

A UNIONIST POLICY FOR IRELAND.

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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PREFACE.

THE sketch of a Unionist Policy for Ireland presented in the following pages is not, and does not pretend to be, a final and authoritative statement of the views of any section of the Unionist party.

It is an earnest attempt to exhibit for further discussion and consideration a practical solution of the great problems raised by Mr. Gladstone's Bills, the proposals in which were condemned by the House of Commons and the country as unsafe, unworkable, and incapable of affording a final or satisfactory settlement.

Before entering on the discussion of any alternative plans, the question naturally arises, what necessity is there for any alternative at all—why cannot you let it alone? The answer, however, is two-fold; in the first place the existence of the Liberal Unionists, at all events as a separate party, is based on their belief that the principles of Liberalism may be conciliated with a safe policy for Ireland, which shall preserve unquestioned the essential unity of the three Kingdoms, while conceding everything in the shape of practical reforms and of an extension of local government that can be shown to be necessary in the interests of Ireland; and in the second place he must be a blind student of history, and especially of Irish history, who believes that a merely negative policy can do more than produce a temporary result, or that coercion in any form is a specific against widespread discontent or a remedy for grievances that have a real foundation. It is right that law should be respected and that order should be maintained. To do this is the

duty of all Governments; and it is above all the interest of a democratic Government to secure the observance of the law, which is the expression of the people's will, which is made, revoked or amended at their discretion, and which is their only sure guarantee against anarchy on the one hand and despotism on the other. But it is clearly the duty of the majority who make the law to see that it is just, and as far as possible in harmony with the sentiments of all sections of the people. It may be, of course, that the demands of a minority at a particular time are incompatible with the safety or well-being of the whole nation, and in that case they must be sternly refused; but the existence of a demand, supported by a large minority, is in itself a reason for careful and impartial investigation of the claim, and for the concession of so much of it, at least, as can be granted without risk of injury to the majority.

At the present moment rather more than three millions of Irishmen demand self government and a separate Parliament, and they are supported by a large minority of the people of Great Britain. To grant this demand would, in the opinion of nearly two millions of Irishmen, and a majority of Englishmen and Scotchmen, lead immediately to strife and civil war in Ireland, and in the end to the disruption of the United Kingdom. What that means few have probably thought out, and none can predict with certainty; but those who think, as the Liberal Unionists do, that it would paralyse an influence that has been potent in the civilisation of the world, and that it would weaken and divide a beneficent Empire that has been slowly built up by the courage, the tenacity, and the wisdom of many generations, may be forgiven if, even at

the risk of being called traitors and impostors, they hold steadily to the ancient ways of Liberalism, and refuse absolutely to share the responsibility for projects which would put in jeopardy their great inheritance. In taking this stand they are consistent, though at the sacrifice of much that public men hold dear; but they would cease to deserve this title if, at the same time that they resist to the uttermost changes that would be destructive of the best interests of their country, they did not also search out and examine into the causes underlying this dangerous agitation, and seek to remove the grievances which give to it its strength and importance. This has been the constant aspiration of all Liberals during the present century, and we should be false to our professions and to our creed if we abandoned it now, because a great leader at the end of his career has thrown up the task in despair, and having failed in successive attempts either to cajole or to compel the discontented party to submit, has suddenly gone over to them, with those of his followers whom he could induce to keep him company, and is now fighting on their side against all his former declarations. It is our duty, and, it may be added, it is our only hope of safety, to meet this unparalleled desertion by a strenuous adherence to the old lines; and we shall fail if we do not show, not only that the policy, hitherto identified with the enemies of our country, and now suddenly adopted by so many of our old companions in arms, ought still to be resisted and rejected, but also that the objects which its authors profess to seek can be better and more surely attained by methods in strict accordance with the old Liberal faith.

Liberal Unionists, then, because they are Liberals, and

Conservative Unionists, because they are Unionists, must alike recognise the necessity of seeking for some permanent remedy for Irish discontent, and the first step must be to discover its material cause. Does there exist a statesman or a politician who is not in his own mind convinced that the material causes are economic and agrarian? Ireland is, and always has been, wretchedly poor, and the great bulk of the population is chiefly dependent on the land, which under present circumstances provides them with an insufficient subsistence. It is useless to enquire whether a more enterprising race would have overcome natural difficulties, although the comparative prosperity and industrial development of the North [of Ulster] prove that these disadvantages, which it shares with other parts of Ireland, are not insuperable by an energetic people. But it is sufficient to know that we cannot change the race, and the only question that remains is whether we can change the conditions. The Imperial Parliament, if not omnipotent, can at any rate do something; and, in the first place, it may stimulate the energy of the people and assist in the development of its industries. If we are to continue to govern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom we must do for Ireland at least as much as a patriotic and capable Irish Parliament would accomplish. Because England is the richest country in the world, and because the Anglo-Saxon race is the most energetic and pushing on the face of the globe, we have no right to conclude that public works, which are safely left to individual energy and private speculation here, can be entrusted to similar agencies in Ireland. In no other country, whether in Europe, Asia, Australasia, or America, have public

