

Irish News.

OUR IRISH LETTER.

(From our own correspondent.)

Dublin, November, 1901

A LANDLORD'S RIGHTS

Who owns the bottom of the sea around the coast of New Zealand? Up to the present hour, I am certain the solving of such a question has never presented itself to any Court or to any body of men in your island. It is to be hoped it never will, for it is a ticklish question and one that over here has many a time brought out into high light the squalid selfishness of the Anglo-Irish landlord, that being who lives by the sweat of other men's brows.

Of late we have had a revival of this old grievance in a new and aggravated form. Hitherto a few landlords have wrestled with their own poor tenants—or other men's poor tenants, as the case may be—who live on the seaboard and draw sand and gravel from the foreshore for use upon roads or farms. In most cases the wrestling has resulted, as might be expected, in victory for the strong man, and the poor have had either to pay for or to cease taking away the useful materials with which the Almighty daily strews the shore afresh from the storehouse of the deep. This is always looked upon as a hardship and an injustice, akin to that law which deprives a farmer who rents land down to the very banks of a fish-providing river of the right to take one single salmon from out that river, even though the landlord and all who pay that landlord highly for the privilege of fishing are constant trespassers upon the tenant's land while in pursuit of sport. In the same way that, until a short time ago, a farmer dared not shoot or trap the very rabbits that often devoured the produce of whole fields.

But quite recently we have seen a still more glaring instance of landlord greed in the case of what has been termed 'a submarine estate.' A case has been tried in the land courts in which the lord of the soil abutting upon the sea in a certain part of Galway likewise claims sovereignty over the bottom of the adjacent ocean and all it contains and yields up; consequently, he claims a certain part of the monies earned by the poor peasants engaged in that most toilsome and ill-paid trade, the making of kelp.

Those who have never seen kelp-making can know nothing of the hardships endured by those engaged in the business. They can scarcely realise what it is to work day after day in cold and wet, often nearly up to the waist in the surf, gathering in the slimy weed, collecting it along shore to dry, then burning it down to that material called kelp, from which are extracted iodine and other useful products. Some idea of the labor entailed by this trade will be given by the fact that 20 tons of sea-wrack must be gathered to produce one ton of kelp, for which the laborer obtains sometimes £2 per ton, sometimes £4, for in many districts a curious custom has been established by the kelp purchaser.

The kelp-makers are a little company of, let us say, two men. When they and their families have collected the raw material and it has been finally burnt down in rude kilns erected along the sea shore, the product is divided into equal shares; the trader comes along and gives, haphazard, a fair price for one lot and a poor price for the second, and thus the lottery gives one family a fairly remunerative price for the season's work, while the second has but a pittance for their hard toil, yet the bare chance of the better money next time induces all to go on again the ensuing season, which begins in May and ends in August, gathering, drying, and burning included. Take the

trade all round, it is but a wretched earning nowadays, yet, upon these scant pittance, wrung literally from the deep, a Galway landowner claims and has successfully fought out in a court of justice (save the mark) the right to levy a tax upon this product of his 'submarine estate!' Oh, yes; the Irish are a discontented people. Not having been created eels, strange to say, they cannot help wringing whist being skinned.

A CHANNEL TUNNEL

There is another sub-marine business that starts up now and again, like the sea serpent, and which has once more been active of late—on paper this is the idea of a submarine railroad tunnel between the north of Ireland and Scotland, intended by its promoters to fulfil three ends: first, the doing away with sea-sickness, which some politicians believe to be the real cause of the sickening dislike which exists between these sea-divided nations. The theory is, that could the English reach Ireland and the Irish reach England without having their bile mutually stirred up in the passage across our stormy channel, all national animosities would disappear and there would be complete union of hearts and hands, etc., etc.

Secondly, the flow of tourist traffic would be diverted from Dublin and the south to Belfast and the north, as, naturally, almost every traveller from the Continent and England would prefer to cross the Channel by rail and, coming first to Larne, near Belfast, or perhaps to some point further north, would spend most time and money amongst the Orangemen.

Thirdly, the proposed tunnel would cost some millions, which would, through certain northern Tory interest, be divided out between Scotch, English, and North of Ireland engineers, contractors, and laborers and would quiet for a period some grumbings that at times are heard amongst the working classes of even the prosperous North, while bringing a fair share of money in the neighborhood of a certain nobleman who is most anxious to have the tunnel begun, even before the war is ended.

