

THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

OUR comrades of the *Sozial Demokrat* have received notice of expulsion from their asylum at Zurich, and will have to leave Switzerland. This attack on freedom by a bourgeois Republic is the sort of thing one expects in these days, but it may be ominous of something special in the welter of European politics, an indication that the huge tyranny of the German Empire is looking on a war as sensibly drawing near, and is putting its house in order, by a further attempt, which will certainly be as futile as the rest to stamp out the growing flame of Socialism.

Just as we are going to press we have received an interesting letter from a comrade on this subject, recounting the shabby pretexes of the Swiss Federal Government for this tyrannical act. Of course, as our comrade states, the Swiss Government is acting under pressure from the German Executive, and the *immediate* cause of the "energy" of the latter is revenge on the *Sozial Demokrat* for the defeat sustained by Bismark and Co. in the Reichstag, when the attempt was made to strengthen the laws against the Socialists; which to any other Government or potentate, ancient or modern, would seem strong enough as they are. In fact, this expulsion of our comrades is just a part of that forward move in repression.

We may well wonder what Balfour and his mates believe in their hearts will be the end of their Coercion adventure in Ireland, or to what lengths they are prepared to carry it. They must, at least, have a deep faith in the want of generosity of the English bourgeois, and the impossibility of shaming him into anything like manliness, or they would at any rate have made haste to alter the sentence of additional imprisonment passed on Mr. Blane for having the hardihood to appeal against his conviction. Such conduct is worthy of an ill-tempered pedagogue, and no one but a man who considers himself entirely irresponsible to anything but his own indigestion, would dare to act in such a manner outside the ranks of the English or American fool, the quintessence of all stupidity past or present.

Yet it is probable that the Balfourian snobs think that something will come about from the imprisonment of Blane and McFadden and the onslaught at Ennis, and other deeds of a like nature. What is the something which they hope for? Surely that they may at last irritate the Irish into some overt act of rebellion, so that Coercion and its dirty tricks may be justified in the eyes of British respectability. Really if this is so, and all the recent events point towards it, the game hardly seems worth the candle to a calm looker on. For what will Balfour do next—and next—and next? Of course he has not troubled his head about that.

As to Mr. Blane, however, perhaps the Irish authorities may know what they are about, and have laid hands on the right person. Some of us will remember our introduction to him at the tea whereat Graham and Burns were welcomed, and the speech he made on that occasion, in which he spoke like a Socialist and a thoroughly good fellow. No doubt he is a dangerous man, and the opportunity of keeping him under lock and key a few months longer is not lightly to be foregone. Meantime, after what we saw of him on that occasion, our sympathy with him must be of the strongest character.

The meeting summoned by the Metropolitan Radical Federation to consider the Trafalgar Square business will, at any rate, have one good effect, that no Radicals worthy of the name can look with anything but contempt on their "Liberal" representatives in London. Mr. Foote's defence of them in the letter which he wrote to the *Star* is as lame as anything could be; and the round-robin written to the meeting fully deserved the shouts of laughter with which it was greeted. Men who will snatch at such an excuse as Mr. Saunder's civil case will do anything in the way of excusing themselves. If Mr. Saunders gains his case he does not establish the right of meeting in the Square, but only settles under what quibble it is most convenient to forbid meeting. If he loses it, affairs are just in the same position as they are now.

We need not doubt that there is plenty of law to prevent us meet-

ing in the Square; or, indeed, anywhere else in the open-air. For the matter of that a very little ingenuity on the part of lawyers and judges would enable a government to forbid us meeting *indoors* either unless we say there what pleases our masters. There is still, for instance, an unrepealed law which forbids Sunday meetings in places unlicensed for public worship under penalties heavy enough "to make your flesh creep"; and it would be awkward, not to say impossible, for Socialist branches or Radical clubs to get their lecture-rooms licensed as chapels. We may be sure that neither this government nor any other will ever be seriously embarrassed by the laws. What ever is convenient for them to do in the way of keeping the people down they will do if the people lets them—if they dare.

