

that she was cured; She could read the smallest print, and from that time she continued quite well.

Remarks.—This case seems clear enough. Ulceration of the cornea of nearly a year's standing cannot be cured by natural means in nine days.

(To be continued.)

RAILWAY REFORM AT HOME.

A GREAT deal has been said and written of late as to railway management in this and other countries, and we have been freely told that here it is all that is bad, while at Home it is all that could be desired. Now any comparison between the two is simply a piece of absurdity, because at Home there is a dense and exceedingly busy population, with thousands of manufactories and industries, whilst here the population and the industries have yet to arise. It may not be uninteresting, however, to go fully into the question and see if railway management in the old country is the "*me plus ultra*" of perfection which interested agitators in the Colony would have us believe. That a belief exists in the necessity for a measure of reform and reduction in the rates and fares at present charged by railway companies at Home is, I take it, clearly proved by the appointment by the Government of a select committee to inquire into and report upon the subject. Bearing in mind the saying attributed to an American humourist, "Never to prophesy unless you know," I will not attempt to forecast the ultimate result of the committee's labours, but will merely mention the fact that a great number of people believe that before long a total change will be made in the manner of calculating and fixing rates and fares, and considerable reductions effected.

This belief is based upon the idea or conviction that Mr. Gladstone is a railway reformer although the reasons for investing that gentleman with such a character are very poor and remote, unless as is probably the case "the wish is father to the thought." It is certainly true that he once advocated a cheap and quick mode of travelling, and to him is mainly due the credit of compelling the railway companies to run one train each way, each day, and charge third-class passengers no more than 1d per mile but it must not be forgotten this was some years ago, and "many things have happened since then."

Assuming, however, that the belief here mentioned is correct let us see how the changes and reductions will affect that large and much enduring portion of the British public, the shareholders. I venture to say the benefit to them or the public at large will be very slight indeed.

It is contended by the manufacturers, merchants, etc., who obtained the appointment of the commission, that reductions in the freight charges on certain goods between certain points, more especially between inland towns and the sea coast would enable them to increase their trade and thus improve the receipts of the various railway companies concerned. The first part of this argument is self-evident, but that the receipts of the companies would generally increase is, as a little examination will show, utterly out of the question. One of the principal arguments brought before the commissioners was that they (the inland manufacturers), owing in the first place to the heavy charges on the imported raw material from the sea coast to their works, and then on the manufactured articles back on the coast for shipment, were prevented from competing with any chance of profit to themselves, with their brethren who are fortunate enough to possess works near the various ports of shipment. This is no doubt quite correct, and taking it for granted that such reductions will be made as will enable them to secure a larger share of business to themselves, what will be the effect on the revenue of the railway companies? As it is not suggested by anyone, or can for a moment be held that the changes asked for will be sufficient to improve the general trade of the country or bring back the prosperity of 9 or 10 years ago, when it advanced by "leaps and bounds," the benefit to the public at large will be *nil*. The only result will be the transference of a certain amount of business from one point to another, further inland. This will increase somewhat the carriers' receipts, by increasing the distance over which the traffic has to pass; but as to bring about this change considerable reductions in the present charges must be made, the ultimate benefit to the shareholders, if any, will be exceedingly small. There are other points raised and very strongly urged by the various gentlemen examined by the commissioners, such as the moderate charges on foreign as compared with Home manufactures, etc, but as all tend to the same end, the prospect for the public is in no way improved. Speaking more especially from a shareholder's point of view, I think it impossible to effect anything like the necessary reform in the working of railways by any such "tinkering" with the matter. The measures adopted, to be effectual, must be of a far more sweeping and drastic nature. How comes it that although 38 years ago the dividends of the leading lines ranged from 8 to 10 per cent, now with a vastly increased traffic they cannot reach the lowest of these figures? The secret lies in the uncontrollable management, or rather mismanagement. It will doubtless seem strange to many to talk about uncontrollable management, by which is meant, of course, the directors etc.

Is not the administration of the railway companies practically democratic? Is not the representative system carried out in its entirety? Shareholders elect the directors and the directors in turn elect their chairman; a certain number of the Board retire at stated intervals and have to be re-elected, thus placing it in the power of the shareholders to supersede them if so inclined. Theoretically this is so. Examined by the light of actual facts what a different state of things presents itself. We find the directorate, instead of fulfilling its functions as a deliberative body, each member possessing the like powers, in most cases succumbs to the power of some one or two members of superior talent, wealth, or strength of will, and the majority, after a short course of drill, become so submissive that every question is decided by the course taken by the one or two leading spirits. Retiring directors are re-elected without opposition, or if op-

posed, have so great a power of ensuring the defeat of their opponents that the Board becomes practically a permanent body, and it is only in the case of death or gross and palpable mismanagement that a change can be effected, and not always in the latter event, as the great struggle between the existing Board and the shareholders of the Great Eastern Co. a few years since, ending in the defeat of the latter, conclusively proves.

