

THE LAND PURCHASE BILL.

THE London correspondent of the *Freeman*, writing on 1st April, says:—

Mr. Goschen's Land Purchase Bill, which was introduced last night by Mr. Balfour, is admitted on all hands to be an ingenious measure, but a very brief investigation of its most plausible proposals was sufficient to show that a more hollow and impracticable piece of legislation was never submitted to Parliament. As one Member said in the lobby, a more striking instance of the absolute futility of applying abstract ingenuity to the solution of a problem without knowledge of its practical difficulties could not be conceived. Undoubtedly Mr. Balfour afforded considerable satisfaction to the landlord party, on whose behalf the Government have done everything that their political exigencies would allow.

Mr. Parnell formed a most decided view of the measure, as I discovered on asking him his opinion of it. "I think it," said he, "absurd and objectionable in the highest degree. The liability which the English taxpayer won't incur this Bill coolly proposes to transfer to the shoulders of the Irish cesspayer. Then the object of the Government is clearly disclosed in Mr. Balfour's speech. That object is to inflate the value of Irish land to an inordinate extent. He has given the word for twenty years' purchase. Besides, a fatal defect in the measure is that it proposes to give no local control over its administration. In that respect it is a long way behind Sir George Trevelyan's bill, which did give a certain amount of local control. I think, on the whole, that we should oppose it tooth and nail."

Mr. Davitt was equally pronounced in his opinions of the measure. He was in the distinguished strangers' gallery during Mr. Balfour's speech, and I met him immediately after the Chief Secretary had finished. "It is a most insidious proposal, in my opinion," said he, "to get the landlord 40 per cent. more for his land than he would by fair dealing in the open market." With the Coercion Act to aid them, Mr. Davitt had no doubt that the landlords would succeed in forcing their tenants into extortionate agreements.

Mr. Sexton quite agreed with Mr. Parnell and Mr. Davitt that the effect of the bill would be to induce landlords to press for twenty years' purchase of what Mr. Balfour calls the net rental, but what is in reality the gross rental, less a small reduction for poor rate.—"This," Mr. Sexton went on, "would be an intolerable price, and in any case in which a body of tenants could be induced to entertain such a transaction at such a price, or anything like it, I do not see how they could expect to escape opposition from the general body of the tenant farmers of the country who may not be buying their holdings, but who would have to become security as ratepayers for the fulfilment of such an iniquitous bargain. Thus the machinery of this Act interposes a serious obstacle to purchase which was not experienced under the Ashbourne Act. In fact, this bill, if passed, so far from facilitating land purchase will go far towards preventing it altogether. I regard it as merely absurd to propose that in the event of any default in the payment in the instalments the Imperial Government would or could attempt to withdraw from such imperative needs as education and poor relief that small portion of Ireland's contributions to the Imperial revenue at present returned to her for those purposes. Tenant purchasers, too, under the new Act will be less favourably situated than under the Ashbourne Act, as for five years they will have to pay four-fifths of the rental, nor does it appear at what period of the forty-nine years that money would be returned to them. The true price of money now is 2½ per cent. and 1 per cent. for sinking fund, so that the real charge should be 3½ per cent. and not 4 per cent., as the Government propose to charge. This additional quarter per cent. is to be applicable to general default, and it follows that the solvent tenant will have to go on paying the whole 4 per cent. and his additional quarter per cent. will go towards meeting the default of an insolvent tenant. In regard to the congested districts, where the need is greater, the relief will be least, because no matter how low may be the purchase price, the tenant will have to go on for five years paying four-fifths of the gross rental. The security which Mr. Balfour called his 'three degrees of impossibility' is perfectly illusory, as the tenants' insurance fund idea assumes that there can be no possible default in the first five years; then the next security the Government, as I have said, could, under no circumstances, dare to make effectual; and the local rate by the grand jury, coming, as it necessarily would, in times of distress, would be equally valueless. In my opinion, the only sound security in land purchase transactions is a moderate price, and where the price is immoderate no security is any good."

Catholic Reading Circles are becoming a feature all over the United States, and in a short time the names of a host of Catholic writers will be identified with the new organisations. From this mustard seed it seems likely that a tree bearing good fruit will arise.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, writes the *Catholic Times*, preached a mission sermon one Sunday evening lately in the "Victoria Hall," a sort of theatre in which religious laymen have been conducting mission services for working people for some time. The report of the service given by the *Daily News* states that the large audience, consisting chiefly of working men, did not join in the Lord's Prayer. As they did unite, however, in singing some popular revival hymns most lustily, we infer that they failed to follow the prayer, not from want of will, but from want of ability. The working men of England are no longer Protestants; after three centuries of undisturbed possession, Protestantism has left the common people simply and literally in a state of heathen darkness, ignorant even of the Lord's Prayer. One day, a day perhaps not so far distant, the Catholic Church will make an effort to reach the English heathens around us. And the report of the Archbishop's meeting shows that the chief means of accomplishing this must be Catholic hymns—hymns and tunes as effective and popular as the sentimental "solos" of Mr. Sankey.

CATHOLIC CONCERT.

(*Thames Evening Star*, May 1.)

