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Notes [Aug, 1887]

Freedom Press (London)

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The admission made in the debate on the Navy Estimates by the First Lord of the Admiralty, that our dockyard management is nothing better than a gigantic job, somewhat tarnishes the glory of the brilliant naval review, for which the workers had to pay last month. No sooner is one government department officially whitewashed than another stands revealed as a den of uncleanness.

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The recently constructed Metropolitan Board of Works does not appear so very much more immaculate than the ancient Corporation of London. Why, in the name of human imbecility, do we continue tamely to submit our lives and delegate the management of our business to successive bands of self-interested irresponsibles? Practically irresponsibles, for our much vaunted right of calling them over the coals seems remarkable ineffective. These official administrators do nothing for the people which the people could not do directly for themselves by voluntary association.

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Prostitutes, Salvationists, temperance lecturers, cab-drivers, and socialists are not by any means the only persons who have doubts as to the unmixed benefits of police supervision. Since its institution in 1829 the Metropolitan Police Force has managed to earn the detestation of the whole proletariat of London.

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Not that the police individually are at all worse than other men who are corrupted by a false position. How can a man be brotherly and honest when it is his business to be a human blood-hound hunting down to their destruction the unfortunate and erring among his fellows? How can he be just when it is his duty to maintain, by any means that fall short of raising a public scandal, the outward appearance of order, where disorder is only the natural and healthy, revolt against deep-rooted social injustice and wrong? The paid guardians of class rule and the monopoly of property are, after all, men of the people who have thoughtlessly turned traitors to the popular cause, and sold themselves to do dirty work that the masters are ashamed to be seen doing for themselves.

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The proposed Land Bill is a public confession on the part of the most conservative of Englishmen of the justice of the Irish revolt, and therefore the injustice of coercion.

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Paris was in a state of siege on the commemoration of the taking of the Bastille. The Republican government ordered its soldiers to fire on the people if they showed the faintest inclination to follow in the steps of the ancestors whom they were assembled to honor!

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The people are everywhere losing respect for authority, for everywhere they begin to perceive that it is nothing more respectable than the brute-force of the masters, wrapped round with a cloak of false morality. This mystification has been almost completely stripped away in France. Nothing but a few miserable shreds of legality and statecraft hang between the proletariat and middle class property-rule, and both sides have come to see plainly that it is but a question of opportunity and the best weapons between them.

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The Czar is still busy concocting new measures where with to tighten his failing grip on the throat of the Russian nation. The intellectual life of the country is already all but stifled by the weight of police supervision, and now the new regulations for the University of St. Petersburg exclude all students who cannot produce a certificate showing them to be well affected towards the existing tyranny! Moreover, during their whole course of study they must reside with relatives or guardians responsible to the police for the young men's continued good behavior—indifference to the sufferings and wrongs of their unhappy country.

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It is with this same just and enlightened Russian Government that the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Daily Telegraph* are advocating a close British alliance, that the spoils of Central Asia may not be spilled in division between the two principal thieves.