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### NOTES ON NEWS.

"CIVILISATION" is happy again, for Stanley is alive and successful and is "coming home." Meantime, since there have been several persons hanged for murder during the last few months, we may well ask whether when he comes home Stanley will be put upon his trial for the capital offence? Or if not, wherein his hanging men because they refused to serve him at the risk of their lives differs from murder? This is, indeed, a short way with breach of contract, which no doubt many rich people at home would like to take if they durst.

As some of our readers may not have seen former notes and articles in the *Commonweal* on this subject, we may as well explain to them in a few words how it is that Stanley is the enemy of workmen in Great Britain as well as of the natives in Africa. His mission is "to open up Africa;" that is, to establish regular trade with the people of the interior of that vast continent. Now this trade the natives do not want, and resist as much as they can. They do not want trousers, rum, bibles (printed by scab labour), or cotton cloth scientifically weighted with sulphate of barytes; and, in point of fact, the bargain in our trade with them would be, that we should take from them what we want and give them what they do not; which they understand and consequently will only admit the trade if it is forced on them. This as we see, Mr. Stanley (and the whole British nation, which clearly approves of his hanging his hirelings for refusing to go on with him) is quite prepared to do. Therefore, he is clearly the enemy of the natives of Africa.

But is he the friend of the natives of England? Will he not render a service to them by "opening up Africa," by getting fresh trade whereby to employ the workmen here? Some workmen uninstructed in the truths of Socialism may believe this, but we Socialists know that it is false. If the position of the labourers in England is a good one, it may be a good thing to supplant African barbarians by English labourers; if it is not, it only spreads the evil which we are suffering from here, and by that process helps to perpetuate it. And this is all the good which this piracy can get for the English workman. There will be gains indeed from the plunder of Africa, but those gains will fall to the capitalists and their middlemen and led captains; they will be called "profits," and will be sweated out of the workmen, English and African, who will be enslaved by this march of civilisation.

English workmen, therefore, should know that this man is the friend of their enemies and the enemy of their friends. The friend of the capitalist who lives by robbing the workman of the results of his toil, and therefore by that very act is his enemy; the enemy of the barbarian who lives by the labour of his hands, and is therefore the brother of the English workman. It is to be hoped then that if, unfortunately, Stanley reaches England safely, the workmen of this country will make some demonstration against him, and so clear themselves of participation in his crimes.

"As there is some probability that during the current year the trustees of the British Museum may be induced to throw their institution open on Sundays, the Parliamentary friends of Sunday opening think it better not to raise the question by means of a direct motion, but have, it is said, decided to bring it forward on the Estimates."—*Pall Mall*.

This is a curious instance of the kind of hold that the people has upon its own property and over its servants. We are to sneak behind the possible goodwill of the trustees, instead of claiming our rights straightforwardly. "Their institution" too!!! O yes, it is but too clear that it isn't ours. Britons never never never will be slaves! Won't they?

Last week the House of Commons managed to spare a little time from the consideration of the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee, to the consideration of the position of the poor in our big towns. Mr. Broadhurst, who was once poor and is now rich, was the initiator of the discussion, which to say the truth might just as well, for all the good it could do, have been held in a middle-class

discussion-forum. For, indeed, the habitual discussion of tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee does not educate men to consider the great tragedy of life in the lower classes. Besides, from the nature of their position, the loyal members of that House must shut their eyes to the causes of the misery which now and again in the course of years they deem it politic to talk about.

For truly what is the disease, the mere symptoms of which Mr. Broadhurst (who was poor and is now rich) called their attention to? What is the disease, but these very gentlemen themselves and the life that they live of sweating the poor for their own aggrandisement? When that proprietary class, which (and which only) they represent, is got rid of, the symptoms will no longer be there for us to deal with. When the rich are gone there will no longer be any poor. That is the one truth that our rulers have got to learn. But can they learn it? That is more than doubtful. The rich class exists, it is a living and active organism, and it is difficult or perhaps impossible for that which exists to realise non-existence.

Also, of course, it is the business of these gentlemen to insist on the necessity for their existence, nay the impossibility of their extinction. Their song chanted in various tones is always, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen"—or hurrah!

Under these circumstances it is not wonderful that the debate was languid to the last degree, and that the pretence of having anything to say about such a subject was not even decently kept up, and that none of the party leaders had a word to say on the subject, so that even as "political birdlime" it was but a failure.

But consider what a condemnation of the whole of our political system! The condition of the poor (*i.e.*, of almost the whole of the working classes) in our big towns. What a subject! Surely a six nights debate on it is not too much to consider it in; surely all the big bucks of both parties will be in their places eager to claim their share in dealing with the most, nay, the only important matter of the day. The Irish will forget Home Rule, for they also have big towns in Ireland; the Tories will try to show the advantages of a benevolent demi-semi despotism; the Liberals that the franchise will educate even a sweated tailor to claim his rights; the Radicals will make a sudden leap towards Socialism, and the whole country will hang breathless on their deliberations.

Alas! none of that happened. The condition of the poor is not "practical politics." Their votes, when they have any, can be got at even when they are left to starve. So what does it matter? Indeed, what everybody in this wretched rag end of a debate, or conversation, really said was, "Who cares?" Yes indeed, who, if the workers themselves do not?

That is an old and hackneyed pass-word of Cobbett's, but is always good and necessarily true: "House of Commons—Den of Thieves."

W. M.

The *Star* is really improving. Of course, like all papers and men without definite clear principles to regulate and guide their conduct, it wavers and wanders a good deal, contradicting itself in lamentable fashion every other while. But the general tendency is good, and, in despite of occasional lapses into the old pathways, and burstings out of the old Adam, shows that the lessons of the time are being learnt by its conductors, and that they recognise "which way the cat is jumping." To us the semi-socialism they sometimes talk may seem particularly small beer, as indeed it is; but, remembering the impossibility of even that in an ordinary daily a short while ago, and the rarity of it even now, one may look upon it with some complacency as a sign of the times, and take it as a warning that our work is bearing fruit.

The extremes to which the vacillation of the *Star* carry it were wel