The directors, though nominally the servants of the shareholders do not look upon themselves in any such light and the majority of them treat any attempt at dictation from those who have appointed them as something to be at once and peremptorily put down. In this they are, unless in very rare instances, successful, and so far is the domineering spirit carried that in several cases which have come under my personal observation, a simple amendment to some one proposal of the Board was haughtily treated as a want-of-confidence motion, and the autocratic chairman met it with the remark that if the shareholders could not trust himself and his colleagues they had better select others. This had an always the desired effect, and the oftentimes, nervous individuals who had the presumption to try and have a voice in the management of their own affairs and the working of their own property, are silenced by the fear the company's interests would suffer by any disturbance, and thus measures quite at variance with their wishes are allowed to be carried. But the chairman is not always content with having carried his point. Strong in the conscious profession of almost absolute power, he sometimes actually insults the spokesman of the silenced party by telling him that if he is not satisfied he had better sell out and invest his money in something else, and even this has been exceeded for only some three years ago the chairman of one of the northern lines told an objecting shareholder that if he did not cease raising objections at the half-yearly meetings, he (the chairman) would obtain the necessary powers to expel said shareholder from the Board-room. In this particular instance the shareholder was objecting to an extension which he believed would not pay, and his belief has since been proved, by the irresistible logic of facts, to have been correct. But, some one may ask not thoroughly conversant with railway matters at Home, why was it that he, believing the company was committed to a losing undertaking, did not act upon the advice of the chairman, even if the giving of that advice was an insult, and disposal of his shares? For a very simple reason in which self-interest was uppermost. Owing to the declaration of a disappointing dividend, shares had fallen considerably, and had he sold it would have been at a loss. He therefore held on, knowing that the losing extension could not be completed under two years, and hoping the fluctuations of the share-market in the interval would enable him to sell, if not at a profit, at least without sustaining actual loss.

(Concluded in our next.)

The brutal intolerance of the loyalists in Lurgan burst out again last week. A Catholic clergyman was "mobbed" in the public streets, through which crowds of Orange rowdies, unrestrained by the authorities, paraded in the most violent manner. Other Catholics also were attacked and cruelly maltreated, and when they attempted to seek the protection of houses the windows were smashed into smithereens by those pious advocates of "law and order." Appropriately enough the crowd varied their barbarous amusement by giving cheers for the Prince of Wales!—*Nation*.

At the ceremony on the Capitol, when revolutionary Italy laid the first stone of a monument to Victor Emanuel, the Prime Minister, Depretis threw down the gauntlet of defiance to the Vatican. The day was well chosen—Passion Sunday—which will remind posterity that "Christ is once more captive in His Vicar." No fitter place, said Depretis, could be found for the great king than that spot which seems with memories of ancient and modern times. He sketched the glorious deeds of Victor Emanuel, whom the people by a "*plebiscite* of love" proclaimed the gentleman-king, and by a "*plebiscite* of sorrow" the father of his country. He recalled those famous words which showed the faith of the dead monarch in the regeneration of Italy: "In Rome we are, and in Rome we will remain." He apostrophised the queen as the "honour, example, and highest ideal of Italian women," and hoped that "for many long years she would come to that classic spot in her own Rome to contemplate the image of the king who had made her country one." Depretis is not the first who has stood on the Capitol and vaunted the eternity of a new regime. Rienzi was once there a tribune of the people, proclaiming respect for the Pope and the glory of an independent republic; Arnold of Brescia succeeded him, with the fixed idea of "subverting the immovable rock of St. Peter." Then came Porcari, in 1453, inflamed with a desire of restoring the grandeur of pagan days. He spoke of country, of liberty, of glory, of immortal fame, and did not forget to remind his followers that the sack of the Papal palace would produce a million florins in gold. In a few days he was dangling by the neck from the battlements of Castle Sant' Angelo. In 1798 General Berthier with a French army entered the city to liberate Rome from the popes. He took up his residence in the Apostolic palace of the Quirinal, and on the fifteenth of February proclaimed the Republic of the Tiber from the heights of the Capitol. He invoked "the shades of Pompey, of Cato, and of Brutus, to accept the homage of free Frenchmen. The sons of Gaul came with an olive branch to set up the altar of liberty first erected by Brutus. The Roman people should arouse themselves and emulate their ancient greatness and the virtues of their ancestors." Again, in 1849, the Papacy was declared defunct, and Muzzarelli, Armellini, and Mariani announced to the people,—"The Roman Republic was proclaimed to-day from the Capitol. The Roman Republic will be eternal and prosperous." So said Victor Emanuel in 1870; so says Depretis in 1885. But while pompous words are calling up the memories of Paganism, the prayers of the Church are besieging the throne of God for the annihilation and route of Humbert, Depretis, and Co. The monument on the Capitol will be their tombstone, and their own motto their epitaph.