NOTES ON NEWS.

"There can be only one answer to the question of whether a man is unjust or not," Judge Justice Hawkins said last week, "and that answer is found in the suffering and joy of the people who are affected by his actions."

So that when Mr. Parkes, editor of the Western Mail, came before Mr. Justice Hawkins and was found "guilty" of libel, everybody knew that his punishment was not going to be a light one. For it is to be remembered that Mr. Parkes was editor of the Star, and honoured in that capacity with the heats and hatred of the class whom their servant Hawkins was defying. Whatever quarters he may have found with the Star, or with Mr. Parkes himself, for occasional unfaithfulness to Socialism and Socialism, we can have nothing but praise for their part in forcing something more than mere politics upon public attention.

If Mr. Parkes had been connected with any other paper than the Star—outside of course—he would have been let off with a quarter of the penalty to which he has been condemned. This was the universal opinion among press-men when they heard the verdict. And that if he had been a Socialist writer the penalty would have been doubled several times over I am equally confident. I do not yet know what his colleagues of the Star intend to do in the matter, but I hope that they are going to do something, and that they will allow the Radicals and Socialists of London to help them in doing it.

In the early days of the League, a then comrade raised a laugh upon one occasion by declaring that "his mission in life was to smash the British Empire." He has since become an "excellent volumizer," as a contributor to "a contemporary" signs himself, and has apparently neglected his mission for a long time past. But there are innumerable signs that although he is not likely to carry out his threat of smashing the British Empire, the British Empire is fully capable of smashing itself, and further, that it will perform the desirable operation at no very distant date.

Despite the smooth prophecies of the Imperial Federationists, and the loud shouting of the Jingos, there are no doubts in the minds of any who watch the policies of the course of Australian affairs that the British Parliament is voting every year; so near that men are counting the possibilities of repression, and prophecies for their blistering Hill. As Chief Justice Lilley, of New South Wales, said the other day:

"In truth, Australian independence is in the air and in the hearts of men, and although no man can foretell the hour of its birth, its advent sooner or later is sure."”

It will be many a long year yet before Australia will satisfy a Socialist by its administration of public affairs; a republic with private property will be like France or the United States; but all the same, there will be few Socialists who will not relish the hour when the"-wall between the republicans and the Union Jack.

Rather different will be the case of the South African Republic, which is also trembling on the verge of anarchy; for, in that case, the rebellion will be in defence of the right of "whacking their own ogres." Revitalised by the British treatment of the other races, its own working-classes, including its own students, is the English Government upon the crassness of the Africander to the "suggers." The days of South Africa are nearly as degraded in that respect as those of the Southern States of the Union are now, and would soon be as bad as those were before the war without any very great trouble.

After Australia and South Africa have departed—I don't know much about New Zealand—we may hope that the absorption of the West Indies by the United States, Canada, too, is not far off throwing in their lot with the States—and when will the Republic be then, poor thing! when will the Republic be then?

A Mr. Sidney J. Thomson wrote a letter to the Pall Mall Gazette the other day:

"Many weeks ago you published an article on the Airedale Bread Company, and mentioned that the average weight of a stone of bread in the quarter was 13 ounces, and it was said that these were being sold at 6s. 8d. I, as a holder of a few shares in the company, could not at first believe this statement; but subsequent inquiries confirm it only. It seems to me monstrously unjust that a company earning a dividend equal to the cost of production should be allowed to pay its servants so poorly. It must never be forgotten that every shareholder is himself an employer, and such is to the extent of his holding, responsible for the wages paid."

It is evident that he is not far from "finding salvation," and if he can only get his fellow shareholders to agree with him will have done some good in his day and generation.

Amid all the froth and splutter about Mr. Parnell as a co-responsible, there has been only one utterance on the subject which was characterised by anything like sense; and that was the letter of our old friend and foe, Mr. A. T. Hadfield, which appeared in the Pall Mall the other night, and which we regret elsewhere. But that Mr. Hadfield is honest and fearless, while all others who have written or spoken on the subject, being politicians, are all "formalists, out of fear and base flattery ... a cloud of witnesses, ready to embrace and maintain all that is, or shall be proposed, in hope of preferment.""}

NEWS FROM NOWHERE:

OR,

AN EPOCH OF REST.

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM A UTOPIAN ROMANCE.

CHAP. III.—THE GUEST HOUSE AND BREAKFAST THEMES.

I AMBERLEY’s little behind the others to have a seat at this house, which, as I have told you, stood on the hill; and it was a long building with its gable ends turned away from the road, and long trellised windows coming rather low down in the wall that faced us. It was very handsomely built of red brick with a lead roof; and high up above the windows there ran a line of genteel semioval sashes in banded glass, very well executed, and designed with a force and directness which I had never noticed in modern work before. The subjects I recognised at once, and indeed was very particularly familiar with them.

