

All communications for insertion to be addressed to the Editor, and to be authenticated by name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication.

No notice will be taken of anonymous communications.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Delivered in town weekly.

Thirteen Weeks,.....1s.

By post.

Thirteen Weeks,.....1s. 8d.

Six Months,.....3s. 4d.

Twelve Months,.....6s. 8d.

DISPLAYED ADVERTISEMENTS.

Single Insertion, - - - 2s. an Inch.

Two Insertions, - - - 3s. 6d. "

Three Insertions, - - - 4s. 6d. "

Standing Advertisement, - - - 1s. "

SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS.

Eighteen Words for 6d., or at the rate of 3d. a line.

The Workers' Herald

A SOCIALIST WEEKLY.

The economical subjection of the man of labour to the monopolizer of the means of labour—that is, the sources of life—lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence.

The economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subservient as a means.—KARL MARX.

ABERDEEN,
SATURDAY, 16TH JAN., 1892.

WHY HANG CRIMINALS?

THAT a man should pass, in health, and strength, from a prison cell at 8 o'clock in the morning, and 15 minutes later dangle a lifeless corpse—death being procured by deliberate, cold-blooded judicial strangulation—is a disgrace to the nineteenth century. The man who adjusts the rope and draws the bolt is a murderer, and they who aid and abet in the execution of the death-sentence are accessories to the crime they punish. A friend of ours once spoke to a reporter who had been present at an execution in Dundee; and this pressman told how one day a man walked close past him in all the vigour of manhood to the fatal platform; how

he witnessed the life choked out of him in a few seconds; and how the horror of the scene so weighed upon him that, although a temperate man, he vainly tried, during an entire week, to sink the recollection in drink.

Let those who are all for the continuance of capital punishment draw upon what imagination they possess, and settle once for all in their own minds whether death by hanging should still go on. Let them walk along the prison corridor, across the prison courtyard; let them, in imagination, mount the murderous stage, walk within the chalked space, feel the hempen strands around the throat, realise the last sight of earth and sky, the faces of men whom they have been taught to regard as brothers looking on stern and unmoved while they, a fellow-mortal, submit to the last preparations; let them realise, if they can, the sudden rush of recollections of the past—of the innocent days of childhood, the lessons, admonitions, caresses by the mother's knee; the games and play with childish companions, the hopes of youth, the joys of wedded life and fatherhood; the present thought that from these men, within the distance of a few feet, they are divided by a gulf so impassable that they seem already to belong to a different order of beings—then the creak and crack, the suddenly-created void, the agony, hate, despair, physical resistance to the quick-coming grapple of death—the mental and physical torture of a thousand lifetimes crowded into a few seconds, and then all is over. Let them conceive all this as vividly as we can conceive it, however inadequately we may express it; let them weigh all the reasons for capital punishment with all the reasons against it, and then let them say whether the death penalty should still remain a disgrace on the statute book of any civilised country. In the case of Storey the law has triumphed, and from reading the account of how the last murderer has

been murdered, men, full of hate and unreason, will go forth to commit fresh murders.

For the plea that hanging acts as a deterrent to the man with murderous intent is only a salve to the consciences of those who thirst for vengeance. Thomas Carlyle, who knew his own thought and the thought of his time, admitted that the death penalty was, to his mind, executed, and rightly executed, from the desire to *revancher*—to be revenged on the criminal. And we cannot account for it on any other grounds. Everybody knows that the murderer does not count the consequences of the deed which he is about to commit; and that this was the case with Storey is specially clear. His body had been enfeebled by drinking; his mind was deranged by love or lust, by jealousy and wounded pride; he was temporarily insane, as are all who do what he did; and to punish him with death is to take a man's life for allowing his brain and stomach to get into a certain state. We have only to look at Storey's portrait to see that he was not a strong, determined, calculating criminal, but an excitable, impressionable man, who would readily give way to alternating moods of wild joy and profound melancholy—characteristics typical of the class to which he professionally belonged. Had he been allowed to spend the rest of his life apart from his fellows he would have died a chastened and subdued man, and those who baited him to death would have been saved the stain and the debasement of blood-guiltiness.

Capital punishment for theft and other lesser crimes has been abolished; and these crimes, in proportion to the population, are fewer than when they were punishable by death. Those countries which have abolished the death penalty do not find that more murders are committed as a consequence. What, then, is the warrant for continuing this barbarous penalty in Christian Britain? We consider

the murderer a mental and moral lunatic, and believe that the safety of his fellows requires that he should be withdrawn from communion with them; but the community which takes the life of him who has done a murder is scarce less guilty than the murderer himself. The degree of its guilt is lessened only by the circumstance that it does not directly take the life of the man who has broken its laws; and one of the worst counts in the indictment against capital punishment is that no humane man would perform the duties of executioner; that society has to employ an agent whom it secretly despises to do its dastardly work; that the work cannot be done without the dehumanising of him who does it. As a test of the justice of capital punishment, we put the question to the average reader—Would you for Berry's fee choke the life out of a fellow-mortal? If you answer, Yea, then you have the heart of a murderer, and all that is necessary to induce you to take the life of a fellow-man are the due circumstances of opportunity and temptation.

A satisfactory indication of the growth of feeling and opinion on the matter of judicial murder is to be seen in the fact that executions, once carried out in public, are now done in private, as if the authorities were ashamed of them; and it is not too much to expect that the barbarous practice will ere long be discontinued altogether.

"SONGS BY THE WAY."

William Morris has just issued from his Kelmscott Press a new volume entitled "Songs by the Way." The work includes the poems published in the familiar "Chants for Socialists," and these, along with numerous new pieces, make up a book which shows the author to be no longer "the idle singer of an empty day," as years ago he described himself, but one, rather, who writes with a social purpose, and is in touch with all the "storm and stress" of present-day life. The publishers are Reeves & Turner, London, and the book is beautifully got up, as you might be sure a book of Morris's would be.