

Railway Returns and the Tourist Traffic.—English experience is rarely respected in Ireland (says *Engineering*), the trend of events in England finds no echo in the Emerald Isle. This has just been the case with regard to the dividends of the four principal Irish railway companies, the Great Southern and Western, the Great Northern, the Midland Great Western, and the Belfast and Northern Counties. While English ordinary stock dividends have either been slipping back or have been maintained with great difficulty, the outlook has improved, if anything, in Ireland. This is due largely to the fact that systematic efforts have been made during the last year or two to bring the tourist attractions of Ireland more under the notice of the public. The result of these efforts has been a respectable addition to Irish railway revenue—an addition which has proved more than sufficient to meet the increased cost of locomotive power. The net profits realised by the Great Southern and Western for the first half of this year was, accordingly, £175,394, as compared with £171,492; that of the Great Northern, £188,594, as compared with £181,119; that of the Midland Great Western, £88,049, as compared with £79,564; and that of the Belfast and Northern Counties, £51,551, as compared with £49,893. The companies had no difficulty in keeping up their ordinary stock dividends, and carried somewhat larger balances forward. The ordinary stock dividend of the Great Southern and Western remained at 5 per cent. per annum; that of the Great Northern at 5½ per cent. per annum; that of the Midland Great Western at 4 per cent. per annum; and that of the Belfast and Northern Counties at 5 per cent. per annum. The four Irish companies have also set a good example to their English contemporaries by forming reserve funds. An important amalgamation received legislative sanction in the last Session of Parliament. This amalgamation was the absorption of the Waterford, Limerick, and Western, and the Waterford and Central Ireland lines into the Great Southern and Western system. The hold of the Great Southern and Western upon the South and South-west of Ireland will be strengthened by this addition to its network, and economy in working will also, no doubt, be secured. There is another matter in which Irish railway companies are showing sound judgment. This is the provision of comfortable, well-managed, up-to-date hotels. Nothing is more calculated than this to secure a large influx of tourists. The natural attractions of Ireland are, no doubt, great and tempting; but hitherto there has been a want of good lodging accommodation.

Death of a Distinguished Archaeologist.—The death of Miss Margaret Stokes removes from the field of Irish archaeology one of its most gifted and one of its most interesting explorers. Her work upon the remains of Christian art in Ireland and upon the traces of Irish influence on Continental art and literature (says an Irish exchange) placed her in the very foremost rank of students and writers. She traced the footsteps of the great Irish missionaries on the Continent with loving reverence; and her books, *Three Months in the Forests of France* and *Six Months in the Apennines*, are as tender a tribute to Irish sanctity and zeal as the work of Montalembert. Miss Stokes was almost the first to study the inter-relations of Irish and Continental art, and her work in that connection was full of suggestiveness, and was in process of further discovery, as her lectures on the Monasterboice Crosses recently bore witness. Here and there her writings betray a bias, due to the reading back into Early Irish Christianity of some of the notions of modern Evangelicalism. But they are, on the whole, sound, and their author is worthy of remembrance with the great Irish scholars and archaeologists of the past.

THE IRISH LAND QUESTION.

In the course of an address to his constituents at South Tyrone Mr T. W. Russell, Unionist candidate for the district and member of the Government, made a very important speech with reference to the manner in which the benefits of the Land Acts were being nullified by the Courts. He said—

Three great Land Purchase Acts, involving the advance of £40,000,000 sterling have been passed. The Land Acts of 1887 and of 1895 have also been secured. And, wherever Irishmen may think, there is no man calmly taking stock of the past 30 years—who will refuse to admit that the Parliament of the United Kingdom has striven hard to right what was wrong and to do justice. The unwillingness, therefore, of the average British elector to look at the question is easily understood. Why, then, it may be asked, should I propose to-day to re-open it? Why not 'rest and be thankful?' The question is entirely reasonable, and I propose to answer it.

THE LAND PROBLEM HAS TO BE FACED AFRESH.

mainly because of three things. First, the leaders of the Irish landlord party by persistent agitation and by bitter attacks in the House of Lords, and in the Press, upon the Land Acts, will not permit the issue to be closed; second, because a handful of land agents, maintaining the evil tradition of a class which has been responsible for much of our troubles, appear to spend their lives harrying the tenantry of the country, forcing expensive law suits upon men who are utterly unable to afford these costly luxuries; and thirdly, because the administration of the Acts which forced, in 1894, a Parliamentary inquiry, apparently goes from bad to worse, and, according to every second man one meets, is no longer even tolerable. I take this step most unwillingly. It might have been avoided if the leaders of the landlord party had been wise; if they had controlled some of their representatives in Ireland; and, above all, had the Land Commission pursued its work in a broad and tolerant spirit, with the great policy of the Land Acts constantly before its mind. But although knowledge comes, wisdom lingers, and whom the gods wish to destroy they first drive mad. I propose

therefore to-day, and with the fullest sense of responsibility, to prove that it is perfectly hopeless to continue as a permanent plan the present system of fixing rents, and to show that it is not impossible to revert to that system of single ownership which has always been the ultimate goal of all real statesmen, and by which alone peace and contentment can be secured. Now, I am going to prove, prove, first of all,

