NOTES ON NEWS.

It is assumed by the speakers at a party meeting that the audience will stand anything, partly because as a rule if they are thorough partisans they only listen to certain party catch-words and cheer them; but in one of Mr. Balfour's late speeches he must have tried the "thorough" party quality of his friends somewhat, and probably rather disappointed them, in spite of the loud and prolonged cheering which followed the remark, which we may assume was caused by the fact that the Under-Secretary spoke loud at this point of his speech.

Said Mr. Balfour: "If it were true that the Union could only be maintained by taking away the civil rights of the Irish people, by putting in prison people who are innocent, by attacking those who are guilty of no other offence than that of differing from us in political opinion, I would not lift a hand to maintain the Union. I would rather that it were sacrificed, and that the greatness of this Empire were sunk in the dust, than that we should soil our hands by the political methods of which we are accused by our political opponents! Let us do that true!"

How is that for high! One can imagine the fervor with which this flower of rhetoric was fired off at the heads of the Tory audience, and no wonder that they cheered. But on the whole it was probably not so much because Mr. Balfour spoke loud that he was cheered, but because his audience must have felt that they had come to the climax of the entertainment, and that no bigger lie could be told them that day. What Mr. Balfour says he would not do under any circumstances is an accurate description of what he has done.

After all, why should Mr. Balfour be so earnest in disinclaiming his acts, or trying to put another colour on them? It is his business as an officer of the Executive of our "Society" to put his enemies in prison, and the legal accusation to be brought against them is a very insignificant detail of the matter. They are his enemies, that is enough.

In fact, all this business of careful discrimination between "crime" and "political offences" and the like is beside the question. What Mr. Balfour does with his Irish enemies "Society" in general does with its enemies, only with far more cast and hypocrisy, since it feels itself safe in the absence of responsibility which its corporate quality gives it; and no doubt decent people are apt to feel as Mr. Balfour feels about Mr. Mandeville and others, that if they suffer in the process of slow torture, and sometimes die of it and sometimes go mad of it, so much the worse for them; that comes of their being our enemies.

For instance, when Judge Stephens the other day gave four lads fourteen each for an act of brutality and robbery committed against an old woman, whatever enjoyment he might have had in the prospect of his victims, and the shrieks of their female relatives, which the reporter tells us rang through the Court, all that was by the way. As a judge (apart from the fact of his being Stephens) he had to make the accused feel that they were enemies, and were going to suffer the "woe to the vanquished," which is so old a story. It was not the brutality which he was set to punish, but the inconvenience to that abstraction, "Society," in which things are everything, persons are nothing, and to which Balfour sacrificed so recklessly in that prize lie of his.

Can we venture to hope that when the Irish have got Home Rule, and before they have attained to social freedom, the memory of Balfour's prison and its tortures and injustices will make the then rulers of Ireland interestingly moral to those other enemies, the enemies of "Society," who may come under their hands, that they will rather remember the suffering inflicted on persons, than the damage done to things? We can almost hope that it will be so with such a quick-witted and impressionable people, and that during the space they intervene between the attainment of Home Rule, and the realisation of True Society, Ireland will be noted for the lightness of its sentences on "criminals."

The Foresters have given a snub to American exclusiveness as to colour by cancelling the Constitution of the subsidiary High Court of the United States, which refused to withdraw the exclusive word "White" which had been put into the clauses of its rules. This decision and the enthusiasm with which it was done are creditable to the Foresters; but are they going to stop at condemning the exclusion of "men of colour" from the advantages of Society? Won't they now be in some form unseat the "master of labour" from these advantages? Surely this is their business if nothing else is.

Lord Salisbury has had at the Mansion House the usual opportunity of uttering a manifesto on behalf of the Ministers, if they have one to utter, and in any case of blowing their trumpet before the fools who allow themselves to be governed by them. His speech was not surprising, but it is worth noting as giving a fair summation of the aspirations and covert fears of the stupider part of the middle classes, of whom Lord Salisbury, in spite of his surface cleverness, is a good representative.

He plumed himself on the passing of that piece of humbug, the Local Government bill, and had the effrontery to hope that it would be "full. In dealing with the matter of Ireland he had the further effrontery to hint (he didn't do more) that the opposition of the Irish was slackening. He said that the disease of Ireland was its poverty; and surely he might have added of England also, or else it is a delusion that the Government has been driven to hold a Commission on the sweating system (in London not in Ireland) and the resistance of the match-girls to the horrible shabbiness of the pious Bryant and May, and their poor little gain is a dream. He crowed over the diminution of boycotting in Ireland; but we Socialists can answer for it that it has not diminished in England; only here it is the boycotting of the oppressed by the oppressors and not of the oppressors by the oppressed.

The hymn that he sang to the sacredness of "free" contract no doubt was echoed in the breasts of his hearers, who rejoiced in believing that heaven would never sanction the abolition of their monopoly.

Then came his own subject, foreign affairs: "Popular passion or popular feeling" may "drive the vast force of nations" into war, "but the object of the rulers of the world is to secure uninterrupted peace." This seems intended as an insult to the public; but he is not thinking of them; his "popular feeling" one can see means the feeling of the bourgeois only—the others—what others are there to this most noble man! For the rest he is right; "popular passion," i.e. the necessities of the competitive market may bring on war, and most bitterly will "the rulers of the world" regret that they cannot help it, for who knows but that "the popular passion" of the real people may then change the aspect of affairs.

Egypt, he said, is happy; that is, its accursed exploiters are: "it is going on up to and beyond the utmost wishes we have can formed?"

Yes, and what wishes can its luckless passants have formed? I fear not much. I am sure that though Lord Salisbury has heard of them, he only thinks of them as a fact in the lump, and has practically entirely forgotten that this fact is composed of many thousand persons, each one of whom is a sufficiently complex fact in himself or herself. He said also that it was not the annexation of territory (in Egypt) that was desirable. Just so. To sneak a thing is much more convenient than boldly robbing it: besides, we have done that already: why steal it twice?

But enough about this grievous twaddle! The real thing to note in it is the complete ignoring of all but the middle-class and its rulers: the Marx-class as at the middle-class as its mediatory position and politics compel him to do; but he is devoted to its interests, is its faithful servant; is, in spite of his sneer, an integral part of it, a result of its holy dogma of "free contract." Below that he knows of nothing but a machine which sometimes creaks inconveniently.

The Daily News says that the strike in Paris is a political one; that means in other words that the Paris workmen understand by this time


### The Revolt of Ghent

(Not available for transcription)