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NOTES ON NEWS.

IF Socialists retain any illusion as to the apparent defeat of Matthews and Warren (which was so loudly crowed over by a part of the Radical press) having any influence over the conduct of the police to the people, the brutality on 16th inst. will surely have swept such illusion away. It is not easy to imagine a worse case of arbitrary and cowardly violence than that which was perpetrated on our comrades of Berner Street, reproducing some of the worst features of Bloody Sunday, such as the beating of prisoners in the police-cell. Furthermore, is it probable that such things are done by the police out of the pure cussedness of the individual? That would be absurd to suppose; the authorities expect their men to behave in this manner, such deeds are practically, not condoned, but approved of. It is assumed that every poor man must be treated as an enemy of that society which is undoubtedly his enemy. And if he adds revolutionary ideas to his poverty—well!!

I can imagine a smug orderly well-fed military-looking higher officer of the police talking to some *refined* gentleman, and saying to him, "Well, my dear sir, you don't know the London rough; you can do nothing with him unless you knock him about; and as to who are roughs, why in such places as Berner Street the whole population are roughs. You must just let us act, my dear sir, and don't pay any attention to any outcry that a parcel of poor Jews may make. They can't do you any harm; the native roughs are quite inclined to fall upon them, and some day it will have to be done." And the refined gentleman would go away thinking it was all right, slumming being now out of fashion again. But if he could only bring his mind to bear upon so dull a subject, he might see that it is somewhat dangerous that it should have become an understood thing amongst the poor that the police are their natural enemies. "Those whom the gods will destroy they blind," says the ancient proverb.

The London County Council has made a very false step in closing the doors of its committee rooms on the public. This is going the way of the Board of Works. Why, it is exactly these committees that it is important for the public to know all about, that they may detect the first germs of corruption, criticise short-comings, discover incompetency, and encourage administrative qualities where they exist. It is very little use the public being admitted to the mere parade-days of the Council if it is to be excluded from its business meetings. This hole-and-corner resolution was passed owing to the laziness of the Progressives on the Council, who, one would have thought, might at least have been present on such an occasion. Or what explanation have they to offer?

The government have not been leading a happy life lately. The opposition have been working their victory in the Parnell Commission for all it is worth, and it has proved rather remunerative. However, one need neither affect to feel special moral reprobation, and still less surprise. Morally they are in a bad position, because they have been found out; that is all. For the rest, though they are cornered as to matters of detail, they have a good defence to put forward in the lump which should be accepted by the other side if they were not so steeped in hypocrisy.

For, after all, what is their business? The defence of property; the defence of the brigandage of the classes. We must at once get out of our heads that they have *anything* else to do. So what these Tory robber-chiefs or thief-syndicate have to say to their Liberal attackers is simply: "You know the interests which we have to defend, and how paramount they are; *you* in the enthusiasm of playing the party game have made a false step, and (no doubt without intending it) have attacked the rights of property, and have let loose upon us a crowd of ignorant Irish peasants, who don't know what they want, though they know that we (and you) keep them poor. They are headed by an ambitious, astute, and satisfactorily short-sighted politician, Mr. Parnell. So now it is our business to try and cure your blunder, if it be not incurable; and the only way to do that, as

you yourselves will one day find out, is to use all our resources of force and fraud, and set ourselves stiffly to say 'No' to any claims that could be brought against us, whatever humanity or justice there might be in them.

"And as to all this pother you are making about our using our advantages in the shape of prisons and spies and rapsallion magistrates, really it is very unconstitutional of you, when you *know* that any and every government would use the same instruments whenever it thought it necessary. Why didn't we have a State prosecution against Parnell and his gang? Why, because we thought it would be such a breakdown if we failed, as we feared we might; and we thought that if we carried it on under cover of the *Times*, that at all events some of the dirt might stick, and that we might have gone about bragging that we *could* have prosecuted had we pleased. However, you will see, the time will come when a Liberal Government will have to do just the same sort of thing, when these damned Socialists begin to make a little head, perhaps. And how will *you* like it then? No, my friends, remember that passage of holy writ, and do as you would be done by."

But if the Government are rather hard set on by their declared enemies, they can't be said to help themselves much. Just as there is a fate on the Liberals to push on questions which they had much better have left alone, like the agrarian question in Ireland, so there is a fate on the Tories to discredit their party by saying the very worst that they possibly can for themselves. Lord Salisbury, *e.g.*, made a most unaccountable blunder in his hint that perhaps after all the forged letters were not so very much forged. Real generosity is not to be expected from politicians on any occasion, but a little simulation of it would help them wonderfully sometimes, and on this occasion a little "frankness" of this sort might almost have retrieved the position for the Tories. It is lucky that reactionaries are such fools.

Neither should a man in his position have begun by using the words "calumnies and falsehoods." Says the proverb, "Don't speak of a rope in the house of a man whose father was hanged." And the parliamentary history of the last few days has done something towards putting some of the said "calumnies and falsehoods" into a different category, that of facts.

