

# THE COMMONWEAL

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## NOTES ON NEWS.

THE locus-pocus by which the debate on the gross jury-packing in the Irish State trials was set aside, seems to have pleased the Tory mind; and it ought to please us Socialists also, because so far as it goes it is a sign of the growing decrepitude of our great enemy, or rather the great instrument of our enemies, the middle-class Parliament. In short, the disgrace of such a scene as that of the 17th is so clear, that one is really driven to wonder that it could be cheered even by the greatest idiots of the idiotic party of the most idiotic assembly in the world.

The release of the 23,000 odd prisoners in India as a compliment to the Jubilee flunkeyism has a queer mediæval smack about it, and of itself disposes of our pretensions so often put forward to governing India on modern principles of "Justice." Indeed, to some people it will reveal depths of tyranny undreamed of before. Here is a dilemma for our Jubileeists: "If it was dangerous to the public that these men should be at large, why do you release them for the danger of the public? If you can safely release this host of poor miserable tortured people, why did you torture them with your infernal prison?" There is no answer but one: "Because we are unjust, tyrannical, muddling fools!"

The Lake railway scheme has scored a success at last, but one may hope that the bill will yet be thrown out, as such misfortunes must be averted by any means possible, as they are lasting and irremediable.

It would be hardly worth while noticing Mr. Labouchere's bad arguments in favour of the railway if they did not illustrate the anti-social temper of the ordinary bourgeois so-called Radical. Because, of course, Mr. Labouchere is always playing a part, and he is no more the brutal and stupid bagman which he posed as being the other night, than he is the virtuously indignant democrat which he plays on other occasions. He is a very smart and handy person, who has chosen the democratic side of the political game, and is determined to play his part thoroughly and without finching. So that we can see that his conception of the democratic bourgeois involves a grovelling and sordid utilitarianism, and it is to be feared that he scarcely overdid his contemptible part in speaking as he did on the 17th.

Meanwhile, I would appeal to all Socialists to do their best to preserve the beauty and interest of the country. It is true that it is a part of that wealth in which the workers under our present system are not allowed to share. But when we have abolished the artificial famine caused by capital, we shall not be so pinched and poor that we cannot afford ourselves the pleasure of a beautiful landscape because it doesn't produce ironstone, or of a beautiful building because it won't do for a cotton-mill, and that pleasure will not then be confined to a few well-to-do people, but will be there to be enjoyed by all. Of course, as things go now, the Lake railway is not a question of the convenience of the Amblesiders, or the pleasure of the world in general, but the profit of a knot of persons leagued together against the public in general under the name of a railway company. W. M.

"Respectable" papers are exceeding lachrymose over the "incipient civil war" in Ireland and the beginnings of a rebellion that show themselves occasionally. It is so wrong of the bear to defend himself after his skin has been sold!

An emergency-man has met with his death at the hands of the enraged people against whom his loathsome services had been directed; whereupon the *Spectator* waxes wroth, and says: "Justice is dead in Ireland."

Justice never lived there save when it has been wrought by the people for themselves.

Dr. Croke, Archbishop of Cashel, has published a letter begging Irishmen no longer to pay their taxes:—"Payment is suicidal; and, in the presence of the actual state of things in Ireland just now, it is inconsistent besides. We run the 'Plan of Campaign' against bad landlords, and stop what they call their rent; and we make no move whatever against the Government that pays 'horse, foot, and dragoons' for protecting them and enforcing their outrageous exactions. Our money goes to fee and feed a gang of needy and voracious lawyers, to

purchase bludgeons for policemen to be used in smashing the skulls of our people, and generally for the support of a foreign garrison or native slaves, who hate and despise everything Irish and every genuine Irishman."

"Who follows in his train?"

The presumptuous arrogance of the conventional bourgeois Christian came out well a little while ago at the consecration of All Saint's Church at Allahabad, when the Bishop of Calcutta quoted "Unto thy seed have I given this land," as applicable to the divine disposal of India as a British plunder-ground.

When prelates paint the deity as a glorified carpet-bagger, or missionaries couple their creed with Manchester cottons, it makes the unregenerate smile, and brings home to a Socialist how everything whether "carnal" or "spiritual," is the direct outcome of and moulded by the economic condition of society. S.

## NATIONAL BURDENS IN RELATION TO NATIONAL INCOMES.

To the thoughtful of every country the present state of Europe is most alarming. Everywhere there are rumours of wars, and everywhere there are preparations for war, and that, too, on the most gigantic scale. The European Continent is one vast military camp, adding every day to the heavy burdens the toiling millions have to bear. But there undoubtedly will be wars of the most terrible character. In all probability these will be followed by repudiations in many countries. They will also be followed by revolutions in most of the European States.

We complain in England of the enormous weight of our taxation. We complain, and very justly too, that more than two-thirds goes for war debts and war purposes. Nor can we be certain that our war expenditure will not increase. Indeed, an increase is certain to take place. But while we complain of our heavy taxation, we seldom think of the still heavier burdens that have to be borne by the peoples of the Continent. And here it must be observed that taxation must always be viewed in its relation to annual income. In 1840, it would have been impossible for England then to have borne £90,000,000 of taxation. Not only because the population was less than at present, but because our annual income was relatively still smaller as compared with the present day. It is quite true that taxation has increased faster than population, but our annual income has increased faster than both. It is true that many people think but little of the question of taxation, yet if we view the matter as we really should view it, as so much taken from labour, and from labour alone, we find it amount to a considerable sum. Thus in 1883 our total expenditure, national and local, amounted to £156,709,535, and dividing that among the working-classes, it was equal to £34 13s. 4d. for every working-class family.

But we must look at this question of taxation from another standpoint. In 1840, our taxation was only about forty-six millions, and at the present day about ninety millions. At the former period our annual income was only equal to about £19 per head of the population, while to-day it is over £35. The total at the former period being £514,000,000, and in 1883, £1,265,000,000. Our taxation, then is only about the thirteenth part of our annual income. Bearing this in mind, let us look at the case of the leading Continental States.

In 1882, France had an annual income of £965,000,000, and a Governmental expenditure of £142,000,000, being over one-seventh of her annual income. Germany in 1882 had an annual income of £851,000,000, with a total taxation of £103,753,000. Her taxation then was less than one-eighth of her yearly income. Her income was only equal to £18 7s. per head of population, her taxation £2 5s. 10d., leaving a balance per head of £16 1s. 2d. If we take Austria-Hungary, her total income the same year was only £602,000,000, equal to £16 3s. per head. Her expenditure was £76,478,000. As in the case of Germany, the taxation was nearly one-eighth of her total income. In 1882, the total income of Italy was only £292,000,000, equal to only £10 7s. per head of the population. But her taxation was over £61,480,000, being equal to £2 2s. per head, and more than one-fifth of the national income. What a condition for a country to be in, and especially Italy, for whose unity and independence so many