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NOTES ON NEWS.

Mr. Ritchie's Local Government Bill is accepted everywhere as a progressive measure, and surprise is often expressed that such a measure should come from a Tory government. It is hardly worth while for us to go into its details, especially since it is more than possible that, whatever Mr. Ritchie's intentions may be, the Government generally does not intend that it shall pass intact. Meanwhile the putting forward by the Tories of a measure which would have been thought bold by the Liberals, points to that confusion of parties amongst our governing classes which is the sure forerunner of the emergence of the great popular party—Socialism, as the only real opposition to the sham Toryism and sham Liberalism that are now really but one party, the Obstructionists.

It must also be said that since undoubtedly this Bill is intended as a dishing measure and a bid for the popular vote at the next election, this betokens that the feeling for decentralisation, which has made the present form of agitation for Home Rule possible, is on the increase. It was understood by the Tories to be a certain bait, which it would not have been if the feeling in favour of decentralisation were not strong. Doubtless they also think it a *safe* measure; let us hope that it will turn out not to be quite so safe, and that it will be used for other purposes than electioneering.

Great news! An amnesty proclaimed in Berlin as the first-fruits of the new Kaiser's accession. "It chiefly applies to political offences," says the press; "but is not extended to persons sentenced under the Socialist Laws, nor to those imprisoned for high treason." To whom is it extended then in the name of patience? and how many first-class carriages would the non-Socialist political offenders fill? The Socialists, who are no doubt not at all surprised at this act of mercy, must feel themselves much honoured by the exception. Well, well! so ends any hope that may have been founded on the Liberal Kaiser—poor devil!

The consistent supporter of coercion in England, the *Daily News*, in reviewing the prospects for the hatching of that bad egg, the Liberal Party, says that "when Parliament met on the 9th February the Liberal cause had been seriously compromised by the follies of Trafalgar Square." This is an Easter Monday paragraph, and no doubt in such holiday times the production of a paper has to depend on at least its *second-rate* writers, and I think we may fairly suppose that the writer in question has as good a right to give us his views about folly as a blind man has about blindness, or a lame man about lameness.

Yet one must agree with the words of our coercionist booby, if not with his meaning. Balaam's ass has spoken, and spoken truth too; the Liberal cause has been seriously compromised by the follies of Trafalgar Square. Such a folly as that committed by Mr. Gladstone and his followers has rarely been met with, when they fell into the Tory trap by not resisting coercion in England while they were going about bawling over the horrors of coercion in Ireland. Trafalgar Square has been the touch-stone of their genuineness, and has found them out, and they now stand proclaimed as mere politicians and humbugs, who have taken up the Irish question because Mr. Parnell forced their hand by making his party vote against them in 1885. They will find out their mistake at the next election and bitterly regret "The Follies of Trafalgar Square," as given for the first time by the G. O. M. and his world-renowned company.

W. M.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE FINANCIAL ARISTOCRACY.

THE lords of usury rule supreme throughout the world. They rule supreme in the councils of the nations, and hold in bondage the wealth-producing millions. They direct and control the press of the world, and the pulpit is everywhere their humble servant. Schomburg tells us that in the king are centred all the riches, and power, and wisdom of the nation, and we are assured that the gods of finance are the worlds benefactors, without whose beneficent presence the toiling millions would perish.

We have seen some little of the doings of the financial aristocracy in connection with the so-called English national debt, and the claim they have on the labour of the English workers. But their power is becoming equally great in all the States of Europe; whatever the form of government, the usurer is there. He is a kind of omnipresent vampire—he is here, he is there, he is everywhere—a ubiquitous monster living on the vitals of the people.

If we turn to France we find the public debt increased from £221,000,000 in 1852 to £911,000,000 in 1882, with an annual charge of over £39,000,000. This was the outcome of the Imperialism of Napoleon and the Franco-German war. What a rich field here for the gods of finance! We must remember, too, that France is far less rich than England, the annual income being nearly £10 per head less in France than in England. If we turn to Germany, a still poorer country, its public debt rose from £82,000,000 in 1852 to £271,000,000 in 1882, the annual income of Germany being only about half what it is in England per head of her population, viz., £18 7s. 0d. per head to £35 2s. 6d. in the United Kingdom. If we turn to Austria-Hungary, the case is even worse. In the thirty years ending 1882, her debt rose from £118,000,000 to £458,000,000, with an annual charge of over £20,000,000. And in Austria-Hungary the national income is more than £2 per head less than in Germany. If we go to Italy the case is worse still. There, with a national income of only £12 per head per annum, her debt has gone up from £68,000,000 in 1852 to £353,000,000 in 1882. But if we go to the icy regions of St. Petersburg, the case is even worse. There we find the debt rose from £95,000,000 in 1852 to £553,000,000 in 1882; and the national annual income of Russia is only equal to £9 9s. per head of the population. And the debts of all these States are increasing from year to year, and the taxation of the several States increases in the same proportion.

We have heard a great deal of late of the loss the world has sustained by the death of the old Imperial hypocrite of Germany. We have been told of the glories of his reign, and its immense benefits to the whole of Europe. But from the date of his accession to the throne of Prussia to 1887, the revenues of the European States had been raised from £390,000,000 to £773,000,000, while the public debts of these States had increased from £2,626,000,000 to £4,862,000,000. The result of the warlike policy he at once inaugurated and the imperial spirit of jingoism he and his man of blood and iron created, is that Europe to-day is one vast military camp, the peace establishments having over four millions of men under arms, and in case of a general war nearly seventeen millions of men would be placed under arms. What a commentary on the glorious reign of the late "peace-loving" Emperor!

But we have to look at the gods of finance in other directions as well as in connection with the public debts of the European States. If we go to the United States of America the same system prevails. There the Government borrowed one thousand three hundred million dollars. Up to 1880 it paid in interest two thousand seven hundred and eighty million dollars, in principal one thousand two hundred millions, and then owed one thousand eight hundred millions. In the large sums she borrowed from European capitalists she not only gave them credit for £100 for every £40 received, but agreed to pay them in a gold currency. Since 1880 more than 800,000,000 dollars more have been paid as principal and interest. It is true the Government has reduced the debt from 2,844,000,000 dollars to about a third, but the enormous sums paid and that will be paid before the whole debt is cleared off is a disgrace alike to the Government and people where manhood suffrage exists.

Let us see these gold kings in the capacity of bankers, and the powers they possess to plunder the people.

The Bank of England so called, has the power to issue £16,200,000 in notes without an ounce of gold as security. The shareholders are