works been carried out entirely without State assistance. The marvellous development of prosperity in our great Indian dependency is almost wholly due to the magnificent network of communication created under Government guarantees or by its initiative, while it may be added in passing that the peace of that vast dominion has been secured by concessions to native opinion on the subject of land tenure. The writer of the following articles has shown from the report of the recent Commission in what ways the development of the resources of Ireland might be assisted by the action of the State, and unless the people of the United Kingdom are prepared to recognise this obligation they are not justified in standing in the way of a Government which would at least attempt to fulfil it. The risk of such an investment is not a serious one. Railways, tramways, and other means of communication have never yet failed to pay a reasonable interest when they have been economically and honestly constructed. There is in this case no possibility of repudiation. The fares and rates are collected without difficulty as the service is rendered. There can be no strike of passengers or freighters against railways, and the only risk lies in the possibility that the traffic may be too small to pay. But experience has shown in India and elsewhere that the facility of communication creates the traffic, and though it may not return sufficient to tempt speculation, it is almost certain to pay the moderate interest exacted by the State.

But, important as is this branch of the subject it sinks into insignificance beside the question of the Land. Whatever the State may do to promote general industry it is certain that the majority of the people will still look

to the land for their means of support, and if they are unsettled, or dissatisfied with their tenures, there can be no peace in Ireland.

It is because the leaders of recent agitation have appealed to agrarian discontent that they have been more successful than their predecessors. Whatever their ultimate objects may have been, they have consistently promulgated, as Mr. Gladstone said at Leeds, the gospel of sheer plunder. In all their speeches and in all their writings Home Rule has been secondary, and agrarian revolution has been primary. The great recommendation of Home Rule in the eyes of the peasantry has been that it would lead to their possession of the land on their own terms, and nothing is more absolutely certain than that if the tenantry possessed the land in freehold the agitation for Home Rule would altogether change its character. Is it not the duty of statesmen to appreciate these facts, to recognise this sentiment—the earth hunger of all agricultural people—and to endeavour to satisfy it by just and reasonable means. It is now at least a quarter of a century since Mr. Bright began to advocate this solution of the Irish Question, and all experience since obtained shows that it is by such measures and not by tinkering with rents that finality can be obtained and the Irish people contented. The returns of sales effected under various acts of Parliament, and especially under Lord Ashbourne's Act, show that the most striking improvement both in the temper of the people and in the condition of the holdings, has followed the change of ownership, and that the payment of instalments and interest has invariably been accomplished with exemplary regularity. It is natural that in these circumstances some

persons should look to an indefinite extension of Lord Ashbourne's Act as all that is necessary. But there is a fatal objection. If the extent of these transactions were greatly increased, and if the number of debtors to the State became very large, nothing would be easier than for the agitators at some favourable time, or after a bad harvest, to bring about a strike against payment of interest, just as they have in the past induced a strike against payment of rent. As there would be only one landlord, and that landlord would be the unpopular British Government, and as it would be easy to represent the purchase price agreed upon as exorbitant, there would be every temptation to strike a double blow both against the British connection and against what would be described as the British tribute. Where there are a number of landlords to be dealt with, the difference in the conditions makes a general strike difficult or impossible, but the extensive development of purchase under Lord Ashbourne's Act would concentrate the agitation against a single and impersonal authority. In this connection it is well to take warning by the speeches of Mr. Davitt, Mr. Healey, Mr. Dillon, and other prominent Nationalists who have not obscurely threatened a repudiation of obligations under any large scheme of purchase with a British guarantee. To these considerations may be added the fact, which no experienced electioneerer will question, that the constituencies of Great Britain would emphatically condemn and probably destroy any government which largely increased the liability of this country for the purpose of buying out the landlords of Ireland. The scheme proposed in the present volume is not open to this objection. It rests entirely on Irish

credit and Irish resources, and attempts to secure, by self interest, a public feeling in favour of the discharge of just obligations and against the defaulter. If this object can be obtained there is no doubt that in every case the land will fall into the hands of solvent tenants, and those who will not pay or cannot pay will have to emigrate or find other occupations.

It behoves the landowners in Ireland most seriously to consider these proposals. They may rest assured that no further large assistance from British credit will be forthcoming, and if they cannot accept the present or some similar alternative they will be doomed to see their property slowly disappearing with successive reductions of rent, or wholly confiscated by the more drastic proceedings of an Irish Parliament; and in this case, though the evil done may be repaired so far as the Government of the country is concerned, their loss will never be recovered. After the defeat of Napoleon the Monarchy was restored in France, and the work of the Revolution in large part undone, but even the Monarchy and the Reactionaries were powerless to restore the land to its former owners.