The rights of property take shapes as curious and shifting as the wizard in the old tale. Here is a "common-sense" public horrified at Socialist propositions to meddle with the sacred thing, and invoking the eighth commandment of a tribe which, I think, in those days hardly held the same views about property as the modern bourgeois does. Here is the House of Commons, the judges, the lawyers, the magistrates, the police, the army and the navy all engaged in the holy task of safeguarding property, and yet the whole of this magnificent moral sense, the whole of this irresistible machinery, quite capable of spending a hundred pounds in mending sixpence beautifully, cannot get back for poor Mary Ryan *her* property, which has been "conveyed" from her by the police; though a magistrate (a not very tender conscientious species) gave her an order for it, the judges of a superior court found they were not strong enough to let her have it; and so hopeless is her case that questions have been asked about it in the House of Commons! Her sole remedy now is to bring an action against the police. What a night-mare of stupidity and injustice!

It is puzzling to some brains why Mr. Peters should have £300 as a result of Mr. Bradlaugh's assertion about Lord Salisbury's cheque. It is doubtful if the conundrum is worth much trouble to solve; since it is clear enough that the jury awarded that sum to him to avenge Lord Salisbury on Mr. Bradlaugh. I suppose precedent forbade their recommending from the box that Mr. Peters should offer halves to the Most Noble; but it may be hoped that Mr. Peters will see his way to making the marquis a handsome present out of his windfall: all the more as his lordship belongs to the necessitous class whom Mr. Peters supports politically—the landlords of Great Britain and Ireland. If that could be done, it would be a case of "all's well that ends well": Mr. Bradlaugh's fine paid by M.P.'s who can afford it; Mr. Peters happy; and Lord Salisbury content. W. M.

Events are moving in Roumania with such rapidity that the peasant revolt there will have been crushed, or a revolution carried out, before this number is in the hands of its readers. When the rising took place it was at first described as a mere local outbreak fomented by Russian money; but the flame spread, and village after village rose upon its oppressor, and proprietors had to fly for their lives from estate after estate. Large towns were taken, pitched battles fought, granaries pillaged, and extortionate officials tried and sentenced with rough justice. Day after day it was stated that the rising had subsided, and then that it had broken out again, and then that the territorial troops had fraternised with the people and fired on the regulars who were sent against them.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Russian money, or any other outside stimulus, has little to do in the affair; the movement is Socialist, says the *Pall Mall*, and there is no doubt that Socialists have something to do with it. But the reality of it is nothing more than a huge hunger-revolt—and nothing less. Meanwhile there seems to be no thought on the part of the rulers of Roumania of striking at the root of the evil, and there is most certainly none on the part of their outside advisers. The old "remedy" of repression is to be tried; "order" must be "restored" before anything is done; etc., etc.

But how such wicked proceedings as those of the Roumanians must be looked on with horror by the dear good Englishman, who when hit in the face turns round to be kicked, and sings psalms of loyalty and law'n'-order while he is being plundered! S.

The attitude of the Irish Party at the Mid-Lanark election is very unsatisfactory. They have advised the electors to go against the Labour candidate. This is a shabby return for the self-sacrifice of those English working-men who have gone to Ireland and suffered imprisonment for the Home Rule cause; and the lesson will not be lost on the thousands of workmen who have subscribed their pence for the same cause. The Irish party have talked a lot about their trust in the English democracy, and to a large extent they have gained its sympathy; their action in Mid-Lanark is not calculated in any way to retain it. We hope the election will show them that they cannot afford to insult the Labour party in this way.

F. H.

A NEEDED TALISMAN.

SIR,—Since the beginning of the present year I have passed through a series of remarkable events. To explain the cause of these events I must trouble you with a short account of my family history. In the days when the philosopher's stone was so eagerly sought after, my ancestors devoted their time and their estates—which latter were considerable—to the search. It is probable they were unsuccessful, as the only heirloom, for several generations, has been a small wooden box. When I received it about twenty years ago from my father the box was carefully sealed up, and bore upon it the directions that it was to be opened by the head of the family of Cliffords when the last three numerals in the date of the year were identical, or, as the inscription put it, when the "trinity of the century" arrived.

