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NOTES ON NEWS.

On this side of the Atlantic we have had an "accident" of the kind the responsibility for which it is impossible for us not to take on our own shoulders; nature or ill-luck or what not, must be accused after us and not before us. As a matter of course, we have nothing to say about the men who have been arrested: even if they should be proved guilty of carelessness, yet after all it is not they who would be the real criminals, but rather ourselves, who allow monopolist companies to work our railways for profit, with the necessary consequence of low wages and long hours and short-handedness amongst the underlings out of whose pay and leisure the monopolists have to scrape up a dividend. What *can* come of such a system but misery and disaster on all hands?

I see the Rev. Mr. Viner, in presiding over a meeting of the Plumstead tram-car men, said that the object of the movement was not to make war on the company, but to get for the men a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. Well, the words are pretty, but unmeaning; the men *are* at war with the company, and must be so as long as they don't get a fair day's wage for their work; that is, until *they* are employed by the public and get what the public pays for riding in the cars instead of their do-nothing, dividend-drawing masters. The masters are showing them pretty well what war means already, and it is much to be feared that if the men don't learn to understand their position, and fight as hard as they can, they will soon be taught by their masters the meaning of one of the maxims of war: "Woe to the vanquished."

In point of fact, they are at the lesson now: the companies are acting in a quite straightforward commercial manner, and see the necessity of crushing the movement at once: they know their enemies, and put them *hors de combat* by giving them the sack without quarter. The public, however, are beginning to be a little uneasy at such straight "application of economical principles," as the bourgeois slang goes, and it is not so certain that the dividend-drawers will win.

Here is what a non-Socialist friend told me last night. Asking why a certain tram was late, one of the men told him that the company had extended their dinner time ("hour," I was going to write) from eight minutes to fifteen; and that in consequence they had to put on the extra minutes' work at the end of the day. How is that for shabbiness in this world where nature is so superabundant? I call it the very sublime of shabbiness: the true antithesis to the Widow's Mite.

The respectable critics have been very much down on Ibsen's play of "A Doll's House," now being acted at the Novelty Theatre, and profess to be shocked: Mr. Buchanan, *e.g.*, reiterating the phrase a "young woman of criminal proclivities" *apropos* of the heroine, whose crime one may say in passing is merely a technical one. How is this to be explained, linked as it is with the fact that the Socialists obviously look on the play as making for Socialism, and are enthusiastic about it? It is not difficult of explanation: whatever may be the demerits of "A Doll's House" as an acting play (by the way, if it is *different* from an ordinary modern play it must be better, just as any day different from last Whit-Monday must be better than it)—I say in any case it is a piece of the *truth* about modern society clearly and forcibly put. Therefore clearly it doesn't suit the critics, who are parasites of the band of robbers called modern society. Great is Diana of the Ephesians! But if my memory serves me, her rites were not distinguished for purity.

I note that the critics say that Ibsen's plays are pessimistic; so they are—to pessimists; and all intelligent persons who are not Socialists are pessimists. But the representation of the corruption of society carries with it in Ibsen's works aspirations for a better state of things, and that is not pessimism. Therefore Socialists recognise in them another token of the new dawn.
W. M.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* in a recent issue says: "The proposal to administer the territory between Bechuanaland and Lake Tanganyika by means of a company armed with a Royal charter, has excited considerable uneasiness at Berlin, and it is understood, says the *Standard's* correspondent, that Germany and Portugal are both preparing to prevent any encroachment by the English company on their spheres of interest." Of course; this *administering* (beautiful word) of the territory mentioned may involve "poaching on the manors" of Germany and Portugal; the vultures don't want too large a company at their dinner-party.

On June 12th and 14th, we have two articles by Mr. John Mackenzie on "British Supremacy in South Africa," in which the writer impresses on us the quantity of healthy habitable land available in this region. He remarks: "Considering the landlessness of the people of these [British] isles, I have yet to find the man who will come forward and propose that her Majesty's Government should give away any part of Bechuanaland, up to the Zambesi, to any other administrative power whatever." It never occurs to Mr. Mackenzie, or any other advocate of "extended Imperial administration," that her Majesty's Government should leave any part of Bechuanaland in the hands of the natives. In fact, he expresses his feelings with ingenuous openness in the next quoted lines: "All would agree that the simplest and best method of overtaking our work in Bechuanaland would be to extend Imperial administration there, so that the whole country, from the border of the Cape Colony up to the great river at its northern boundary, may be in our hands." This is truly comprehensive and all-embracing; the writer should be congratulated on his large-minded views. He adds, "This also is what the natives desire." No doubt they do; we have it on the most trustworthy authority (of sportsmen) that the fox likes being hunted—rather enjoys the fun, in fact.

Mr. Mackenzie suggests an opening to British railway capitalists here, and even waves the glint of gold before our eyes, provided permission could be obtained from one of the native chiefs to begin gold-mining, "which would amply secure those dividends which shareholders in a commercial undertaking always look for." There is "room for all" in South Africa, he thinks; the white man will find scope for his energy, and will bring his chastening influence to bear upon the untutored native, who will "find that with the passing away of his old methods and beliefs, he has offered to him more ennobling teaching, and the possibility of living in peace, and enjoying the fruit of his industry." Mr. Mackenzie becomes pious towards the end of his second article, and says that he regards the recent concurrence of events in South Africa as "the call of Divine Providence to occupy and administer that great country till it is ready for self-government."

The Queen has sent a message of sympathy "kindly worded" to the scene of the railway disaster at Armagh; that done, she very likely troubles herself no further about the matter. Her Majesty's "messages of sympathy"—seldom or never accompanied by anything more substantial—are perhaps proverbial by this time. We English are so snobbish and apathetic we deserve what we get.

The Shah of Persia's journal, published in 1874 after his visit to England, contains some very amusing reading, and gives a fresh aspect of English life, which should be a godsend to some of us who find London life rather dry in its old day-to-day aspect. For example, the following tribute to the police, how vigorous and picturesque in its language, and yet how touchingly true in every particular:—"The police of this town is eight thousand strong, all handsome young men, in a particular dress. The citizens set great estimation on the police; whoever behaves disrespectfully to the police is adjudged worthy of death."
M. M.

The increase of professional vagabonds in France causes uneasiness to the professional politicians, and the mayors of communes are asked to be more rigorous towards them. The increase has been greater of late years, owing to the vast number of unemployed. America also clamours for fresh legislation against tramps. *Reynolds* may include these notes in its next gush *re* glorious Republican institutions. F. K.