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THE REVIVAL OF THE "CAT."

Two well-known British judges announced their intention last week of sentencing prisoners convicted of robbery with violence to be flogged, in addition to imprisonment, and already thirteen men are awaiting the execution of this sentence. In this age of crankdom it is but natural that such a decision should cause an uproar among the fads of both sexes, and the papers have been bombarded with fiery epistles condemning the reintroduction of this "barbarous, brutal, degrading anachronism." Most journals have lent themselves to the popular side of the controversy, with the result that the two learned gentlemen who had the courage of their convictions are held up to scorn as heartless monsters.

But there is still the reverse side of the medal to be examined, and an impartial consideration of the matter from a practical point of view leads us to believe that the "cat" may prove an excellent deterrent to the perpetration of particularly atrocious crimes. The hardened criminal faces with equanimity a lengthy sentence of imprisonment; there are drawbacks, it is true, but he has the satisfaction of knowing that during his term of detention his bodily welfare is well looked after, and it is useless to maintain that incarceration presents many terrors to the homeless outcast and criminal. This is a point raised often enough, but it has lost none of its cogency. The lash, however, represents acute physical discomfort, but we do not agree with the assertion that it morally degrades the victim. With all due respect to the hooligan we are loth to believe him a creature of such exquisite sensibilities: in any case, he certainly manages to conceal them. Faced with a flogging sentence even the most callous ruffian blanches.

But while the "cat," judiciously applied, has many qualities to recommend its application, it is a matter for real regret that the judge's powers to inflict this punishment are so grotesquely limited. Robbery with violence is the only crime in the calendar punishable by flogging. Persistent wife-beating, unspeakable cruelty to children or animals may be indulged in with impunity, at least so far as the lash is concerned. Why this legal paradox? There is no "cat" for half-killing a woman for a more sinister purpose than robbery; no "cat" for manslaughter; no "cat" for the husband who systematically belabours his wife with the poker or the tongs or anything else which comes handy; no "cat" for fiendishly torturing dumb animals or no less helpless children. You may half kill a man or a woman by an act of criminal violence, but so long as you do not steal or attempt to steal from your victim, you are safe from the lash. In truth, an eloquent tribute to the Great God Property! And so long as this inconsistency remains, an incontrovertible argument against punishment by flogging is placed in the hands of short-sighted humanitarians: extend the sphere of the "cat's" application to those crimes enumerated above, and the most humane faddist must perforce remain silent. It is quite irrelevant to enlarge—as many do—on the fact of the lash having been struck off the penal code of the Navy and Army, and to employ this incident as an argument against its retention in the penal civil code. Corporal punishment for offences against military discipline is incompatible with twentieth century principles, and no beneficial results accrued from its retention. But for sheer brutality the lash is eminently suitable as chastisement, and for our part we are willing to leave the individual merits of each case to the calm judgment of the British Bench.

Until it has been proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the "cat" is inadequate as a deterrent to criminal ferocity, that its use is to be condemned on grounds other than those of sentimentality, that it presents no more terrors to the hardened malefactor than a term of imprisonment, in short, that it is actually an unworthy anachronism in the penal code, the employment of the "cat" for those particularly abominable offences we have mentioned has our unequivocal suffrage. The tenets of humanitarianism cannot be applied to the inhuman, a circumstance overlooked by those well-meaning people to whom the mention of the lash is anathema.

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GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY.

It is notified from the Lord Chamberlain's Office that the King's Birthday will be celebrated in London and at all Home stations on Friday, June 26th next. At all other stations His Majesty's birthday will be celebrated on Monday, November 9th next.

DANISH HONOURS FOR KING EDWARD.

The King of Denmark has appointed his guest, King Edward VII., honorary colonel of the Hussar Guard Regiment and a general in the Danish Army.

NOVELIST'S DAUGHTER MARRIED.

