

duct of Catholics. There is nothing, then, to surprise us in the following testimony borne lately at a conference of the English National Education Union, by the Rev. A. J. Kennedy, an inspector of schools as well as a Protestant minister. It is but what we have frequently ourselves advanced, and what we cannot understand any one's sincerely denying:—"I speak of my own personal knowledge when I say further that some of the zealous promoters of free schools aim especially at dealing a death blow to Roman Catholic schools. How far this feeling extends I do not know. Now, nobody can be more thoroughly Protestant than I am, but I deprecate this result. *Our Roman Catholic population is a great fact. You can't get rid of it. Facts are stubborn things. Will you make better men and better citizens of them in Board schools and secular schools?* Not so; quite the reverse. I have lived for thirty years in the most Roman Catholic towns in England; and I, as a Protestant clergyman, have for some years examined Roman Catholic schools and I found that these schools spared no pains to turn a very poor and dangerous population into enlightened, humanized, God-fearing people. Liverpool especially owes a debt of gratitude to the managers and teachers of Roman Catholic schools; and I should be very much surprised if the able men, Mr. Bushell and Mr. Rathbone, who have been Chairmen of the Liverpool School Board, would not endorse what I now say."

OUR IRISH LETTER.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

DUBLIN, November 6, 1879.

ONCE again I am to try to compress in as brief space as possible for transit round the world the principal events that have broken the monotony of life in this little corner of the globe during the month that has just passed, and once again in the attempt to give your readers an idea of what we are doing and thinking about here, I am forced to begin with the Land Question. It has taken forcible possession of the entire country we are thinking about and talking about nothing else. We have mass meetings almost daily, sometimes in little bits of villages for whose names we have to search the geography, and in all places there are the great excited crowds of O'Connell's time to tell that the heart of the people is in the agitation. The *Freeman's Journal* Land Commission is over at last, but not until it had excited a ferment throughout the country, and not until it had tempted one of the greatest of the English dailies, the *Daily News*, to follow its example with the result of confirming its most gloomy descriptions and anticipations. But it is not merely in mass-meetings throughout the country that the great land crisis was indicated. In all the poor law boards, or almost all, despite the strenuous opposition of the aristocratic element, the local potentates, *ex officio* guardians, resolutions were adopted, and are being adopted, recognising the terrible condition to which the people are reduced, and calling on the government to provide some immediate and sufficient remedy. A very considerable section of the landlords themselves have endorsed those representations by granting substantial reductions, in some cases as much as 50 per cent. of the incoming rents. On the 30th of last month there was a special meeting and a very large attendance of the Dublin Corporation, under the presidency of the Lord Mayor to consider the question. After a protracted debate, (the City Fathers are wonderfully fond of hearing themselves talk,) it was resolved by a majority of 25 votes to two: first, that the Government should be memorialized to provide useful public works to give employment to the famishing people, and thus, if possible, to enable them to tide over the food famine and the fuel famine that the winter threatens; and secondly, that in the opinion of the council the present land system is one of the main factors in producing agricultural depression, and that a tenant proprietary is, in view of rapidly increasing foreign competition, essential to agricultural prosperity. The resolutions were moved by Mr. Gray, Lord Mayor elect, member of Parliament for Tipperary and responsible proprietor and editor of the *Freeman's Journal*. The members of Parliament who constituted what for want of a better name may be called the Irish party, have drawn up a memorial which is intended for immediate presentation to Government, setting forth that the establishment of public works is essential for the preservation of the people from famine. Indeed there are no few indications that the matter is passing from the domain of agitation to the domain of legislation. Lord Beaconsfield's first lieutenant, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and our jaunty Irish Secretary the hon. James Lowther (better known as Jim), have been touring through the country recently with the expressed purpose of examining into the truth of the rumours of prevalent distress amounting to impending famine, and already we have seen official announcements that the Government is disposed to grant the prayer of the several memorials and establish public works of a useful character throughout the country, so that those who are waiting to labour may not be compelled to starve. The unfortunate "Church Surplus" is, of course, to "pay the piper." It is curious to note how in this matter the present Government has, so to speak, picked the pocket of Gladstone's policy. If they had their way the Irish Church would still hold its endowments and as a matter of course there would be no Irish Church surplus to distribute. But the present Government have the spending of the surplus which the Gladstone Government created in spite of them.

A new system of intermediate education is established in Ireland, a matter apparently for imperial taxation, and the Government allocate one million of the Church Fund. The Irish national school teachers demand that their salaries shall be equalised with those which their English and Scotch brethren receive from the Imperial coffers and, after a hard fight, the Government generously consents to pay the deficit out of the Church surplus. I owe again when the people are starving a great compliment is made of giving them work to do and paying them for doing it with their own money.

