

tier.' I was greatly pleased to know that Miss Theresa McGrath's noble conduct was recognised during that trying time, while the Afridis besieged the fort for weeks in great numbers. Major Desvoux's skill in holding the fort was highly spoken of by the Commander-in-Chief, and, a vacancy occurring, he was made Lieutenant-Colonel of the 3rd Ghorkas.

GENERAL.

The Catholic University Question.—Mr. Balfour, speaking in the House of Commons recently, declared that Great Britain would never sanction a Catholic university in Ireland unless professional freedom was secured. The Nationalists were reported to be bitterly disappointed at the Government's refusal to legislate.

The Irish National League of Great Britain.—The Executive of the Irish National League of Great Britain has made public its annual report, which is an eminently satisfactory document, and shows a pleasing revival of National spirit all over Great Britain. Last year the total received from the branches was £1659 7s 8d; this year it is £2050 10s 1d. That is to say, the Executive has received this year about £400 more than in the previous year. The last few weeks of the financial year are those in which the subscriptions flow in most largely. Last year the sum received in the fortnight preceding the Convention was £403 9s 6d; this year the sum received in the same period was £547 14s 9d, showing an increase of no less than £140 in that period for this year.

A Literary History of Ireland.—Dr. Douglas Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland*, which has been looked forward to with intense interest for months past, has been published by Mr. Fisher Unwin. It extends to over 650 pages, and, considering its subject, is not, therefore, a work to be lightly judged or easily pronounced upon. The literary history of Ireland has hitherto, for the most part, been a fallow field, and even experts will hesitate to dogmatise on an achievement such as this without considerable thought. The *Literary History of Ireland* (says the *Freeman's Journal*) is a memorable book, and lifts Dr. Hyde at once into the position occupied by Hericulus in Portugal and Palacky in Bohemia, for it is not merely a contribution to the literature of Ireland—it is an event in her annals.

The Heroes of '98.—Although 1898 is past, the popular wave of enthusiasm for the heroes of 1798 has not subsided. A meeting was held the other day (says a Dublin correspondent) of the Executive Committee appointed to superintend the erection of a statue of Bartholomew Teeling at Collooney, Co. Sligo, and the following districts were represented:—Sligo, Collooney, Ballyrush, Ballyseare, Ballygawley, Cairy, Coolaney, Ballymote, Ballintogher, Lragan, and Geeragh. It was decided that the monument should be unveiled by Miss Maude Gonide on Sunday, July 2, and that all taking part in the proceedings should wear green scarves. In Dublin the Wolfe Tone and '98 Memorial Association are taking steps to organise regular collections in the city in aid of the fund for the erection of the National memorial to Wolfe Tone and other United Irishmen. A '98 monument is also to be erected in Clonakilty, Co. Cork.

The Irish Party and the Transvaal.—In the article on the Transvaal, which appeared in the last issue of the N.Z. TABLET, we referred to the fact that Catholics were debarred from becoming members of the Legislature on account of their religion. This is a sample of religious toleration as practised by an essentially Protestant State. The Jews resident in the South African Republic labour under the same disabilities. Had the boot been on the other foot, that is, had such a law been in force in a Catholic country, the matter would have been repeatedly referred to as another awful example of Catholic intolerance. Mr. Kruger is a fine example of what the fanatic Protestant of a century or two ago was like. The Irishmen of Cape Colony know him well, and, as a cable message of last week stated, they are astounded at the action of the Nationalist members in the House of Commons extending their sympathy to the President of the Transvaal. Another message received last week was to the effect that 20,000 Jews and Catholics in Witwatersrand demand the removal of the disabilities imposed upon them under the present Transvaal laws.

Land Hunger in the West.—In the course of a letter in an English contemporary, the Bishop of Clonfert says:—Much has been already done for the West of Ireland by the Congested Districts Board; and they are now in a position of doing still more. The men of the West will, I hope, never forget what they owe to Mr. A. Balfour, for the establishment of that Board, and for the railway grants he gave to the West of Ireland. There will, no doubt, be a Board of Agriculture also established for Ireland during the present session. It is to be hoped that it will have large powers for dealing with the grass farms in the West. There is no need of compulsion; plenty of land—uncultivated, but excellent land—will be coming into the market. The Board only needs the use of money, and it can buy up these farms or estates, sub-divide, and re-sell them to deserving agricultural tenants, who will cultivate them with the labour of their own families, or, if need be, of a little extra help during the busy season. This solution of the difficulty is simple, and it will be found to be efficacious. We have better land and quite as good a climate in the West as they have in the North of Ireland; yet what a difference! The main reason is that in the North the good land is under cultivation; but in the West, owing to the 'iniquitous laws of the past, it has for the most part gone out of cultivation. Let the land be cultivated to feed the people—famine will disappear, work will be found at home, the produce will be in the country, the towns will have better business—and contentment will reign. There is one and only one effectual remedy for Ireland's lack of prosperity—cultivate the land, and make the people the owners of the soil they till.