There is one point in the scheme here submitted which is worthy of careful consideration. It may be doubtful if it would be wise, in the first instance at any rate, to proceed by way of compulsion or in a wholesale manner. There is much to be said for a more gradual change, and probably it would be found better not only to limit the sums devoted annually to the purpose, but also to restrict the application in the first instance to cases where the landlord and tenants agree, or where either the landlord or the whole of the tenants on an estate are willing to avail themselves of the plan.

There remains only to consider the alternative scheme of Home Rule or extension of Local Government propounded in these pages. It is clear that the suggested land reform must precede the political change, and until the long-standing quarrel between the owners and the occupiers has been compounded, it will not be safe to trust the latter with full control over the property of the former. This was the avowed opinion of Mr. Gladstone in introducing his two Bills, and it must be considered an essential condition of every proposal.

But assuming that the social war which now exists in Ireland were terminated by a reasonable settlement, there are strong reasons for desiring on the one hand to relieve the Imperial Parliament of some of the constantly increasing burden of its local work, and on the other hand to open to Irishmen in their own country a larger field of local ambition, together with greater liberty of action, and greater personal responsibility. Such a result is surely not beyond the reach of statesmanship, and might be effected without in the least impairing the authority of Parliament, and without creating legislatures which from their nature would infallibly tend to become co-ordinate powers. The scheme elaborated in these pages is a tentative proposal, but at least it is not open to the objections which were fatal to Mr. Gladstone's ill considered Bill. The intention of the Unionist Party to consider at the proper time some such development of local government would prove the sincerity of their determination to pursue a policy of justice and conciliation, and it would justify their continued resistance to the schemes of anarchy and separation to which their opponents seem to be committed.

It is said that a moderate scheme would not satisfy the

extreme party, nor put an end to agitation. That is true; and so long as agitation continues to be profitable to every patriot who engages in it, it is certain that there will be many found to risk a few weeks or months of mild imprisonment for the chance of securing such a prize as Mr. Parnell's when, without a word of thanks to his paymasters and dupes, he pocketed a testimonial of £40,000 as a reward for his disinterested services.

But the question is, would a policy of the kind here indicated satisfy the vast majority of the people of Ireland? Would it turn the attention of the tenants to making the best of the land which would be their own? Would it convince them that nothing more was to be gained by violence and disorder? Would they recognise in it a friendly and practical interest on the part of the Government, and people of Great Britain in their material welfare? Would they find in it opportunities for improving their condition, serving their country and for securing the changes in their immediate surroundings which are most necessary to their happiness? If the answers to these questions be in the affirmative it matters little what may be said or thought by the well-paid representatives of Irish-American hostility and the leaders of what Mr. Gladstone formerly called the anti-British and anti-loyal party.

I hope that the proposals here set forth may receive impartial consideration and the fullest discussion. For myself I believe that it is in this direction that the ultimate solution of the Irish question is to be found.

J. CHAMBERLAIN.

September, 1888.

THE CONDITION OF IRELAND.

A STAGE in the Irish question has now been reached which permits, and indeed invites, a review of the position, and a consideration of the future Irish policy to be adopted by those who uphold the legislative union between the three kingdoms, and especially by Unionists who are Liberals. Whatever may be said by advocates of the legislative independence of Ireland, the power of the Nationalist League in that country, if not broken, is greatly abated. A serious blow has been struck at the organisation itself, and at its methods of manifestation and operation, by the execution of the Crimes Act; and the most favourite devices of its promoters—boycotting and the so-called plan of campaign—already condemned by the law, have now on religious and moral grounds been also condemned by a spiritual authority to which the majority of Roman Catholic Irishmen, both priests and laymen, may be expected to yield obedience. Throughout the disturbed districts of Ireland the law is now being administered with firmness and discretion, outrages are fewer, the population is calmer, loyal subjects are becoming convinced that the law is adequate to the duty of rendering them protection, and though sullen discontent still prevails in some parts of the country, as a whole Ireland is more peaceful and orderly than has been the case for many years. The purely political situation also shows a tendency towards relaxation of tension, and slackening of energy on the part of those who stand