THE concert given last night in the Academy of Music, in aid of the purchase of the allotment in Willoughby street on which the Catholic Hall stands, was a most unqualified success, both in a musical and a financial point of view. The programme was of especial excellence, and to lovers of good music it was undoubtedly such a treat as has very rarely indeed been offered to them at the Thames. The attendance was very good, the front seats and gallery being filled, while there was a fair number in the pit. The fact that several vocalists and instrumentalists of repute who were strangers to the Thames were announced to take part, attracted a very representative and appreciative audience, among whom were members of every denomination, and judging by the applause, as well as by the repeated encores accorded to the several performers, they must have heartily enjoyed the concert.

The first item on the programme was an overture, "Manola," which was performed by the Orchestral Society, under the conductorship of Mr. Beale. This, together with another piece, entitled "Potpourri," with which the second part commenced, was much appreciated. Instead of taking each item *seriatim*, we will briefly mention each performer, beginning, of course, with the ladies. The first who sang was Mrs. N. Payne, whose rendition of "Ora Pro Nobis" was greatly admired. Her voice was clear and unflinching, and the enunciation was perfect. In response to an imperative encore, she gave, "No, Sir" with equal success. In the second part she sang, in the costume of an Irish peasant girl, "The Isle that's crowned with Shamrocks," and in response to an inevitable encore, "Dear Little Shamrock," both of which, appealing as they did to the many Irish hearts present, were warmly appreciated and applauded. Miss Josephine O'Reilly, of whose abilities as a vocalist we have heard through the Sydney papers, was warmly received on her appearance on the platform, and as the opening notes of the song "The Lost Chord," were heard, it was evident that her reputation had not been by any means exaggerated. She fairly astonished the audience by the wonderful volume and range of her pure contralto voice, evidencing the most careful training, and we do not think we ever heard the well-known song rendered in a more finished and effective manner. She was rewarded by a shower of bouquets, and for an encore gave an Irish song, "Kitty of Coleraine," with great spirit. In the second part Miss Josephine O'Reilly gave Hulla's "The Turc Fishers," and in this she was, in our opinion, even more successful than in the first, it being sung with the most exquisite pathos and expression. The audience rapturously expressed their approval, and insisting on an encore, she sang "Barney O'Hea," putting into it such an amount of by-play and fun as to show that she is as good an actress as she is a vocalist. Rev. Dr. Egan played all the accompaniments on the piano for Miss O'Reilly. The next lady vocalist was Miss Swan, of Auckland, who possesses a mezzo-soprano voice of remarkable sweetness and melody. In both her songs, "The Blind Girl to her Harp," and "Kathleen Mavourneen," she very favourably impressed the audience, and for encores to each she kindly responded by singing "I'm the merriest girl about," and "A kiss and nothing more." "Gathering the Myrtle with Mary," was a very pleasing rendition, and was highly applauded; and "The Minstrel Boy" was very sweetly sung by Miss McLaughlin. Among the male vocalists the first was Mr. Vowles, who sang "The White Squall" in his usual effective style. Rev. Dr. Egan gave "Alla Stella Confidante" in a very finished manner, showing he possesses a cultured voice, though not a powerful one, and so pleased the audience that they insisted on an encore, for which he sang "I'll Die for Thee" with equal success. In the second part of the programme Dr. Egan sang "Father O'Flynn," and this was one of the greatest successes of the evening, fairly carrying away the audience by the expression and fidelity with which the item was rendered. An encore being called for, Dr. Egan gave "I'm not myself at all," for which he was heartily applauded. Mr. Christie gave a very pleasing rendition of the song "Silver Cup." An instrumental trio, selections from "Norma," was given in the first part by Dr. Egan (flute), Rev. Father Lenihan (cello), and Miss McIlhorne (piano); and another in the second part, "Ranzana," by the same. Both these were very pleasing and finished performances, evincing undoubted ability, and were deservedly warmly applauded. Rev. Dr. Egan's performance on the flute in a solo, "La Zingarella," showed him to be a finished flautist, fully maintaining the reputation which preceded him by the masterly manner in which he played both on the piano and the flute. A quartette, "Good night, gentle folks" was capably rendered by Messrs. Catran, Small, Steward, and Vowles; and a chorus, "Dawn of Day," very pleasingly sung by the choir of St. Francis' Church, under the leadership of Mrs. Bruce, brought the programme to a close.

A special word of thanks is due to Miss McIlhorne for the exceedingly artistic manner in which she played nearly all the accompaniments during the evening, through a very long programme, and she is fairly entitled to the credit of having materially assisted towards the success of the performance. Rev. Dr. Egan, as we have said before, played the accompaniments to Miss Josephine O'Reilly's items, and Mr. H. H. Small also assisted on one or two occasions.

At the close of the concert Rev. Father O'Reilly came forward and briefly expressed his sincere thanks to those present for their attendance, and also to all the ladies and gentlemen who had so kindly assisted in any way towards the success of the entertainment. He said he would especially thank those who were not members of his own flock, and he assured them that he warmly appreciated the friendly feeling which had prompted their action.

The singing of the National Anthem brought a most enjoyable evening to a close.

A good investment is now offered to an energetic man of business in the Auckland Catholic Repository, which is advertised for sale.