NOTES ON NEWS.

By a sudden or accident other people have been granted the wonderful boon of being allowed to boat in the London parks on Sundays those who can pay for the privilege, be it understood.

That the folk are so miserably beaten down that an hour or two's amusement on some particular day is a great thing to be thought of even by the "comfortable artisan"; this is bad enough in all conscience, but there are so many found willing to take even this small streak of colour out of their endless lives is beyond endurance.

The time is past when the people could be kept quiet by the forcible application of a crude ideal of inaptitude and sanctimonious self-satisfaction, or bribed into inaction by the promise of celestial delights.

They want their heaven here and now.

Would it not be well for the present-day "rulers of men" to see what they can do toward a gradual approach to social justice! Let us see what is the matter with our dealing here being characterised by a decisive promptitude eminently subservient of their dignified serenity!

This is not mere sporting-boxing or very much more extended applications of the panic of crimine policy. The people may be amused and so kept quiet for awhile, but the manner by which has rather a grim under-meaning to it, not of good augury for the annuaries.

Once more the city corporation identified itself with a gigantic piece of bribery, but it is quite vain to heap obloquy upon its members as is now being done.

Allow a gang of dacoits or brigands to entrench and arm themselves and store up a mass of plundered wealth; can you then wonder that they defend their position with what weapon comes to hand?

It does no good to stand around and complain to all the gods of their unfair fighting; what must be done is to come handshakes as soon as may be; to resolve on the final extinction of monopoly, upon which rests the power of them and all like them, and then to "fight it out on that line if it takes all summer!"

Meanwhile it is funny to see how impecunious philanthropists, and other self-advertisers-from the purest-motives, wriggling and squirming when the futility is exposed that lies behind the fair show they turn toward the world.

The report of the Committee of Enquiry into the accommodation for prisoners awaiting trial has been reported of things doubly supposed to have died out with the "Holy Inquisition."

An article dealing with the report will appear in these columns as soon as it can be arranged; meanwhile may we suggest to the Government the advisability of instituting a companion enquiry—one into the nature and origin of the causes for those being prisoners to be tried!

The Spectator is exceeding wretched over those who look with lenient eye upon "disorder" among an oppressed people. A defender of reaction, it cannot see that "enemies in Ireland, Russia, Austria-Lorraine, are healthy signs in that they show that the healthy instinct of revolt against oppression has not been dragooned or "civilised" out of existence.

H. H. S.

Our heavy contemporary Punch has lately had a cartoon a long way "after" Albert Durer's marvellous cut of the Knight and Death, illustrated by his "free adaptation," to commemorate Bismarck's victory (1) over the Socialists. Our wooden friend with a naive stupidity quite characteristic of the professional bourgeois, imagines it, to-day will only fail to notice the splendid cut of Death from his cartoon, although if he had not been quite so dull or so impudently lazy he might have extracted something from Fouque's romance which would have helped his lame allegory to totter on a step or two.

However we may have observed that Durer's immortal work to ask what Durer really did mean by it. For the imagination of the honest and serious craftsman of old Nuremberg, fertile as it was, and though it led him into wild and strange places, was free from any of the hybernia of the age, and his pictures are so pathetically honest and soundly romantic, and the poetry of his work is so full of the spirit of his age, that it may be fairly concluded that Durer's intention in the Knight and Death was to commemorate the victory of the rook-knight who had long ploughed the good town of Nuremberg, and implies a warning to those in high places who live by violence and robbery.

The armed man on the war-horse is riding towards no victory, but a shapeless death, he has had the Kouros meaning of the body, and the awful thing that follows him is a tangible image of the crimes of his past life; his greed, rapine, cruelty, fraud, and reckless violence.

So that we may be well content after all to take Albert Durer's "Knight and Death" with his own meaning still cleaving to it, as a figure of the doom of Blood and Iron of our own day; especially if the look is not so much upon the "future" as upon the past circumstances has so curiously placed in his high position of infamy, but rather upon the type of the armed bourgeoise, "the strong man losing his house," which to-day seem the most important all of makes, and which after a long period of that confidence of living for ever, which is the natural gift of youth and manhood, is now entering the valley of the shadow of death, and has become conscious of its coming defeat, and of the companions it has made for itself, and so rides on warily and fearfully, Crime behind it, Death before it.

W. M.

THE TRADER'S INTERESTS v. THE PEOPLE'S INTERESTS.

Mr. George Howell, M.P., writes in last month's Fortnightly on the "State of Trade," which shows how completely he has failed even to see the question, much less to grapple with it. After wading through pages of statistical calculations, he comes to the conclusion that trade is not alarmingly depressed after all. That we are only going through the usual slight depression after an unusually great expansion. Production has been continually expanding, while it is prices (not the volume of trade) that has fallen. Now, granting that Mr. Howell has proved what no one ever disputed, how much better are we for his investigations? Mr. Howell alleges that the merchants have suffered a large decrease of profits, and everybody else admits that the workers have suffered a large decrease of wages and suspension of work. What a magnificent system of society we live in! capital getting better prices, land and the people who are on that, not so much whole, improving! Profits fall and wages fall, yet production is expanding! Then what are we producing, and what use is it in going on producing if nobody benefits by it? What the devil can possibly be being prosperous if the people are getting worse off in consequence of its prosperity? For it seems, according to Mr. Howell, that it is competition only and not decline of trade that is doing all the harm. Going on the political economy is going into the bay with the process of its decline; and, like a certain poet now in his dotage, will go on babbling long after the time for silence has come. Of course, Mr. Howell cannot accept the abolition of orthodox notions to questions of the day forms an interesting though dismal study. The old fallacy—that the interests of commerce and the interests of the people are identical—has long since been shown up, but it still finds adherents here and there, and they are useful. By their advocacy they bring ridicule on the cause they champion, and thus ensure its complete defeat. Mr. Howell had better go on with his work of explanation of the current economic facts he is certain to bring ridicule on it and himself.