As to the rest of his speech, it was in the main, if properly read, an eloquent plea for revolution, under cover of a defence of law and order; for what it practically said was this: "Granted that the Irish have grievances against us, that the prison system is bad, that men are being put in prison for making political speeches of a certain tenour; yet is it not all law? Did not you, the English democracy, allow these laws to be made? If you want them altered go to parliament and get them altered." Behind all which there was a kind of gleeful chuckle, Don't you wish you may! For of course Lord Salisbury's true complaint is that his opponents have used the really effective weapons of boycotting and the Plan in the teeth of constitutionalism, and he very naturally "says you haven't played fair."

All this may be damaging argument for a debate, in which pure constitutionalism is to be assumed. But we may almost hope that pure constitutionalism is getting played out, and that the democracy will have the wits to see that if a change is good, it is good against the law, and that those who try to uphold the law against it are simply the enemies of the human race. Meantime it is encouraging to think that the great Liberal party, with Mr. Gladstone at its head, are accused of egging on people in Ireland to break the law wholesale, and that as a matter of fact it cannot rebut the accusation.

But we must not be too sanguine; it is only in Ireland that the Liberals like law-breaking as an instrument for law-mending. Doubtless the time will come when they will have to face the same trouble in England. The Irish question once shelved, the question of labour and capital which is involved in many side issues in the Irish matter will lie bare and obvious before them, and what will they do

then? How, for instance, will a Liberal Government treat a no-rent manifesto in London? And why should a labourer be fined for wanting to sleep under a roof in London any more than in Tipperary? Will you say, the Irish cottar has laboured on his land, and has got just enough to keep himself and can pay no rent. True, but has not the English labourer done the same? Yet Lord! What a set of evasions the politicians will have to use to point out the essential difference between the two! And how easy it will be to clap Socialists into jail for doing the sort of thing that O'Brien has been doing and over whose fate the Liberals have been so indignant. W. M.

We are informed by a lady friend that a poor sewing-woman was lately employed by a clergyman's wife to make underclothing at a starvation price; for instance, for a night-dress sewn entirely by hand she received 1s., and was offered 9d., which latter price she refused. Any one who understands what work there is in hand-sewn linen, will appreciate this preposterous price—perhaps the pious lady threw in religion as a make-weight. The friend who told us the story said that she herself employed the woman to do some sewing for her, and on offering her what she considered a moderate price, the poor soul was so much taken off her guard with surprise, that instead of taking it without a word she exclaimed at the enormity of the pay, which was twice as much as her other patronesses would have paid her. And, indeed, it is not the poorer folk that beat down prices from sheer necessity, but often ladies and gentlemen from mere self-complacency at their power of bargain-making, and who, with all their cultivation and sensibilities, have got no nearer to justice and right dealing than this—beating down prices in the smaller industries with one hand, and with the other perhaps subscribing to a Mansion House Fund or a Dog's Home.

The lately published prospectus of the "Bellite Explosive" Company (Limited), gives far more prominence to the advantages this new explosive possesses in warfare than to those which recommend it as useful in mining operations. The company are confident of the greatest success; every scrap of news that points towards warfare, in whatsoever part of the world, will, one must think, cause directors and shareholders to rub their hands in glee over the newspapers at their comfortable breakfast-tables. It is nothing new, this trading and speculating in warfare—any more than is the trading on and coining human miseries of all sorts—but every fresh announcement of the sort, frank and impudent and brutal, renews one's disgust at the social order which endures, approves, and applauds the rage for money-making (without personal labour) at whatever cost to others.

Here we have more of the same sort. In a recent issue the *Star* says: "It is believed that a new industry is about to be started by the Birmingham Small Arms Company (Limited), who have lately fitted up a branch for the manufacture of drawn steel shells, the company having secured two War Office contracts which will keep them busy for the remainder of the year." M. M.

THE SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE.

In making our claims for the changes in Society which we believe would set labour free and thus bring about a new Society, we Socialists are satisfied with demanding what we think necessary for that Society to form itself, which we are sure it is getting ready to do; this we think better than putting forward elaborate utopian schemes for the future. We assert that monopoly must come to an end, and that those who can use the means of the production of wealth should have all opportunity of doing so, without being forced to surrender a great part of the wealth which they have created, to an irresponsible owner of the necessities to production; and we have faith in the regenerative qualities of this elementary piece of honesty, and believe that the world thus set free will enter on a new cycle of progress. We are prepared to face whatever drawbacks may accompany this new development with equanimity, being convinced that it will at any rate be a great gain to have got rid of a system which has at last become nearly all drawbacks. The extinction of the disabilities of an effete system of production will not, we are convinced, destroy the gains which the world has already won, but will, on the contrary, make those gains available to the whole population instead of confining their enjoyment to a few. In short, considering the present condition of the world, we have come to the conclusion that the function of the reformers now alive is not so much prophecy as action. It is our business to use the means ready to our hands to remedy the immediate evils which oppress us; to the coming generations we must leave the task of safeguarding and of using the freedom which our efforts shall have won them.

