

THE COMMONWEAL

The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

VOL. 4.—No. 118.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 1888.

WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

THE police have been at it again, and this time, as they have been bearing false witness not against "revolutionaries" or persons who happened to be mixed up with them, but against ordinary citizens not guilty *à priori* of the crime of "demonstrating," they have got into trouble, and the public prosecutor is to look into the matter. Couldn't he go a few weeks backward and look into the cases of the "rioters" of the past winter?

In all soberness, the attention which has been paid to Mr. Montagu Williams' scolding of the police brings out the cowardly injustice of society towards the victims of the raid on free speech into yet stronger relief than before. To judge by the tone of the press about this affair, one would suppose that no accusations had ever been made against the police, that the whole public are perfectly satisfied that their evidence against Harrison and Ellis and dozens of others was admitted to be spotlessly true, and that everybody "run in" for anything (or for nothing) connected with Trafalgar Square was even himself persuaded that he had received a perfectly fair trial. Surely no hypocrisy has ever come anywhere near the Pharisaism of modern bourgeois England!

I get papers from candidates for the vestry shoved into my door at times, besides the voting paper. Some of the former are droll. One candidate appears to me to be at least frank; he says he shall consider it one of his principal duties to see that the contracts are given to persons in the neighbourhood, or words to that effect. The same gentleman says that he will do his best to see that those unfortunate persons who are in need of relief shall, as far as possible, be treated with a fair amount of comfort and consideration. Here is qualification with a vengeance!

The economics of some of our leading papers are wonderful indeed. The *Daily News*, for instance, says, quoting Major Roe about work at Birmingham: "The use of power-driven machinery is daily increasing, with the result of increased output and the substitution of women and youths for the skilled artisan; on the other hand, the men are more than compensated by the increased demand for them in the manufacture of tools and machinery." Which must clearly mean, if it means anything, that the manufacturer, having got rid of human labour at one end of the process, uses up all the displaced labour at the other end, and has besides saddled himself with machinery which he has had to pay for and cannot use, and that he does this without compulsion. On the whole, it is easier to believe that the *Daily News* gets its minor leader-writers from Colney Hatch than to believe this.

Indeed, this explanation gathers credibility as one reads further where the writer, having informed us in the first-quoted passage that women and boys are being substituted for skilled artisans, goes on to tell us that it is said that the days of unskilled labour are numbered. With a leer in his eye and a straw or two and a peacock's feather in his hair, he finishes by drawing a moral for us, the often-told tale that all is for the best in this best possible of worlds, wherein the capitalist can still make a profit out of other people's labour. "Thanks to the Education Act, the condition of the working classes is better than it used to be; they spend both their wages and their leisure better than of old. Technical instruction and sober diligence will be the salvation of many a British industry." Yes; but he means the salvation of much British capital. Make technical education so common that it is no longer of any market value, thinks the capitalist, and then we shall be able to get the skilled workman at the cost of the unskilled; let every workman (that is employed) work two hours a day more than he does now,

and it will put so much the more into *our* pockets, as we shall pay the same for the twelve hours as we do now for the ten. This is the way to safeguard British industry against foreign competition.

Yet education, technical instruction, and sober industry are good things—so good that it is grievous indeed to see them made use of to "cheapen labour," that is, to make legal stealing safer and more profitable. However, let us have courage; education is a dangerous gift to give to slaves. What does our author from Colney Hatch think will be the result (if we should come to it, and we *are* coming to it) of a class of skilled artisans unemployed, or reduced to the ranks, and at the same time "educated" by book-learning as well as suffering? No men, surely, have ever set themselves more busily to sow the wind for the harvest of the whirlwind than our anti-Socialist "Liberal" capitalists.

