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NOTES ON NEWS.

A newspaper correspondent, on a visit to the City dust-bin, seems to have been a good deal filled up by the boss there, who vaunted the superior attractions of the occupation of—well, *dirt*-shifting and stink-smelling. So that it seems we are all wrong together in our attempts at sanitation; or perhaps the dust boss was a liar, which seems on the whole the simpler explanation. Anyhow this job of dust-shifting is one of those concerning which one gets asked after lectures as to who is to do such and such things under Socialism. Well, however hard the question might be to answer as to the future, it seems to me that at present M.P.'s might work at it between the squalls. It would teach them the difference between metaphor and fact for one thing, and probably they would prefer their old habitual way of eating dirt after all. To be serious, the real job is not fit for anybody else—except the lawyers.

Mr. Bradlaugh is in luck; after being canonized by Lord Wemyss, he has received a still more important testimonial from the *Daily News*, which classes him amongst "thoroughly sound and moderate politicians"! After this it will be strange indeed if he is not a member of the coming Gladstonian Government. Some persons will think indeed that it must be rather a strain to keep up a reputation for "soundness and moderation;" and whatever has been in the past, that will probably be true in the future, and even before very long, when when there will only be two parties—the party of the people and the party of reaction. You can only be moderate when it is possible to say "perhaps" instead of "yes" or "no." Which of these two latter will Mr. Bradlaugh say?

Meantime, on this Irish matter there are Gladstonians with greater claims to moderation than Mr. Bradlaugh. The meeting Liberals held recently to discuss the help to be given to the Irish in the present stress was in its moderation worthy of the study of a Molière. Even allowing for the disclaimer of the accuracy of the report in the *Daily News*, the general tone of it must have been pretty accurately given in the report, and it is curious how anxious certain members were—especially Mr. Howell—not to commit themselves to anything definite. One need hardly warn the Irish party not to trust too much to the Gladstonian M.P.'s, they will have reckoned them up long ago; but the English democracy, which is sincere in its conversion to the cause of Irish independence, should look a little sharper after its "representatives."

The delusion as to the recovery of trade which was spreading, or rather, perhaps, being industriously spread, a little time ago, probably as a part of the Jubilee decorations, is vanishing with the brilliant memory of those decorations; and it has now to be confessed for one thing that the falling off in the railway receipts is serious. The coming winter will bring home the fact of the failure of expansion in English trade very sharply to the millions of the slaves of commerce. And the trading class also will be feeling more and more the result of the revolution which is going on, though neither class will know what is the real cause of the pinch, but will put it down to "free trade," the immigration of foreigners, and other sticks and straws that are floating on the vast current of fully-developed commercialism.

It is Socialism only that can explain the conundrum offered to us by the capitalists, "Livelihood is so cheap that it is hard indeed to live." Truly even when thieves are disreputable persons they are inconvenient members of society; but when successful stealing is the aim of all respectable persons, and thieves have got to be looked upon as benefactors of society; when legalised theft is so gloriously organised, and the art has reached such a pitch of refinement that the thieves steal their slaves ready-made, instead of buying them honestly in the market, or boldly risking their lives in battle to conquer them; then indeed the less successful of us may well find it hard to live.

Indeed even the stealing is accomplished vicariously by these full-blown geniuses in the art, for, as Mr. G. B. Shaw was explaining to us the other night, the slaves themselves are forced to offer themselves as unbought property to their masters. Ancient society, with its brutal chattel slavery, did its business with discreditable want of economy compared with capitalist civilization.

The captive Salvationists are being championed by mightier prints and persons than we can bring forward. So, little need be said about their case, though it cannot fail to be interesting to us who have been in the same trouble and shall be again. The crime for which they are punished—of speaking in public on ground that belongs to the public—is familiar enough to us, and the cause for the attack on them is one of the causes for which we were attacked—lack of respectability, to wit. We can only hope that those who are defending freedom of speech in this case will do so again when our turn comes round.

W. M.

"THE" TEXT.

As is only fitting in a great industrial country, our government has made a collection of the finest of the products of the labours of every race of man. In this manner it means to preach to us a silent sermon, and point the way to a more "profitable" national life; and, not to be otherwise than strictly orthodox in its method, it points the moral of its teaching in a scriptural quotation, which is at once its text and "application." This text, which is emphatically "the" text, being given forth by "authority" for all engaged in productive labour, is:

"The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure: and he that hath little business shall become wise. How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks? He giveth his mind to make furrows, and is diligent to give the kine fodder.

"So every carpenter and work master that laboureth night and day: and they that cut and grave seals, and are diligent to make great variety, and give themselves to counterfeit imagery, and watch to finish a work: the smith also sitting by the anvil, and considering the ironwork, the vapour of the fire wasteth his flesh, and he fighteth with the heat of the furnace: the noise of the hammer and the anvil is ever in his ears, and his eyes look still upon the pattern of the thing he maketh; he setteth his mind to finish his work, and watcheth to polish it perfectly; so does the potter sitting at his work, and turning the wheel about with his feet; who is always carefully set at his work, and maketh all his work by number; all these trust to their hands, and every one is wise in his work. Without these cannot a city be inhabited: and they shall not dwell where they will, nor go up and down; but they will maintain the state of the world, and their desire is in the work of their craft."

These words are to be found, then, written in large letters around the principal Court of the South Kensington Museum, and they are also to be seen on the large window of the great staircase of the same building.

Really this text seems to have been expressly devised and set up to serve as a peg on which to hang a revolutionary dissertation; and its society tone, which admits that, after all, "without these a city cannot be inhabited," but consoles itself with the determination that "they shall not dwell where they will, nor go up and down," is truly nineteenth century, as also is the forgetfulness that the artist who gives himself to counterfeit imagery; the inventor who is diligent to make great variety; the foreman who watches to finish a work, and all the actual producers, happen to be the city itself; while the leisurely fed are but parasites, without whom a city could indeed be well inhabited.

Nothing could be more significant of the real aims of the ruling classes in this country than this inscription placed on an institution ostensibly for the advancement of the industrious mass of the community; nor could anything more openly betray the hypocrisy of the movements which have been made for the so-called benefit of the working-man. The South Kensington Museum, nominally erected for the training of art-workmen, by the very fact of it being the "South Kensington" Museum, proves the hollowness of all its professions of utility to the workers themselves; for the site of the building, miles from the industrial districts, and in the midst of an aristocratic quarter, shows that its real intention is for the convenience of those who have the greatest facilities for using it—the rich. And it is here that their class-hatreds are inflamed, their pride of caste flattered by having placed before their eyes this precious text telling them it is their right to control the men whose brains and lives produced the masterpieces of art surrounding them: that they, the men of leisure, the whore-master and the pigeon-shooter, are the divinely authorised disposers of the lives and productions of the potters and the smiths—the Palissys and Cellinis; and it is here that both genius and plodder, not to speak of the millions of the toilers, when by chance any such being wanders from his habitation to this far-off palace, are insulted by these words, which, however true and forcible to the pride of those who placed them there, are a threat and a challenge to every man and woman in