

THE IRISH LAND ACTS

Despite some serious drawbacks in the working of the Irish Land Acts (writes Mr. John O'Callaghan in the *Boston Globe*), the rate at which the work of land purchase in Ireland is progressing is exceedingly rapid. This, of course, means the establishment on a constantly increasing scale of family proprietary throughout the country. Its effect is felt in many ways in the social life of the people, but in no way is it more pronounced than in the spirit of independence and self-reliance which it has put into the people. There are three bodies engaged under different statutes in carrying out the work of transferring the land from the landlords to the tenants. They are the Landed Estates Commission, appointed under the Land Act of 1903, consisting of William F. Bailey, M. Finucane, and Frederick S. Wrench; the Land Commission, appointed under the Gladstone Land Act of 1881, and the Congested Districts Board, which deals entirely with the Congested Districts in the West of Ireland.

In the period down to March 31, 1909, agreements had been come to to sell under all the Land Acts 6030 estates to 159,216 purchasers, for an agreed aggregate price of £56,000,000. This amount had been increased down to September 16—the latest date to which William F. Bailey, one of the Landed Estates Commissioners, was able to give me the figures. The amount of advances applied for up to that date was £58,000,000, and the number of intending purchasers had been increased from 159,216 on March 31 to 168,794. Of this number 88,888 had purchased under the Land Act of 1903 and the Evicted Tenants Act of 1907, the amount of purchase money in all the transfers being £32,000,000.

A sum of nearly £40,000,000 was still needed to complete the payment for the land in which agreements to sell had already been entered into. Up to October 31, 1908, there had been a total of 490,301 holdings offered for sale by the landlords to the tenants comprising 18,739,644 acres at a total cost of £210,000,000. The average purchase price of the holdings was in Ulster, £240; Leinster, £530; Connacht, £210; and Munster, £450. The Commissioners had made preliminary inspections for the securing of 80,649 acres of untenanted land to be utilised either in the enlargement of existing holdings or in providing new ones.

The total number of fair rents fixed by the courts for a first statutory term of 15 years, where purchase of the land was not involved, down to March 31, 1909, was 445,995, dealing with a rental of £7,200,000, on which the tenants secured an average reduction throughout the entire country of more than 20 per cent. There was in addition 155,237 cases in which a second reduction averaging 19.6 had been secured. As showing the punctuality with which payments are made by these purchasers, it is interesting to note that on annuities amounting to £1,600,000 by 126,952 purchasers scheduled by the Commissioners in their report, the total deficit was only £10,000 by 1170 purchasers, and both the number of delinquencies and the amount of the deficiency have been considerably reduced since then.

The Housing of the Working Classes.

There are few more pleasing features of Irish life apparent to-day than the vast change for the better that has been brought about in the housing of the working population of the country. Compared with conditions 25 or even 15 years ago, that change is remarkable. The Irish landscape to-day wherever one turns throughout the country is dotted with neat and cozy cottages, healthy, clean, sanitary, and pleasant to the eye, most of them with creeping vines or ivy clinging to them, and with neat flower beds in the gardens attached. It is wholesome and striking contrast to the wretched hovels which, in too many instances, the Irish laborers were compelled to occupy only a comparatively few years ago.

One can ride through any part of Ireland to-day and see these cottages at every turn. Sometimes there are half a dozen of them on either side of the road within the space of half a mile, and in very few places can one travel more than that distance without seeing at least one or two of these new and strikingly picturesque conditions to the social advancement of the people. Like every other advance made in the Irish struggle during the past 25 or 30 years, this has not been brought about without considerable difficulty and oftentimes of sacrifice. The first Laborers' Act was passed in 1883, being introduced on behalf of the Irish Party of that day by T. P. O'Connor. Under its provisions more than 25,000 cottages have been built throughout Ireland. Three years ago an enlarged and much simpler statute was enacted, under which the progress of the erection of laborers' cottages has gone ahead all over Ireland rapidly. Between the two measures a sum exceeding £32,000,000 has been made available for the purpose of building these cottages.

