

# THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

## NOTES ON NEWS.

The Liberals had a grand meeting at the Memorial Hall the other evening, to condemn the coercion and imprisonment proceedings of the Government in Ireland. This is well enough, and everyone who thinks freedom a matter worth considering must agree with their resolution against the stupid bourgeois tyrants who have set themselves the task of conquering a determined people by a kind of persecution, which proves conclusively that they themselves at home are the masters of a country nowise free. But there are one or two points to be considered before we can let our Liberals blow their trumpet too loudly. These very same men, when *they* were opposed by the Irish people, acted much in the same way as those whom they now condemn, and would do so again if occasion served. Far greater applause greeted the news of the imprisonment of Mr. Parnell and his colleagues at the hands of Mr. Gladstone than is now uttered at an anti-coercion Liberal meeting.

The truth is, once more, that the Liberal leaders only use this "imprisonment for political offences" as a stalking-horse for getting a shot at the official benches, and the ordinary Liberal follows his leader blindly and hilloas when he is told. This has been often enough said, but it is necessary to remember it in order to calm one's amazement at the shamelessness of Liberal politicians in holding a meeting about the prisoners of liberty and not saying one word about those who had suffered close to their own doors. So it is! Gladstone has given his fiat that nothing is to be said about Trafalgar Square, and all his following do his bidding with a tameness that has no parallel in the animal world; and poor Harrison must rot in prison and have his life worn out month after month, and no notice taken of him because his case doesn't come within the scope of "practical politics."

W. M.

One of the lessons of the Canonbury murder seems to be that the morally-miraculous police in being made an efficient instrument of coercion has lost proportionately in the power of preventing or detecting crime. Men whose training has been intended to fit them for the suppression of public meetings or the bludgeoning of passers-by, are necessarily not the best to look after the lives and limbs of unoffending citizens; the military drill and dependence on command take out all individual initiative and fertility of resource. Besides, if so much effort is expended on Trafalgar Square and Socialist meetings, it is evident that it must be withdrawn from somewhere else.

A few days after the Canonbury affair came one in Holborn, where a man was knocked down, had his leg broken and his watch stolen, and the men got off safe with their plunder. But, after all, I Warren, is not intended for anything else but what he is, the suppressor of the people. Not only in his neglect of the rudiments of public safety, but in his consistent refusal to interfere with disorderly houses and the like, he has always shown an utter disregard of anything but the comfort and pleasure of the "upper" classes.

I Warren, and the Government were neatly stopped by Mr. Firth in their endeavour to work the blackmailing cases as that of Endacott was worked; that is, to get up a "prosecution" with a pre-arranged programme, and a wind-up of whitewash. Mr. Firth refused all evidence without a *public* enquiry was granted into the whole system; the Government was "afraid to face the music," and the enquiry was burked.

An incidental side-light is thrown on the Government and its supporters by the fact that Mr. Maple, M.P., presented himself at the Sweating Committee when a man who had worked for him was about to give evidence against him, remaining while the witness was giving his evidence, plainly for the purpose of intimidation. That this man Maple should do such a thing will cause no surprise, but it certainly does a little surprise one that the Committee and the Government alike are unable or unwilling to protect witnesses who are called on for evidence.

At the same committee, Lord Thring asked one of the witnesses if he believed that "men who were well fed were killed by hard work." Whereon the *Pall Mall* expostulates: "Why the point of the whole inquiry is that it is barely possible for the sweaters' victims to keep flesh and bones together on the starvation wages. Why did he not ask the witness if good dinners were matters of every-day occurrence in

the working dens? If meat was often served on the tables of the workpeople? If they had tables to serve it upon? Bread and tea, with a stray bloater on high days and holidays, we should say, form the menu which is most familiar. There are other little matters which the noble lord seems to ignore, such as fresh air, rest and sleep. Of course recreation is unknown."

But there is "hope for the weary"! A large number of M.P.'s on both sides of the House have organised themselves to work for "Legislative Social Reform." They have long been, so they say, dissatisfied with the apathy of Parliament on social questions, and they are now going to try and alter it. High hopes are being built on this foundation, slender enough though it seems to us, especially as the components of the organisation include landlords, capitalists and privileged people galore. Can the leopard change his spots, the lion lie down with the lamb *not* inside him, or the social parasite refrain from performing his "due function" of feeding on the people? S.

## THE HISTORY OF A SWEATER.

### HIS DEVELOPMENT.

My name is Myer Wilchinski. I came from the city of Kohl, near Carlsh, Russian Poland. My father occupied a good social position, as he was a wealthy carman and contractor, besides owning several omnibuses which ran between our city and Carlsh. At the age of eighteen, I and others were called on by the authorities for the conscription. My father spent many roubles in trying to get me off, but it was only for a time, and I had to join the army of the Czar a year later. We were all sent to Tomazow, and then I began to feel my position most acutely. I, who had had such a happy, comfortable life, with all the pleasures that my father's wealth could procure, to have to mix up, by day and by night, with such specimens of humanity as the abominable conditions of Russia alone can produce. When I considered that for eighteen years I should have to serve, and have to fight for, so rotten and so cruel a despotism, it was maddening to think of. And how well I remembered our (Polish) people telling the stories of how their dear native land was barbarously torn from them, and with what cruelty they and their wives and children were treated by the invaders, and the right to speak their own language denied them, under heavy pains and penalties. To think that I should have to serve such brutal scoundrels made me watch for the opportunity to desert and escape from such a holy Christian country. (Can you blame me, reader?)

To escape was a comparatively easy task, as I had money, and was generally liked because of that; and so corrupt is Russian officialism that it is a byword with the people that you can buy a policeman or sentry for a salt herring or a drop of schnapps (spirituous liquor) and their superior for a silver rouble. One night I determined to make the attempt. To change my clothes and bribe the sentry was a very easy matter, to bribe another on the outside also not a risky job. Once on the road, to get a lift from a kindly waggoner, and tell him my tale, got me a long ride and a little rest. I rewarded him, to his entire satisfaction, as he understood my motives and sympathised with me. We soon reached a part of the road where a small wood was all that was between me and the granitz (frontier). I here parted company with my good friend, who, after warning me to be very cautious, cracked his whip and went. I had really to be very careful, as it was getting daylight and the sentries were looking to be relieved; but a few more small bits of silver did the trick, and at last I was off Russian territory.

I felt for my passport (which my father had manufactured for me), and made my way to the resident official, but I had a difficult task to speak German without the Jewish accent, so I determined to speak as little as possible, and tied my face round with my handkerchief, as if I had faceache. By the aid of a bottle of good rum, I soon was on good terms with the resident official, and we drank each other's health several times. I then got my passport signed, which completed all that was necessary to take me all through Germany to Hamburg. There I was uncertain what to do next, but determined on placing water between us, I took the boat for Hull, remembering that England was the land of the "free," where Jews enjoyed the same privileges as others; where there were Jew members of Parliament and a Jew prime minister.