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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

THE rich are getting so extremely kind to the poor, that, if they don't take care, they (the rich) will expend all their time in performing these kindnesses, and will have no time left for performing the absolutely necessary duty of finding means of wasting the wealth which they have sweated from the poor; and a pretty mess we shall be in then! For since the "poor" are only employed by the sweating process, and depend for their subsistence on the sweaters, if the sweaters don't sweat we shall be all undone together—unless the workers have come to the conclusion that they will employ themselves for their own benefit.

Here is a queer example of this rash philanthropy, this killing people with kindness. The National Home Reading Circles Union, which resolved the other day "that it was advisable to organise in a large and effective manner a plan by which to direct and encourage home-reading among all classes of the people," etc., etc.

"All classes." Yes, but they mean one class. You bet they won't come to me—I wish they would. At the meeting in question the stream of twaddle flowed on very steadily. Said the Bishop of London: "It would not be difficult to make home-reading a very living thing, though not quite so powerful as the voice of the teacher." "The voice of the teacher," that means the Bishop, I suppose; "the voice of the teacher" is good, very good.

The Venerable Archdeacon Farrar thought, "That it would do much to counteract the flood of wicked, malicious, and frivolous literature with which England was inundated." I say, which of the three are we of the *Commonweal*? Not "frivolous," I think; "wicked and malicious," I fear. O parson, parson, what tall words you use; but taller follow. "They might find in them (books) fruits which are fruits of Nepenthé, and flowers that are flowers of Amaranthe." Yes, only I fear that the cases are not uncommon where beefsteak and porter would be more welcome than Nepenthé and Amaranthe; nay, would enable us to find those "articles" in our books—if we have any.

In short, what the devil is it all about? Are there not books enough written year by year in this country drowned in "culture"? Are they not cheap enough, as cheap as worthless paper and scab labour can make them? What is needed, O benevolent rich gentlemen, to further "home-reading"? I think you know, though you don't choose to confess it. Leisure, freedom from anxiety about livelihood, pleasant roomy clean dwellings, access to pretty places and the rest; in short, reasonable ease of life, and above all unanxious leisure. When people have this they will read such books as they will, such as suit them, and, *pace* Mr. G. Howell, amuse them. Can a man have this when he is a trembling dependent for his livelihood on the caprice of another man, who is himself a slave to a system of cut-throat competition? We all know he cannot.

In short, O benevolent persons and parsons, your kindness to the working-classes will be welcome to them when it is no longer used as an excuse for your continued robbing of them. Is it "malicious," I wonder, to quote Scripture and say, "Let him that stole steal no more." Meantime, it is not a little ridiculous to see the efforts of these worthy folk to wag the dog's tail for him since he declines to wag it himself.

W. M.

Last week the Liverpool landing-stage was overcrowded with emigrants going by steamer to America. On seven vessels there went six thousand exiles, including English, Scotch, and Irish, Germans, Italians, Norwegians, Russians, Hungarians, and Polish Jews. A number of English agricultural labourers sailed for South America. The leading Atlantic lines ran extra steamers to meet the enormous traffic. From Southampton a lot of Scotch fishermen have gone to South Africa. A constant stream is flowing to Australia. Every outward-bound steamer carries a load of exiles somewhere—anywhere, if only they get away from their native land.

And all this is not, as in the old days of the Scando-Gothic exodus, an overflow of freemen from sterile lands too small for their teeming myriads. Nor is it, as with the Elizabethan English, the voluntary going out of a strong and poor people, freemen still, if not so free as their forefathers, against a great and unwieldy wealthy nation, that barred their way and at the same time offered a fine field for plunder. These folk have indeed the hunger that drove out their forefathers, but have neither the longing for adventure that led them round the world, nor the strength and freshness that enabled them to destroy and replace the effete systems that confronted them. These are slaves fleeing from the lash to the lash.

They go from lands in which there is plenty of room for them were it not for monopoly and injustice, to lands that meet them with the same injustice and subject them to the same monopoly. They are slaves born and bred; have lived as slaves at "home," and carry with them the will to be slaves wherever they go. Yet with the poison they carry the antidote; among the slaves there go some exiled men, men driven out because of their manhood, even as the slaves are driven out because of their slavehood. And so, while for the Land of Behest they find the Land of Betrayal, with blood and bitterness for milk and honey, and wander in a desert of commercialism that seems to stretch beyond their utmost vision, there are among them the men who will lead them out of it into the land that lays beyond.

Meantime it is not pleasant for Englishmen who reflect upon what their fathers were—pirates and freebooters, it is true, but men at least, and lovers of freedom, though it were only for themselves—and then think that Englishmen are among the most willing slaves and makers of slaves that can be found in all the world. Nor is this only so in far-off lands; there is a proof of it this present week at our very doors. It is proposed to "colonise" with English labourers an Irish estate which has been cleared of its native tenants. The proposal is made, not because the English will be, as their fathers were, strong thieves, able and ready to buy with hard blows what booty they desire, but because they will crouch more tamely and be plundered more patiently than those they replace.

I may be a crude barbarian and the rest of it, but I prefer their fathers. To me there is nothing more terrible in the present system than the loss of manhood it has brought about. The only thing that gives me patience enough even to listen with moderate calmness to the preaching of palliatives is the hope that, perchance, they may in some way give to the working classes a chance to recover somewhat of the fibre and backbone that will be needful ere they can achieve their freedom or live as freemen. That is their only argument, and, needless to say, not a conclusive one.

S.

THE ENGLISH REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT, 1815 TO 1817.

SPA-FIELDS RIOTS AND DERBYSHIRE INSURRECTION.

It is a commonplace among many revolutionists to say that the English people have no revolutionary traditions. To some extent this is true, for we are forced to go back to the days of Wat Tyler and Jack Cade, to those of the "Pilgrimage of Grace," or to those of the "Levellers" and "Fifth Monarchy Men," if we want to discover a time of really formidable risings of the dispossessed. But still revolutionary traditions of a kind do exist among the people. Hyde Park railings are still a watchword among Radicals, who are anxious to prove that beneath their placid demeanour there lurks something dangerous; and the great Chartist demonstration on Kennington Common is still a subject for conversation among older men. But these, though revolutionary traditions, are revolutionary in a very mild way, and do not come up in any way to traditions of the great revolutions which have displayed themselves upon the stage of Paris during the past century. Well, but degenerate as we are, and tamely as our people put up with