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NOTES ON NEWS.

A SUNDAY CLOSING BILL (second reading) has been passed by a House of Commons which is very susceptible to the voting power of any solid body of the public. M.P.'s know not only that the teetotallers are a large and well-organised set of people, but also that they will go to the poll at election time. Meantime, the said members do not trouble themselves in the least about the real wants and hopes of the mass of the people, and so between carelessness as to the *lives* of the people and anxiety about their *votes*, if these can only be gathered together in formidable proportions, they pass measures like this bill of Mr. Stevenson's, a gross and abominable piece of oppression, a measure fit only for a set of helots, while they allow the public to be poisoned by any and every commercial rascal who finds that in the competitive race for position, water and chemicals are more for his purpose (selling for profit) than the result of properly fermented malt and hops.

John Bright is dead, and the newspapers have been busy heaping up a dung-heap of rotten nonsense over his dead body. The first thing that must strike any thoughtful and dispassionate observer, is that for any public purpose "the Great Tribune" has been dead several years. For the rest, it is fair to say that the man was personally honest always; but so essentially blood bone and soul a middle-class person, that he could not escape from the conventionalities of that class, *i.e.*, from its innate hypocrisy. He was utterly incapable of imagining himself in the position of any one outside the great commercial middle-class; to him that class included all the human reality of society. The upper class was a mere perverse obstruction to the progress of Podsnap; the lower, mere machinery to enable Podsnap to carry on his business. Business and the kind of family affection, and the kind of religion suitable to it, were the whole duty of man, and anything which came in its way was to be sternly swept aside.

In this view of life John Bright was singularly consistent. Some Home Rule Radicals wondered that he should turn anti-Gladstonian in his last days; it would have been wonderful if he had not. For in these later days the Irish Question has begun to look towards revolution, and against that Bright always set his face most determinedly.

It would have argued genius and quickness of wit in Bright, neither of which qualities he ever had, if he could at any time of his life have perceived that he himself was engaged in a war continuous and implacable, the war of commerce. But what he *could* see as war he did genuinely hate; nor did he favour a war, as more dishonest persons of his way of thinking have done, because it was a war of the market, a crime necessary to commerce.

No one who was not in this respect a man of principle, could have assumed the attitude which he did at the time of the Crimean War. Though he was hated bitterly at that time by the Whigs and Tories, he was very popular with the advanced Liberals, and, to do Bright justice, he was no man to seek for popularity from his enemies. Well, this popularity he threw away at the bidding of principle, as he saw it, coolly and deliberately, and became the very outcast of politics. I remember well the fury of hatred against him, which could not have been surpassed if he had proposed to meddle with the property of the rich. The sacramental phrase was, "I should like to hang John Bright."

A middle-class, repentant of having so mauled their true and steady champion, is now heaping fulsome flattery on his unconscious head; and one enthusiast was especially anxious that he should be buried with all the honours in Westminster Abbey. Truly a solace for the dead worth having! To form one of the gang of fools, rogues, and ruffians, whose capacity for pushing themselves into notoriety is expressed in a series of undertaker's lies, whose outward hideousness pollutes the most beautiful building ever raised in England by the hands and hearts of the people. Whatever wrongs we may have against John Bright, we would not revenge ourselves by thus ticketing him fool and dunce.

W. M.

A man has been murdered by London policemen for being "violent." He resisted arrest, and they gave him the "frog's march," under which treatment he died. Of course all respectable people sympathise with the policemen under whose hands it happened, and say, "How sad for them!" Recognising that respectable society is only upheld by the police, they feel, though few of them dare say it frankly, that whoever resists their lawful authority merits any fate, however horrible it be, that his contumacy may bring upon him. Still it cannot be difficult for any ordinarily humane person to see that the "frog's march" is one of those brutalities which only degraded and cowardly ruffians are capable of inflicting on their fellow-men, but which, in proportion to their degradation and cowardice, they delight in inflicting.

As it is the inevitable outcome of their occupation that policemen should be degraded and demoralised, those who employ them, if they make pretence to humanity, should see that there are some limits laid down, within which the lambs of law-'n'-order might be told to restrain their ferocity. The coroner at the inquest on the victim of the "frog's march" said that his treatment was illegal, and seemed under the impression that so much restraint at least on the freedom of action of the police would be salutary. But the Chief of Police, Mr. Matthews, would not have his men hampered "in the exercise of their duty," and "was not prepared to prohibit the 'frog's march.'"

Could not some one suggest to the House of Commons that it do resolve itself into a Committee of Investigation and adjourn to the terrace, there to see Mr. Matthews frog's-marched by four stalwart constables of the A Division, specially selected for tenderness? If Mr. Matthews' nose were skinned by contact with the gravel, and the breath knocked out of him by one or two bumps of his stomach against the ground, it would add an interesting and instructive touch of realism to the scene, and give honourable legislators an idea of how the laws they make are administered.

Henry Broadhurst, Esq., M.P., is to have a banquet of honour at the National Liberal Club. This is, of course, by way of counter-manifesto to the charges made and proved against him; of endorsing his denial of responsibility to the men he used to be supposed to represent; and of adopting him definitely into the Great Liberal Party. That is all right now, so far as it goes, but there may come a time when those who now crowd to get tickets will be even more anxious to explain away their presence on such an occasion. Stranger things have happened.

JOHN BRIGHT.

"Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? . . . He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour; . . . he that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

"He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones."

As an infant at my mother's knee I was almost taught to consider but two men dwelling with in the four seas of Britain as worthy of love and respect, Richard Cobden and John Bright. We are all doomed to pass our lives picking our path through the painful fragments of shattered idols scattered along our way, and generally come to the conclusion that it is folly to lift any miserable human personality to the position of a pattern, much less to that of a god. We learn by cruel experience to reserve our respect for ideas, and our aid for truth from whatever initiative, being of necessity always on the alert for betrayal in the most trusted quarters. The dangers of hero-worship are strikingly illustrated in the careers of Bright and Cobden. These two have been the stock subjects of adulation during our era for the "women and fools," but when the stern and sober warriors of the