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WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

NOTES ON NEWS.

THERE are curious signs of the time abroad, that show us pretty clearly in what an element of discontent we are living, *e.g.*, a leader in the *Daily News*, that pink of respectability, in lamenting the heavy record of murder of the past few months, does seem to be fairly shocked at the record of the gallows also. "We are getting perilously near a revival of the good old hanging days," is a sentence in strong contrast with the feeling of a large part of the well-to-do classes, whose word, like that of the king in the old romance, is "Hang and head! hang and head!"

On the other hand, as a matter of course, after the burglary at Muswell Hill, the courage, humanity, and wisdom of the *successful* thieves of our sham society, the well-to-do, to wit, is illustrated by the loud cry for the flogging of burglars, and apparently of people (of the "lower orders") suspected of being burglars. We must never forget that the boasted humanity and tenderness of human life of our century depends entirely on the feeling of continuous safety amongst the ruling classes; as soon as they are conscious of any hole in their rampart, of any enemy amongst them, humanity and tenderness is cast to the winds. "To think that I—I should be subjected to violence, should be liable to be robbed or shot—I, amidst all my soft wrappings and the bosom of the family; I, who in my daily luxury and cowardice manage so successfully to forget both death and the reasons for living! Hang and head and torture those wretches that have made me afraid!" That is the ordinary sentiment of the comfortable classes.

This is the constant tendency of the masters of society, of those who believe their position to be eternal; and who are so stupid as to fail to see that if they drive their enemies (on whom they live) to be conscious that there is no hope for them but the hope of revenge, they are building up for themselves a hell of daily terror; since, indeed, the one unendurable evil is *fear*.

The *Pall Mall* jeers at the *Daily News* for its exaggeration of the hangings, and laments not that so many people are hanged, but that so many are *unchanged*. It apparently favours the idea that it is possible to kill off so many of the bad specimens, that you will not only purify "society" thereby, but also terrify those that are left of them into quiescence, thus killing two birds with one stone. This, after all, is only another way of accepting the eternity of sham society, mingled with the ferocity of the Christian religionist, who considers himself bound to be revenged on immorality.

For my part, I think the exaggeration of the writer in the *Daily News* is to his credit, as it is the result of the impression of loathing at the horrible judicial murders of the last quarter of the year, culminating with the slaughter of the two lads at Maidstone, which was obviously a judicial crime due to sheer cowardice.

Per contra the *Star* has some very timely and very sensible remarks on this matter of the "punishment" of crimes against property. (Crimes against a crime? Can that be?) It is to be hoped that its working-men Radical readers will take them to heart, since I fear there are not a few of them who are inclined to share in the "just indignation, *i.e.*, the revenge for the terror of the "plate-basket proprietor face to face with robbery."

"There is no getting over the fact," says the *Star*, "that we have turned our burglars into murderers." Just so; and also we have been driven into that idiocy by our initial idiocy of making them burglars. I quote the *Star* again: "The trade of manufacturing and hardening felons at the greatest possible cost to the community (the main secret of the process is teaching them to associate the idea of labour with useless torture) goes on, whitewashed by the addition of a little hypocrisy to its brutality and stupidity." Most true; and this no less so: "Our penal system is an abominably cruel one; and it is made so for no other reason than that our honest poor fare so wretchedly, that if prisoners were treated with humanity, the victims

of our sweaters would find in Pentonville a comparatively pleasant refuge from the miseries of their workshops and garrets. This is the naked truth." It is indeed; the cruel judge with his solemn hypocrisy of morality is the necessary complement to the sweater of sweaters, the capitalist employer.

Sham society continuously revenges herself on the "criminals" whom she has created, and without whom she would cease to exist. How long will it be before all those who have a grain of honesty left in them, will understand this, and come out of her to become rebels against her?

Meanwhile, I think that for much of the change of feeling on this point of the treatment of so-called criminals, which to me (a middle-aged man or rather more) is obvious enough, we have to thank men like Sir Charles Warren and Mr. Balfour, and that never-enough-to-be-praised custom of our beloved country of treating political prisoners as mere felons. Some years ago none of us thought of a gentleman being sent to jail till he had been *ungentlemanned*. The fact that now we see personal friends who have worn the order of the Broad Arrow, and that we may wear it ourselves, has quickened the imaginations of us, the gentlemen, considerably.

Sham society is at work to try to purge itself of what every one must admit to be a crime, the condemnation and imprisonment of two innocent men, Brannaghan and Murphy, for burglary. The way it is setting about it is to indict four policemen for conspiracy to bear false witness. Put no amount of revenge on the lower instruments of legal tyranny can undo what has been done, or give back the lost years of their life to its victims.

Nay, more: supposing these men are found guilty, let us not forget also that they are habitually encouraged to give false evidence by the very Law that tries them. They are not indeed encouraged to tell downright obvious lies, for they might be found out; but their statements as guardian of Law and Order are received in practice (whatever the theory may be) as facts that it is useless or dangerous to question. And surely to poor and ignorant men, degraded by their miserable profession of thief-catching, this is a mere invitation to the invention of falsity and the suppression of truth, and the general wresting of facts towards a conviction. Once again, if these men are found guilty and punished, sham society will punish them for the crime she has driven or allured them to.