The wedding took place on Tuesday in the pretty Capuchin church at Sant 'Agnello, near Sorrento, where Mr. Marion Crawford, the author, has a villa, of the novelist's daughter Eleanor and Cavalier Pietro Rocca, son of a wealthy merchant and of Princess di Fondi. The witnesses were Prince Sonnino, ex-Mayor of Rome, Prince Summonte Colonna, Marquis Strevi, and Marquis Campolattaro, ex-Mayor of Naples. The newly-married couple left for Ravello, and later will proceed to Munich and Bayreuth.

THE FASTEST WARSHIP IN THE WORLD.

On the termination of the severe series of trials which she has satisfactorily undergone, the "Tartar," turbine torpedo boat destroyer built by Messrs. Thornycroft and Co., of Southampton, has been finally inspected by Rear-Admiral M'Gill, Admiral Superintendent of Contract Built Ships. The "Tartar" is the fastest warship afloat, her speed on the official trials being 35.672 knots as a mean of six runs. During six hours' run the mean speed

proved to be 35.363 knots, while the fastest run was at the rate of over 37 knots. The speed guaranteed by contract was 33 knots. The vessel has now been taken into the Fleet Reserve, and will be stationed at Sheerness, where the wireless telegraphic apparatus will be fitted forthwith.

AN AUSTRALIAN NAVAL SQUADRON.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* has published the report of a conversation which a correspondent has had with Lord Tweedmouth, who regards the proposal to form a local Australian naval squadron as an excellent and serviceable idea, always supposing that it consists of submarines and other small craft difficult to transport across the ocean. He also expects the squadron to pass automatically under the control of the Admiral on the Australia station in the event of war. This declaration has attracted attention because it is believed to represent Sir John Fisher's views, but it is considered that it betrays invincible ignorance of the Australian standpoint.

LIBERAL VICTORY AT DEWSBURY.

The bye-election at Dewsbury rendered necessary by the appointment of Mr. Walter Runciman, formerly Under Secretary of the Local Government Board, as President of the Board of Education, has resulted in his re-election by 5,594 votes, against 4,078 recorded for the Unionist candidate, Mr. Boyd Carpenter, and 2,446 for Mr. Ben Turner, of the Labour party. The figures at the last election for the same three candidates were: Runciman 6,764, Boyd Carpenter 2,954, and Ben Turner 2,629.

THE LATEST INDIAN EXPEDITION.

Simla advices announce that several detachments of Afghans, numbering many thousand warriors, have crossed the Cabul river and joined with the rebel Mohmands. The mobilisation of British troops is proceeding apace.

Concerning the bands who have crossed the Cabul *Reuter* reports as follows: These so-called Afghans are not actual subjects of the Emir, but members of tribes over which the Emir exercises a purely nominal sovereignty, although they are nevertheless styled Afghans.

They are always in evidence at the slightest hint of disturbance and conflict. Well informed circles hold that the improper attitude of the Emir of Afghanistan is responsible for the hostile movements of these tribesmen.

The *Times* correspondent at Simla says that an official summary of the position on the Mohmand frontier shows that the attitude of the British authorities at Peshawar is strictly correct; but the presence of the Afghan contingent with the tribal gatherings seriously complicates matters, as it shows that the Emir's officials at Dakka failed in their duty when this body was allowed to cross the Cabul river openly to join the Mohmands.

Later: *Reuter* reports from Simla that on Thursday a large number of Mohmands advanced from several sides to the attack, but were repulsed with shell fire. A second attack made in the evening on the bridge of Adizai was also hurled back. Two brigades, under the command of General Sir James Willcocks, have been ordered to concentrate on the frontier, while a third brigade is held in reserve at Peshawar.

AMERICAN NEWS.

CANADIAN CROP PROSPECTS.

Advices from Winnipeg state that crop prospects in the Canadian North-West are eminently promising, following one of the best winters for many years. Cattle are doing well, seeding is well forward, and the country has seldom looked better.

THE CASE OF HARRY THAW.

In accordance with the court order obtained by his counsel, Mr. Harry Thaw has been permitted to sign the petition for a writ of habeas corpus. It is expected that he will leave the Matteawan Asylum and appear in court in support of the application on Saturday (today). All the members of the Thaw family are opposing the step.

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