOTISM AND NIHILISM IN RUSSIA.

THE world has once more been startled by another attempt at assassination. The despots are 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 eternal right, of eternal justice. 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. Usurpation is the greatest of all crimes. 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 despotism, of the most debasing 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. Behold him on his throne of blood, 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 everywhere treated as an outlaw. Usurpation is despotism in all its naked deformity. None but slaves can tolerate it. None but sycophants can recognise it. None but courtiers can sing its praises. The glory of usurpation and the grandeur of its saturnalia 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 free 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 *Czar* of all the Russians on his throne of blood and rapine, surrounded by his almost countless legions of mercenary cut-throats; 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