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AT HOME & ABROAD.



THE rejection of the measure introduced last February into the Imperial Parliament for the reclamation of the waste lands of Ireland is a further proof, if such were needed of the unfitness of the British House of Commons to deal with purely Irish matters. Mr. Macarthy stated that of the whole area of the lands of Ireland, four million acres, or about one-fifth, were bog and swamp. His proposal was that Government should undertake to reclaim these lands, making it compulsory on their present proprietary to part with them for this purpose, of course at a just scale of remuneration, and that they should then be disposed of to peasant farmers, who would refund the money expended on their purchase and reclamation. It is needless to speak a word in favour of the measure, which recommends itself clearly to the judgment of all unprejudiced men. Indeed the evident advantage to be gained from the reclamation itself was too clear to admit of much opposition on that score; although Lord Crichton rather foolishly adduced, in opposing the measure, the instance of certain lands in Fermanagh which he said had been successfully reclaimed and cultivated, but after some time given up by the farmers who held them and allowed to become once more shelter for grouse. His Lordship did not enter into any explanations by which it might be gathered how far a desire for exorbitant rents, or a fancy for the return of the land in question to the sole occupancy of game might have determined the ultimate fate of the lands in question, but if we may judge by the barren aspect at present shown by other districts in Ireland, which were also once successfully cultivated, there need not be much doubt that some such cause led to the desertion spoken of by him. The measure was objected to, not because it was thought, so far as its main feature was concerned, unreasonable, but because certain of its clauses made provisions to which exception was taken. It was objected to by some members who considered that it interfered unjustifiably with the rights of landlords, and by others because they questioned the wisdom of creating a class of peasant proprietors. Yet if the interests of individuals—and indeed in this case rather their whims, or pastimes—were allowed to stand in the way few great national undertakings would be carried out. While we can fancy nothing more desirable in any country than to have settled upon its soil an industrious and prosperous population, such as that of Ireland would undoubtedly be if they were certain of fixed tenure, and the fear of the cormorant landlord were removed. But the time has yet to come, it seems, when Irish landlords will be regarded in England in their true light, as being the bane and hindrance of the country; and when it will be admitted that the great principle universally recognised at the present day in reference to other lands must in all justice be extended to Ireland, so that she also may be declared the legitimate possession of her own people—Ireland for the Irish.

To those who remember the high-sounding boasts with which the secular system was established in Victoria some five years ago, it cannot fail to be instructive when they find that the great expectations then so confidently expressed have resulted in disappointment. At that time we were told that the panacea for all social and political ills had been discovered, and that the golden age was about to issue from the Government Schools. The contrary, however, appears to have been the case; five years have passed, and as yet hardly any thing has been accomplished. So little, indeed, has been effected, that it is now admitted the system, if it is eventually to succeed, must be completely remodelled. Such, at least, is the conclusion which Professor Pearson in his report appears to have arrived at,—a conclusion which people of ordinary understanding might, perhaps, be held excusable in looking upon as highly condemnatory of the system in question. The system, however, is not to be condemned, it is to be remodelled, and the learned Professor, who has pronounced upon it, is to be rewarded by the appointment of head of the education department. A matter which, by the way, may lead to consequences that will hereafter require examination into, at the hands of some other

expert, for Professor Pearson gives expression to a notion or two on the subject of education that may lead to startling results. For the present, suffice it to say that gentleman is greatly bent on compulsion. The whole duty of man he conceives to be that of inculcating devotion to the cause of R.'s upon the rising generation, and with a view to the enforcement of this duty he would introduce certain new and stringent regulations into the measure in question. He would have parents—who will certainly arrive at the suspicion, at least, that it is a desideratum to be free from "incumbrances"—obliged to register their families with the nearest dominic. Dogberry is about to be multiplied! He would have an official elected to fill a most enviable post, who would be known to persons speaking with propriety as the "Truant Inspector;" and amongst whose pleasing duties would be that of caning extra-refractory members at the bidding of the school-master. To increase the popularity of this person, moreover, Professor Pearson would have him maintained at the expense of the district to which it was found necessary to appoint him. In short, we may observe, *en passant*, that if individuals could be found of sufficient meanness of spirit, and yet strong-bodied enough to fulfil the duties of the office, it would afford a proof of the degeneracy of the times and colony. It now proves the fertility of the Professor's invention in the matter of "publicans and sinners." This gentleman would, finally, have Government examinations held of all children receiving private instruction, and in cases where such children were pronounced not up to the standard, and there would we imagine be many such cases, he would have them forced into the Government schools—which measure is rather a dangerous one to propose, for we can fancy instances in which it would be the duty of parents to resist such a mandate as if it were an attempt upon life or honour. It would undoubtedly have been so in the case of those schools wherein the seed of destruction had been sown in the hearts of those women of whom Professor Agassiz has told us, and fathers would be as much bound to resist it as if it were the direct order to imprison their innocent children in the houses in which Agassiz found them. It would be so, likewise, with regard to those schools in which the New York Society for the Prevention of Vice informs us obscene books are freely circulated. We do not believe the secular system will prove one whit more cleanly in Australia than it has proved in America. The system, however, has so far failed in Victoria. "I do not," says Professor Pearson, "regard an average attendance of 46 per cent. or less with any feeling but dismay, when I consider what our expenditure has been." It remains to be seen how far the rigorous enforcement of compulsion will mend matters, or whether even this will succeed in bringing up the rate of increase to what it was under the former system, and of which it now falls short.

DR. CUMMING, we perceive, is still amongst the prophets. The rev. seer appears to have been in no way discouraged by the failure of previous predictions. He is of better heart, and when the years he has now and again declared as, severally, the last which the world was to witness had passed, and left this terrestrial ball still swinging intact around the sun, he simply wiped out the page he had inscribed, and commenced all over again, to the admiration and satisfaction of himself and his followers. The rev. doctor now declares that the crescent is "waning in a mist of blood and slaughter." A rather prettily turned expression we admit, but hardly one that it requires second-sight to suggest. He announces further that the "cross will soon supplant the crescent," and it is respecting this that we desire a little information. What cross does the prophetic gentlemen allude to? Does he mean the Russo-Greek cross, which is not very much more a sign of Christianity than is the crescent itself? Or does he, peradventure, mean the Presbyterian cross? which, if our eyesight does not deceive us, and the summit of the First Church steeple in Dunedin may be relied upon as a criterion, it strikes us bears a strong resemblance to something horticultural, and, in fact, to a kind of trophy of green-grocery, rather than an emblem of religion. However, if there were to be found any patriarchal fish surviving from heathen days in the waters of the Bosphorus, the reflection of such an adornment there from the dome of St. Sophia might excusably lead them to conclude that the worship of Ceres had been revived upon the earth. We doubt, even if Dr. Cumming were possessed of a power kindred to that of St. Francis