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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

THERE seems to be a risk of the London County Council making a huge blunder, which it certainly will do if it approves the report of its Licensing Committee. That committee proposes in the first place that the Council shall act as a censor of morals as to the matter of what is said or sung in the Music Halls, and it is impossible for them to fulfil this function except on the old reactionary lines. Granted that the songs provided by the music halls are often coarse and often nasty, who is to gauge the degree of coarseness and nastiness which shall be enough to deprive a hall of its licence? Whose standard is to be applied? That of a Scotch goody-goody, a fanatical Salvationist editor of a commercial sensational journal, or that of a sensible man?

But no sensible man will have anything to do with such nonsense as trying to make people moral by Act, either of Parliament or of County Council. The standard, therefore, will be the standard of "purity" fanatics, who will be backed up by politicians anxious to catch the votes of the very powerful Nonconformist Liberals.

And all the time they will let alone the nastiness and *double entendre* of the respectable theatres, which are every bit as bad as the coarseness of the music halls.

It won't do. As a people is, so are its entertainments, and both the music halls and the theatres are but a reflex of the life of the slums. To that must you play down, gentlemen and ladies of the stage, or your managers will not be able to fill their houses, and your salaries will tumble down. Given a society corrupted by the existence of general misery, and founded on sheer robbery of the disinherited, and what are its theatrical entertainments likely to be? At the best, corruption whitewashed with respectability; at the worst?—but can there be anything worse than that?

As to the other side of this moral outburst of the over-righteous of the London County Council, the shutting up of a place of entertainment because it shelters prostitutes; that is worse still. You want to turn these poor women out into the streets, and when they are in the streets you want to run them in for being there. And all the while you know perfectly well that they are just as necessary an institution of modern Society as the banker who looks after the money that pays them, or the policeman who runs them in.

In short, this is an attack on the public by the Puritans, and it will be a thousand pities if the London County Council allows them to jump into the saddle and so injure its possible usefulness. And it is grievous to think how much power this Puritanism still has. Although it has sunk from a destructive fanaticism into a slimy superstition, it is still a dangerous ally of the gigantic robbery of capitalism, which first gave it birth. Such a body of voters as it can bring to the polling places!

The Bishop of London in the chair of the St. James's Hall meeting, gave a clear expression of its arbitrariness in refusing to allow our friend Headlam to move an amendment or to speak. His conception of a public meeting as a place where only one side is to be heard is refreshingly naïve, and really beats Bradlaugh.

Certainly it would be a preposterous blunder of the London County Council to jump at the office of a subsidiary Lord Chamberlain, and carry out his antiquated rules with extra zeal, even to the shutting up of the unprivileged small dramatic entertainments with (naturally) the full concurrence of Mr. Augustus Harris.

The "Turkish Atrocities" in Crete and Armenia are such an obviously good card for the Liberal party to play, that one cannot help feeling some suspicion on the subject. Such things, however, are the natural outcome of a dominant race with a population of workers

under them, whether they be peasants or what not. We shall be less likely to question the substantial truth of these reports when we remember English "atrocities" in Ireland, India, Jamaica, Egypt, and other places where that blameless, religious, and practical race has been dominant.

Certainly two wrongs do not make a right, and we should be heartily glad to hear of the Cretans and Armenians rising against their tyrants, especially if that could be done without furnishing them with a fresh set of tyrants in the form of westernised, stock-jobbers subservient to the world-market, as I fear it could not. But we must not forget meanwhile that these "atrocities" are nothing more than the form which exploitation takes in rough societies; and that our own workers forced to live (?) in slums, to work in the factory hell, to have to enjoy bad beer and a low music hall as *their* share of the comforts and luxuries of civilisation, can show "atrocities" in competition with Crete, Armenia—or Hell, and that their case is a pretty considerable "disgrace to Europe," as the newspaper posters were phrasing it the other day.

For again let us remember that while the "atrocities" in Crete are spasmodic, the atrocities in England are chronic: *they* are always going on day after day, though we sometimes sprinkle a little rose-water on them in the hope (?) of a remedy. The very fact that the Cretan peasants can raise such a clamour over their sufferings shows that they have a well-grounded hope of their ceasing. What hope can our slum-dwellers have of curing their sufferings? Only those of them can have formed a hope who, dimly it may be, see the Social Revolution advancing.

To think that there are people in England by the hundred thousand who *cannot* hope for happiness because they have had no opportunity of forming an idea of what happiness is! Yet this is the foundation on which our modern society rests.

W. M.

By an unaccountable slip last week, I attributed the strike articles by Cardinal Manning and John Burns to the *Universal* instead of to the *New Review*, in which they really appear. The blunder is all the greater, as I might have remembered that I had *bought* the *New Review* (at 6d.), whereas I should have *borrowed* the *Universal* (at 2s. 6d.).

The Arts and Crafts Exhibition is open again, and might be used as a propagandist weapon with great effect. To take a doubting friend and show him what Socialists can do might induce him to hear with more attention what they have to say. And you will find plenty of Socialist work there; not alone of Morris and Crane and Emery Walker, and so on, but of men and women less heard of and comparatively unknown. An announcement of the forthcoming lectures will be found elsewhere.

Critics of all kinds have had a try at judging it, of course, and, equally of course, have for the most part failed miserably in rendering any coherent verdict upon either its merits or its meaning. But with one exception they have been studiously fair; the exception being Mr. — well! the "Artist Unknown" of the *Star*, who is neither an artist nor unknown, as I have had occasion to say before. And he, like the capitalist who listens to a Socialist, and knows that if the people hearken his occupation will be gone, and for just the same reason, indulged in a tirade of reactionary abuse. Against which may be placed the "plain man's" opinion expressed in its favour by Mr. Grant Allen in the *Pall Mall*. The fact of the matter being that on its own lines the Arts and Crafts Society is doing right good revolutionary work, to the great anger and disquietude of the quacks and exploiters of the present reign of sham.

Apropos of the schoolboy strikes which are taking place "all over the shop," we have received several very interesting letters, notably one from a Leith comrade, which we can only regret that space forbids our printing in full. The points they chiefly emphasise are the parallelism with the French Revolution times, the value of a real strike of