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### NOTES ON NEWS.

ONE could hardly have a better specimen of the inefficiency, stupidity, and humbug of Parliament, than the debate on the Leasehold Enfranchisement Bill. In the first place, the measure, whatever its merits or demerits, might be, purported to be a bill in the interests of the working-classes. This was enough to thin the House down to the number which are usually got together when anything of any interest to the public has to be discussed, for nothing of that kind of course interests the House at all.

Then consider the ignorance of these legislators! Both sides approached this bill as though it were of a terribly Socialistic and revolutionary affair; its promoters thought they were making a great concession to the growing feeling for Socialism, and that the working-classes would almost have a new life given them by it. The professed reactionaries attacked it on the same grounds, the useful Mr. Matthews saying that he looked at it as blank Communism, and that it attacked the principles of private property directly.

What an exhibition of ignorance! The truth is that it is really a definitely Conservative and reactionary measure, and the booby Matthews with the whole of his colleagues ought to have supported it, carried it, and put it into working order. Here is the point, stated over and over again by Socialists. Landlordism is bad; landlords are bad; therefore, says this sham Socialistic measure, let us break these few landlords up that now exist into many pieces, and so have more and more landlords; each one of these landlords will be a "kind of a man" with an interest in the monopoly in which he shares, and which he will do his utmost to defend. What can possibly result except the strengthening of the monopoly which it is the business of Mr. Matthews and his crew to defend, and which it is the business of every Socialist to attack?<sup>1</sup>

The Vigilance Committee who are so watchful over our morals are making another attack on Zola, this time through *expurgated* English editions. Apart from the blatant hypocrisy which attacks the symptoms and lets the causes alone, this is a gross piece of stupidity. What do they object to? The coarseness? This is a matter of art; it must be admitted that there are works which sin against art in this direction. But what then? Is bad taste to be made a matter for a criminal court? In that case I think the prisons might be filled to overflowing with criminals taken from the "cultivated" and "refined" classes. Besides, there are many sinners among the English classics in this respect; in a breath—Fielding, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and our translation of the Bible must be condemned and expurgated.

Or is the demoralising effect on people to be the matter to be considered in the extremely "moral" air of a Court of Justice? And how pray? I hold that there are dozens of most respectable works which the Vigilance Society wouldn't think of attacking, which are far more demoralising and corrupting than Zola. Henry James' novels for instance; or even in their feeble way, Mr. Besant's imitations of Charles Reade, whose books, though very amusing, are not specially "moral" (small blame to them) according to the standard of the Vigilance Society.

W. M.

The *Pall Mall* has been commenting severely on the "too-elaborate 'editing'" of the *Irish World*, taking as its text the telegram from Mr. Parnell to Patrick Ford, upon which the light and playful pen of

<sup>1</sup> It may be worth preserving for future reference the following particulars:—The second reading of the Leaseholders Enfranchisement Bill in the House of Commons on Wednesday, May 1, was supported by 124 Gladstonian Liberals, including Mr. Gladstone, Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Mundella, and Sir George Trevelyan; 13 Irish Nationalists; 11 Conservatives: Sir George Elliot, Sir E. Lechmere, Sir John Puleston, Admiral Mayne, Colonel Hughes, Messrs. Holloway, Kelly, Mallock, B. Robinson, Seton-Karr, and Whitmore, and eleven Liberal Unionists, including Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Caine. The majority which rejected the bill was composed of 172 Conservatives and 15 Liberal Unionists.

the editor had been professionally exercised. Here is the telegram, with the parts added in editing printed in italic:

"Montreal, March 9th, 1889.  
"Will be leaving on Thursday for Ireland in the 'Baltic.' Shall, of course, return to America after the elections. *The work here is vitally important, and must go on. Tell my friends to keep the good work going and the flag flying, and we shall come back with victory shining on our banners to complete a labour in America that is yet scarcely begun.* Dillon remains here on guard, and will keep the ball rolling till my return. *Canada has welcomed us magnificently, and Montreal turned out in a style that shows to our enemies that Irish hearts are Irish everywhere. Men of America! keep on forming Land Leagues—and above all, sustain the men at home in the present crisis.* Have called, by telegraph, a hurried conference of Irish leaders at the New York Hotel on the morning of my departure. *Hope for your presence.*"

Hereupon the *Pall Mall* moralizes:

"The art of padding has certainly been carried to great length in America. It is a useful art in its way, for when you are using the telegraph, especially from great distances, it is ruinously expensive to transmit all the words which form what may be called the cartilaginous matter of the dispatch. All that is necessary is to telegraph the bones and allow the ingenious news-editor at the other end to clothe them with flesh and blood. This method, however, which is perfectly innocuous when practised with discretion and with the assent of the sender of the telegram, becomes very mischievous when it is practised without discretion and without the prior knowledge of the person who telegraphs. And the proof that such padding is resorted to so unscrupulously as to transform the whole character of the dispatch, entirely vitiates the claim of the newspaper indulging in such a practice to be the authentic record of contemporary history."

"Authentic record of contemporary history" indeed! The "perfectly innocuous" method when "practised with discretion," is as Mr. Stead well knows, exercised by every news-editor in London, and for the most part even more unscrupulously than by the *Irish World* man. Among the worst offenders are the *Pall Mall* and its evening rivals; while the one paper on which the "innocuous" method is least apparent is the much-abused *Times*. No! it is not only a few out-of-the-way papers or over-enterprising journals, as we Socialists know to our cost, the news-editors of which embody the "dry bones" of fact in the "flesh and blood" of an over-active fancy!

And as for the "authentic record," this hardly looks like it:

*Pall Mall Gazette*, April 24th.

"Lord Derby is, I hope, not going out of public life altogether. England can ill spare the active services of such clear-headed and independent peers as the Lord of Knowsley."

*Pall Mall Gazette*, April 25th.

"Lord Derby's chronic inability to make up his mind seems to have followed him. . . . In Lord Derby's case it is, no doubt, only another instance of the diseased scepticism of intellect." . . .

Journalists, like the members of all other trades and professions in these evil days, are, we know, crippled and corrupted by the economic conditions of their calling; but those of them who "set up" to be better than their neighbours must expect to be more severely judged than their "unregenerate" fellows, just as is the psalm-singing sweeter or the lay-preaching company-promoter. Mr. Stead must really cool his fiery indignation until he proves his own superiority to the conditions that make journalism what it is.

Nor, as we have said, are his evening rivals, democratic or otherwise, beyond reproach. Does not even the *Star* embroider? Has it not an "Artist, Unknown" whose name is less well than widely known among those who care anything for art, and who, under a specious covering of democratic cant, endeavours to conceal his presumptuous ignorance and morbid spite? Can it not preach Socialism one day and praise Broadhurst or Bradlaugh for their moderation on the next? Has it not been known to denounce a landlord (in Ireland) on the front page for exacting his rent, and a tenant (in England) on the back page for the non-payment of his?

But all these are little things—"legitimate business," and in the "ordinary way of trade." It is only when they are found out that they matter. In a state of society like that we live under, where the