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, of course, bound to praise themselves, have not been altogether unmoved, but that people should tamely bear such a ridiculous and posthumous 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 hateful 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 In 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 Peter-ness? 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 Gladstonians, though perhaps the very confidence that most people have in the rapid approval of Home Rule, springing from the habitual laziness of the English people, will yet delay it somewhat.

The freeible forcible government has made another step in Coerdo 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. Cunningham Graham is to be congratulated on his suspension at the hands of the pantomimic actor who serves the House for Speaker at prayer; 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 attack against freedom on the part of the coarse blackguards who govern us. On the other hand, if the political prisoners protest against prison torture as an attack on the rights of the individual, and ground the whole nation not merely on poor devils of warders, jailing, 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 vicious cruelty that sets a body of poor wretches of the "lower classes" to do the prison-torture for the behalf 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.

I dread that the "honest" people's "slogan" quoted Cain, and the same sneer is practically the answer which our vile representation makes to any doubts that may be suggested to it on this matter.

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. The reprinted of the "Platform of the United Labour Party" would fill three columns of this paper; but here is the gist of it:—

- 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) municipalisation of light, gas and water; not apply the "Individualist" idea that every man must have his own; (5) divide the landed wealth of the country among the working-classes; (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) widen and deepen the State canals; (3) eight-hour day for letter-carriers; (4) compulsory education of children from 14 to 16, and establishment of free libraries; (5) denounced the public press and demanded a fair examination of their principles from "the people, the pulpit, and the press"; (6) establishment of a State printing-office; (7) 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 forecasted 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 proclaiming the doctrine of the American Anarchists have been rejected; but they have been further agreed 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, baseless and careless at once, which is one of the most noticeable characteristics of American commercialism.

W. M.