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NOTES ON NEWS.

ONE lesson, and a very valuable one, the authorities have been giving us by their recent conduct. They have, so to say, preached us a practical sermon on the value of the vague something called "moral force." This time surely the "moral force" was on our side, and it was natural that many should have thought that the affair of Dod Street would be repeated, and that the Government, glad enough to harry and bludgeon a small band of poor unemployed voteless men here and there, would draw back when the Radical clubs entered the arena. Well, on this occasion they did not draw back, and many people are astonished at it. But they must remember that it was convenient for the then Government to draw back at Dod Street, while it was inconvenient for the present Government to draw back at Trafalgar Square. That is just as far as "moral force" can push Governments who have in their hands physical force.

The Government with their big majority in Parliament felt perfectly safe against any mere talk, even though Mr. Gladstone himself and the United (?) Liberal Party were the talkers; therefore they thought that the opportunity was good for striking a blow which should encourage their friends and cow their enemies, and so far from drawing back they have been acting as an "agent provocateur," and would have been only too glad if they could have had an opportunity for shooting as well as bludgeoning the people. They believe themselves safe behind their bludgeons and bayonets against any "moral force" that can be brought against them; and so they are until the "moral force" arrayed against them means a corresponding amount of physical force, until apathy is turned into determination, timidity into despair, and organisation grows out of necessity.

Meanwhile, there is nothing to discourage Socialists in all this; we have known our present physical weakness all along; and the action of the Government has at least shown us that the classes are afraid of something, that they are beginning to forecast the inevitable trouble which the approaching break-up of wage-slavery is brewing; that forecast will almost certainly as it grows lead us into a period of persecution, and that again to a general knowledge among the workers of what Socialism aims at, and the threat of physical force (or let us say at once of *force*) which that knowledge will imply, will either make the oppressors waver, lose counsel and conduct, and so at last give way; or the oppression will become so unbearable that it will *force* the revolution to break all bounds and sweep it away.

A writer in the *Daily News* is sorely grieved at Sir C. Warren being called a martinet, a mere official soldier, in short, a lump of pipe-clay, and sets forth at length his amiable and humanitarian qualities. Surely this is either a day too late or too early. The *innocent* Arabs who were slaughtered because their tribesmen slew the briber Palmer may be forgotten, and at any rate they can tell no tales; but how about our kind-hearted friend on the 13th and the 20th of November, 1887? Really Sir C. Warren's love for humanity took a strange form on those days; we have not yet forgotten all that so cleanly that we do not also remember that passage from an old book: "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles?"

The police, as we know too well, are, to put it mildly, very much irritated against the people in the streets, whether they are unemployed, or processionists, or what-not short of respectability. Naturally irritated, say some people, since they have been hustled about from pillar to post, overworked, kept without their meals (except when fed by the shopkeepers and the Prince of Wales). Well, you see, since they are "naturally irritated," they can be *depended upon*. I was talking about these matters to the son of an old chartist the other day, and he said that in the '48 time the soldiers were kept at extra drill for some time before the Kennington Green meeting, and in consequence were "naturally irritated" against the people. There are more ways than one of killing a cat.

The Liberal leaders are in a terrible fright of being involved in a contest against law and order. Harcourt, Morley, and others have been speaking about the country, and not a word have they to say about the state of things in London. The Tories are not so reticent: they are naturally crowing over the victory of force over reason. The clever cartoon in *Punch*, which is really the illustrated *Times* in a

political sense, puts the point to Mr. Gladstone in an unanswerable way. Only he *won't* answer it, or indeed think of the matter as long as he thinks it can be safely disregarded from the political or vote-catching point of view.

The "unemployed" agitation has got as far as the setting on foot of a census of them; which to my mind does not seem very far; but if they themselves want it done, as it appears they do, all one can do is to hope that something, however little, for their benefit will come of it. But how shall a census be made of men (and women and children) working for the wretchedest of wages? The wages now being offered to men on the ship canal works now beginning in Lancashire are 4½d. an hour, and I hear that thousands of men are eager to accept this "reward of labour." There is *employment* for you! I want to know also if a man who is an artisan, a carpenter, cabinet-maker, weaver, or what not, is set to do navy's work, whether he can properly be said to be "employed"? Once again, it means but one thing—out-a-door relief. This is what the Captains of Industry and their governing committees, parliament and the rest of it, have to offer to the people they lead. That is *their* way of organising industry.

It is curious to see the eagerness with which well-to-do people accept any scheme short of the one obvious remedy for dealing with the "unemployed" business. You would think, to see the high spirits of some of them over this census business, that the men were by now not only numbered but also set to well-paid remunerative labour. Again the "beggar colonies" scheme, here called politely "home colonisation," has been received with a kind of enthusiasm in some quarters. Mr. Herbert Mills set the ball a-rolling with his scheme, which was to be an imitation of the Dutch beggar colonies; and then there was an account of a similar scheme in work at Berlin, whereby people by dint of working eleven hours a-day and a strong dose of church to boot, all under strict discipline, were to earn a splendid livelihood of 6½d. per diem. That such schemes of slavery can be received as "palliatives," that they are not received with universal horror and disgust, shows how miserable our condition is, and what a tremendous upheaval it will take to amend it.

The Liberty and Property Defence League cannot be congratulated on the result of the "big name" they got to lecture for them. Mr. Froude, almost of course, showed complete ignorance of Socialism and its aims, and quite of course violent prejudice in favour of reaction; and in short his address was a queer performance for a man with a reputation. And yet he gave his friends a hint or two worth their remembrance, when he told them, *e.g.*, that the rich had in these latter days surrendered political power in the hopes of preserving property, and that in all probability they would as a consequence *temporarily* lose their property. Some of their faces must have fallen at this *temporary* prospect. What Mr. Froude really meant was that liberty and private property are incompatible,—who shall say him nay?

W. M.

A great lady and seigneur of the *ancien regime* were speaking about what was likely to happen to a certain old rake, lately of their acquaintance, but whose life and debaucheries had been cut short with very little notice. "It is to be regretted," said he, "that his Highness was not more careful in securing the good offices of the Church." "No doubt," said she; "but depend upon it, sir, God will think twice before he damns a man of that consideration." Kindly people flatter themselves that such notions belong to a time that has passed away; they will, then, be shocked to hear that at the great Tory gathering at Oxford on November 23rd, Monseigneur Salisbury said, when for once in a way he *spoke the truth*, "One of my Ministry is worth all the eighty-six Irish M.P.'s." These are but brutal ways of stating what to the speakers is the truth. But they are shocking more for the underlying truth on which all such ideas are based, than for the mode of putting them forth. It is *not* true that one man is worth more than another, but it is true that the whole of our society is arranged on the assumption that one set of men, selected by the merest chance, are better than the rest. The ideas expressed in "the claims of capital," or "the rights of property," and similar ones, all assume that men who happen to be chained to certain material surroundings are more worthy than if they were free from such encumbrances. Those who hold such ideas do not hesitate any more than the great lady of the *ancien regime* to take God into partnership when they quote "Dieu et mon droit" against others.

C. J. F.