THE LANDLORDS AND NOT THE TENANTS

who are responsible for the reopening of the land question. After the Morley Committee and the passing of the Land Act of 1896, with both of which I had something to do, I, at least, was prepared to await what I knew would be the irresistible pressure of land purchase. I knew that the result of the first statutory period was a reduction of 20 per cent. in the Irish rental. I knew that the second period would not result in less—it has actually resulted, so far, in an average reduction of 22 per cent. And I felt assured that this pressure which was just, and could not be got rid of, would force sale and purchase upon a large scale. Nor have I been disappointed. Purchase is proceeding apace. Then, it may be said, why not let things proceed after this fashion? I could easily show that the very success of the Purchase Acts has made delay difficult, but, apart from this reason, the Irish landlords have settled the matter. The ink was scarcely dry upon the Act of 1896 before the landlords demanded, and the Government granted, a Vice-Regal Commission to inquire into the administration of the Land Acts. This, be it remembered, was only two years after the Parliamentary Inquiry by the Morley Committee. There was not a single representative of the Irish tenant-farmers upon this Commission. It was presided over by a distinguished Englishman who had filled a great judicial position—Sir Edward Fry. And it issued a report to which, if I may say it without disrespect, nobody save the landlords paid much attention. I am of opinion that the Land Commission is to-day engaged in knocking the bottom out of the Land Act of 1896. I will give four illustrations, and they are only illustrations, of what I mean. Adams and Dunseath is a case known far and wide. It arose out of a trifle of 40 shillings. It dealt a deadly blow at the tenants' property all over Ireland. I can explain its kernel in a sentence. Parliament enacted in 1881 that no rent was to be placed upon improvements created by the tenant or his predecessor in title. What did the Irish Court of Appeal say? Did they say, 'This is a great healing measure intended to undo great wrongs. We shall construe it, as far as possible, in accordance with that policy?' Not at all. With the instinct of pedantic lawyers they proceeded to ask what Parliament meant by 'improvements.' What Parliament meant by improvements was plain enough. Lord Chancellor Law, who helped to draw and carry the Act, and who was one of the Court, told them what was intended. But instead of taking the large and plain view intended by Parliament, these learned judges proceeded to suggest and devise limitations upon the word. And so, one short year after the passing of the Act of 1881, the Court of Appeal drove a coach and four right through the heart of the measure. It was all a case of 'property, property, property.' And, of course, as Mr. Lecky put it, the idea of a tenant having legal property in and upon the soil was a thing hard for Irish judges as well as Irish landlords to understand. There had been

TWELVE YEARS OF WRONG-DOING

upon the part of the Land Commission—twelve years during which in every case of reclamation the money belonging to the tenant had illegally gone into the pocket of the landlord. A Sub-Commission dealt with a case of reclamation near Ballymena—by the way, it was the veritable David Adams and the veritable Mrs Dunseath, the very farm upon which the original case arose. Mr Adams had reclaimed land. The Sub-Commission acted upon what Lord Justice Fitzgibbon stated to be the law before the Parliamentary Committee. It gave David Adams five or six per cent of his expenditure, and it divided the increased letting value between landlord and tenant, allowing one-half for the inherent properties of the soil, the other half to the tenant for his exertions in developing these properties. What happened? There was the usual appeal. Mr Justice Meredith heard it and promptly decided against Lord Justice Fitzgibbon's view, and the Sub-Commission was reversed. Fanciful David Adams toiling to reclaim an Antrim bog, and having done so only to find that he had raised the letting value from, perhaps, 3s to 14s an acre! The case created a profound sensation in Ulster. The decision shook all faith in the Chief Land Commission, and gave rise to the fatal distrust in regard to Mr Justice Meredith's Court which now everywhere exists.

SECURE THE LAND.

As a class the Irish landlords once controlled the representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament. It gave them great opportunities which they sadly missed. But be this as it may, the representation of Ireland has passed into other hands. They cannot return by the votes of the people a single member to that great assembly, which must ultimately decide their fate. I have often heard it said by their friends that as a class the Irish landlords never knew their own interest, that they were a doomed race. I trust this has been said for the last time, and that all parties in Ireland will unite to close this sad, sad chapter in Irish history. My next appeal is to the tenants, and to them, at all events, I have some claim to speak. In asking for the compulsory sale of Irish land, in asking that the fee simple of the Irish soil should be compulsorily taken from one class and given to another, you are asking for a thing so great, so tremendous, that history can provide but few precedents. It was done, of course, in France by a revolution. It was done again in parts of the German Empire by a wise statesmanship. And it will be done here by the same means if the tenants are moderate and the landlords are wise. I appeal to the Ulster farmers to frankly express not alone their desire to secure the land, but to secure it, under all the circumstances, at a fair price.

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