When I opened the box I found it contained a small black stone about the size and shape of an egg, and a bundle of manuscripts, many of which I am unable to read. These papers describe the wonderful effects this stone has produced when used by my ancestors in previous centuries. They also contain the "charm" or formula which is necessary to repeat before any effect is produced. On pronouncing this charm all present are unconsciously forced by it to speak the truth. Those who have not cultivated this virtue speak out boldly perhaps for the first time in their lives, while they smile on in happy ignorance, thinking they are still imposing their falsehoods upon us.

I have taken the following reports down in shorthand, but I may in transcribing have made some mistakes. If you think that probable, you are at liberty to alter; only pray do it carefully, as a most awful curse rests upon the person who changes "one jot or tittle" unnecessarily. Should they be printed (correctly) I intend to put your paper in the box at the end of the year (which will be "absolutely the last day" on which the charm will have its proper effect). I shall thus confer a boon on my successor in the year 1999; for your printed matter will be much more readable than the manuscripts I have had handed down to me. I hope therefore for his sake you will have the kindness to insert them.

C. CLIFFORD.

SCENE—POLICE COURT.

John Bull, whose face was severely cut, covered with blood, and very much swollen, was charged with attempting to rescue a prisoner from the custody of the police, and further with assaulting constable Jones, 441 H, while in the execution of his duty.

The officer stated that just before seven o'clock the previous evening he was in Trafalgar Square, in company with constable Robinson, when he saw a man named C. Fervent (now in custody) causing an obstruction. Witness told him to "move on," and on his refusal took him into custody, when the prisoner, rushing up, struck him on the head and attempted to take the man Fervent from him by force. Thereupon the witness, leaving Fervent to the care of constable Robinson, proceeded to arrest the prisoner, which he succeeded in doing, after a very severe struggle, but not before witness had received some very hard treatment at the hand of prisoner.

The magistrate said the man was evidently a desperate character, and the constable was to be praised for his courageous conduct in arresting the prisoner.

I thought it was about time we heard the truth, so I muttered over the charm.

P. C. Robinson, 301 H, was then called, and deposed that on the previous evening he had assisted the last witness in arresting C. Fervent, and they were endeavouring to knock the opposition out of him when the prisoner came up and called them "cowards," "brutes," etc. He said he would attend the court and give evidence for Fervent. Upon this, leaving Fervent to the care of witness, Jones sprang upon the prisoner, and so effectually batoned him with his truncheon, that he was soon reduced to an almost senseless condition.

While giving his evidence, P. C. 301 H looked quite happy, as though perfectly certain of promotion. But as he advanced in his evidence, the black looks of the magistrate and the relieved look which stole over the prisoner's face, made him feel very uneasy, although unable to account for these peculiar manifestations.

The magistrate then said that the evidence of the last witness clearly proved that the police had tried to incriminate the prisoner by false evidence. It was perfectly evident that the first witness had committed deliberate perjury. It was past his comprehension why constable Robinson had not supported his fellow policeman. However, in spite of this evidence, directly supporting the prisoner's statement, he must sentence him to three months' hard labour. Prisoner was then removed, looking considerably astonished.

It will be observed that the stone does not seem to force the person to act rightly (witness the sentence). Perhaps it is some fault of the charm. I intend to read the papers found in the box, and may find instruction there.

Believing that the Adulteration Act did not fully prevent fraudulent adulteration, I went the other day into a grocer's shop, kept by a Mr.

Grits. On entering the shop, observing that a lady was being attended to by an assistant, I repeated the charm in an undertone, when the following conversation ensued:

Lady Customer. Have you any butter which you can recommend?

Assistant. Well, madam, this article labelled "pure butter" is a combination of cart-grease, oil fat and various other ingredients, extracted from all manner of filth and rub—

Mr. Grits (who has heard the latter part of this description with horror). Here, James, just see to this; I will serve that lady.—Very sorry, madam, that my young man should have told you what he did. You see, this is margarine, though we label it "pure butter." We are able to get so much more profit out of it than we can out of the genuine article. Can I supply you with any of it?

