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NOTES ON PASSING EVENTS.

It is difficult, or rather impossible, to get at the real facts of the farce enacting in Bulgaria at present. The ultimate meaning of it is of course that Russia wants to get Bulgaria into due condition for being eaten—to beat it tender, as French cooks do with a beefsteak. As to when or how she will eat her Bulgarian morsel it is little use speculating. Meanwhile the Prince Alexander, who a few days ago was such a hero to the English bourgeois, turns out to be a "hero" of quite a modern type. He will now doubtless find plenty of people to give him the very disagreeable names which his present conduct seems to call for. I think it will be enough for us to sum them all up in one word—perhaps the most opprobrious that can be cast at a man—and say that he has acted like "a gentleman."

For the disappointment of the Bulgarian people one does really feel a pang of genuine grief; that they should be made the playthings of these scoundrels! Yet one must keep in mind that even if their dream of independence had been realised they would have been after all landed amidst the sordid realities of a backward country undergoing the process of being opened up to modern commerce. Nothing worse will happen to them under Russian rule—because nothing worse could happen to them. Massacre, war, pestilence, pinching times—all these are incidents to a rough condition of life; but they come and go, and leave hope behind them. But the pitiless grasp of commerce, continuous, unrelaxing, is a robbery of the weak by the strong from which there is no appeal. All these blessings of civilisation the Bulgarians would have had to accept as the dark lining to the glittering robe of their independence. Dependence on Russia can give them nothing worse, and may make them more discontented, more ready to throw off at once the tyranny of absolutism and the tyranny of the money-bag.

It is at least to be hoped that they will have no illusions as to the help they are likely to get from this country. "Our best wishes" they can have as much of as they please—a kind of gift-money which several other nationalities have had opportunities of appreciating at its true value—nothing. If they are so rash as to attempt to resist the Czar in arms, and get themselves killed and maimed by the thousand in consequence, they will at least have the further consolation that their sufferings will afford a pleasure equal to the reading of a realistic novel at the breakfast-tables of English middle-class families. But on the whole they had better trust to the paternal promises of the Czar than to the sentiment of the ruling classes of England: there is not a pin to chose between the good faith of the two.

In the debate on Dr. Clarke's amendment on the Crofter question there was plenty to show how in questions affecting the immediate welfare of the working classes it is hopeless to expect to get anything out of Parliament. "Non possumus," how *can* we? was the clear-cut answer to the Crofters' story; and will be the answer always given to any attempt at dealing with the one thing necessary to be dealt with—the exploitation of the workers at the hands of the land and capital grabbers. The occasion was made good use of by those who were anxious to set forth the virtues of the "Macallum More," that great chief (of rack-renters and land-agents) known in London as the Duke of Argyll, and to sing the praises of landlords generally.

It was no bad commentary, also, on the curious delusion that Parliament is a good platform for revolutionary propaganda that Dr. Clarke's speech was contracted into three lines of print by the great Liberal paper, the *Daily News*.

The unemployed men who "demonstrated" in Liverpool on the 3rd ult. met with a similar "How *can* we?" from the mayor of that city; though the answer was not given so unhesitatingly as in Parliament, and to judge by the report in the *Liverpool Courier* the mayor seemed somewhat uncomfortable, probably because he could not fail to know what an amount of distress there exists close to his own municipal door. One workman asked the mayor if the corporation could not take in hand their work themselves, instead of giving it out to contractors, who would employ less men. The mayor naturally said in answer that he could not say anything on the matter, and pointed out that competition among the contractors prevented any excessive profit. He did not further point out that that profit came out of the wages of the workman, for if he had heard that fact he of course would have

tried hard not to believe it, and probably would have succeeded. Neither, it seems, did the workman retort on him that the competition praised by the mayor was the reason why the unemployed were there asking for what in fact amounted to parish relief in a different form.

The workman (poor fellow!) had had no opportunity of learning that "relief works," in crises like the present, mean just digging a hole and filling it up again—a make-believe of real work, in short—and that the temporary palliation of employing out-of-work men on non-productive labour must be very temporary indeed, and react on those men who are "in employment"—*i.e.*, who are working not for their own livelihood, but the profits of a master. Let us hope that he and his fellows are learning in various ways that there is but one remedy for their trouble—employing themselves; living on the wares which they themselves have made, using the machinery and hoarded wealth which they themselves have made to go on producing necessary and pleasant wares for their own use. It is dismal to think what a heavy price they are paying meanwhile for their ignorance of this. Let the thought stir up all Socialists to extra exertions.

WM. MORRIS.

TO THE POLICE.

FELLOW-VICTIMS,—Poor, despised, abused policemen, how refreshing a poor man's pity must be to you! But does it never strike you as passing strange why you, of all men, should be so generally disliked and avoided; you who are charged with the weighty duty of watching and guarding the interests of the community? I pity you sincerely in your thankless task. I pity you, dull and lonely, compelled to live aloof from men, pacing your cheerless rounds in stiff and sullen decorum. I pity you, numbered, buttoned, and solitary, dogged by the cold scrutiny of an unsympathising, fault-finding public, and for many other things beside.

What quarrel can there be between us as reasonable men? I know that you come of the people—the poor and unfortunate of them, as I do. That you have been buffeted through life I know, with next to no leisure or means by which to put your days to profitable account. That you, in common with the most of us, have had to rough it in all weathers for a scanty living, and, on the whole, a miserable one, I also know. What cause, then, can there be for bad blood between us? No cause in the world but our own sad ignorance!

But you may say: "Are you not a Socialist, and the enemy of law and order which it is our bounden duty to maintain?" I am a Socialist, and the ardent supporter of all order and law which have Justice for their foundation. Do you say that the justice of things is not your concern? Then will you not say whether you are men first, or policemen? Surely the justice of the laws you are called on to maintain should concern you closely as men, and doubly so as policemen. But you know, and I do, perfectly well that you cannot at all afford, as affairs stand at present, to consider the right or the wrong of Society's regulations. It is a matter of bread and butter to you, and you let it rest at that. Still, you would prefer to maintain the right thing to the wrong thing, would you not? If you say Yes, that is enough.

Now look carefully about you. You have a wide field for observation. The vices and weaknesses of the highest and lowest come out in all their nakedness before you. Are you never ashamed of the work you are compelled to do? Surely you do not enjoy arresting the poor starveling whose offence is his necessity, the begging of a mouthful of bread. Surely you at times compassionate the destitute girl whose last resource against hunger is the streets and a short life. But have you never made a mistake? I mean have you ever arrested, in your fresh and unsophisticated experience, an aristocratic ruffian under the delusion that the law applied without favour to wealthy and poor? If so you will have atoned. I can sympathise with the sense of shame which must take hold of you when you are contemptuously tossed half-a-crown to see a brawling, drunken money-bag home. I have seen a wealthy young rough make a bet with his friend that he would knock down the first "bobby" he met and not be arrested. And it actually turned out so, the few shillings which might have been mulcted at the police-court going, in this case, into the assaulted policeman's pocket. Of these proceedings I know but little in comparison to what you must know. I know sufficient, however, not to envy you.

Strip yourselves of your blue-coats and buttons now, and let me address you as men. Are you not saddened and sickened by the