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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

WE can believe that our old acquaintance Mr. Phillips really was sorry that he could not help the unemployed men who applied to him to help them, and were waiting to see if they could get a job in clearing off the snow, because he seems to have some appreciation of the condition of the unemployed at present. He appeared to relish the job of blowing to pieces a lie that appeared in the respectable *Times* to the effect that "although a large number of persons were wanted to work to clear the snow from the streets on Boxing-day, only three applied, and they were under the influence of drink." Mr. Phillips said that the Town-hall was not open on that day, neither was any notice given that men were wanted on that day. Mr. Phillips, much to his credit, stigmatised this as a deliberate lie, and a libel on the working classes—"in fact a malicious libel." It is, however, the kind of lie which is very commonly accepted as gospel truth in these winter days, as anybody can bear witness who has an opportunity of listening to the conversation in a second-class carriage on the District Railway.

"Infamy" has different meanings to different minds, it would seem. To Mr. Mansfield, for instance, it appears to have meant the other day the extremity of poverty which forces a man to beg in the streets in order to get a little victuals for himself and three little children. "Your conduct is simply infamous," said the "worthy" magistrate. On the other hand, others (myself amongst them) might think the title of "infamy" fairly well earned by the magistrate who from his unanswerable position goes out of his way to insult a poor man, even supposing that he was compelled by a stupid and brutal law to send him to prison for what was no offence. W. M.

One of the "swell" kind of emigration-touts, Mr. David Buchanan of the New South Wales Parliament, had a rather stormy reception when, at St. James's Hall on Friday week, he started out to prove New South Wales a veritable heaven for working men. For twenty-five years a political trickster, his long experience served him in good stead when he came to solid, right-down lying as to the condition and resources of the colony. "Enormous tracts of alluvial land which could produce forty bushels of the finest wheat to the acre" laid promiscuously around and waited to be picked up. "Not one of the really industrious" was suffering or ever had suffered from distress there. John Norton, the N.S.W. workmen's delegate, G. Lansbury, and our comrade Somerville, opposed the lecture, and a very stormy scene followed, which was only terminated by turning out the gas.

A good illustration of the "ministerial meaning" of a political speech was given in the Northern police-court of Dublin during the examination of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach on the 7th in the case against John Dillon and his comrades. When "Mickey the Botch," as he is called in Ireland, was referred to the speech he made at Bristol on November 13, and asked what he meant by saying "the Government have brought what pressure they could within the law to bear upon those few landlords who would not follow the example of their more generous fellows," he would only respond, "Exactly what I said," and would give no clue as to what "pressure within the law" meant. Now, either the "pressure" was a mere figure of speech (and this after all is almost a certainty) or it was not. If it was a reality and "within the law," why hesitate to speak of it? If it was not "within the law," how comes it that a government which to curry popular favour and prolong a shaky existence will overstep the law, will yet seek to punish others for following its example?

The Irish papers last week were lively reading. What with the miserable floundering of perjured police witnesses under the searching cross-examination of Mr. Healy and the other counsel for the defence; the "fun of the (proclaimed) fair" at Gorey; John Dillon's meeting at Arklow, and W. O'Brien's at Fairymount, they overflowed with interest for any one not wholly dead to the cause of the people in its various phases.

The "majesty of the law" asserts itself in many ways. Mr. Bowler, counsel for the defence in the case against the chairman of the Waterford Tenants' Association, while the case was proceeding was twice threatened with violence. District Inspector Davis, provoked by an allusion made to him in the counsel's speech, shouted that "if I wasn't in court I'd wring the head off you," and was with difficulty restrained

from attempting to carry his grotesque threat into execution. While struggling with those who interposed he shouted again that he "would pull the throttle out of him," and so on. Information against him was applied for and refused, the impartial magistrates apparently believing that any treatment was good enough for a Nationalist.

The Plan of Campaign has scored another triumph. Lord Dillon, who so stoutly refused 25 per cent. reduction, and "would die first," has now agreed to accept an abatement of 20 per cent. all round, reinstate all evicted tenants, and pay all costs incurred on either side in the whole affair. S.

LIBERTY AND PROPERTY DEFENCE LEAGUE REPORT FOR 1886.

WHOEVER has drawn up the above Report deserves credit for having concocted a most formidable and imposing document, which will doubtless comfort and gladden the hearts and brace up the nerves of the weaker brethren, as they read the record of the heroic resistance offered by the redoubtable knights, Wemyss, Pembroke, Fortescue, and Co., to the advance of the terrible *Spectre Rouge*.

Putting aside the ineffable disgust which every honest intelligent person must feel at the shameless pretence and gross hypocrisy of this league of monopolists posing as friends of freedom and champions of the oppressed, there is much in the Report to gratify and encourage all who work and hope for the Social Revolution. Allowing considerable discount for bombast, bunkum, and soft sawdow, there yet remains the solid fact that our Cause has grown so stout and strong as to tax the energies and resources of a wealthy and "influential" organisation like the L.P.D.L., with its 71 federated bodies, to cope with it.

By far the larger part of the Report is taken up with a record of Parliamentary Bills rejected or mutilated through the action of the League Parliamentary Committee. As, however, even the best of these Bills, emanating from the hopelessly corrupt bourgeois parliament at Westminster, are and could be nothing more than miserable make-believe make-shifts, anything that the League could do in regard to them is of comparatively little importance, except as showing the real spirit that governs its action. I do not propose, therefore, to occupy space and time in commenting on the forty odd Bills enumerated in the Report, but will confine my observations mainly to two—viz., The Shop Hours Regulation Bill and the Coal Mines Regulation Bill. With regard to the former, the precious committee of loafing landlords and landsharks showed their devotion to Liberty by contending for the right of greedy grasping shopkeepers to drudge their unfortunate youthful assistants, male and female, as many hours as they choose. There is, however, a curious admission in the Report, to the effect that "after consultation with the Shopkeepers' Defence Committee, your Committee concluded that it would not be practicable to oppose the Bill *in toto* with any certainty of success." They therefore confined their efforts to securing modification of the Bill, whilst their "agents attended meetings held by the promoters for the purpose of moving resolutions against the Bill; and the principle of the Bill was attacked by the League speakers on various occasions in workmen's clubs in different parts of the metropolis." What other interpretation can be put on this than that the evidence disclosed such a state of things that even the tough consciences of the middle-class M.P.'s felt a twinge? Yet these gentlemen of the L.P.D.L. did not scruple to take advantage of the need of some of the more cunning among the proletariat to use them as agents to delude their ignorant and simple fellow-men into supposing that in opposing the curtailment of the shopkeeper's power of exploiting his assistants, they were maintaining their own freedom.

Their action in regard to the other Bill—that of the Coal Mines Regulation—calls for somewhat fuller comment, inasmuch as it concerns the vexed question of female labour, the particular instance being that of the employment of women at the pit-brow. I quote a sentence from the Report which is pregnant with meaning and deserves the serious consideration of the workers for more reasons than one: "A miners' conference at Birmingham in January, under the presidency of Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P., having passed a resolution in favour of the legislative suppression of women's labour at the pit-bank, a member of the League specially experienced in the matter wrote a letter to the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, warning the pit-brow women of the impending danger, and appealing to the public to assist them in retaining their freedom of labour." Before dealing with the main question,