W. M.

So there has actually been a plot against Mr. Balfour discovered, after all this time of coercion. Of course no sane man believes in any possible utility resulting from the use of dynamite after the manner of the American Fenian. But surely the terms of moral indignation in which the fact was chronicled by certain journalistic advocates of Home Rule partakes of the nature of "cant." Most of these journalists profess to believe in the accuracy of Mr. Blunt's charges against Mr. Balfour. Mr. Balfour on this assumption has tried to kill his political adversaries, the American Fenians do the like, only perhaps more mercifully. The only difference otherwise is that Mr. Balfour is within the law in doing what he does and acts indeed as the representative of the law, whereas the American dynamiters are without the law. But if they, being without the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, it would hardly seem that any special moral blame attaches to them—at least from the point of view of a law-abiding journalist. The American Fenian might surely say to Mr. Balfour and his friends, "How can you, possessed of *such* magnificence at home (i.e., for purposes of coercion)—goals, plank beds, cells 7 feet by 10, etc., etc.—envy me a humble can of dynamite?"

Freedom according to the conceptions of the modern capitalists is admirably illustrated by the proposals of the syndicate of London bankers and merchants relative to the affairs of Morocco. According to the views of those persons, Morocco is to be compelled to receive European shoddy and to "open itself up" by telegraphs and railways, on pain of forfeiting its "integrity"—that is, of being dismembered by the European band of harpies. The Moors don't want the shoddy goods, or the telegraphs or the railways; but no matter, they *must* expend their substance on things they don't want and had much rather do without, for the benefit of the enterprising European capitalist, commercial and industrial, the first of whom wants to force his wares, and the second to start mining and other operations, at the expense of the unfortunate native. Even the *Daily News* is impressed with the ironical nature of "independence" on such terms.

E. B. B.

Canterbury is doubtful just now whether to laugh or cry over the alteration in its police arrangements. Among the exposures that moral-miracles have made of themselves, no scandals have come to light much worse than those of that ancient town. As a consequence the superintendent has resigned, a constable been dismissed, another degraded, and the city police will be abolished. In future Canterbury will be policed by the county constabulary, and its inhabitants are by no means sure that they will be better off.

It looks like a retrograde step on the part of the municipality, this

giving up of its own police; but probably, as things now are, the blue lambs would be much the same under whatever authority they nominally were.

The *Star* quite rightly calls upon every Radical member to back up Mr. Labouchere in attacking the vote of £5,000 for robes and insignia of Knights, Companions, and other officers of the various orders of knighthood. "If it pleases grown men to indulge in these puerilities, no kind-hearted person will object to their doing so. But that overburdened taxpayers should be asked to pay for such tomfoolery is such a monstrous impertinence that it is surprising that it should be left to Radicals alone to oppose it."

If there were any meaning in these things beyond mere snobbery—if they really were public rewards for public benefits—folk would pay for them without grumbling; but the futile stupidity of a minister paying for a political service by an "honour" out of the people's pocket is enough to move laughter in—hell!

A LETTER FROM INDIA.

A RATHER remarkable Report upon Taxation has recently been published by the Government of Bombay. For the eight years ending 1886 a License Tax upon Trades had been levied—professions and Government servants being exempt—the maximum which any one party or firm had to pay was £20 and the minimum £1. Below I give the total amounts which had been levied for the years 1878, 1881, and 1885—

Year.	Country.	Bombay City.	Total.
1878	£93,000	£35,000	£128,000
1881	87,000	39,000	126,000
1885	81,000	42,000	123,000

It will be seen that the collections from the country districts steadily declined; those in Bombay just as steadily rose; while the total collections for town and districts uniformly decreased. The complete list shows for each year a uniform progression downwards and upwards in such respective column. As the population of the Presidency is less than 20 millions, the tax amounts to an average all over of one penny per head. It shows that the cultivators and those dependent upon them are becoming impoverished, that the urban population (three-fourths of a million), consisting of merchants and the whole class of middlemen, are getting richer, but that the town and country together are not improving in material prosperity under the agis of British rule.