OVER-TAXED IRELAND.

Mr. William O'Brien has been forced by ill-health to take a long sea voyage, but his work of the United Irish League remains in good hands during his absence. Two little items of statistics will show the need there is in Ireland for legislation on the lines laid down by the League, i.e., the compulsory sale of farms to the tenants, and the breaking up of the big grazing ranches into small holdings.

Ireland is naturally one of the most fertile tillage lands in the world, therefore, her people should be, for the most part, an agricultural population. So fertile is the soil that, with proper cultivation, it would support 15,000,000 of people in comfort.

Before 1813, there were 8,000,000 of inhabitants; there are now but a little over 1,000,000, the richest districts having been cleared of inhabitants in order to make way for cattle, so that at the present time there are 12,000,000 acres under grass and only 3,000,000 under tillage.

To take one county as an example—Sixty years ago Tipperary County had a population of 412,000 today, Tipperary contains but 190,000 inhabitants.

In a late number of the 'Fortnightly Review,' Lord Mayo and Mr. N. L. Synnott published a joint article containing some startling figures, especially startling when taken in connection with the above items.

Writing of the 'increased taxation of Ireland with no increased capacity for taxation,' these gentlemen tell us that 'From 1891 to 1896 there was an increase of nearly £600,000, from 1896 to 1900, an increase of more than £600,000.

The total increase in those six years was, in round numbers, £1,100,000, or six shillings per head on every man, woman, and child of the population.' But the increase for the present year, 1901, is £1,871,000. That is an additional burden of £2,000,000 laid upon this country since 1896, when Irish taxation was declared by the Financial Relations Commission to be two millions and three quarters in excess of Ireland's taxable capacity.

Whilst we smile, we soothe affliction' was the motto over the stage of a provincial theatre very celebrated in its day. It is well for us Irish, that we can smile under almost any affliction, even taxes, at least so long as our up-to-date educators leave us our faith in a happy world to come.

A FASHION IN MOURNING.

In London there is a fashionable mourning warehouse in which is a department styled the mitigated affliction department. We don't quite advertise the purveying of mitigated affliction in Dublin, yet I think it is creeping in, for I smiled the other evening at a concert to see a very young and very pretty girl, with dark eyes and black hair, wearing right in the south-east-by-south, in her curly front locks—just above the meridian of the heart—a snow-white curly tress, to the memory of her first-love, no doubt; a tress suggestive of sorrow her young days shading, but prettily and becomingly shaded, not darkened. The question was debated in my row was the lock put on or was that one sad spot genuine, the result of an accident to the scalp, or a sudden breaking off of an engagement? The question was settled next day when I saw a row of precisely the same white tresses in a fashionable hairdresser's window.

A BOG SLIDE.

There are still some people alive who date particular events from the year of the Big Wind, a storm which, if I mistake not, occurred in the year 1826. This year we have had a hurricane said to be the fiercest gale that has been experienced since that time, now 75 years ago. Floods, wrecks, fires, loss of life, are reported from all parts of Ireland, and a serious bog-slip occurred in the County of Clare, by which, though no human lives were lost, several farmers have been ruined through the loss of cattle, houses, and even land, for hundreds of acres that had been purchased and reclaimed are now lying 15 feet beneath an inundation of bog stuff. A public subscription has been started to help the sufferers who, by this awful visitation, see themselves beggared, deprived in a few short hours of the work of generations of hard toilers. One family, consisting of father, mother, and nine children barely escaped in the night, without even getting time to dress, as the mother and children had to be carried off in their night clothes to a house that was fortunately out of the track of the torrent of liquid bog that streamed down from the summit of the mountain. When daylight came, the poor people found that everything they possessed in this world—house, furniture, clothes, cattle, and the very land, with its crops, lay buried as hopelessly as if an eruption from a volcano had burst forth and consumed all before it.

M.B.

COUNTY NEWS.

ANTRIM.—A Priest passes away.

It was with sorrow and deep regret that numbers of Catholics in Antrim heard of the death of the Rev. B. McCartan, parish priest of Hannahstown. The sad event took place in the Mater Infirmorum Hospital, Belfast, in which Father McCartan was nursed during his last illness. After laboring for close on 15 years in Portlenny, Glenavy, Lisburn, and Ballymena, Father McCartan was appointed to Hannahstown. For 12 years he had dis-