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NOTES ON NEWS.

THE dam above what was once Johnstown in Pennsylvania turns out to have been the crowning triumph of what we call in England jerry-building—i.e., building not for the use of the public but for the profit of the speculator. The crowd of unfortunate people who were lost in that stupendous tragedy have in fact been sacrificed to the demon of profit-mongering to which hundreds and thousands of the disinherited classes are sacrificed every day, whether the kind of sacrifice be the actual death caused by privation, or the living death of hopeless poverty.

To the demon of profit they were sacrificed, and also to the demon of waste: for it seems that that huge mass of water, held temporarily in check by its jerry-built dam, was in fact a pleasure lake, the property of a fishing-club; so that this gigantic threat of sudden death to thousands was simply one of the means of wasting the riches which the idle class wring by force from the workers, and which they cannot use but can only waste.

I do not wonder at the anger of the survivors from this artificial deluge, this subsidised terror, against the owners or holders of the pleasure-lake; but if there be any members of the class which lives on the enforced labour of the workers amongst these angry men, their anger is illogical; because they themselves are doing the same kind of thing (unconsciously maybe) every day. Let Keats speak to it:

“For them alone did seethe
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark:
Half-ignorant, they turned an easy wheel
That set sharp racks at work to pinch and peel.”

On the other hand, those of the disinherited classes who have shown their anger are abundantly justified in being angry; but if they understood their position better, their anger would seek wider afield, for they would know that the profit and pleasure of the masters of slaves does not produce mere spasmodic accidents only of death and misery, but is and must be the constant and necessary cause of continuous death and misery.

Will you say, “How do I know that there was a slave class in and about Johnstown?” If I did not know it otherwise, I should be sure of it by the token that after the catastrophe there were people found so miserable and brutalised that they used the occasion to rob the dead bodies—and were shot for doing it by others (doubtless maddened by the terror that surrounded the place) who did not, and we will say could not, remember the words of a great teacher, “Let him who is without sin amongst you lift up the first stone against her!” O shooters of the robbers of the rich dead, is it not a worse crime to rob the living poor, and that not now and again, but constantly, systematically, and legally?

The “large employers of labour in the printing trade,” who have just lately published a circular to prove that they are the true friends of labour, “protest too much.” We don’t need to be told that they will do what they think best to bring them in a profit; but surely workmen don’t need to be told that this *must* mean their paying the lowest wages they can safely pay. We shall have more on this subject.

Advanced Radicals boycotting Socialists is a sight which would please Tories more than any other party. *Reynolds* please take note of this, and do not refuse to publish our lecture-lists. *Star* please take note also, since you seem to be beginning that game. The *Dispatch* has not the same terror of us as other Radical papers have, but publishes our places and times of meeting regularly.

A poor little boy was run over and killed the other day in getting out of the way of a tram-car. The driver of the said car was arrested and brought before Mr. De Rutzen. But the evidence that the man was not in the least responsible was so clear, that the magistrate remarked that “no doubt what had been done by the police was in

accordance with police regulations, but why the person before him should be taken into custody he was utterly at a loss to understand.” The reason, I think, is rather clearer to us; it is in accordance with police regulations to badger and bully poor men on every possible occasion, and even on what would seem to ordinary persons *impossible* occasions. W. M.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has been again throwing off some feverish yammerings—prognostics of death—respecting the non-church goers and “lapsed masses.” The Rev. Donald McLeod has emphasised the fact “that this, like other countries, was passing through what he might call a cold wave of religious indifference arising from many causes, but certainly affecting the religious interests of the people to a very enormous extent.” The fact of the existence of the cold wave referred to is beyond dispute, but the new birth which it forbodes is what really alarms the leisured professional prattlers in our churches, presbyteries, and assemblies. Its cold calm characteristics are guarantees of the coming cyclone which will sweep away the sham sentimentalists who, while preaching of honesty, holiness, and love, subtract from the sum of social wealth more than they render an equivalent for, and whose honesty of purpose is as the inverse ratio of “the cold wave of religious indifference.”

The Rev. Dr. D. McLeod confesses that “Bible women, missionaries, and students are not the persons to deal with working-men. These working-men needed good strong teaching.” The necessities and miseries of the workers have too long been the playthings of pious pretenders and moneyed sensation-seekers, who have other objects in view, as the fruits of their “labours,” than those actually professed; and because “these working-men” refuse such stuff as the pious pretenders provide, it does not follow that they will shut their eyes and open their mouths and take the “strong teaching” of the church. What does the church propose to do, or what can it do, to secure for “these working-men” the full results of their work? If the “strong teaching” of the church can reach those who steal from “these working-men” now, so as to make them steal no more, then it will be able “to deal with working-men.”

But it is clearly evident the church does not intend to reach those who steal from “these working-men,” and the burdens which the church sanctions to be laid on the backs of the latter by the former, as by the design and will of God, are such that “these working-men” are physically unable to look towards heaven. It is in the nature of man to stand erect, and nature must have *its* way. It is the knowledge of this fact that has aroused the bats of the church, for they know when the workers throw off the burdens that deform them, the church, as it now is, will be in the lot. Until the church renders an equivalent to the workers for what it takes from them, the church will be in danger. G. McL.

The L.P.D.L. has issued another circular, soliciting “your opposition to the following bills,” etc. Considering the hopelessness of the business, either from the point of view of the devoted M.P.’s who introduce these wicked bills, or of the unhappy idiots who think them worth opposing, it is a matter that calls for our pity rather than for our anger. It is a dispiriting spectacle, this of the old watch-dog of property scratching so incessantly to keep down the fleas. Poor beast! He is terrified, but they will never cause his death (indeed, it wouldn’t suit them to do so); nor, again, will he ever be clear of them, till his miserable life is summarily cut short by the triumph of Socialism.

Some of the flea-bites of bills are certainly large of their kind, and must be sufficiently terrifying to the wretched dog. But that is no reason why the fleas should shriek, as some of them have lately done, for Socialists to come and help them. We desire to kill the dog, and neither can share the feast with his Liberal and Radical parasites, nor can look on them as our allies. Their bites only touch the skin, and we, who have decided he shall die, must find some more effectual means of killing him; which, indirectly, will be bad for the fleas as well.