

# THE COMMONWEAL

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### NOTES ON NEWS.

THE Liberal victory at Kennington is being received with a flood of self-gratulation by the organs of that side of the game of politics, which is a little trying to the feelings of Socialists, whose victories are yet to come; or to speak more correctly, as well as more hopefully, are still below the surface. Nevertheless, do not let us forget in the first place that it is a protest against open, brutal, undisguised coercion in Ireland, against which we Socialists have protested over and over again whenever we have had an opportunity, as indeed our principles compelled us to do.

In the second place, although it might be possible for the Tories to dish the Gladstonians by themselves bringing in an Irish Compromise, it is not very *probable* that they would make the compromise go far enough to shelve the Home Rule Question for the present; and, in fact, we shall be hampered with this question until the Gladstonians have come in pledged to definite Home Rule. Undoubtedly the Irish agitation has been of service to the cause of Revolution; but it has for the present done about all it can for us, especially since Mr. Parnell has been whitewashed into a very angel of respectability by the proceedings of the Commission.

Besides all this, a brutally Tory government in power, although it brings the Radicals and the Socialists into occasional alliance, and therefore seems to push forward Socialism, has this disadvantage—that it obscures the fact that Socialism is the *only* hope of the workers. Get together some three years hence some of those enthusiastic Radicals who have returned Mr. Beaufoy for Kennington, and ask them how much better off they are for having a Liberal Government in power, and you will have your answer short enough I'll warrant. By all means let the Tories go; they proclaim themselves the enemies of the people, and undoubtedly we must attack them. Now then, let the Liberals, the friends of the people, come in, and let us see what they will do—in all essentials exactly the same as the Tories. Well, then we know where we are, and may expect some of our democratic friends to come to the same knowledge.

The great anti-Coercion meeting at St. James's Hall was doubtless a success, and very enthusiastic; it was, I am told by a friend who was present, wholly a middle-class meeting, as might have been expected. The lesson to be drawn from these facts is encouraging, for they show us how suddenly the public opinion may change about a measure which, to the ordinary public at least, seems revolutionary. I daresay Mr. Morley's speech was more than all that was expected of him, but how much more effective the following speech would have been.

"Ladies and gentlemen, why waste time in going over for the hundredth time what you all know about this matter? I prefer rather to bring a blush of honest pleasure to your cheeks and my own by recalling to you an incident which happened to me about eight years ago, which will show you how much I (and I believe you) have improved since that time. I was standing as candidate for Westminster at the time, and was addressing the electors summoned specially to hear me. I gave them my views on various political matters (for the most part of no importance now), and then followed the heckling; and I answered many questions to the complete satisfaction of the audience. At last a troublesome Irishman in the gallery (I ask your pardon, Mr. Parnell) put me the question, 'How about Home Rule?' I wish I could remember the exact words of my answer, but they have escaped me amongst all the other phrases I have been compelled to concoct and utter since. I can only say that logically, neatly, succinctly, I repudiated Home Rule as an impossibility, a danger, and a disgrace"—(signs of dissent amongst the audience)—"and you cheered me to the echo."

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," he might have gone on to say, "is not this cheering, in view of all the blessings of Home Rule which you now know by heart? In a very few years we have been, so to

say, brought out of a barren wilderness of negation and coercion, into a paradise of goodwill and friendliness with our neighbours"—(great cheers)—"and have found out that they were only asking for that self-government which we claim (but don't get) for ourselves. Now if there were no other countries in the world but Ireland and England (the latter entirely inhabited by happy middle-class people, producing nothing and living on each other, as you probably suppose is the case), I might ask you to disperse at once after having given three cheers for Mr. Parnell,"—(enormous cheering)—"and—those who once put him in prison. But I have recently acquired information, which may perhaps reach you before long, and I wish to say a word or two to you about it."

"I am now (with some reluctance, I must confess) prepared to admit that Home Rule for Ireland is not likely to be the only new and revolutionary measure which we may have to consider in our lifetime. It seems that the happy view of the composition of society in England which I have mentioned just now is not as strictly accurate as we once thought it. In fact it seems probable that we cannot include factory hands at 24s. a-week and farm labourers at 10s. in the middle classes, and that there are a great many of such persons, and also that they are getting it into their heads that as they *make* all, they ought to *have* all"—(groans and hooting)—"Well, well, of course we know how idiotic that is now, just as we knew Home Rule to be idiotic nine years ago: but we may as well make up our minds that ten years hence we shall probably be meeting as we are now, to protest against coercion in England, and to pass resolutions in favour of the communization of the means of production"—(great uproar, amidst which Mr. Morley sat down, after having been heard by one reporter to say, "Well, after all, it sounds as well as the other").

If the *Pall Mall* interviewer is to be believed, Mr. Beaufoy, M.P. has already stripped off his lion's skin. Questioned about Trafalgar Square, he answers: "I do not think the electors had any more sympathy than I had with the extreme view which is prepared to defend the abuse as well as the use of the right." Well, you may ask Mr. Beaufoy what that means. In the next sentence he explains: "All our shopkeepers, at any rate, had a good deal of fellow-feeling with their West-end brethren, who objected very naturally to seeing Trafalgar Square turned into a place of public meeting in permanent session." What our electioneering snob means is clearly that a "respectable" meeting, one held for backing up some form or other of our capitalistic government, shall be allowed; but an unrespectable one, held by men with a real grievance, shall be bludgeoned. Exactly; that is just what we have always expected from the Liberals: "Yes, you may speak if we are quite sure you will say nothing we don't like to hear." Otherwise—well, here is one of those Radical M.P.'s for London whom Sir C. Russell advised the delegates the other day to elect in order to get them back the Square. These be your gods, O Israel!  
W. M.

The Broken Hill mines in Australia now pay dividends at the rate of 126 per cent. on the £19-share paid up, and the total amount paid in dividends for the half-year ending 30th November is £192,000. This piece of news appears in the commercial column of a paper which continues to breathe "threatenings and slaughter" for the workers of Australia should they seek to better their condition by such movements as will disturb this dividend and frighten the capitalists away. The free and independent press of honest Scotland has seen fit in its wisdom and prerogative to warn the miners of Australia that if they continue harrassing capital as they were doing during their late strike, they would kill the goose that laid the golden egg. From the above piece of news it is obvious the capitalist is not "the goose."

Why should the workers be such geese? If they lay the golden eggs, why should they be so foolish as to let the "cacklers" who lay none gather them? The voice of the "promoter" receives its "fibre" from the unorganised state of the workers, and the big syndicates of the capitalists must needs be met by bigger and closer combinations of the workers. The battle which is imminent with these two is the