However, all this I took in in a minute; so we were presently with the door, and standing in a hall with a floor of marble mosaic and an open chimney roof. There were no windows on the side opposite to the river, but arches below leading into chambers, one of which showed a glimpse of a garden beyond, and above them a long space of wall lightly painted (in fresco, I thought) with similar subjects to those of the frise outside; everything about the place was handsome and generously solid as to material; and though it was not very large (somewhat smaller than Cowley Hall perhaps), one felt in it that exhilarating sense of space and freedom which was a very architecture always given to an unconscious man who is in the habit of using his eyes.

In this pleasant place, which of course I knew to be the hall of the Guest House, three long women were sitting to and fro. As they were the first of the sex I had seen on this eventful morning, I naturally looked at them very attentively, and found them at least as good as the gardens, the architecture, and the male men. As to their dress, which of course I took note of, I should say that there was a veil with dressings and not bundled up with curtains; that they were dressed like women, not upholstered like arm-chairs, as most women of our time are. In short, their dress was a far cry from the ancient classical costume and the fashion of the fourteenth...
century garments, though it was clearly not an imitation of either: the material was light and gave to the wearer the sense. As they strode themselves, it was pleasant indeed to see them, they were so kind and happy and helpful, in expression of taste, so sharply and well-knit of body, and the dress was all we could wish. All were at least comely, and one or two very handsome and regular of feature. They came up to us at the dais merely and without the least affectation of airiness, and all those gentlemen with me as if I were a friend newly come back from a long journey: though I could not help noticing that they looked ashamed of their garments; for I had on my clothes of last night, and at an Oxford college dinner, if ever.

A word or two from Robert the weaver, and they bustled about on our behalf, and presently came and took us by the hands and led us to a box, the box in the pleasantest corner of the hall, where our breakfast was spread for us; and, as we sat down, one of the choppers aforesaid, and came back again in a little while with a great bunch of roses, very different in size and quality to what Hammesmuth brought me the other day. She had lifted the flowers from the country garden. She had taken them into the buttercups, and added some of the buttercups, so as to make a bouquet to suit our taste.

As I was putting the first mouthful into my mouth, my eye caught a second glimpse of the passageway behind, when we should have had called the High Table in an Oxford college hall, and a familiar name in it forced me to read it through. Thus it ran:

"Guests and neighbours, on the title of this Great-hall once stood the home of the Hammesmuth Branch of the Socialist League. Drink a glass to the memory! May 1862."

It is difficult to tell you how I felt as I read these words, and I suppose my face showed how much I was moved, for both my friends looked earnestly at me, and there was silence between us for a little while.

Presently the weaver, who was earnestly so well mannered a man as the foreman, said to me rather severely:

"Guest, don't we know what to call you? there is no inscription in asking you your name?"

"At Oxford,” I said, "I have some doubts about it myself; so suppose you call me Guest, which is a family name, you know, and add Wilkins to it if you please.”

Dick nodded kindly to me; but a shade of annoyance passed over the weaver’s face; and he said:

"I hope you don’t mind my asking; but would you tell me where you come from? I am curious about some things for good reasons, likewise.”

Dick was clearly noticing me underneath the table; but he was not much abashed, and awaited my answer somewhat eagerly. As for the answer, I was not able to give it, and thought, when I saw it, that he thought me an enigmatical sort of person that would lead us into; so I took time to invent a lie with circumstances, guarded by a little truth, and said:

"You see, I have been such a long time away from Europe that things seem strange to me now; but I was born and bred on the edge of Epping Forest—Walshamtree and Woodford, to wit.”

Dick nodded; I have a steady hand for a weaver, and I fall into the trap without any thought of where and when was I?—so began on it, while one of the girls had been scattering little glasses of lavender and other sweet-smelling herbs about the floor, came near to listen, and stood behind me with her hand on my shoulder, in which she held some of the plants that I used to call flowers: the stronger was a great shock to my mind my very early days in the kitchen-garden at Woodford, and also the wall beyond the sweet-bread patch—a connection of memories which all my eyes would see.

I said, "When I was a boy, and for long after, except for a place on Queen Elizabeth’s Lodge, and for the part about High Beech, the Forest was almost wholly made up of park horsemens and walks, and it was only the walks. But when we got it over about twenty-five years ago, the topping and lopping, which was a part of the old commoners’ rights, came to an end, and the trees were left to grow. But I left this place once for a while, and then we bought it back again to High Beech. I was very much obliged to you, sir, for helping me.”

