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NOTES ON NEWS.

The present example of the sickening conventionality, called a Queen's Speech, is a fine specimen of its loathsome kind, but there is nothing in it to surprise anyone. Its framers are, of course, bound to praise themselves, whatever crimes or blunders they may have committed, but that people should tamely bear such a ridiculous and preposterous piece of nonsense is a sign, if but a small one, of the rottenness of the society we live in, and a token of the baleful officialism of our dead-dog constitutional monarchy, that finds it useful to have a cloak behind which to shelter its misdeeds; even when it is a cloak that would be openly laughed at but for the cant that guards English bourgeoisdom from every breath of common sense.

Mr. Balfour's speech on the Mitchelstown massacre is accepted as meaning an endorsement of the murderous conduct of the police; that was all that we wanted to know of him. His *tu quoque* to Sir William Harcourt was as effective as you please in the atmosphere of the House of Commons, but has nothing whatever to do with the question which all honest men are asking: Are you going to govern Ireland by Peterloos? Mr. Balfour answers "Yes, if my colleagues' courage does not collapse." A very big "if" is that. If the age of miracles does not come back on us, the responsibility of Ireland will presently be shifted from the Tories to the Gladstonites, though perhaps the very confidence that most people have in the rapid approach of Home Rule, acting on the habitual laziness of the English people, will yet delay it somewhat.

The feeble forcible government has made another step in Coercion by specially proclaiming the Clare branches of the National League. This will make no difference to the work that body has been doing (except to keep its name before the public), since it will be taken up in another form.

Mr. Cunninghame Graham is to be congratulated on his suspension at the hands of the pantomimic actor who serves the House for Speaker at present; it is the only honour which an honest man who has strayed into that assembly can receive from it.

That political prisoners should be treated in our jails on the same footing as ordinary criminals, is certainly a-piece of English brutality; but I think it is so principally because it is intended for an insult against freedom on the part of the coarse blackguards who govern us. On the other hand, if the political prisoners protest against prison-torture applied to themselves only on the ground that they are high-minded and superior persons, they show their unfitness for citizens, and their fitness for governors. To treat *any* set of men in the brutality-plus-science manner that prisoners in English jails are treated, degrades the whole nation; not merely the poor devils of warders, jailers, and the semi-military fools of governors, but the whole of society, that in its indomitable cant takes it for granted that here as in other matters England is ahead of the rest of the world, is thoroughly respectable.

Indeed what words can express the baseness of the *vicarious* cruelty that sets a body of poor wretches of the "lower classes" to do the prison-torture for the behoof of the respectable; and these all the while know perfectly well, if they know nothing else, that their prisons are breeding-places of crime and slaughter-houses of the hope of a return to decent life; and if they choose can know that our English prisons are about the worst in Europe, and a disgrace to humanity. "Am I my brother's keeper?" quoth Cain, and the same sneer is practically the answer which our vile respectability makes to any doubts that may be suggested to it on this matter.

The appeal of the Chicago Anarchists has been rejected; but they have a further appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States. Our friends, it may be hoped, will remember that the evidence on which they were convicted of the bomb-throwing or complicity with it, was quite worthless; and that the conduct of the police on the occasion was simply an exaggeration of that of the police in the first act of the Mitchelstown tragedy; only the American police used deadly weapons from the first. In spite of all this, it is only too probable that these men who have dared to speak of freedom to the republican people of America, will be sacrificed to that spirit of cold cruelty, heartless and

careless at once, which is one of the most noticeable characteristics of American commercialism. W. M.

Jus, the "organ of Individualism," has naturally a fling or two at the Trades' Union Congress because of the "manual labourers" daring to meddle with the concerns of better educated people. "Knowledge is a pre-requisite of sound practical politics"; and all the old truisms are trotted out for the occasion, that are tossed aside when they tell against our ingenuous friends. That workmen should endeavour to *combine*, and not accept the advice of Individualists and be beaten in detail, is gall and wormwood to the sensitive friends of "individual liberty."

"A crushing and overwhelming blow for the Socialists" administered by Mr. Broadhurst, however, is found by *Jus* in his dictum that "one of the chief causes of the want of employment is the tremendous development of the power of production"! Both the speaker of this portentous phrase and the commentator thereupon might have heard and read the same truth uttered from many a Socialist paper and platform without seriously harming the Socialists.

"This increase," says *Jus*, "must be set down to invention and organisation. The significance of this will be apparent to those who reflect. Ay, truly! Socialists wish to carry higher the "invention and organisation" that has produced the increase of wealth, *minus* the Individualistic exploitation that has produced the un-employment. "Hence these tears!" S.

THE AMERICAN LABOUR PARTIES.

II.—THE GEORGE PARTY.

In stating the "platform" of the George party it will be necessary to boil it down. Among the sins of some American Labour leaders is that they are as roundabout and long-winded as British lawyers. A reprint of the platform of the "United" Labour Party would fill three columns of this paper; but here is the gist of it:—*Platform*: (1) Abolition of all laws which give judicial, industrial, financial, or political advantages to one class that are not shared by all; (2) repudiate Socialism and land nationalisation; (3) tax all land-values which arise from the growth of society as distinguished from individual exertion; (4) municipalities to supply water, light, and heat; government to issue all money and start a postal telegraph and savings-bank and take over the railways; (5) reduction of the hours of labour, stop employment of children, stop competition of convict with "honest" labour, secure sanitary inspection of houses, factories, and mines, and stop abuse of the conspiracy laws; (6) simplify legal procedure, secret ballot, relieve candidates from election expenses. *Resolutions*: (1) Calling national labour conference (of those who accept this platform only); (2) widening and deepening the State canals; eight-hour day for letter-carriers; (4) compulsory education of children from 14 to 16, and establishment of free libraries; (4) denouncing the public press and demanding a fair examination of their principles from "the people, the pulpit, and the press"; (5) establishment of a State printing-office; (6) no companies or individuals to employ armed men; (7) no class-legislation; (8) no public grants to private schools, charities, or other institutions; (9) equal civil and political rights to women as to men; (10) Home Rule and the destruction of landlordism in Ireland.

This platform was framed by a small committee, presented by George, and "swallowed" by the convention without the least discussion. The first features that will strike any one who knows George's works will be that free trade is not mentioned and land nationalisation is repudiated. George has not abandoned free trade; he has merely put it up his sleeve. It lurks, but not unseen, in the principle that all taxes are to be abrogated except a land tax, or rather "a tax on land-values." The *Irish World*, a true and free-minded friend of labour, has already ferreted out this, and predicts that the coming national conference will split on this point. Very likely, and little pity! A party which accepts such a platform as this will only hold together till it finds out the meaning of it—"which is nothing."

Those who thought that Mr. George was preaching the doctrine of the land for the people will now see their mistake a little more clearly. It is no use to turn upon George, as plenty will do, and abuse him for abandoning his principles. He never advocated land nationalisation. He used Socialist sentiment and arguments, he even talked about the