The English agriculturist, we are told by the English papers, will have good reason to complain of favouritism. The *English Times* is indeed very vehement in offering its customary prescription, which like a Holloway's pills and ointment it seems to consider a universal panacea for every form of Irish grievance. "Let the Irish," it says graciously, "emigrate and be happy." Within what is but a brief span in the history of a country, emigration has reduced the population of Ireland by about one half; and here we are again in the close of 1879 on the very brink of another famine. The result is not encouraging of future experiments in the same direction. The most Rev. Dr. Croke, Archbishop of Cashel, has just written a vigorous letter in condemnation of a policy which would seek to drive a people wholesale from the country rather than alter the laws that prevent them living in comfort at home.

Before passing from this dismal subject, I may be permitted to vouch, on my personal knowledge, for the fearful condition of the country, and for the bleak prospect before the peasantry. I was down in the extreme west of Ireland, the Atlantic verge of Connaught, and had an opportunity of personally inspecting the crops in several districts. The potatoes are at least half black. In very few cases has the corn been gathered into the hayyard; in some, it is still standing and green; and in almost no instance has the peat fuel been got in from the bogs. But it will never do to fill up my whole letter with such miserable truths, though I fear I shall have to revert to the subject again in future despatches.

We have been making a determined effort recently to revive the old poplin trade of this country. The Duchess of Marlborough has entered heart and soul into the project, and her example has, of course, been followed by the leading ladies of the city. Mrs. Gray, the wife of the Lord-Mayor elect, has declared that the state coaches for the ensuing year shall be lined with no other material. On the 29th ult., a great meeting of all interested was held in the Mansion House—the Lord-Mayor presiding—to consider the best means of reviving and fostering the industry. There was a general shifting of blame from one set of shoulders to another in the course of the discussion—the manufacturers accused the great merchants of not encouraging the sale, the merchants accused the ladies of not buying, and finally all appeared to be unanimous that the fault lay with the autocrats of fashion, the despotic men-milliners of France, who wont allow the ladies to wear Irish poplins, and the boldest even ventured to suggest a revolt against the long-established tyranny. It is curious, however, that when the trade was at its highest, as now when it is at its lowest, Ireland was and is the worst market for this cheap and beautiful national fabric. India was declared authoritatively at the meeting to be the best market. I wonder, do they send much to New Zealand?

I do not know if I am permitted in this letter to wander outside exclusively Irish intelligence, but I will venture on a digression of a few words to inform your readers that there was a fearful row the other day in the Mansion House in London, and that the Lord-Mayor himself, sitting in judgment, was very near being subjected to personal violence by the virtuously indignant crowd, his offence being that he had the temerity to discourage the exhibition in shop windows of photographs of naked Zulu women for the delectation of his moral Londoners. Must I confess I sometimes feel strongly disposed to envy the "special correspondents" who have their headquarters in London. They have such a constant succession of pleasurable horrors to sum up to their readers. There is a great dearth of sensational crime in Ireland.

A month or two ago I narrated the exploits of a gang of plate-glass-window-breakers in Dublin. They pleaded guilty a few days since to the charges against them and were sentenced. To the no small surprise and indignation of the Dubliners Mr. Justice Lawson, by whom the case was tried, considered that this inauguration of a system of wanton outrages was sufficiently punished by a fine of £10 on each of the offenders. I wonder will the forgers get off so lightly. We had a succession of ingenious and daring forgeries in Dublin about a fortnight ago. Ten pound notes of the National Bank were imitated with such minute care and such exquisite skill, that the most cunning and practiced eye found it difficult to detect the slightest difference between them and the real notes. All kinds of persons were deceived and defrauded. A zealous priest who received two pounds subscription from a generous benefactor who happened to have no smaller change than a ten pound note, which fortunately the priest was able to change: a good natured Jew who discounted several such notes at a heavy per centage for a young tourist who was on his way to London where he would have much difficulty in having them changed. The amount realized by the fraud has not been ascertained, but the perpetrators, two young men named Cross and Passet, are at present in custody awaiting trial, and further particulars will probably be forthcoming before my next dispatch.

Only a few days ago all Dublin was startled by a most pitiful tragedy. Amongst the most popular of high-class pianists in our city, both as a composer and a performer, was Mrs. Joseph Robinson. Her husband was a professor of music of considerable eminence and resided at 3 Upper-Fitzwilliam street, one of the most fashionable quarters of Dublin. People used to wonder at the mystery of her sudden and total disappearances for some months at a time from society, of which she was such an ornament. That mystery was solved at the inquest held on her dead body last Saturday at her husband's house. The unfortunate lady was subject to fits of insanity. At her eighteenth year the terrible infliction had come upon her, and though only 48 years of age she had been on six different occasions an inmate of a lunatic asylum. Her mania was a belief that she could fly; she had just returned from her last visit to the asylum having been pronounced cured. Early on the morning of the 1st inst., one of the servants going out into the back yard was amazed at seeing her mistress perched high on the extreme verge of the roof, waving her hands wildly in the air. All at once with a great cry she leaped out into space, and fell prone on the stone pavement sixty feet below. She never budged once after she fell. It was a strange sad story throughout. I have given you nothing but "doleful dumps" from beginning to the end of this letter, but I will try to do better next time, and with this promise I must conclude.