NOTES ON NEWS.

The Government have passed their bill for the relief of the Irish landlords to the extent of five millions, as they were quite sure to do in the tide of all opposition, but their victory is very likely to do them permanent service. Compensation to the Irish landlords at the expense of the British tax-payer is just the rock they are likely to split on, but they cannot help steering in that direction; so that before long they will probably have a way for their opponents to try their scheme for peasant proprietorship in Ireland; or more plainly, for making a number of small landlords in Ireland instead of a few big ones. Needless to insist on the fact that this also will have to be done at the expense of the British tax-payer, whatever hanky-panky may be used to conceal the fact.

"The flowing tide is with us" (the Liberals) cries the Pall Mall Gazette. From the electronic agents' pay-roll it is pretty plain that that is present, at the chances of a Gladstonian success at the next election are brightening. But another metaphor more accurately describes the process by which the change of ministries is being brought about: "The pendulum is swinging again," is the figure of speech. That is not so encouraging perhaps to some of the members of the "Liberal party," that curious creature with a Whig head and a Radical tail, though I fear a very great many of them are much better pleased that so it is. When the "flowing tide" of really advanced opinion sets in, these gentry will skip out of the way of it with all the nimbleness they are capable of.

Mr. Henry George has come to England once more with his old pretensions to Socialism abandoned, but clinging obstinately to his old economical heresies, with which in past days he used to weave a veil of vague sociological aspiration and eloquence. Free trade and the single-tax, i.e., what he used to call land nationalisation, but which he now more accurately describes as the taxing of land values, is his platform; and he has left no step from end to end of the single tax, with a very curious oblivion of the not very redeemable fact, that England has been a free-trade country for many years and is not very far on the road to the "single-tax."

Mr. George combats the cry of the land for the cultivator with the cry of the land for the people; but, unhappily, it is but a cry. What he has substituted is "the land for the money capitalist." And how he proposes to separate the land-capitalist from the money-capitalist passes human ingenuity to imagine. Is it possible for a man to be sincere, who with plenty of people teaching him, has not been able to learn this through all these years? To be a forward politician; to make a great agitation, clamouring for a great change which would change nothing in the life of the toiling people; but which happily cannot by itself be attempted even. This seems now Mr. George's career, after all his big words.

The frightful case of injustice perpetrated by "justice" against the two policemen, Murphy and Branaghan, and the case mentioned by Mr. Bernard Collischon, in which no less a person as the Chief Justice of the criminal law, a man of great ability, has been made (though, indeed, how can you "remedy" the murder of so many years of a man's life?), sheds a lurid light on all the ways and means of our criminal law. I do not say that many such cases have happened, and will happen as long as our shambles last, and calls for such a system of defence?

One remark in the papers about this shameful affair struck me particularly. It was stated that there were serious doubts at the time of conviction as to the guilt of the men, but that they were overborne by the superior argument of the prosecution, which was that of the vapidity of the burglary. Does not this show how the whole feeling of the public is corrupted by our judicial system? The offence is committed, and straightforward in the interests of society a manhunt is set on foot; some one is arrested, and the public will be so bitterly disappointed if nobody is caught that if the guilty person cannot be convicted, at least convict somebody; and then the whole machinery of the law is set at work to get a conviction, of the guilty man if possible, but at least of some one. A theory of prosecution is started, and the whole mass of circumstantial evidence is manipulated by it; a sham jury give a verdict which purports to be theirs, but is in fact nothing but a deduction from the judge's summing-up—and, as far as I can see, none of the cases, the public speedily forgets it, while the unhappy victims of its idiotic thrust for theatrical revenge are rotting in jail if they have not been hanged. The word rotting has a figurative word, let us remember, but a literal expression of a fact.

Mr. Pyke, in his interesting volume on the "History of Crime," notes that in the height of the Middle Ages in England juries were very unwilling to convict. There is no more significant symptom of the servile condition we have dropped into than this with which contemporary historians are now almost unanimous. The jury begin to think about their position, and the Courts complain of the difficulty of getting convictions, we may begin to lay some claim to be of the same blood as our stout ancestors.

What trifles will throw some people into rapturous ecstasies. A week or so ago that very advanced Star went almost insane with joy over Mr. Gladstone's Birmingham programme. This perhaps should not occasion any remark, for that organ of wretchedness who hardly knows its due share of Celtic ineptitude, takes very little to excite it; but when the Able Editor of the Star asks comrade Morris what the people in America have reaped from the bomb at Chicago compared with what the people of London have gained from the peaceful and constitutional action of the Star editor, the time has come, I think, to make some reply.

What in the name of all that is wonderful is there in this Birmingham, hopelessly backward for the present, to rejoice and be thankful for! What above all is there for the poor who hardly know where to get their next meal, who are starving for want of work, and who see the grim demon of hunger advancing to devour them?

Leasehold emancipation! This may make the heart of the small shopkeeper and house-farmer leap with joy within him, because he will have no ground landlord to share the spoils he wrings from his rack-rented tenant; but it will hardly afford much comfort to the unemployed workman who is going to be turned into the street by the house-farmer because he is out of work he cannot pay the exorbitant rack-rent which his landlord wrings from him.

"Such changes in the land laws as would prevent the dreadful overcrowding of the poor in London." What does this mean? As far as I can see, it means an end to the landlordism which has been the cause of London over-crowding; but those who know the Liberal party may well guess that it does not mean the latter.

It means "free land," then—that is, expropriation of the encumbered aristocratic landlord in favour of the arrogant plutocrat of the towns. Capitalism may then own the land as well as the factories. Free trade and the single-tax is a step forwards, but it will diminish overcrowding I will leave my readers to find out.

Then again "something is to be done to provide the working classes with decent living." What in heaven's name is to be done the great chief of the Liberal party is commendably reticent.

On the whole, nothing has occurred to justify the enthusiasm of the Star, or to give London workmen any notion that the great Liberal party has changed its character. It is still the miserable sham it has been in times gone by, and those who trust to it will reap their reward.

The workers of London have gained nothing but promises, and very poor promises. But it may be objected that the American workmen have gained as little from the events at Chicago. This may be, but...