Each cottage has an acre of land attached, and there the occupier is enabled to raise sufficient vegetables for his family, and very often a portion of the plot is devoted to the raising of oats or wheat in addition. The cottages are neat, one and two storey buildings, with boarded floors, well lighted and ventilated, each containing four or five rooms. They are erected under the direction of the Local District and Urban Councils, controlled throughout more

than three-fourths of Ireland by the Nationalist representatives elected by the people. It is a strange fact that in the small section in the north-east portion of Ireland, where the anti-Nationalists exercise control of the public bodies, the number of laborers' cottages built in comparison with the number in the section of the country where the Nationalists have control is exceedingly small. These cottages are let to the occupying laborers at a weekly sum of about one shilling, the house and adjoining acre of land being practically the property of the occupier for that trifling amount. A recent declaration by Chief Secretary Birrell in the House of Commons placed the number of these cottages erected throughout Ireland down to date as between 49,000 and 50,000.

During the year ending March 31 last there were 67 of what are called improvement schemes acted on by local public bodies in Ireland looking to the erection of these cottages. Each scheme may contain provisions for the erection of anywhere from one to fifty or upward of cottages, according to the particular needs of the district. The schemes for the past year alone provided for the building of 11,158 of these cottages, with plots of land attached, the acquiring of 194 other allotments, and additional half acres of land in 1933 other cases, where half-acre plots had already been provided. The cost of the schemes for the building of these cottages so authorised during the last year was estimated at close on £2,000,000. The orders issued by the Local Government Board during the last year authorised the building of 13,147 cottages with adjoining plots, the securing of 1817 additional half acres for cottages already provided, and 224 other allotments to enlarge the holdings already existing of laborers in different parts of the country.

The rents paid during the last year for these cottages amounted to upward of £60,000, while the arrears of rent due on March 31 last were only £5000. There are now pending for action before the Local Government Board proposals for 3875 additional cottages. This was more apparent in conditional allotments of land to cottages already authorised, the total estimated cost of these pending schemes being £766,000. During the past year loans were authorised for the building of these cottages in 144 rural districts to an amount of £2,178,000. This sum added to the previous amount of loans sanctioned for the building of the cottages made a total of £6,500,000. In many instances the landlords have stubbornly resisted encroachment on their lands for the purposes of the building of these laborers' cottages. This was more apparent in contrast to the attitude of the farmers, who in most instances freely permitted the taking of the necessity plots for the better housing of the agricultural laborers.

Taking a few among the many Poor Law Unions in Ireland, the average one of which would perhaps be 20 miles square, the number of laborers' cottages erected is striking. Of a total of 6969 in Ulster there are 728 in the rural district of Strabane, 341 in Omagh, 266 in Coleraine, and 339 in Newtownards. The total number of cottages in Munster is 19,251, of which 550 are in Cashel, County Tipperary; 863 in the Union of Tipperary itself, 1090 in the Union of Kilmallock, County Limerick, 711 in Newcastle, and 526 in Rathkeale, both in the same county; and in County Kerry there are 407 in the rural district of Killarney, 812 in Listowel, and 676 in Tralee. In the rural district of Bandon, County Cork, 437 cottages have been authorised, and 253 built in Clonakilty, 356 in Cork City, Cork rural district 1260, Fermoy 641, Kanturk 641, Macroom 778, and Dungarvan, Waterford, 264. The same proportion substantially holds good in Leinster, where in Carlow Union there are 625 cottages, in North and South Dublin 998, in the rural district of Athy 621, in Kells, County Meath, 534, in Trim, in the same county, 577, in the rural district of Mullingar 699, and the rural district of Wexford 911. In the other rural districts throughout the country in proportion to their size and the extent of the laboring population, these houses have been built on the same scale until it has meant practically a transformation of the rural life of Ireland.

EX-PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT IN UGANDA

At the civic meeting held in Carnegie Hall on the evening of February 2, to close the Paulist Jubilee, Judge Thomas C. O'Sullivan, whose subject was 'Reflections of a Paulist Parishioner,' paid an earnest tribute to the work done by the women of St. Paul's, the parish of the original New York foundation (says *America*). 'There was one woman,' he said, 'in the early days—a Mrs. Murphy, who used to come down regularly from Eighty-fourth Street to attend the early Mass at the Paulist Church. A few days ago former President Roosevelt, during his hunt in the African jungle, met a white woman. She was not a huntress, and still she was a huntress of souls, and she is a daughter of that Mrs. Murphy, and her name in religion is Mother Mary Paul.'

Mr. Roosevelt's Visit to Uganda.

Mother Mary Paul, as the readers of *America* will remember, wrote some time ago to say how much pleasure the perusal of the paper gave her in the wilds of far off