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A NOTE ON PASSING POLICIES.
The Gladstonians are very naturally trumpish at the Northwich election, and the Tories as naturally have been attempting to explain away the result. The charge in question will, however, take other by-elections, does seem to an onlooker to mean the extinction of the Chamberlain party, the absorption into definite Toryism of Lord Hartington and a few other nobodies, and in short, the defeat of the revolt in the liberal party against Mr. Gladstone, who seems destined to have one more triumph before he dies. To some ardent Liberals the way seems so direct to Liberal victory that the poll mail Gazette urges the Gladstonians to force on a dissolution by means of a distributive act at once. That no doubt would be good tactics for them if the party were really what the writer of the article in the poll mail seems to think it—a party with principles and a steady aim. As it is, one may err in the words that will attempt to soothe so revolutionary an anti-republican as that: their advent power will come by a longer road, with many more turfs in it. For the respectable part of them have died to the effect of the Home Rule movement, and indeed don't think much about that or anything else except the mere party triumph. However, doubtless in the course of time we shall see a Liberal ministry in power again, with somewhat more pretensions to Realism than a ministry that has had, and with the mandate of a Home Rule Bill. The said Bill will also, of course, be one of compromise; but we may suppose that it will do something to give the Irish question a little rest, though with its accompanying Land Bill it will not be so easily settled, especially as some people seem to suppose. But a truce once made with the Irish troubles, what will the new Gladstonian government do next? That is the rub. It will be expected to do something, and if it values its life must try hard not even to appear to do anything. To appear, I say, because, except as regards the franchise, the instrument of parliamentary democracy, there is no longer anything for that democracy to do. There may, and probably will be, a sharp fight in Parliament over the franchise, which will split up the party once more and give the Whig-Tories another innings; but when that is over and the democratic sword sharpened duly, where will be the enemy to be smitten by it? Doubtless there will be a new Aldermen, and so forth, a Leeds Endowment Act, and other devices for dividing the power of our landlord masters without lessening it; and also doubtless some rubbish about perpetual pensions and the cultivation of grovesonos and the like. But all this will be cut out by the newly-adopted sword of democracy for cleaving a pat of butter instead of a helmet head: it will be doing nothing. Nevertheless it will have an appearance of doing something and will lead to the death of more than one "Liberal" ministry, if constitutionality lasts as long; so that what between disgusting real democrats with really doing nothing, and terrifying respectability with seeming to do something, the Gladstonian party is likely to have a rough time of it, and may well pray for a continuance of the Irish quarrel, in which they have managed, after a deal of standing on alternate feet, to take a position (apparently not to their thinking) too dangerous to constitutionality.

Meantime, after all the Tory Government is not going to die tamely;
they have plucked up heart to pass the Lords' amendments to the Land legislation producing a kind of National League with their foot on their Chamberlain friends are of no value to them, and that they must play their last card of attempting to drive the Irish people into violent action, which might turn the result of the Liberal party against Home Rule again. Fortunately they are probably too late once more; the mind of the ordinary person not pledged to the cause of reaction is no longer used to the idea of Home Rule, and any outbreak on the part of the Irish that is not systematic will be looked on as a mere incident in the struggle.

Some measure of Home Rule is certain; and Mr. Cowperthwaite says that he will be long in power in this country when we have a profoundly popular government in power, which, face to face with the real question of the day—whether labour is to be free or the slave of monopoly—will not be able to deal with that or the Home Rule and the parliament which has produced it are and must be essentially the guardians of that very monopoly.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

IS LIPSKI'S CONFESSION GENUINE?
So Lipski has confessed and all is right, "he has been brought to a frame of mind that has enabled him to make the reproduction," says the Daily News. Bourgeois justice and the Home Secretary are triumphantly vindicated. Thus, doubtless, thought the "respectable" world on Monday morning.

There is nothing to be surprised at in Lipski's confession. Indeed, it was just what was to be expected; those who have never believed in his guilt have no need to do now, the evidence is entirely against such an hypothesis; but that under the circumstances the world should be given to the idea that Lipski has confessed the "justice of his sentence," was absolutely essential to the stability of the government, of the system of capital punishment, and to the credit of our judicial machinery generally. What goes on within the walls of a prison is known only to those in the swim of the bureaucratic train, and we do not pretend to decide dogmatically with respect to the origin of the document. We need only call the reader's attention to the fact that the bureaucrat is by the necessities of his profession a suspicious kind of wretch; the very idea of official declarations is preposterous. Who knows what kind of coajery or even threats might not have been employed, since the occasion was so urgent and so much at stake?

In connection with this it is well to remember that the witches who were burnt in the seventeenth century almost always confessed their guilt, and "admitted the justice of their sentence"—or were said to have done so. It must not be forgotten that Lipski, who came from Russia Poland, remembering that in his own country a confession of guilt is necessary before a condemned criminal can be executed, and that there torture is admitted to be used on occasion to extort such a confession, might be of the opinion that some thing might happen here, and seeing his case was hopeless and that he had to die, submitted to what he might think was a general formula for saving his life.

Anyhow the document bears upon it the stamp of ungentleness. Lipski says that he had not begun to search for money before Miriam awoke and alarmed him. Does it seem likely that a man not being a workhouse body which deliberately refuses to have anything to do with the great economic question, and repudiates any connection with even trade- unionism and politics had better call itself a "slave club" and drop such a title as the "Ploughman's International Union."—J. L. M.

THE SCOTTISH PROCLAMER.—Some hopes were entertained that the Scottish Ploughman's Union would develop into a thoroughly labour organisation, but at the last annual conference one of the officials stated that the union was strictly a benefit society, and not in the least way connected with trade union or political purposes. It is certainly a pity to see such a large and important class of workmen, who make a great power in the labour movement boring themselves with a mere benefit society. If they are not thoroughly united, and if they do not co-operate rigidly exclusively in the interests of the working class, they cannot do the great social problem that confronts the working class, they need not expect that their flourishing financial condition will interest anyone but themselves. In such a way a useless body which deliberately refuses to have anything to do with the great economic question, and repudiates any connection with even trade-unionism and politics had better call itself a "slave club" and drop such a title as the "Ploughman's International Union."—J. L. M.