

# THE COMMONWEAL

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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

### NOTES ON NEWS.

A LITTLE too previous. Our friend the *Star* announces to its readers that there has been "another" split in the S. L.; and *Reynolds*, misled probably by the false news of the delectable evening print, comes out with a note wherein we are informed we are "waking up," and we are dividing ourselves into still minuter sections. The *Star*, with characteristic unfairness, refused insertion until the last moment to a contradiction sent by comrade Morris. No enemy is more virulent than a renegade; and if the *Star* really wishes for reliable information as to what is going on within the ranks of the Socialists, it should seek cleaner channels of obtaining it than the individual it uses now for the purpose. Presently we shall have something to say about the erstwhile Socialist press gang which will make them wince.

"Dodo" in *Reynolds* has disclosed the particular sect to which he belongs, by the puff he gives it as having done "all the practical work." The wish is father to the thought *re* the alleged split in the S.L. No doubt the existence of an International Organisation is a thorn to those who are continually abusing foreigners, and Germans in particular, because the English Royal Collar is made of German silver. We may be "somnolent," but we think that the preaching of International Solidarity is preferable to the national prejudices and continual laudation of Sham Republics like France and America, of which "Dodo," in common with the staff of *Reynolds*, seems to be lost in rapt admiration.

EDITORS.

The *Daily News* the other day had an elaborate congratulatory article on the progress of Italy, which was once nothing at all, and is now a great nation courted and flattered by all the great powers. I do not know nor care how much the Italian bourgeois patriot likes this "condescension" of the English ditto, but I cannot help feeling that all this glorification of the progress of the commercial class in the country (for that is what it comes to) is little better than an insult to the general humanity of Italy.

All this glory of the nation to which he has the honour to belong, what will it do for the Italian peasant, the Italian labourer, the Italian town-workman? The Lombard field-labourer driven to his toil in a gang, dying by inches of *pellagra* (in English, starvation) in the very garden of Europe, I wonder what touch of national vanity (which is what people mean by "patriotism") his master's grinding has left in him. The town workman in whom even trades' unionism is a crime, I wonder whether he thinks that his nation has done all they can for him in driving out the Germans and leaving the capitalists to fatten on his labour?

Italy is like other "civilised" nations, she keeps her successes, her progress, her civilisation for a class of masters. Who could venture to say that Italy has "progressed" who thinks of the condition of those that alone make Italy, the workers, the useful part of the country? Those who write flattering articles about Italy's progress, do in truth think of nothing human in Italy except the middle-class; to them the rest are not men and women, but parts of the huge machine which grinds the masters' sweet idle life. But how if the machine should one day *burst*?

W. M.

The Earl of Wemyss was kind enough in the House of Lords the other night, in a debate on the sweating system, to lay down a few rules of conduct for the people, and which he told them would be excellent remedies for their poverty. He said:

"True statesmanship consisted in telling the people the truth that to a great extent the cure rested with themselves. They must practise temperance and thrift, and must, like the upper classes, avoid marriage until they were able to support their wives and families in comfort. They must be taught not to regard emigration as banishment, but to accept it as a means of reducing the surplus population of this country."

It is quite true that the "cure" does rest with the people, but we doubt whether that remedy is one that Earl Wemyss would relish.

As to the noble lord's humbugging cant about "temperance and thrift," we should have thought that it was scarcely possible for an East-end workman, earning from 15s. to 20s. a-week, to be anything but "temperate and thrifty" upon it. If Lord Wemyss doubts this he is welcome to try the experiment of living upon this sum, and he will then be able to tell us whether it leaves him a very ample margin for expenditure in champagne, cigars, and other luxuries which the noble lord, thanks to the "temperance and thrift" of other people, is now able to enjoy.

The poor must "avoid marriage." Must they! What excellent advice from a "Christian and moral" peer! At that rate the Mile End Road would soon be as full of prostitutes as Piccadilly, and the aristocracy would not be able even to claim a monopoly of immorality. Why, we might even have an East-end Cleveland Street, if the poor "like the upper classes avoid marriage." What splendid morality and "manly virtues" the great Earl Wemyss endeavours to spread among the people! Perhaps they might reply that in these things they are not anxious to emulate the "upper classes."

But the people have still another lesson to learn, and that is, "not to regard emigration as banishment, but to accept it as a means of reducing the surplus population of the country." It strikes me that it will take the people some time to swallow this pill. Why are people forced to emigrate? Because the Earl of Wemyss and his brother thieves, the landlords and capitalists, cannot make rent or profit out of their labour, and so the workmen are forced by starvation to "emigrate." And thus, owing to the monopoly of the land and the means of production by Wemyss and Co., they cannot live in the land of their birth. Earl Wemyss may not consider this "banishment," but the people hold a different opinion.

Supposing, some day the workmen get tired of supplying idle scoundrels with wealth to spend in every form of vice and profligacy which it is possible for the most diseased and depraved mind to imagine; suppose that they rise in revolt, and hunt Wemyss and Co. out of the country, like the French peasants hunted their lords a hundred years ago. Would Earl Wemyss consider that "banishment"? It was called "emigration" then.

Some people might, however, be content "to accept it as a means of reducing the 'surplus' population of the country." Like the countryman in the story, we think that "emigration" is an excellent thing properly applied, and that in England we could very well spare "a few landlords." Earl Wemyss might with advantage set the example, and go first. The unemployed could make a good use of his acres, when they had not got to keep him into the bargain.

D. N.

### SCENES FROM THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

III.

#### THE REVOLT OF THE WOMEN.

THE 5th of October, 1789, dawns—a dull, desolate morning—and the great city of Paris is waking to life again. Already the idea is afloat among the women that the National Guards will surely not fire upon them, and at the markets and in the bakers' queues there is excited talk. "The men are cowards, and will not act; then let the women act. Forward to the Hôtel de Ville, to Versailles! Down with the fore-stallers of bread! Death to murderous aristocrats and their black cockades!"

A woman in one of these excited groups in the Quartier St. Eustace snatches a drum from a guardhouse, rushing through the adjacent streets beating it and raising cries concerning the scarcity of bread. A crowd of women gather round her, and increase in number as they approach the Hôtel de Ville. At the same time a host of women sweep in a surging flood from St. Antoine, the East-end of Paris, and pour like a torrent through the streets, pulling into their ranks every woman they can lay hold of—even breaking into houses and dragging