

the success of which that interest is absolutely essential.

If the promoters of the new League are unacquainted with the fine social reform work for the betterment of the people accomplished by Mary Clifford, Louisa Twining, Octavia Hill, Mary Scharlieb, M.D., Flora and Louisa Stevenson, Milicent Garrett Fawcett, Dorothea Beale, Lady Henry Somerset, Lady Battersea, and hundreds of others, we hope they will speedily make themselves conversant with the result of their labours, and at once enlist such women amongst the patronesses and promoters of their scheme.

Annotation.

FLOGGING IN THE NAVY.

The Humanitarian League has done good service in publishing as a leaflet the speech made by Mr. Swift MacNeill, K.C., M.P., in the House of Commons on the Naval Estimates.

Mr. MacNeill referred in strong terms to the practice of flogging, which, he said, was in active exercise in the Navy. Sailors were subject to the cat o' nine tails, which is a necessary equipment of every one of His Majesty's ships, and youths and boys of the Royal Navy were liable to have inflicted upon them twenty-four strokes of the birch steeped in brine by the ship's police, in the presence of all the boys on board ship for trifling offences, without being first tried by court-martial.

In the Army flogging had been abolished with the best results for the last twenty-five years. He had asked the Civil Lord of the Admiralty to make some alteration of the horrible regulation compelling boys to witness these floggings, but the hon. gentleman declined to do so. What had since happened? Last December there was a court-martial on board the *Victory*. He saw the prisoner emerge and never witnessed such a look of agony and despair on a boy's face as on that occasion. What were the circumstances under which that boy was tried? He had been compelled, with a crowd of other boys, to be present on one of the cruisers, at the flogging of one of his companions, and he had been so overwhelmed by what he saw that he attacked the officer inflicting the punishment, and almost knocked him down. Of course, his offence was a very shocking one, but it was possible to sympathise with the feelings of the lad under such circumstances. He, of course, was also put upon his trial, and was sentenced to a long term of hard labour, and to receive in addition twenty-four lashes. It was actions such as that which tend to produce rebellion in the Navy. It simply drove men to madness.

The hon. Member also read a letter from a clergyman, who had spent many years in the

Service, describing the manner in which the flogging was conducted, and giving a particular instance in which the deck was more like a slaughter house than anything else, and the victim died a few days afterwards. He thought he had said enough to stimulate a spirit of inquiry and investigation in every honourable and true-hearted man.

We think so, too.

Another point made by the speaker was that the naval cadets and midshipmen were not flogged; the flogging was reserved for the sons of the poor.

We are glad that a medical man has had the courage to speak out on this important question. Writing in the *Humanitarian* on the physiology and pathology of cases in which boys at the end of the punishment have had to be supported away, or in some cases carried away insensible, Dr. Haig describes the physiological effects as follows:—

"Pain raises the blood pressure, and every rise of blood-pressure increases the work that the heart has to do, and as the pain increases and the pressure continues to rise, the work of the heart goes on increasing and increasing until it reaches a point at which something is bound to give way; then one of the valves ceases to act, or the heart-muscle itself dilates, sufficient blood is no longer sent into the brain, and the sufferer falls a senseless mass. After a time the heart recovers itself, and sense and reason return once more; but what I want to point out is that when once this condition has been produced, the heart of that particular boy can never again be quite the same as if it had not been strained, no more than the tyre of a bicycle which has once had a bulge on it can be made 'as good as new'; and this means that for the rest of that boy's life he will have a certain tendency to fall again under strain, and a certain amount of defective circulation in his brain and elsewhere, which will ever afterwards react unfavourably on his physical, mental, and moral condition. Under extremely favourable circumstances nothing may again greatly strain his heart, and it may go on for years as if nothing had happened, but, nevertheless, the weakness has been produced, and the defect is probably never completely eradicated.

"If a boy is unfit for the Navy, let him be turned out of it; but to deliberately strain and damage the principal organ of his circulation, and then to keep this strained and damaged organ and its possessor in the Navy, is simply silly. I myself feel that men treat each other in this brutal manner merely because they are ignorant of physiology and pathology, and thus of the real ultimate effects of their deeds."

We agree with Dr. Haig. If a boy is unfit for the Navy, let him be turned out of it. But to endeavour to correct him by a cruel corporal punishment which drives in all the criminal instincts, instead of eradicating them by common-sense methods and moral discipline, is a stupidity which the nation should insist must cease without delay.

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