NOTES ON NEWS.

The news from the Soudan is somewhat portentous, if, as seems pretty certain, Stanley as well as Emin Bey is in the hands of the Mahdi. It is in any case satisfactory that Stanley's expedition has fallen through; it gives us breathing space, at any rate. Also as a matter of course the Soudanese are in a better position for the present, for their possession of these important hostages. But on the other hand the danger of the "pioneers of civilization" (once called pirates) will be felt by the market-mongers and "Christianity-shouters" for all that it is worth, and the difficulties in the way of landing a small, half responsibility expedition in the Soudan will tend to push us into a big affair in which we shall be fully responsible, and in which it would be almost too good to hope for serious defeat.

Mr. Page Hopps "Radicals' Creed," as printed in The Pall Mall, is as contemptible a well-meaning person ever produced: the opening sentence of it convicts him at once of incapacity of understanding the whole social question. Says he: "It is always foolish and wicked to set class against class, but the time has come for a resolute forward movement in favour of the toilers of our streets and fields." Indeed the time has come, and long ago; nor for such a movement has the time ever failed. But pray, how can "a resolute forward movement" on behalf of the toilers face itself, finding itself at once face to face with a class which says, "Thus far and no further; we have won our position by a long struggle and have overthrown our masters; but now we are the masters. Your resolute forward movement must stop, unless it can go forward over us."

Will Radicals of Mr. Page Hopps' kind never learn that whatever is done to raise the condition of the "poor" must be done at the expense of the rich; since the latter are only rich because the poor make them so by allowing themselves to be compelled into poverty? To waste their labour for the rich, and to be paid for their wasted labour with leave to live to waste their labour, is this what they are compelled to do. This is a fact, and there is no evading it. Let the "Radical" read his Adam Smith, and see it stated there in plain terms before he rates the modern social revolution thought of and when there was no danger in stating it.

Who or what sets class against class? The whole evolution of society. That is, the existence of the classes. That is indeed a foolish and wicked thing, and since we now see that we can make an end of it, let us make an end of it at once. Here is a wall which hinders us from the use of a fair garden: there is the hindrance, and it is caused by the wall; which is there, whether we shut our eyes to it or not. Nor shall we be any more inside the garden because we turn round and dabble in a few potatoes outside it, and pretend there is no wall between us and the garden, and that we don't want to get in if we could. Moral—down with the wall! even if it is necessary to say plainly that it is. More of the Radicals' Creed another time.

Mr. Arthur Arnold takes the trouble to attack Mr. George, over whose head the "pernicious" word is now somersaulted, could win an easy victory, if he had taken the trouble to understand the ground monopsony really signifies, and how impossible it is to separate it from monopoly of the other means of production; but such a victory would not be a victory for the champion of "free land," but for the Socialist. Mr. Arnold tells us pretty plainly what his aim is when he says: "Here, also, the monopoly of the land is neither great nor wide nor deep; it is only narrow, a trust piece of wall which makes it great and wide and deep." Just so; Mr. Arnold's aim, like that of many others whose instinct rather than their reason drives them to seek it, is the perpetuation of inequality—i.e., the misery of the many, by means of the widening of the basis of robbery. He thinks (or feels), and rightly, that the more people you can get interested in the maintenance of oppression, the safer oppression will be from the attacks of the disinherited. Plunder by all means, but don't let the few keep the plunder to themselves: if many share the plunder they will form a stout body of men who will be as firm in their opinion that "the abolition of the monopoly is impossible" as the slave-owners of Aristotle's time were as to their monopoly.

Says Mr. Arnold, something or other "would be cruelly unjust to the working classes, and would impoverish them by enhancing the value of foreign investments." How a labouring man on $5 a week can be impoverished by a rise in prices in foreign investments, is surely beyond the ken of anybody but a very wise financier—or a very great fool.

Mr. Arnold makes a curious quotation from J. S. Mill: "The monopoly of land, says Mr. Mill, in words which no accurate thinker can repudiate, "is a natural monopoly . . . . which cannot be prevented from existing." Well, I learned it on the Classics, and I am a thinker, but I am in the habit of weighing the value of language, and I should say that a man who would use such a phrase as "natural monopoly" may very well talk about "dry water," without astonish- ing us much. To such a man I should deny the title of an "accurate thinker," were he Mr. Mill, or the Pope, or even Mr. Bradlaugh.

In plain words a monopoly can be maintained as long as the monopoly has fraud and force enough to hoodwink the most of men and bully the rest; failing that sufficiency of fraud and force, it is scattered to winds. But will Mr. Arnold, or any other Free Land League, tell us only the abolition of the monopoly of land (or says the means of production generally) is impossible? He might as well say that it is impossible for a man to touch his toe with his hand. It is impossible as long as his hand is tied behind his back.

Mr. Morley has been making what is conventionally called a "great" speech in Clerkenwell. To judge by the reports and the columns, it was at least a big speech; but there was in it little or nothing to note. Leasehold enfranchisement was the chief part of the song; and it is to be hoped that even advanced Radicals are not blind enough to see it as, what Mr. Morley half hinted he considered it, a step to the abolition of the land-monopoly. A measure to increase the number of landlords is about all that its supporters can claim it to be. But, as a matter of fact, it means merely aggravating the capitalist, big or little, at the expense of the land-owners, and it is only meant to stop people's mouths, a make-believe of energy on the part of the "Great Liberal Party."

Mr. Morley put before Liberals an ideal quoted from Shakespeare: "I earn that I eat: I get that I wear: o'we no man hate: ev'ry no man's happiness: glad of o'we other's good." Very pretty sentiments, but to whom are they addressed? To the workers? We believe certainly earn what they eat and get that they wear, but also what other people eat and wear. To the possessing classes? well, when they can say that with truth it was a changed world indeed. For they would be both naked and hungry if they only ate and wore what they earned; and if they were glad of other people's good, how about the Soudan, and Imperial Federation, and the whole disquieting war of the market, and oppression of that great tyranny the British Empire?

The Star has been doing a little bit of canonisation of Mr. Brummer as the worker's friend, which under all the circumstances it was bound to do, for where would the Star have been without Mr. Brummer, or rather without Brummer's money? But Mr. Brummer is a Gladstonian Radical, a Gladstonian Imperialist, and a Gladstonian anti-working-men's friend. He was quite properly to canonise a Tory or Unionist employer of labour, has taken the part of the Devil's Advocate, and has taken pains to show that Mr. Brummer is just as good as might be expected from his position, i.e., an opportunist politician, a class which despises other men to keep them grudging against their will, and competing (i.e., fighting) with other members of his class for the biggest share he can get of this plunder. The motto of the Star is, " svensk*; I can do no wrong even if he is one of our owners," and the Evening News has done some service to us in answering the "eternal truth" or infernal lie. It the Star do as much for the Evening News another time, and so do honour to an ancient proverb.

If reference to what I have said about the new President of the United States and his descent from the great regicide, a genealogical friend sends me the following:

"It seems that the new unc* god President (who never so much as