"I have very much obliged you, sir, for helping me.”

"And the other day we heard that the philomel were being landscape, they were not, for the birds were not in the bushes. But what were you thinking about the bushes being stopped and the trees growing in only two good news?—only you know.”

At that point I suddenly remembered Dick’s date; and stopped short and spoke excitedly. The weaver was no more excited, but said hastily, as it he were almost aware of his breach of good manners.

"But, I say, how old are you?"

I said, "And Dick and the pretty girl both burst out laughing, as if Robert’s conduct was excusable on the grounds of eccentricity; and Dick said amidst his laughter:

"Hold hard, Bob; this questioning of guests won’t do. Why, much learning is spoiling you. You remind me of the radical cobblers in the silly old novels, who, according to the authors, were prepared to set off down all good manners in the pursuit of utilitarian knowledge. The fact is, I begin to think that you have no understand your head with mathematics, and with grubbing into those little old books about political economy (the he), that you scarcely know how to behave. Lastly, it is about time for you to get to some open-air work, so that you may clear away the swedes from your brain.”

The weaving laugh good-humouredly; and the girl went up to him and parted his off and said laughing, "Poor fellow! he was born so.”

For as I was, I was a little puzzled, but I laughed also, partly for company’s sake, and partly with pleasure at their amorous happiness and good temper; and before Robert could make the excuse to me which he was getting ready, I said:

"Yes, it’s true neighbours" (I had caught up that word), "we don’t in the least mind asking questions, when I can do so; ask me as many as you please; it’s fun for me. I will tell you all about Epping Forest when I was a boy, if you please; and as to my age, I’m not a fine lady, you know, so why should I tell?”

In spite of the recent lecture on good manners, the weaver could not help giving a laugh, and the others were so much startled by his reticent that all over the room, though for courtesy’s sake they forbore actual laughter; while I looked from one to the other in a puzzled manner, and in last said:

"Tell me, please, what is your idea? you know I want to learn from you. And please laugh; only tell me.”

Well, they did laugh, and I joined them again, for the above-stated reasons. But at last the pretty woman said earnestly:

"Well, well, he is rude, poor fellow! but you may as well tell you what he is thinking about: he means that you look rather old for your age. But surely there need be no wonder in that, since we have not been travelling; and clearly from all you have been saying, in real countries. It has often been said, and no doubt truly, that one ages quickly if one lives amongst unhappy people. Also they say that southern England is a good place for keeping good looks.”

She blushed and said, "How old am I, do you think?”

Well, "I have always been told that a woman is as old as she looks, so without offence or flattery, I should say we were twenty.”

She laughed merrily, and said, "I am well served out for fishing for up-byments, since I have to tell you the truth, to wit, that I am forty-two.”

I started at her, and drew musical laughter from her again; and I was not a little startled. This was as smooth as ivory, her cheeks full and round, her lips as red as the roses she had brought in; her beautiful arms, which she had bared for her work, firm and well-knit, to which I was a little under my gaze, though it was clear that she had taken me for a man of eighty; so to pass off, I said—

"Well, well, you see, the old saw is proved right again, and I ought not to have let you entice me into asking such questions.”

She laughed again, and said, "Well, lad, old and young, I must get to my work now. We shall be rather busy here presently; and I want to close it off now, for I began to read a pretty old book yesterday, and I want to go on with it in this morning: so good-bye for the present.”

She waved a hand to us, and stepped lightly down the hall, taking (as Scott says) at least part of the sun from our table as she went.

When she was gone, Dick said, "Now, guest; won’t you ask a question or two of our friend here? It is only fair that you should have your turn.”

"I shall be very glad to answer them,” said the weaver.

"If you ask any questions about my work, I shall not be very severe; but since I hear that you are a weaver, I should like to ask you something about that craft, as I am—was—interested in it.”

I said, "I shall not be so very much less, then, I’m afraid. I only do the most mechanical kind of weaving, not in fact but in poor craftsmanship, unlike Dick here. Then besides the weaver, I do a little with machine printing and composing, though I am little used to the finer kind of printing or the kind of paper which goes into the beginning to die out along with the waning of the plague of book-making; so I have had to turn to other things that I have a taste for.”

"We have taken to mathematics and the like, and also an interesting part of antiquarian book about the pescable and private history, so to say, of the end of the nineteenth century—more for the sake of giving a kind of recreation to my mind than for anything else.”

That was why I asked you those questions about Epping Forest. You have rather praised me, I confess, though your information was so interesting. But I want to talk more together, when our friend Dick is here. I know he thinks me rather a grinder, but I am sure you will agree with me that I have my hands: that’s