NOTES ON NEWS.

No one will wonder that the second reading of the new flogging bill has passed the House of Commons with a large majority. It was a matter of course that the present house would not lose an opportunity of showing how reactionary it is. But after all this was not, and was not likely to be, a matter of party; the Quaker Peas being as hearty in voting for it as any of the older kind of oppressor of the people. The vote was essentially the vote of the unthinking middle classes, and the debate was thoroughly in accordance with it.

It would be mere waste of time to take in hand the various forms which the ferocity and folly of these Philistines of Philistines took; but one may say that there were two lines taken up by the defenders of the measure. No. 1 was the effectiveness of brutality as a deterrent of brutality; and No. 2 was the exaltation of the moral duty of making the enemy whom you have caught pay for the enemy whom you cannot catch. On the one hand rank cowardice, on the other stupid revenge are the motives of such legislation.

With such cowards and ruffians as the reactionists of the House of Commons are, and with the measure of power they have, it is, of course, no less a waste of time to prove to Socialists that while the gigantic wrong of class robbery supported by violence is overshadowing us like the deadly upsettees, individual theft of any kind cannot excite moral indignation in us; but since this paper will, it is hoped, fall into the hands of broad-minded persons who have not yet learned what Socialism is, we may as well point out first that severity of punishment does not deter persons from committing offences which they are forced into by their surrounding circumstances; and next, that if it did, it might be possible to buy this benefit too dear; and that the price which the force of the vultures; and benefactors of their kind are prepared to pay for a diminished list of violent burglaries, is the degradation of the whole public.

Furthermore, these wiseacres might if they had read a little history (but fancy an M.P. reading history!) have noted that however pleasant revenge may be, it is an expensive pleasure, and that cowards should not meddle with it. And it is not easy to believe that the shopkeepers who want to add new terrors to our criminal law would venture on doing so if they really understood the necessary consequences of driving violent and brutal men (men made violent and brutal) to despair, and that what their precious bill will do will not be to deter the "criminal class" from burglary, but to egg them on to murder. It will probably, if it becomes law, prove the death-warrant of many a quiet householder, who might otherwise have gone on savoring the sugar and calling to prayers for many years.

But really it is a sickening job arguing about a set of cowardly and hypocritical pirates who have got just one idea into their heads on the subject of theft, which is that they alone among all the world should be allowed to rob with violence and then escape the consequences of robbery by violence.

W. M.

For far too long those who "go down to the sea in ships" were helpless, unorganised, and dumb under oppression. Even England, "mistress of the waters," left her sons to perish by sea, as she left them to the enemies of their own work. They were, therefore, the profit-making greed of her capitalists. And they themselves seemed wretched content it should be so. But they have begun to move like the rest of the workers everywhere, and they have now a tremendous union, and an organ of their own. That they may meet with the success they deserve, and not be content for long merely with the objects they set forth in the platform to be found in another column, but go on to form the Navy of Labour which shall end it would, of course, be no less a waste of time to prove to Socialists that while the gigantic wrong of class robbery supported by violence is overshadowing us like the deadly upsettees, individual theft of any kind cannot excite moral indignation in us; but since this paper will, it is hoped, fall into the hands of broad-minded persons who have not yet learned what Socialism is, we may as well point out first that severity of punishment does not deter persons from committing offences which they are forced into by their surrounding circumstances; and next, that if it did, it might be possible to buy this benefit too dear; and that the price which the force of the vultures; and benefactors of their kind are prepared to pay for a diminished list of violent burglaries, is the degradation of the whole public.

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