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NOTES ON NEWS.

THE dockers have won their victory; for with all drawbacks it must be called a victory. They have shown qualities of unselfishness and power of combination which we may well hope will appear again before long. For one thing, they have knocked on the head the old slander against the lower ranks of labour, and shown that the mere "fringe of labour," the "roughs," the "vagabonds"—in short, the men named by the insults of the real criminal class, who have thrust them into their terrible position,—that these men can organise themselves at least as well, and be at least as true to their class, as the aristocracy of labour. No result of the strike is more important than the effect it will have as a blow against class jealousy amongst the workers themselves. Henceforth any working-man attempting to make distinctions between skilled and unskilled will be obvious to his fellows as a traitor and reactionary.

The *Daily News*, which, like several other definitely capitalist papers, espoused the cause of the strikers, was nevertheless very anxious to show that the strike had nothing to do with Socialism. Now if that means that it was no artificial agitation, but was caused by dire necessity, we can all agree with that. If it means anything else it is nonsense. For in the first place, although mere combination amongst the men, with no satisfactory ulterior aim, is not itself Socialism, yet it is both a necessary education for the workers, and it is an instrument which Socialism cannot dispense with. Furthermore, the attitude of the *Daily News* itself and of the well-to-do sympathisers with the strikers (including, doubtless, a large part of the lower middle class), remains, when all deductions have been made, a remarkable fact; and a fact, moreover, quite impossible to be explained except by admitting that the preaching of Socialism has frightened some and, at least partly, convinced others of the respectable classes. They are becoming at once terrified and shocked by the horrible poverty of London. Is that the result of the efforts of the Charity Organisation to make poverty respectable? of the efforts of the philanthropists to make it dumb? of the parsons of all sects to make it religious? No. It is the result of the efforts of the Socialists to make poverty actively discontented.

Let us go on with those efforts then, encouraged by the step that combination amongst the workers has taken, but remembering that the new epoch of combination is only just beginning. Let us make it clear to the middle-class sympathisers with labour, that very little has been done even to palliate the most obvious evils of the system which makes them a middle-class, *i.e.*, a class of sweaters. The Dockers are to have their "tanner" (if the companies keep faith with them, which is very doubtful), but what will be their position when they reap the result of their hard won victory? Let us be plain on this matter. They will receive precarious mere-subsistence wages for the hardest of hard work. They will be lodged in hideous and foul slums; they will have no reasonable pleasure, no taste of the comforts and the luxuries which their labour helps to win for others. In a word, they will still be slaves as far as their material condition is concerned, though they have shown that they are not the stuff of which it is safe to make slaves.

For us, it is our business to make them understand that they never can be anything else than slaves till they have swept away class domination and privilege; that in spite of all the soft words of the capitalist press, they and the capitalists are and must be irreconcilable enemies; that whatever either gains must be at the expense of the other. When they have learned that, their combination will both be infinitely improved as an instrument, and they will also be compelled to use it for its one real use, the realization of Socialism, to which undoubtedly this strike has been a step, as part of the labour struggle, as part of the attack on our enemy—Capitalism. W. M.

I am very glad to see that "The Middleman," Mr. H. A. Jones's new play, has made a success at the Shaftesbury Theatre. Despite some extremely orthodox morality mixed up in the love-interest, and

a great deal too much talk of "shame" and the "child of shame," and a woman who has been "dishonoured" being "better dead," and so on, it remains a really well-planned and well-wrought play, which is distinctly worth seeing. From the moment of the opening, which strikes the keynote at once, to the last dropping of the curtain, there is no fall from a very high level of economic and social thought. Not that there is any "preaching"; in so clearly reproducing, without obvious comment, a striking phase of the present system, the author has answered his evident purpose with tenfold effect. The man must be dull indeed who can rise from witnessing the performance of "The Middleman" without some measure of awakening to the crying injustice of the social arrangements which deliver one man bound hand and foot, body and brain, into the hand of another, because he is poor and the other rich.

Making all needful qualifications, "The Middleman" remains the healthiest production of an English dramatist in modern times, and the one which a Socialist may witness with least weariness, even in its worst places. For myself, I must confess that I have seen it twice and mean to see it again. Of course, the success of it is not altogether due to its high tone and progressive standpoint, though I hope and think that a great deal of it is. Something of it—much, indeed—is due to the magnificently careful and unaffected rendering of the old workman-inventor by Mr. Willard.

If anyone go and see it upon my recommendation, and, not liking it, blame me for beguiling him of his hard-earned entrance-money, I would ask him to think of the tawdry rubbish that has been hitherto, and still is, and will continue to be, served up to the British public in the place of a rational drama with some wholesome relation to ordinary life. Let him for a corrective go and see "A Man's Shadow" at the Haymarket, where he will see a powerful actor wasting his energies and those of a good company upon a melodrama, strong enough as melodramas go, but entirely designed and built upon the lines of the most debased and brutal of the superstitions which go to make up bourgeois "morality."

To say that Mr. Robert Buchanan, who assailed Ibsen for indecency, is its author or adapter, and that the *Pall Mall* is its most enthusiastic admirer, is to say that "social purity" is rampant throughout. Except in the "comic element," that is; for Mr. Buchanan's "morality" fails him when he tries to be funny, and his jokes are all turned upon the alternate condonation of adultery by two men who change places as the lover and husband of one woman. S.

The Liberty and Property Defence League has issued another list of Bills requiring "your opposition." There are 34 of them, all of which seem to have already come before Parliament, and, with two exceptions, to have been withdrawn or dropped. It is a striking testimony to the uselessness of Parliament for effecting any change worth the name, when 32 out of 34 bills, presumably for somebody's good, have to be dropped.

To be sure, it was of little consequence what became of these bills. Misbegotten things as most of them were, it cannot matter that nearly all were still-born. For no bill has the least chance of passing through Parliament, unless it is framed in such a way that it really makes no difference—except to place-hunters—whether it passes or not. So that one wonders what the Liberty and Property Defence League sees in them to object to.

But the fact is that the old watch-dog of Property is near going mad. These little puddles of watery bills have frightened him, and there are signs of imminent rabies. What else but madness can it be, in days like these, to waste hope or fear on Parliament—that huge gas-stroke and light of the world—which, in the middle of the docker's strike, goes out with a little sputter and stink of Queen's Speech, all unobserved as a dying candle when the day is come?

Yet here are these poor creatures of the Liberty and Property