The *Pall Mall* believes that the Puritan and the Socialist will meet on the common ground of Sabbatarianism! H'm, well; they may meet on that ground; but if they do, it will be to *fight* on it. We hope no enquirer into Socialism will be led astray by such nonsense into thinking that a Socialist can be either a Sabbatarian or a Puritan. I say flatly that the Puritan, as Puritan, is the enemy of the human race, his horrible galvanism of Christianity the worst religious trap which the world has fallen into.

Lord Rosebery and Sir J. Lubbock have been lamenting that the elections for the County Council cannot be wholly un-party-political. Here is the Devil objecting to sin with a vengeance! Are you tired of politics, Sir John? Do you want to keep politics all to yourself, my lord Rosebery? Probably. In short, what Lord Rosebery and the others mean on this head is, "You County Councilmen, attend to your jobbery; you'll have plenty of it and you were made for it; but don't meddle with politics, that's for your betters. Look here, this is the way to do it! Ain't it funny?"

The Pope is laying a heavy charge on the bishops in America to do their best to put down the Socialism which is spreading amongst the Irish Roman Catholics there. This is good news on both sides; on one that Socialism is spreading enough to annoy his Holiness; on the other a sign that neither side of orthodox Christianity will attempt to draw us into entangling alliances. The Pope is right. Real Catholicism died with the Middle Ages: modern Catholicism is but a survival from it, kept alive on the one hand by its alliance with absolutist

bureaucracy and on the other by its alliance with Puritanism, with which, though Catholicism is less revolting on the surface, it has much in common: the Salvation Army, e.g., being a development quite in the manner of modern Catholicism. It is good to know our enemies; both these are of them.

The plot against humanity in Central Africa is going on briskly. The check given to the Germans has had its necessary result in stirring up those would-be masters of the world, the rulers of the German people, to set on foot a new expedition in regular military style, with twelve field guns to aid. At the same time we have news of a "revolution" in Uganda. The missionaries have been driven away, and Islam has been proclaimed there; which means that the Arabs, the only people capable of organising opposition to the European pirates, have got the upper hand there. However, we must be cautious in accepting news from the tainted source of filibusters and filibusters' friends; for it will often be fabricated, or at least exaggerated, in order to stir public opinion into getting up fresh filibustering expeditions.

W. M.

WHIGS ASTRAY.¹

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN

OWEN MARX BAKOUNINE JONES, *an architect (unsuccessful), and—the Rev. SWAIN STRIDE, a Nonconformist parson, and } advanced Radicals.*
MR. JEREMIAH BROWN, *a business man*

SCENE—A comfortable bachelor-looking room in MR. BROWN'S house, with tobacco and pipes and grog to the fore. MR. STRIDE and MR. BROWN sitting on either side of the fire, looking important and self-satisfied. Enter to them MR. JONES with an ill-concealed grin on his face; after the usual greetings he sits down and says:

Jones. Well, Mr. Brown, here I am, ready to hear what you have to say to me, and eager to know what puts you into such good spirits this evening, as you obviously are in.

Brown. Well, we are; we have been talking about matters that make us hopeful.

J. I am glad of that. I see so many doleful faces nowadays, that it does me good to see two cheerful ones, especially as finials to two such pinnacles of the temple as a parson and a man of business.

Stride. I don't like you to call me a parson, Jones. I am none of your priests; and really I think you know me well enough not to set me down as a relation of Chadband. You know very well that what I'm really interested in is politics, and practical at that; and that I want them to be discussed without fear or favour; so knowing you for a cantankerous Socialist, I asked Brown to ask you to come here to-night.

J. Thank you for the compliment—and also for your company: you want to cheer me up, which is kind of you. But you know how curious I am; what can it be? It can't be politics, for things are looking rather blue for your side of the house. Is business beginning to boom, Brown? Have you been speculating in a gold-mine which is turning up trumps, Stride?

B. Well, perhaps business is a thought better. But that's not it. You see—

S. (interrupting). It so happens that you are out about it's not being politics. Brown and I think matters are looking much more hopeful of late.

J. Indeed! And now I look at you, there is something portentous about your cheerfulness. What's up? Are you going to turn Tory-Democrats, the last refuge for the desperately hopeful? Or does the Salvation Army raise your spirits? Have you got another Gordon on hand to put a stop to war by cutting down the fruit-trees on which potential warriors live, and to put a stop to slavery by killing the niggers before they can be made slaves of? Are you civilising Africa?

S. Now don't you be offensive about Gordon: you know I'm dead against the whole nigger-slaying business.

J. Yes, but somewhat in favour of the Christian-hero pest. But let that pass. Is Lord Salisbury dead? Don't be too glad of it; it won't do you Liberals much good. Vic can truly say with King Harry in 'Chevy Chase,'

"I trust I have within my realm
An hundred good as he."