Tunnelling Under the Irish Sea.—The proposed tunnel under the North Channel to connect the North of Ireland and Scotland is attracting a good deal of attention. Among the supporters of the project are the Marquis of Londonderry, formerly Viceroy of Ireland, the Earl of Rosebery, Earl Spencer, and Viscount Wolseley, commander-in-chief of the army. It is estimated that the tunnel will cost £10,000,000, and the promoters of the scheme intend to ask the Treasury to provide the money. About two years ago a deputation representing Ulster and the South-West of Scotland was introduced to Mr. Ritchie, president of the Board of Trade, by Mr. Arnold Forster, M.P. They came to ask the Government for a grant of £15,000 to carry out borings and soundings. Mr. Harrison Hayter, past president Inst. C.E., said that the Irish tunnel would be in deeper water than the English Channel tunnel, and that the strata, instead of being chalk, consisted of silurian rocks and red sandstone. After the necessary borings and survey, an expenditure of £200,000 would be required to sink a shaft and drive a heading, which would set at rest the question of practicability. Mr. Barton, C.E., said that four routes had been examined, and that any of them would cost between eight and ten millions sterling. In the course of a critical reply Mr. Ritchie said that he had seen estimates as high as 16 millions. It was a new departure to grant public money for such a purpose, but the Government were prepared to enter into a conference, and to give the assistance of the engineering department of the Board of Trade.

THE NEW BOARD OF AGRICULTURE.

THE new Board of Agriculture for Ireland, which it is proposed to establish, seems to be looked upon as an effort of the Government to add another Board to the many already connected with Dublin Castle. The Bill, introduced by Mr. Gerald Balfour, has a threefold object. It concentrates in one department responsible to Parliament the functions now performed by the Government in regard to Irish agriculture through five or six departments. It provides funds and machinery for carrying out work similar to that done by the Congested Districts Boards. It also breaks fresh ground by providing funds for machinery for promoting technical education in the towns. An income of about £170,000 a year, obtained from Imperial resources and the Irish Church fund is to be placed at the disposal of the new department. Considerable exception has been taken to the financial proposals, which Mr. Dillon describes 'as shabby and unsatisfactory.' It is, however, a step in the right direction. There has been a need for an institution which would provide technical instruction in agriculture, while extending some direct State help, through a responsible department, to the chief industry of the country.

The new Board will be directly responsible to Parliament, as its heads are to be the Chief Secretary as president, and a vice-president, who will also be a Minister. This second Parliamentary official will be the active and directing chief of the new institution, and it is pretty obvious that Mr. Horace Plunkett, Member for South Dublin, is to have this lucrative post. The Board will take over the work now carried on by a number of petty officers; not, of course, superseding these offices, but amalgamating them into the proposed additional department of Dublin Castle.

It was not clear from the Chief Secretary's brief speech, in introducing the measure, how far popular or elective elements will be represented in the Board of Agriculture. It is probable that the County and Urban Councils may be permitted to nominate certain members to seats on the new Board. Such a democratic feature of the institution would be welcome of course, as a necessary and reasonable one in a body which would have such direct and constant contact with all the existing local governing Councils. The extent of this representative element will more or less determine the character and worth of the measure from a popular point of view.

The total endowment of the new Board, according to the Chief Secretary's figures, will consist of £166,000 an annual income, and £100,000 of a capital sum. This latter sum is to be found in the residue of the local taxation account of the Estate Duty Act of 1896, which was, of course, due to Ireland anyhow. The money to be annually voted by Parliament (already to a large extent allocated in other ways) will comprise £78,000 out of the beer and spirit money; £70,000 from the Irish Church Surplus Fund; £12,000, representing the savings effected by the abolition of a judgeship or two; and £6,000, which will represent the present expenditure upon the Glasnevin Model Farm and the Munster Dairy School and Agricultural Institute, Cork. The £78,000 from the spirit licenses being already in use for educational purposes, will have to be replaced by an equivalent Parliamentary grant, otherwise that amount would be taken away from the Estimates for the needs of Irish education each year.

The new Board will work mainly in three directions—that is, there will be a department which will be concerned with agricultural interests, another that will look after technical instruction in Irish industries, and there will be the work at present carried on for the benefit of Irish fisheries by the body over which Sir Thomas Brady had control for a number of years of most useful service. The annual income of the Board is to be apportioned in fixed sums as follows, to these three purposes:—Agriculture, about £120,000; technical education, £20,000; and the remainder (less expenses) to the promotion of Irish fisheries. The two last sums are miserably inadequate for the pressing needs of technical instruction in Ireland, and the decaying fortunes of a once flourishing fishing industry round her coasts. In these two branches of the work of the new Board there are enormous opportunities for improvement and progress, and it was fully expected from the liberal provisions which were contained in Mr. Balfour's previous Bill (that of last year) that at least quadruple the sum now set apart for these two pressing interests would be provided.