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NOTES ON NEWS.

THE result of the elections for the London County Council and the Govan election, shift the scales once more toward the "Liberal" side; for, as a matter of course, in spite of all disclaimers the County Council election was fought out in London on party lines. As to the Govan election, *if* the Liberal success tends at all to bring the Irish matter any nearer to a conclusion, it is so far favourable to us. As to the County Councils once more, it must be a very sanguine Socialist indeed who can really believe that they will have any inclination to go beyond the well understood lines of very moderate "reform," which will make no monopolist in the least in the world anxious about the safety of his heart—*i.e.*, his purse.

It is surely a matter to regret that our generous-minded and energetic comrade John Burns should be pitchforked into that thicket of red tape, which our new "Parliament for London' is pretty certain to turn out; but, undoubtedly, the return of such a "dangerous" man at the head of the poll is a sign of the times worth noting.

An account in the *Boston Investigator* of an interview with Colonel Ingersoll on the subject of Robert Elsmere, is interesting as showing the effect which the Socialist movement has had on that outspoken and eloquent Secularist. As far as I remember, in his early works Ingersoll shows no sign of being able to see beyond his own class; with him, as with so many intelligent middle-class men, the world was made up of the triumphant middle-class engaged in putting the finishing strokes to the work of demolishing feudal and absolutist oppression, and clearing away the cloud of superstition which yet hung over the latter end of the contest. The following sentence amongst several others has a very different ring about it.

"The poor man willing to work, eager to maintain his independence, knows that there is something higher than charity—that is to say justice. He finds that many years before he was born his country was divided out between certain successful robbers, flatterers, crawlers, and cringers, and that in consequence of such division not only himself, but a large majority of his fellow-men are tenants, renters, occupying the surface of the earth only at the pleasure of others. He finds too that these people who have done nothing and who do nothing have everything, and that those that do everything have but little."

Again, as to "charity": "For instance in England, think for a moment of the manner in which charities are distributed, the way in which the crust is flung at Lazarus. If that parable could be now retold, the dogs would bite him. The same is the case in this country (America). The institution has nothing but contempt for the one it relieves." It is much to be wished that all Secularist orators were as open to such generous ideas as "Col. Bob" seems to be. More power to him!

Apropos of charities, I have been begged to contribute to the Providence (Row) Night Refuge and Home for deserving men, women, and children. I have no word to say against the charity in question, which seems to do what work it can with less expensive machinery than most, and at least is doing good service in stating the facts plainly; I notice also that it has no harsh words for the poor folk it succours; but I must emphasise the word "deserving" by the way, for surely if there be any one who *deserves* less than the quite elementary help a night refuge can give him, what can that less be, short of a merciful bullet through his brains? Heavens! what strange words we use—about other people! The circular speaks about "the *appalling* destitution which is in the midst of us; and the number of persons who are walking the streets for nights homeless." Again, another word. Whom, I pray, does this appal, unless it be the sufferers themselves? Yet they, too, surely are long past being appalled. Will it appal the London County Council? I fear not.

And yet it well might if they could think of it. A hundred thousand people starving to death *is* appalling, I think, on any terms. One hundred thousand people is the population of a tolerably large town, even in the populous nineteenth century, if they were all brought together in one town. Reading, *e.g.*, has 42,000. Fancy living in Reading with *all* its population out of work, *i.e.*, starving! Think of yourself on a considerable island with no one in it able to do a stroke of work! Would that be less than appalling? And is it less appalling when this is happening amidst prosperous and respectable men going contentedly about their business and pleasure?

And why is not everybody who could by any chance amend it, always talking about it and about nothing else? Surely all business, public or private, should be but subsidiary to such a question as the solution of this "difficulty," this "problem," as we call it with lying cowardly evasion. For that is not all. Listen again: "There are numbers of women under the sweating system working from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m., and sometimes till 3 p.m., can only earn from 4s. 3d. to 5s. 6d. a week." We know the story, don't we? Or if we don't, *why* don't we, if it is true? As it is.

Do we know also that while business is improving, as is the word on all hands, "the applicants for poor-law relief exceed by 3,000 the number last year, and the charitable institutions are besieged." You capitalists, that is appalling enough if you will only consider what those two facts brought together mean. But you are not appalled, and I think will not be, until all doubt that your own skins are in immediate danger is at an end.

Again: "The outcasts who were at a distance, at Stratford, Victoria Station, Hyde Park, New Road, Dalston, and Hackney, had the bus fare paid to them to Liverpool Street, were most of them so poor, ragged, and dirty, that the conductors would not admit them, etc." Never mind, they were equal before the law to the Duke of Westminster and Mr. Blundell Maple. Oh pleasing and useful equality! Three cheers for civilisation!—with one cheer more for its—lice!

Yes, an old story indeed; and the why and wherefore of well-to-do people, not ill-natured or specially stupid above their fellows, looking on and sending from time to time a guinea to some such charity as this above mentioned, is not far to seek. No consideration of the subject, no talk, if it were continuous for a dozen years, would help. They would not know what to do, except by way of feeble palliatives, if they were to turn their whole attention to the subject. For they have not yet conceived the possibility of getting rid of the curse of private property and the struggle of the strongest for profits, which is its natural outcome. And the necessary outcome of that is that the extremely unsuccessful are not fit to ride in the same bus with even the moderately successful, or, if you please, even the moderately unsuccessful; so many minor grades there are in this hierarchy of the money-bag.

Most of all we have to remember that the only way out of this dreadful misery for the many, and the shame and crime for the few, of being forced to forget that it exists, is the attainment of a SOCIETY OF EQUALS. All inequality, whatever specious pretexts it may be veiled with, bears beneath the veil this grinning skeleton of stolid misery, side by side with soft, cowardly, well-to-do life. All inequality, I say, unless we are consciously striving to extinguish it, must in the end result in this last degree of inequality. The classes in a society can be "moderately" unequal when a man can be "moderately" honest and a woman "moderately" chaste.

The Immigration Bill before the Congress of the United States has suddenly flashed on the capitalist press as a kind of morning star of hope. To build a brazen wall of perpetual peace round the fools and snobs of the civilisation of a Continent, so that no soul should inhabit it except the said fools and snobs and their miserable slaves, is indeed an invention worthy of the Nation of Inventors. It is no wonder that the *Telegraph* is so enthusiastic about it. A reasonable man however, is likely to ask, "Will it work or burst?" W. M.