L. C. No, thank you; I think I will get my butter elsewhere. (Exit.)

Then Mr. Grits and James indulged in mutual recriminations, during which I thought it advisable to take my departure, and postpone my enquiries until a more favourable opportunity presented itself.

You will see that Mr. Grits and James had both unwittingly displayed that article in its true light. My further experience shall be sent anon.

C. C.

THE BLARSTED FURRINERS.

THE growth of Socialism and the gradual breaking up of the competitive system, evidenced by masses of poverty-stricken unemployed, is calling into light some curious men with curious ideas as to how Society based upon robbery can be saved, and its human waste and social wreckage bestowed away from sight.

These would-be saviours of Society plus a slight percentage on salvage, are in short a literary police, as useful to the propertied classes as is Scotland Yard. Their work is to start discussions in press and on platform upon various panaceas for admitted social grievances. Trotting out their own pet hobbies, which generally ends in their being called before a Committee of M.P.'s or outside rogues and faddists, to elaborate their brutal shallow schemes of emigration and repression, and their own installation in some official or semi-official position, where of course they discharge their duties without any connection with filthy lucre, but only to satisfy that yearning love for their fellows, especially landlords, which wells eternally in their virtuous hearts.

Having been met and foiled at every turn by the Socialists until it is not possible to hold a successful open meeting in favour of emigration, they are now trying their hand on the poor foreign immigrant. They seek the support of the propertied classes on one hand by asserting that revolutionary Socialism is due to foreign immigration, and of the worker on the other that his labour is badly remunerated on the same account. Thus two antagonistic forces are used as pawns in a reactionary game, which means the total obliteration of the right of asylum or what is left of it after Most's imprisonment in 1881. Conspicuous in urging restrictions on foreign labourers, stands Mr. Arnold White, of emigrationist fame, who thinks a Jew-hunt possible in the East End, and is fearful lest, as he told a Government official lately, the patience of certain Irish cockneys should be exhausted and they take the matter into their own hands.

Whether the convenient Irish cockney is kept in stock and fed like a writer of the three-deckers in the *Daily Telegraph* is supposed to be, on rum and beef, deponent sayeth not. Anyway, Mr. Arnold White being pre-eminently a religious man will, I think, admit that seeing how slack the emigration business has become the foreign pauper arrives as a god-send, and should be treated with gratitude accordingly.

With old prejudices breaking down amongst the really cultured few, and international congresses and societies abounding to deal with all matters pertaining to science and literature, in presence of international leagues and syndicates of exploiters, who rob without caring two straws about the locale or nationality of their prey, men of the "Stöcker" stamp would have no audience were it not for what Emerson styled the "Man in the Street." He lends a ready ear to the wiles of those who wish to distract the attention of the workers from the real causes of their poverty. "We keep German Princes a lot, sir, whilst the poor man with hunger may rot, sir," sings he.

And the foreign refugee fleeing from the conscription of Continental despotisms or political persecution, shares in the anathema which the "Man in the Street" hurls at those "blooming Germans," who as serenities and royalties enable the grateful English public of snobs to preserve the Protestant succession as decreed on high. The "Man in the Street" is not a thinking man, at all events not on a large scale, he lets others think and write for him, and his favourite journal thinks to strengthen its attacks on monarchy by abuse directed against the whole German race, worker and prince alike, for the remote reason that when the English wanted a fresh master they had a brand new foreign one in the person of George I.

Now German Hans and English Jack as workers have had as little to do with the diplomatic and dynastic arrangements, which result in Germans occupying the English throne, as presumably the King of the Cannibal Islands has. But seeing that the nationality and not the status of royalty is objected to, there is nothing more likely than if that *rara avis*, a pure Englishman, could be found, and he could be prevailed upon to accept the English Crown, that the anti-royalist journal of to-day might become the Court journal of the future, as its chief grievance and *raison d'être* for present attitude would be removed.