

THE COMMONWEAL

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NOTES ON NEWS.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN waxed almost pathetic in his appeal for the gratitude of constituencies to their representatives for *past* services: a very convenient feeling to establish on behalf of "rats" and dishonest politicians, and I fear a feeling rather strong amongst voting working-men. I fear, because a matter of fact such a feeling at best means a weak doubt of one's own principles, and at worst (and oftenest so, probably) means mere servility and stupidity. Gratitude to traitors and turn-coats! Sham sentiment of the nineteenth century, you do indeed get into curious corners when politicians deal with you!

Mediæval sentiment was at least more logical than this. An old chronicler puts into the mouth of an orator pleading a cause some words like these: "Why do the heralds at the tournaments cry 'Honour to the sons of the valiant' (preux), and not 'Honour to the valiant'?" Because a man that has been valiant may do amiss, and spoil his valiancy, and then he is valiant no more; but when he is dead, and has not spoiled his valiancy in aught, then you may call him valiant indeed; and to think of this is great encouragement to younger men, so that they may endure to the end."

Certainly in politics "we have changed all that"; and the rule now is that when a man has once got a reputation as a leader he may indulge himself in almost any shabbiness and sneaking ways, and injure his reputation scarcely at all; always so long as he brazens it out, and keeps himself well before the public—advertises himself, in fact.

Mr. Chamberlain, for the rest, said very little worth noting. His scheme of peasant-proprietorship, which he has always before him, is really reducible to this: the creation of a class of small owners who would (somehow) have bought their holdings, and the driving those who could not (somehow) buy them into the class of day labourers. This would certainly be an advantage to both landlord and capitalist, but it would hardly turn Ireland into a heaven for the working man, whether he were a labourer or a small proprietor with a millstone of mortgage round his neck.

W. M.

Can the stupidity of "national" rivalry as engendered and fostered by commercialism go much further than in the Fisheries Dispute between England and America?

War is even talked of. Of course, it is not very likely to come off; but like two boys who say "Yah, who's afraid!" the two governments are trying to frighten one another into concession.

The policies proposed only differ as to the capitalists of which nation the profits shall go to, no thought is given to the people's benefit.

That men of any intelligence should become in anywise excited over the "Queen's Speech" is difficult for a Socialist to understand, the ponderous empty platitudes that convey nothing with great effort are so desperately trivial.

Dealing, even in the way it does, with "the affairs of the Empire," it has no word for the folk or for their interests. Some distant hint of peasant proprietorship is all that can even be twisted into a semblance of being projected on their behalf.

The way in which people leap into the fray and attack Socialism without in the least knowing what it is, both amuses and disgusts one.

Thus a journal whose only *raison d'être* is the combatting of Socialism speaks after this fashion: "Mr. Fyffe, formerly 'the candidate' for Oxford city, Mr. Rowlands, M.P., together with the Leasehold 'Enfranchisement' Association, and *all other* urban Socialists!"

Now, our contemporary is either under the delusion that all the named folk are of one kidney—and that Socialist—or else it is seeking simultaneously to enrage the Socialists and discredit the politicians by the conjunction of their names.

But it is almost certain that *Jus* does really regard any one who recoils from the unlimited license and boundless self-assertion of Individualism as, *ipso facto*, a Socialist.

In order that our friends the enemy may have a criterion whereby to judge of a man's Socialism, they should remember that a Socialist is one who believes in the destruction of the system which now obtains of individual property in the means for the production of wealth, and the substitution therefor of a system of social collective ownership and collective control.

Unless a man thus believes, he is *not* a Socialist, however honestly he may desire to limit the wrong and robbery of to-day.

Poor Mr. Bradlaugh! He was, once upon a time, quite an Ishmael among the respectabilities and proprieties, but now *Jus* is asking what is the exact amount of disagreement between him and the Liberty and Property Defence League. "It appears there is a difference, but it is so slight that it seems to us almost invisible to the naked eye." Quite so, as the quondam champion of the people is now pilot-fish to the association of sharks drawn together for the defence of the "liberty" to devour the folk.

It is surely enough degradation to fulfil the loathsome function, without having public attention thus insolently drawn to it.

Even as I write comes the *Chicago Tribune* of January 11, in a leader of which the following occurs:

"No man possessed of genuine American manhood can be found in the ranks of Socialism. No man speaking the English language, educated in our schools and having the American characteristics, is identified with it, except as he hopes to become a leader of one of its sections. None of the older Germans who have become Americanised and none of the younger Germans attending our schools and familiarising themselves with our institutions are to be found advocating it. Its followers are those who have come to this country indoctrinated with its foreign unrepublican principles. No American or Americanised working-man can subscribe to its doctrines without sacrificing his manhood, his personal dignity, and all his individual rights, and voluntarily declaring his willingness to become a pauper and live upon the workhouse system. Before taking such a step, before allowing these demagogues to fasten a system upon them which will pauperise them, would it not be wise and prudent for them to study it a little, and to read what Mr. Bradlaugh has to say about it, before they surrender to a clique of demagogues who are plotting to destroy organised labour and its rewards and substitute organised pauperism and its penalties?"

The *Chicago Tribune* is about the biggest "rat" paper in the States. "Like likes like." Still, it is very funny to be advised to read Mr. Bradlaugh as a corrective to demagogueism!

The *Personal Rights Journal* takes a long extract from the article upon the Liberty and Property Defence League that lately appeared in our columns. For this we thank it, as also for the ludicrously clear proof once more given, in its comment upon the extract, of the utter lack of knowledge of the economic position of the working class possessed by Individualists in general.

Jus pleads with us for "goodwill and fraternity" towards the Liberty and Property Defence League and all other opponents. Has it ever heard the historic advice "not to swap horses in the middle of the stream"?

It is not in the heat of battle that men can stay to analyse motive and give credit for intention. We are arrayed for the destruction of a wrong: all who are not with us are against us. The Liberty and Property Defence League is expressly and avowedly formed to combat us, and they must look for hard knocks. We fight with clean weapons—but relentlessly.

When the dust of battle has cleared away, and the victory has been made secure, it may be that we shall see—it is certain that we shall see—that there has been much good intention and pure motive behind these men's action.

To-day they stand as our declared foemen, honest or not, a bar in the way of the folk toward freedom. They must stand aside—or go down!

H. S.