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THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

MR. DE RUTZEN'S sentence on the so-called rioters by the Marble Arch is a fitting pendant to the Norwich affair in which the members of the League suffered; and though no doubt Mr. De Rutzen can lay claim to be represented by Mr. Nupkins as well as Justice Grantham, one cannot help thinking that there is something behind that, and that the "worthy magistrate" has had a hint to do a little terrorism, and that the unfortunate persons who were not Socialists, who have found themselves in the same prison-van as the Socialists, must do their best to console themselves with the fable of the cranes who suffered for being found in the same net with the more game birds who were the hunters' real quarry: the members of the S. D. F. were of course the real persons aimed at.

One advantage the "rioters" have at all events, that the affair having happened in London, and chancing to coincide in time with the growing feeling against the Tory government, the press has been compelled to take it up in some way or other. The *Pall Mall*, for instance, has a leader on the subject, which does it much credit, while it had not one word to say about the equally monstrous sentence passed on our comrades at Norwich, prefaced as it was by Grantham's charge to the jury in which he coolly prejudged the case.

As for the disavowal by Government of its agents Poland, Matthews and De Rutzen, which the *Pall Mall* cries out for, that can hardly be expected, unless a general public outcry forces them to give way when the appeal is tried: they have done what they were told to do, and are in their places to exercise arbitrary violence whenever it seems advisable to do so; and the "respectable" mob that backs them is both too stupid and too truculent even to note the grim joke of De Rutzen kindly consenting not to send the accused to a jury, on which they might at least have had a chance of finding one or two honest and un servile persons who would have listened to the evidence and tried to find out what it was worth, instead of taking their opinion from that gross abuse, the summing-up of the judge: they would, I say, have had that chance, though it must be admitted that English juries are grown so servile, that it would be but a chance.

The reactionists are getting on, that must be allowed; to take advantage of a mere slight disturbance, provoked by what was admitted on all sides (except Poland & Co.) to have been the bad conduct of the police, to strike terror into the Socialists, is a considerable advance on their part. Their next step will probably be to drop all pretence of defending the rights of the public to the free use of the highway, or of supporting the police in quelling a disturbance, and to attack opinion directly. There is plenty of law for it, and they will have no difficulty in getting a conviction, if the unsupported evidence of policemen is to be accepted as good enough for the purpose.

The disturbance on Sunday at Kennington was the natural outcome of the police magistrate's decision of the week before not to defend a Socialist from violence. At the same time it may seem to some persons as the result of a deliberate plot on the part of the police to get rid of a Socialist preaching-stand without incurring the trouble and odium of a prosecution for obstruction. In that case it is a simple dodge and seems likely to be an effective one, since there can always be found handy a genuine collection of idiots under the name of a branch of the Primrose League, who, having nothing to say, don't want to hold meetings except amongst themselves, and so need not fear reprisals.

W. M.

The Canadian Parliament by 135 votes to 47, and the Nova Scotian by a large majority, have voted a resolution against the Coercion Bill and in favour of Home Rule in Ireland. This is but a sample of the way "our" colonies regard "us." Imperial Federation may mean more to the Jingo than they will care for.

Some excitement is being caused by the proceedings of the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh and the supposed Irishman who accompanies him. When a great power like England subjects any Indian prince, or other victim of its rapacity, to the usual "civilising influences" of robbery by force, the victim is denounced virulently if he seeks redress, and more so if revenge.

Even the purity *Pall Mall* joins in the outcry against the unfortunate Indian in question and calls out for his incarceration—if caught!

However bad the man may be, he is distinctly entitled to resist England with all his power, and the English Government has treated him and many of his fellows with such brutal treachery that it is hard to blame him if the means he adopts be modelled in too close imitation of the example set him.

Counsel applied in the Queen's Bench Division on 27th ult., for an order to compel the corporation of Birkenhead to grant a licence for a traction engine to Messrs. Fox. The Lord Chief Justice remarked that Birkenhead had not been made for Messrs. Fox and their traction engines, and refused the motion. We know nothing of the "merits of the case," but it is cheering to find that a capitalist may sometimes be prevented from doing just everything he wants to.

A theory quite opposite to that held by the Lord Chief Justice is usually held: That the whole world, and all that in it is, belongs to the bourgeois to do what he likes with.

At the Wimborne police-court lately two brothers were charged with unlawfully wounding their stepfather. Prosecutor had been beaten till he was unconscious, and left by the roadside. He was conveyed from the union workhouse to the police-court, and had his head bandaged and one arm in splints. Prisoners were fined 15s. 6d. each or fourteen days' in default! At the same court a man named Dyatt, against whom there was nothing previously, was charged with taking four penny worth of straw, and was sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labour, without the option of a fine!

Can it be wondered at that the workers are "becoming infected" with Socialism, when they see how lightly any injury wrought their limbs or lives is regarded as compared with any "infringement of the rights of property"?

H. H. S.

THE IRISH QUESTION.

III.—LANDLORDISM.

In dealing with the Land Question in Ireland, and before coming to the economical part of the subject, it may be well to take a general view of the position and claims of at least a few of the great landholders. At p. 178, of Part III. of the 'New Doomsday Book' (for Ireland) published in 1876, we have the following summary.

There are 110, each holding 20,000 acres and upwards, dividing among them 4,151,142 acres, with a stated valuation of £1,512,594. No one must for a moment suppose that the valuation represents the rental. There are 192 holding from 10,000 to 20,000 acres each, making a total of 2,607,719, with a valuation of £1,174,223. There are 440 others holding from 5,000 to 10,000 acres each, giving a total of 3,071,471 acres, and a valuation of £1,453,697. We thus find that 742 persons hold, and claim as their own private property, 9,830,632 acres out of a total of 20,047,572 acres. That the valuation returned amounts to £4,140,514, out of a total of £10,182,681. At p. 186 it is stated that the non-residents only number 1,643, that is, those who very rarely or never reside in Ireland; that these hold 4,513,861 acres with a valuation of £2,139,143. Then there are one hundred and sixty-one companies or charitable institutions (including the London companies), who hold 582,327 acres with a valuation of £234,678. Also 1,350 landlords whose residence is not ascertained, yet who hold among them 615,308 acres, the valuation of which is £331,673. There is no doubt that the total rental taken from the country and spent elsewhere, amounts to at least £5,000,000 to £6,000,000 a year. Such a drain and from such a poor country as Ireland (under present conditions), must of itself produce widespread ruin amongst the population. A drain of five millions a year from Ireland is equal to at least one hundred millions a year from England.

In the county of Fermanagh there are seven great landlords. Of these men one of them, Sir Victor Brooks, writing in the *Standard* of November 24, 1880, in defence of their position as landlords, said: "The larger part of this county is held by the descendants of seven families planted there by the monarchs and statesmen of the last three hundred years." And Sir Victor Brookes thought that was enough as a justification of their claims to the land. Let us look at the holdings of these seven men.