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NOTES ON NEWS.

THE verdict on Mr. Ridley's suicide, passing over the conventional phrase of "temporary insanity," will be endorsed by most men who are not rabid partisans. The poor man was too weak to play a part in the civil war which is now going on, and so was crushed out by an extra turn of "the system" driving him up against his own conscience and that of the community amongst which he lived. It is a thousand pities that he could not have trusted himself to the good will of his fellow-countrymen, and snapped his fingers at the authority which bade him go a little further than usual in torturing a prisoner!

The check to the share of Italy in the plunder of Africa will scarcely make a nine days' wonder, yet one cannot help feeling some exultation at the defeat of the armed clerks of the counting-house, under whatever nationality they may serve; though naturally one is most pleased when they belong to our own counting house, whose tyranny presses most nearly on ourselves.

The new Kaiser's speech at Frankfort-on-Oder furnishes a curious commentary on Lord Salisbury's view of the pacific tendencies of the rulers of Europe at present; but it does not tell us anything new about the character or aspirations of the German demi-god. We have all known that he is a furious reactionist, who will do all the damage he can during his reign; but in this matter of war he will be rather driven than driving; the blind instincts of the commercial bourgeoisie, which force them to the worship of such men as this, will settle that matter for or against. It is at any rate pretty certain that if the Kaiser does fairly "go on the rampage" in the temple of reaction, he will pull the roof down on his own head. So may it be!

The closing of the Landore Works is a good example of the position of the workman under nineteenth century capitalism. A thousand men employed in working at—in fact they know not what. Suddenly without warning the work comes to an end, and they are in the streets with a prospect of what would be indeed a cruel punishment for gross misconduct. And what can they do? They have never had the least control over their own work, know nothing about the market for it, or what may influence that market; nor have their "employers" a grain of responsibility for them. They can do nothing but try to put themselves once more in a position, which involves helpless ignorance on one side and complete irresponsibility on the other. They are simple machines in helpless dependence on other men's wills, other men's necessities, of which they know nothing. When will the time come when they will make up their minds to employ themselves, and accept the responsibilities of their own lives? They will one day have to choose between that and sheer starvation.

Zola is being attacked in England through the publisher of his English translations, and there will doubtless be many pros and cons on the matter. The only one of his works that I have read is 'Germinal'. If that is a fair specimen of them, I must say that whatever grossness there is in it could do no harm except to those who are determined to have harm done to them. I feel sure also that the grossness is there not for "nastiness" sake, but because it forms part of a true picture of the life which our civilisation forces on labouring men; and I hold that "What is not too bad to be done, is not too bad to be told about," though I find no difficulty in imagining that our rulers and masters take a very different view of the subject.

W. M.

One of the most completely comic things in print lately, occurs in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of the 2nd inst. Comic and yet tragic; comic because of the tragic so close behind.

Frank Holl was painting John Bright's portrait, and in course of the chat during a sitting, on Gladstone's name being mentioned, Bright expressed much regret at the breach which had come between them. "Do you know, Mr. Holl, I seriously fear that my dear old friend's

mind has really become seriously undermined." Later on, while at work at Hawarden, a somewhat similar conversation takes place about Bright, similar regret at the broken friendship, and——. "Tell me, Mr. Holl,"—and here his mouth twitched, for he was evidently struggling with great emotion—"tell me, did you notice anything in the manner of my old friend which would lead you to believe that his reason was becoming in any way unhinged?"

Evidently there was more in Axel Oxenstierna's advice than even he meant, "Behold with how little wisdom this world is governed." "With how little wisdom," apparently with no wisdom whatever. Bright fears for Gladstone's reason, and Gladstone for Bright's. Somewhere hereabouts can be found the factors of a mental equation, which should delight my anti-Parliamentary friends. A set of revolutionists—mad; a set of reactionists—madder; a set in power sitting on the safety-valve of Free Speech and press—madder still; and the result of the seething together of these mad elements a mass of mad legislation, and a social state that the maddest dreams of the Bedlamite could never suggest. "'Tis a mad world, my masters, a mad world."

We are told by those who have much to do with the "insane" (?), that outside the one particular weak point it is hard to distinguish the patient from the attendant or the doctor. Suppose, after all, it shall some day be decided that the sane is insane and *vice versa*, it will be rather rough on some. Possibly the man who makes so much fuss about "interfering with freedom of contract" may become somewhat discredited, and quite a number of the adored fetishes of to-day may be thrown down. To-day the Socialist is mad, should be confined, either in jail or asylum—when possible is so served. To-morrow—well—"Time makes ancient *good* uncouth." Roughly, the rich and the powerful are the only sane; Socialists are not rich and powerful, therefore the Socialists are not sane; Q.E.D. with a "!"

Imagine a "Vision of Judgment" when social systems shall be weighed off; when "sane" shall scale against "insane." When one comes to consider how many "impossibilities" of the past are "commonplaces" to-day, verily some of the "sane" should be a bit careful as to what they say of the insane; it should suggest that even—

"After us, some purer scheme
Will be shaped out by wiser men than we,
Made wiser by the steady growth of truth."

The Lord Chief Justice, by a decision on Saturday, decided that "boycotting" is legal. In the case of Gregor, Gow and Company v. the Peninsular and Oriental Company, T. Sutherland, M.P., and various other steamship companies, claim for damages was made for an alleged illegal combination to boycott and ruin by means of bribing and intimidating shippers in China not to send goods by the plaintiffs' ships. In an elaborate judgment his lordship held that the defendants were justified in "using inducements" and in "withholding advantages." It was fair trade competition and not unlawful.

The foxhunters of Nottingham have boycotted the parson who protested against the way his crops were destroyed. The foxhunting parsons used to boycott the Rev. Sydney Smith when he made this same sort of protest. Our modern parson suggests that the foxhunters should all emigrate; let us add to that a wish that all the parsons go with them.

The robbers are getting ready to go. A proclamation has just been published in the *Gazette* to the effect that on and after October 1st the rate at which freight shall be paid for the conveyance on board of any of her majesty's vessels of treasure belonging to parties other than the Crown, whether gold, silver, jewels, or other articles, which may by special order be received on board, shall be 1 per cent. This order suggests that the people who have gold silver and jewels in quantity enough to require a war ship to carry them off are already making contracts as to the price of carriage. May they soon be called upon to part with their 1 per cent.! We can well afford to lose the jewels if the owners go also.