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## NOTES ON NEWS.

Mr. Wilfrid Blunt is to go to prison for asserting the rights of free speech in Ireland. Well and good so far; but surely he is not to be the only one of the English Home Rulers who is going through this business: one could name half-a-dozen who would be fitter for the task than Mr. Blunt, who is a "faddist," which is the political jargon for a man who has some idea of justice outside mere party necessities, as witness Arabi and the Egyptian matter. Let some of the orthodox show the genuineness of their convictions on coercion, and for once be of some service to the cause of progress that they profess. It will be a shabby business indeed if they don't share the glory and discomfort with the candidate for Deptford.

Or the Balfour will score a victory, and the process may be a long one. But once for all there is a method of shortening the struggle, or rather of finishing it at one blow, which, strange to say, has not suggested itself to any Gladstonian partisan yet. Though I believe my following suggestion will not be accepted as the Columbus egg-trick by the whole Home Rule Liberal Party if, as is doubtful, they happen to read the *Commonweal*, yet it certainly should be so accepted.

Let Mr. Gladstone go over to Ireland and follow Mr. Wilfrid Blunt's example, and coercion is at an end, and the Tory Government along with it.

Yes, I know the orthodox will receive that as an unworthy joke; but the very fact that they will do so, and that I have been obliged to put it as a joke, shows how lightly politicians treat the matters which they talk about so solemnly. Here we have them gravely discussing the legality or illegality of Mr. Blunt's action when they know very well that he went to do what was at once illegal and reasonable. If Mr. Gladstone were to do the like, how the unreasonable legality would vanish amidst roars of laughter, and the discussion about Home Rule and the squeezing of rent from people who *can't* pay would enter on a new phase. But it is a joke to propose it for that very reason. It would crush the Tory party, and to do that is exactly what the orthodox Liberals will by no means do. A famous chess-player doesn't want to exterminate his adversary; or who is he to play with? He wants to beat him at the game, that is all. If there were no Tories to play with and make about the same moves as the Liberals, the latter might have to deal with *realities*—and what would they do then?

I repeat, let the great man go to Ireland and get arrested for speaking on the side of freedom at Woodford or elsewhere, and thereby put his political opponents in the deepest hole any government were ever in, and himself become the most popular man of the century.

Says a correspondent of the *Daily News*, "When any disturbance does occur it is the police that begin it." It is not London that he is speaking of but Woodford in Ireland; that is, doubtless, because he has not been in London for the last three weeks.

Mr. Chabmerlain's expression of passionate devotion to law-and-order is touching, coming as it does from the man who gave that warning to the rich about ransom. And it must be said that, if there is anything genuine about him at all, probably this later view of his is his genuine one; he is what the cabman once called the almost forgotten Robert Lowe (now Lord something or other) "a harbitrary gent."

Poor Samuel Huby has had very bad luck with Mr. Nupkins-Mansfield. The policeman in the attack on the citizens of October 20th, hit him and he very naturally hit the policeman, who being knocked down either received or imagined a kick. Huby explained that the policeman hit him three times and knocked him down; but though his old master came forward and gave him a good character, and though the policeman himself said: "he seems to be a respectable and very good lad," yet the *thing* on the bench paid no more attention to his statement than if it had been the wind blowing, and had the impudence to remark in the true Nupkins style, "It would be a most improbable thing for the constable to strike you without provocation." So Mr. Huby got three months' hard labour in order to increase his affection for the beauties of law and order. I don't know if he was a Socialist before his introduction to the Nupkins of Marlborough Street; but I should think he would lose no time in becoming one now.

The *Daily News* is very severe on the deputation sent on the 28th October to the Board of Works, for what it called their "Jack Cade" behaviour there; but may there not be another side to that story? Suppose that the deputation were treated by the majority of the board with that circumlocution-office off-handedness which is a standing insult to the citizen, and which everybody having business with an official body is sure to receive, as I by personal experience can declare, unless he is known as a "person of importance." If that were the case, is it wonderful that men on such serious business as the trying to get work in order to prevent them from starving, should show some resentment at this supercilious bad manners, not knowing perhaps that such bad manners are habitual and a part of what we pay for. The representatives of a vast body of starving men don't to my mind need forgiveness if they lose their temper when brought face to face with the brazen wall of official impudence and unreason, which even Dickens' immortal humour failed to shake by a hairs'-breadth.

The police have been spinning if not one of the longest, yet at least one of the stupidest of galley yarns on record about Clan-na-Gael conspirators and jubilees, and lodgings and swell hotels, and the Lord knows what, clearly under instructions and for the purpose of discrediting the Home Rule agitation. Stupid as it is, it will no doubt be an effective weapon as far as it goes, that is, it will frighten some timid voters who take everything for gospel which they see in an official report. But, really, was it worth the wear and tear?

W. M

## IS LUXURY GOOD FOR TRADE?

UNDER this heading there has been a brief passage-at-arms in the correspondence columns of the *Daily News* between Sir Henry E. Knight, Alderman, of the one part, and Mr. Sidney Webb, Professor of Political Economy, of the other part. "A happy combination of defects, natural and acquired," renders the worthy Alderman a fitting exponent of the time-honoured fallacy he set forth:—

"Money spent in entertainment goes into the pockets of the working classes. . . . I say further that for every pound spent in entertainment another pound is spent by the entertained, so that at least double the cost of the entertainment is distributed in wages; therefore he who spends encourages and promotes expenditure and is the best friend of the working classes."

In a second letter he disposed of his opponent's reply in an off-hand fashion with great satisfaction to himself, and still further established his claims to bourgeois orthodoxy by sacrificing those to sense. His "argument" is worth reproducing in full (but with a few words italicised):—

"Always putting aside abuse, which, being contrary to the laws of God and man, cannot be countenanced, can there be a doubt that the answer to this question [*i.e.*, Is luxury good for trade?] must be Yes? Nay, is it not an absolute necessity in order to find mankind in employment? Are not all things beyond the requirements of food, clothing, and shelter more or less luxuries? No doubt we could all live on plain food and drink water, and would perhaps be healthier and better than we are now, but in that case what would become of the millions who earn their living in the production and preparation of what we may call fancy food and drinks, and those great industries which produce the luxuries of beer and wine? We could all be clothed in homespun, but what would become of those millions who are employed in the manufacture of other dress goods—silks, satins, broadcloth, and hundreds of other cognate articles? We might also *all* be reduced to an equality (the Socialists' idea) and live in *comfortable houses* quite sufficient to afford the necessary amount of food and shelter; but in that case *what would become* of those millions connected with the trades which flourish by the erection of large premises and also the decoration and furnishing thereof? Can it be doubted that gold and silver plate, jewellery, carriages, and no end of other things in every-day use and consumption, are luxuries? Yet no one in their senses would propose to abolish them, as it would simply mean destroying the living of the best and most intelligent mechanics on the face of the earth. Need I pursue the subject further? Surely it is evident that the non-consumption of luxuries would mean the destruction of nearly the whole trade and industry of the human race."

The man who puts forward such a plea might lay claim to exceptional courage, were it not too evidently but an accidental audacity born of ignorance, "the colossal ignorance which drives the political economist to despair," as Mr. Webb calls it. The last-named put the whole case so far as concerns the present system, very clearly and cleverly:—

"Sir Henry Knight is apparently unaware even of the existence of a great body of ascertained and undisputed truth on the subject on which he undertakes to enlighten the 'ignorant working classes.' The blunder into which he has fallen is explained in the first few pages of every text-book on economics; yet even when his attention is called to it, he does not think it worth while to consult the most elementary primer, but denounces an unknown correspondent as 'an agi-