Nevertheless, we do partly know the direction which the development of the world will take in the immediate future; the evolution of past history teaches us that. We know that the world cannot go back on its footsteps, and that men will develop swiftly both bodily and mentally in the new Society; we know that men in general will feel the obligations of Society much more than the later generations have done, that the necessity for co-operation in production and life in general will be more consciously felt than it has been; that the comparative ease of life which the freeing of labour will bring about will give all men more leisure and time for thought; that crime will be rarer because there will not be the same temptation to it; that increased ease of life and education combined will tend to free us

from disease of body and mind. In short, that the world cannot take a step forward in justice, honesty, and kindness, without a corresponding gain in all the material conditions of life.

And besides what we know, a knowledge without which we should not take the trouble to agitate for a change in the basis of Society, we cannot help guessing at a great deal which we cannot know; and again, this guessing, these hopes, or if you will, these dreams for the future, make many a man a Socialist whom sober reason deduced from science and political economy and the selection of the fittest would not move at all. They put a man in a fit frame of mind to study the reasons for his hope; give him courage to wade through studies, which, as the Arab king said of arithmetic, would otherwise be too dull for the mind of man to think of.

There are, in fact, two groups of mind with whom Social Revolutionists like other people have to deal, the analytical and the constructive. Belonging to the latter group myself, I am fully conscious of the dangers which we incur, and still more perhaps of the pleasures which we lose, and am, I hope, duly grateful to the more analytical minds for their setting of us straight when our yearning for action leads us astray, and I am also, I confess, somewhat envious of the beatitude of their dreamy contemplation of the perfection of some favourite theory; a happiness which we who use our eyes more than our reasoning powers, for noting what is going on in the world, seldom or ever enjoy.

However, as they would and do call our instinctive vision dreaming, and as they almost always, at least in their own estimation, have the better of us in argument when we meet in friendly battle, I must be careful what I say of them, and so will for the present at least only deal with the visionaries or *practical people*. And one thing I must confess from the beginning, which is that the visions of us visionary or practical people differ largely from each other, and that we are not much interested in each others visions; whereas the theories of the analysts differ little from each other, and they are hugely interested in each others theories—in the way that a butcher is interested in an ox—to wit, for cutting up.

So I will not attempt to compare my visions with those of other Socialists, but will simply talk to you of some of my own, and let you make the comparison yourselves, those of you who are visionaries, or let you unassisted by me criticise them, those of you who are analytically given. In short, I am going to give you a chapter of confessions. I want to tell you what it is I desire of the Society of the Future, just as if I were going to be reborn into it; I daresay that you will find some of my visions strange enough.

One reason which will make some of you think them strange is a sad and shameful one. I have always belonged to the well-to-do classes, and was born into luxury, so that necessarily I ask much more of the future than many of you do; and the first of all my visions, and that which colours all my others, is of a day when that misunderstanding will no longer be possible; when the words poor and rich, though they will still be found in our dictionaries, will have lost their old meaning; which will have to be explained with care by great men of the analytical kind, spending much time and many words over the job, and not succeeding in the end in making people do more than pretend to understand them.

Well now, to begin with, I am bound to suppose that the realisation of Socialism will tend to make men happy. What is it then makes people happy? Free and full life and the consciousness of life. Or, if you will, the pleasurable exercise of our energies, and the enjoyment of the rest which that exercise or expenditure of energy makes necessary to us. I think that is happiness for all, and covers all difference of capacity and temperament from the most energetic to the laziest.

Now, whatever interferes with that freedom and fulness of life, under whatever specious guise it may come, is an evil; is something to be got rid of as speedily as possible. It ought not to be endured by reasonable men who naturally wish to be happy.

Here you see is an admission on my part, which I suspect indicates the unscientific mind. It proposes the exercise of free will on the part of men, which the latest scientists deny the possibility of, I believe; but don't be afraid, I am not going into argument on the matter of free will and predestination; I am only going to assert that if individual men are the creatures of their surrounding conditions, as indeed I think they are, it must be the business of man as a social animal, or of Society, if you will, to make the surroundings which make the individual man what he is. Man must and does create the conditions under which he lives; let him be conscious of that, and create them wisely.

Has he done so hitherto? He has tried to do so, I think, but with only moderate success, at any rate at times. However, the results of that moderate success he is proud of, and he calls it *civilisation*. Now, there has been amongst people of different minds abundant discussion as to whether civilisation is a good thing or an evil. Our friend Bax in his very able article on the subject, did, I think, really put the matter on its true footing when he pointed out that as a step to something better, civilisation was a good, but as an achievement it was an evil. In that sense I declare myself an enemy of civilisation; nay, since this is to be a chapter of confessions, I must tell you that my *special* leading motive as a Socialist is hatred of civilisation: my ideal of the new Society would not be satisfied unless that Society destroyed civilisation.

For if happiness be the pleasurable exercise of our energies and the enjoyment of necessary rest, it seems to me that civilisation, looked at