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## NOTES ON NEWS.

THE continued violent and brutal attacks made on the public by the police have added another element to the demonstrations of the Unemployed: a deliberate attack on the freedom of speech is now being made. The respectability of London is, it would seem, so terrified at the sight of the misery it has created that at all hazards it must be swept out of sight. So the police have, it cannot be doubted, received orders to fall upon any assembly of ill-dressed persons who may have the temerity to assemble together to try to find out why they are ill-dressed and half-starved. These wickedly rash people they are to beat, kick, and otherwise ill-use as much as possible on the spot, and they are also to bring home a bag of game in the form of anyone they can catch who is ill-dressed enough to be considered a criminal at sight: it being quite a minor consideration as to whether he has taken any part in the "riot," since the police themselves are always ready with any amount of evidence that may be necessary for the conviction of the criminal (who has certainly committed the crime of being poor) before the Nupkins of the hour.

All this is done, it must be repeated, just to drive the symptoms of the disease which is eating out capitalistic society below the surface—for a month or two; and if in the process the right of public meeting and free speech receives such a blow as nothing but the most vigorous protest will remedy, what does it matter? For these people are not a long way off, like the Irish cottars; their woes are very unpicturesque; and though in fact they bear the old historic name of proletarians, well known to Rome when she was sickening for her death, the English Liberal thinks not of the history but the nuisance of them; as, if he were living in Ireland, he would think of those valiant Celts, over whom Mr. Gladstone has thrown his cloak, and thereby made them respectable.

This is a very poor game for the Great Liberal Party to play, but it seems it is good enough for persons blinded by the base political struggle, the great game of ins and outs. Meantime, are there no Radicals who remember something of their old traditions, of dislike to officialism, of resistance to arbitrary authority? If that is so, then it is a clear case that the Socialists are the only body of men in these islands who have any regard for liberty.

Or what do they think about the dictum quoted by the Bow Street Nupkins in sentencing the "rioters" for allowing themselves to be knocked about by the police? which, stripped of its verbiage, amounts to this, that when the police (the servants of the public) are running a-muck it is the business of peaceable citizens to prove on the spot, when they are under the batons of these philosophers, that they are peaceable citizens, and, if they don't, that they may be sent to prison for their carelessness; so that they had better not go out of their houses at all, for fear lest they should fall in with one of the guardians of Law and Order.

On this maxim the police are now acting; but fortunately in the hurry of the moment they have sometimes attacked persons of undoubted respectability. More power to their elbows in so doing! since if that goes on we shall still be allowed, perhaps, to hold out-door meetings without the accompaniment of a probable cudgelling on Saturday and a sentence on Monday.

Our friends of the Social Democratic Federation have issued a manifesto concerning the unemployed, which all Socialists must read with interest. It must be said of it that if it were possible for a bourgeois government to carry out the proposals contained in it, they are very reasonable ones considering the present condition of society; and one would think that the bourgeois themselves, those of them at least who have any real good-will towards working-men, and don't class them all as mere necessary nuisances, would be of that opinion. But then no capitalistic government will attempt to carry out any one of them, and in truth it could not do so. These proposals all attack the sacredness of "free contract" between the master who gives men leave to work on payment of a sufficient tribute, and refuses it on any other terms, and the workman who must work or die; and the maintenance of this holy law is the one function of a capitalistic government.

Therefore, it seems to me that our friends ask either too much or

too little. Even a transitional administration (if such a thing be possible) would give much more, because it must be said (as our friends would doubtless admit) that if all these demands were granted the workers would still be in a condition of miserable slaves; while on the other hand, as aforesaid, the maximum which a capitalistic government would or could grant would be a wretched concession of mere "charity" or out-a-door relief. That concession will have to be made, whether or no, and therefore to my mind it is a mistake for Socialists to take steps which may mix them up in the granting of this misery of a concession.

One can easily imagine the song of triumph and self-congratulation which the capitalist government will set up when it has been forced to set on foot a few relief works with pauper wages for payment of the workers. "We are all Socialists now," will be the cry, "what do you cantankerous revolutionists want now?" "What do we want?" we shall have to answer, "Why all that we have always wanted, the Freedom of Labour, the abolition of private property in the means of production." I think that answer will come clearer from us if we have allowed the capitalists to grant the palliatives they could not help granting. Don't let us mind their gaining what transient credit they can gain from such measures; it will soon pass away. "The poor ye have always with you," is the doom of capitalism.

"The police have adopted a milder bearing towards the crowds," says the *Daily News* of October 24th, after Sunday's events. In other words, the police have been beaten once more, and have had to give way before the gathering indignation of the public, and probably also before the task of bludgeoning a *Sunday* crowd, more numerous than a mere week-day one. The *Daily News*, the advocate of free speech in Ireland and of the suppression of free speech in England, has a good deal to say on the subject, which, however, doesn't come to much in the teeth of the fact that all that the objectors to police violence put forward has been proven true by events. During the week small bodies of men met, and were attacked by the police, so there was "rioting"; on the Sunday large bodies of men met, and there was apparently well-founded fear in some people's minds that there would be a great disturbance, but there was none. Why? Because, in the words of the *Daily News*, "the police have adopted a milder bearing toward the crowd"—that is, they have not made a riot as they did on the other days.

Now that the police have proved themselves a set of ruffianly rioters, and that Sir Charles Warren has written himself down an ass in characters which he who runs may read, surely even the Law-and-Order (in England) *Daily News* will admit that it is preposterous to keep the citizens in prison whom the Bow Street and other Nupkins have sentenced to one, three, and six months' hard labour for performing their duty as citizens. The only question is what compensation is to be made to them for the ill-treatment of the police and the police-court, and with what amount of ignominy Nupkins and Co. are to be dismissed.

The scene has shifted to Ireland again. Mr. Wilfrid Blunt has received the diploma of honour which the policeman's hand gives now-a-days, and with him Mr. John Roche, the President of the local Association. The *Daily News* will (of course) condemn their resistance to undoubted legal authority, but we shall congratulate them for serving the same cause as the poor workmen in London are serving.

Once more an Irish policeman, Connor, has shown that he is a man by refusing at his own peril to fall on harmless and unarmed citizens. Such men give one hopes for the Social Revolution, and the heroism which will be necessary to carry it through.

I see that one or two geniuses have been writing to the *Pall Mall Gazette* proposing a scheme for inveigling the unemployed into the ranks of the British army: that noble body of warriors which is at present to act as burglars abroad and bum-bailiffs at home—since Ireland is still "united" to England—and whose future function will be perhaps the attempted suppression of rising liberty in England. Well, I doubt if the cock will fight; but if any workmen are driven by starvation into the army, let them at least remember what they were, and like the gallant man mentioned in the note last above, refuse to attack their brethren if they should be called on to do so.

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