In 1886 an income-tax of 2½ per cent. was imposed by the then Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph Churchill, to help to make good the deficit caused by the frantic policy of preparing to fight Russia by means of frontier railways in the mountains of Beluchistan and Afghanistan. This income-tax is levied upon trades, professions, and government officials, all incomes below £50 per annum being exempt. This tax produced in the Bombay Presidency £300,000 only, equivalent to an average tax per head of the population of 3½d. The laws upon which our civilisation is based favour the accumulation of money by the rich, who by means of usury in its many ramifications make the poor their slaves. The course of British government in India is no exception to this rule. The above Government report most instructively shows that in the country districts the money-lenders—i.e., those who live by lending money to the cultivators to pay the Government land-rent, or by lending them grain for seed and sustenance—pay more than one-half the income-tax of the country, the proportion varying from three-fourths as the maximum to one-third as the minimum in thirteen principal collectorates. The average tax paid by the money-lender in the country is £2, 10s., while in Bombay it is double this amount. These figures will greatly tend to confirm the opinion, so strongly urged by Mr. Hyndman, that India is becoming the poorer under British rule.

You may perhaps remember Sir Lepel Griffin, who last year stumped England as a parliamentary candidate of the Jingo class, and greatly offended Americans by the irreverent remarks he expressed upon the types of civilisation rampant in the States. As a sign of the times, it is worth while to quote some portions of the speech he recently made at the investiture by one of the Indian Jubilee princelings of the insignia of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire.

"The Rajah is rich, but after all, admiration for wealth, apart from its power to do good, is the attribute of slaves. The G.C.S.I. is granted, like the Garter in England, for reasons altogether apart from merit or virtue. Its insignia may be worn upon the breast of an illustrious prince or by a useless debauchee and tyrant. The old order changes, yielding place to the new. The idea of Divine Right, repudiated by the sentiment of civilised Europe, has taken refuge with barbarism in Russia and in the native states of Asia; but the time is coming when it will have to leave these last strongholds. The past history of the world has belonged to princes and slavery; the future is for the people and for freedom. The time will come when the enlightened judgment of humanity will no longer tolerate the idle, cruel, and sensual prince who looks upon his people as objects of plunder, and neglects every obligation which he should fulfil. In the new world which is coming, there will be no place for rulers such as these, who will disappear before advancing civilisation as wolves and tigers retire from the cultivated plains to the jungle. The only princes whom the conscience of the world will tolerate are those who rule on principles of enlightened virtue, and whose security will be found in the good will of the people."

The reading of this speech fairly took away my breath; it was so

unexpected, and, considering the quarter from which it emanated, so good. It shows that the principles of Socialism are spreading fast, when one so highly placed would give utterance to such ultra-Radical doctrines. "Princes and slavery are to go; the future is for the people and freedom." My thoughts immediately went home; I compared Warren to a tiger, and the upholders of law and order in Ireland to wolves. It is time you drove them into the jungle for good and all.
Bombay, March 16th. D. GOSTLING.

Note.—The above figures are given in pounds sterling for the convenience of English readers. The currency of the country is in rupees. These used to be worth 2s each, and are calculated at that rate in the above table, but their current value is now only 1s. 4d., consequent upon the action of the goldbugs of Europe.

REVOLUTIONARY CALENDAR.

WEEK ENDING APRIL 21, 1888.

15	Sun.	1836. George Engel born. 1881. Judicial murder of A. F. Jellia- boff, S. L. Perofskaja, W. Kibalchich, T. Mikhayloff, and N. Rissakoff.
16	Mon.	1790. Benj. Franklin died. 1866. Karakazoff's attempt upon Alexander III. 1871. Hyde Park Demonstration of Fra- ternity with Commune.
17	Tues.	1884. Bradlaugh and Hyndman debate. 1885. Colombian murder of rebels.
18	Wed.	1775. American War of Independence began.
19	Thur.	1772. Ricardo born. 1775. Battle of Lexington. 1868. Fenian trials. 1882. Charles Darwin died.
20	Fri.	1653. Cromwell dissolved "Rump" Parliament.
21	Sat.	1802. Louis Kossuth born. 1868. O'Farrell hung for attempt on Duke of Edinbro'. 1874. Wm. Carpenter died.