S. (laughing). Hear the spite of the Tory-Democrat!

J. (severely). Don't call bad names, Stride!

B. (anxiously). No, but ain't you a Tory-Democrat, Jones? Stride always calls you one.

J. Yes, that comes of his innate wisdom, that does not need vulgar information. I am not a Tory-Democrat, Brown.

B. What are you then? Because—

S. (interrupting). Come, let's be serious, Jones. You know I'm really a practical Socialist.

J. Indeed I did not know it. May I ask—

S. (interrupting). No, please don't interrupt me! I say I am a practical Socialist; and yet I cannot be one of your hard-shell

Socialists, with your impossible nostrums of the abolition of capital and railways, and your preposterous ideals of communism and equality; and your false political economy, dead in the teeth of all the accurate thinkers of the day, such as Mill and Tennyson and Ricardo and Swinburne, and—and—Lord Rosebery and Auberon-Herbert. But yet, you see, I was bothered that there should be no true Socialist party that I could work with heartily; and now I really think that we are getting one, and I've got out a sort of manifesto of it: indeed, there it lies on the table now.

J. And you have asked Brown to ask me here to cheer me up with it? How kind of you. Is it in print?

S. No; but any Radical paper will print it.

J. Well, well, things are getting on fast. And is Brown a member of the new party? Are you a Socialist, Brown?

B. Well, where's the harm of a name? Stride and I thought—

S. (interrupting). We don't call ourselves Socialists, of course.

J. No, of course not.

S. We call ourselves Advanced Liberals or Radicals.

J. (with preternatural gravity). Hah! But is that such a great invention in the way of names?

S. That's just the beauty of it.

J. I grant you the beauty of it must be there—or nowhere.

S. Pray be serious, and don't interrupt!

B. I assure you, Jones—

S. (interrupting). We are Socialists who don't set class against class, which I think is downright wickedness.

J. (softly). Let the galled jade wince, my withers are unwrung! The ages have done all that for me.

S. (taking up a paper from the table). Nevertheless we have a clear, definite Creed, which I will now lay before you, Jones.

J. Ah, now I see what makes you look so happy! You are Radicals who have been searching for the planks of your platform, and you think you have discovered the necessary timber—(sotto voce) all out of your own heads.

S. (hurriedly, and not listening). Yes, that's it. Now look here, this is the preamble. (Reads.) 'It is always foolish and wicked to set class against class, but the time has come for a resolute forward movement in favour of the toilers of our streets and fields. Legislation cannot do much to make the weak strong, to make the poor rich, to make the miserable happy; but it can keep off the greedy hand, and shield the helpless from oppression. It can help the poor to help themselves. It can break down legalised monopoly. It can clear the road by sweeping away many hindrances in the path of men without influence. It can give the poor "the benefit of the doubt." It can help the wage-earner to give his child a chance. It can provide something better than the workhouse for old men and women whose strength is spent and whose friends are gone.'

J. It is nicely written, Stride, and I'm sure that you mean well, so far as you know how to; but you are deceiving yourself. How can legislation do all these things with one hand, while with the other it is engaged upholding that very monopoly (do you know what monopoly is, my friend?) of which the poor and their terrible needs are a necessary result? It exists to support the greedy hand; it exists for oppression, and when ceases to oppress will cease to exist. This is a riddle you cannot rede till you know a little more.

S. Well, well, that's only the preamble. Wait a bit! Our first plank is, 'Government by the people, for the people, in the interests of the people.'

J. If the people govern themselves for themselves and in their own interest, there will be nothing but themselves: is that so? Can it be so while the present system lasts, reformed or not? Your first plank is not a plank, but a phrase, and a phrase without meaning. As long as there are rich men nursed up at the expense of the people they will govern us for their interest, whatever the machinery of their government may be. Meantime the people is but the material for the feeding of the rich.

S. Well, this next is a plank, at all events: 'The State should as far and as fast as possible delegate to each locality the rights of self-government, and should encourage and protect them in the use of such rights.' There!

J. County Councils, eh? A Tory measure; and properly so. Bodies with feeble administrative powers in themselves; mere machinery in the hands of the central government; good to strengthen that by doing its dirty work and appearing responsible for it, while in reality they are responsible for nothing. That is what you mean by self-government. If you were to mean more your plank would be a plank to be walked by the present society; for when the State has delegated all its powers what is the good of it, and what shall we do with it?

S. Hilloa! Since when have you turned Anarchist?

J. Don't use words you don't understand. But go on.

S. 'We should lift the burdens as far as possible from the shoulders of the struggling classes'—

J. Stop a bit! That's good! as far as possible is a good phrase. No Tory could object to that plank so far. Well, where are you going to put these burdens when you have lifted them as far as possible? I suspect back, again.

S. We would 'put them to a greater extent on the shoulders of those who toil not, but without toiling have enough and to spare.'

J. Well, that I call a great invention; only it smacks somewhat of going about to get something out of nothing. For how the devil can those who toil not (i.e., produce nothing) have enough and to spare—unless they steal it? In short, your struggling classes are too poor to pay taxes; that you admit (and by the admission admit also that the

¹ The portions of this dialogue between the single "quotes" are taken from a genuine document—"A Radical's Creed," by John Page Hopps, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of Dec. 10th, 1888.