Benjamin Franklin.—Born January 17, 1706; died April 17, 1790; greatest of tramp printers, was a typical Yankee, for all that his father was an Englishman of later date than the great Puritan exodus, for his mother was of the most energetic New England stock. Although born in Boston, Franklin, like every genuine Yankee, considered the world his country and acted up to this idea. Like every true-bred Yankee also, Franklin was a thorough-paced Anarchist, devoting his whole life to breaking the fetters, political, social, and mental, which weigh down ignorant humanity. His method, however, was one of careful policy and gentle satire, his great defect being a woeful lack of the kind of courage which inspires the daring pioneer and the unfaltering martyr. This defect sometimes induced him to give cowardly advice to bolder reformers, as his well-known counsel to Tom Paine (to suppress 'The Age of Reason') is an instance. Still it takes many sorts of people to move the world as well as to fill it, and no just critic can deny Franklin great praise as a true friend of humanity. The great lesson of his life is the dignity of productive labour. This has nothing to do with the present all-glorified opportunities of the humblest citizen (if only cunning rogue enough) to rise to the highest station through our cheating and thieving commercial system. Franklin was from first to last an almost god-like mechanic. The penniless printer of Philadelphia was courted as a conqueror at Versailles by the most gorgeous and proudest feudal Court the world has ever known, not because he was a successful stock-gambler or pork-factor, but because he had proved his superiority by giving much to mankind instead of taking much from them. He who had sought to chain the lightnings had used the lightning flashes of his own wit to snap the manacles of millions of his fellows. It is the fashion to decry Franklin as "worldly wise." We can well leave his lack of ethereal thoughts to the gospel-brokers. Humanitarians will be little apt to blame him for being only human. Carpers may decry him for not being a god; the kindly will like him the more for being only a man.—L. W.

Bradlaugh and Hyndman Debate.—At St. James's Hall, Piccadilly, Professor E. S. Beesly in the chair, a debate between Mr. Charles Bradlaugh and Mr. H. M. Hyndman. One of the most debatable matters which could possibly be debated would be, "Do Debates ever Settle the Debated Topic?" There are very few if any debates on record where a debater has been converted to his opponent's views. During the Corn Law agitation, Cobden and Hume and others debated in various parts of the country, but the result was sometimes breaking up the meeting with a row, sometimes a brass band appeared, and sometimes the adjournment to another night in an adjoining parish, when the corn duty champion would fail to turn up. A weapon to be very carefully called into use is the debate; a man may have the very best of cases to present to judge and jury, and yet by special and peculiar advantages possessed by the opposing counsel, make a very bad show. It is well known that some of the clearest thinkers and writers have been exceedingly bad speakers, and to work out a lucid connected argument at length and in detail is an impossibility to many a good logician. In all that goes to make a platform debater, Charles Bradlaugh has few equals to-day. Voice, clear and powerful enough to command even a mass such as St. James's Hall was crammed with; argument, in the main well planned out, but always with room to allow rough incidental hits over or under his adversary's guard, and not above using a sort of platform boomerang with which to dent a knock on the back of the head when he could break through his opponent's guard. It would be exceedingly interesting to know if any person in the vast crowd present was to any great extent changed in opinions by the speeches of the two debaters, certainly they were very little changed; the feelings of the meeting ran very high, and more than once there seemed danger of a storm. The Socialist was much handicapped, but made a gallant fight, and whether he or the Individualist was the most satisfied, and which of the two followings was most satisfied, is quite impossible to decide; there is this little fact which may be thought worth consideration, the Individualist seemed more than once to be very ill-tempered, which could not be said of the Socialist.—T. S.

Colombian Rebels.—The agreeable freedom from conventional restraints enjoyed by the Colombian authorities, enabled them to put in force an expedient that "I Warren" as yet finds beyond his reach. Selecting one hundred of the most conspicuous rebel prisoners, they took them on a steamer out into the bay flung them overboard and left them to drown.—S.

Fenian Trials.—Wm. and Timothy Desmond, Nicholas English, John O'Keefe, Michael Barrett, and Ann Justice, tried on April 20th at Old Bailey for murder of a woman named Hodgkinson, killed by the Clerkenwell explosion. Barrett was the only one found guilty, and he was sentenced to death. Hung on the 26th of May.—S.