committed to vast schemes of organic change. It is true that Mr. Gladstone still speaks, that his chief lieutenants echo his utterances, that discussions on personal issues are persistently raised in the House of Commons, that occasional meetings—not too spontaneous—continue to be held in the country, and that the organised central machinery of agitation, necessarily endeavouring to justify its existence, continues to be languidly worked. But in the political aspect of the Irish agitation, as conducted in Parliament and in Great Britain, there is nevertheless an interval of repose. It may be the lull which precedes renewed storm—in our days no man can securely predict the strength or the course of the current of political energy—but as an immediate fact there is a cessation of active exertion ; due, perhaps to design, perhaps also to irresolute counsels and to a growing recognition of an impossible cause. That a project of Irish Home Rule is still before the country is, of course, not to be denied ; but it is now a vague project, shadowy as to its magnitude and its general proportions, and unexplained, unknown, possibly undefined even in the mind of its author, as to its details. Mr. Gladstone refuses to speak of his plan at all ; no one is authorised to speak on his behalf ; his colleagues do not know what they may safely or prudently say on his behalf ; and thus, left in the dark as to the plans and purposes of their leader, the general body of his followers are reduced to a merely personal confession of faith in Mr. Gladstone and his unknown intentions. Meanwhile the cause of the Union not only maintains its ground, but advances, and consolidates its strength. Since the general election the country has had additional time for reflection, and this process has resulted in an

increasing reluctance to approve projects which, no matter what may be the design or the desires of their authors, must of necessity tend to separation, to the demand of absolute independence, and probably to renewed and infinitely more serious conflict. But for the startling impression produced by them at the time of their full disclosure, it might have been possible to carry Mr. Gladstone's plans with a rush—that chance has disappeared; the verdict pronounced at the general election remains unshaken; and if the same plans, or others nearly resembling them, were reproduced, unless all ordinary political indications are fallacious, the judgment of the constituencies would now be more emphatic than it was in 1886. If Mr. Gladstone has new and different schemes to offer, the country will doubtless consider them; but it shows no desire to press him to break through the reserve which, for reasons avowedly strategical, he continues to impose upon himself. Something of this attitude of the public mind is doubtless due to the weariness caused by the iteration of the Irish question, to the impatience of prolonged postponement of legislation urgently required by England and Scotland, to the general demand for an English session, and to the boldness with which the Ministry, advising with and supported by its Liberal Unionist allies, has brought forward measures of reform broader, more liberal, and more courageous than have been offered even by Liberal Administrations.

We are not optimists in politics, and therefore we do not derive from a review of these circumstances a conclusion tending to false security. The Irish problem is laid aside for the time; but it remains unsolved, it will reappear, and it must be faced and dealt with, on conditions at once safe for the empire

and just and even generous for Ireland itself. The importance to be attached to the present slackening of agitation is that it affords an opportunity of considering the question with calmness, without prejudice, with a desire to ascertain what can be reasonably done, and with a determination to do all that is possible, within the clearly marked lines of the maintenance of the Union—of the real and effective supremacy of the Imperial Parliament over all constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It may be asked, and probably will be asked, why this question of Irish policy should now be touched; why Ireland cannot be left alone to quiet down under the influence of law strongly vindicated, and of government firmly administered. The answer is twofold. First, even if that were desirable, we cannot—we are speaking here for Liberals—leave Ireland in her existing condition. The law is producing a good effect, the forces of disorder are held in check, confidence is beginning to return; but these results are produced by efforts which are not ends but means. If, at this moment, owing to the operation of the law, Ireland were as free as Great Britain from disturbing or dangerous agitation, that would give no assurance of progressive improvement or permanent content. We recall Mr. Bright's memorable saying—"Force is no remedy." Using the word in no invidious sense, coercion is not a policy. We may secure a period of calm; but we need to go further, and to use the opportunity for the consideration and adoption of a scheme of constructive reform. The second part of the answer is that we have promised to reform the local government of Ireland; and we must keep our word. Liberals especially, Conservatives in a scarcely less degree, are pledged—

of course with variations necessitated by the peculiar circumstances of each country—to place England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland upon an equal footing in regard to reforms and extensions of local government. From such pledges there is no desire to escape, nor any possibility of escape, even if the desire existed. While resisting, and unflinching, continuing to resist, such changes in Ireland as would set up a Parliament conflicting with and becoming practically independent of the Imperial Legislature, and a Government which might put itself in opposition to the Government of the Queen, we are bound, not less by the common interests of the three kingdoms than by repeated promises, to place Ireland on an equal footing with England and Scotland, and thus to ensure to her the right of local self-government, and to confer upon her the power of developing the material prosperity and social order which only good government can secure. The idea of recognising a separate nationality, and of expressing this by a separate Parliament and a practically independent government, is of course out of the question so far as those who maintain the Union are concerned; but short of measures tending to the disruption of the empire, much may be done—all, indeed, that Ireland can justly or reasonably demand, or that can be conceded by the rest of the United Kingdom. What, then, can be done? What is it that it is the duty of Liberals to attempt to do, with the design of effecting a settlement of the Irish problem? We propose, in a series of articles, to endeavour to show to what extent, by what means, and in what order, the pledges of Liberal Unionists can be redeemed, and their hopes realised, by large measures of reform—so connected in regard to cha-

racter, to operation, and to sequence, as to constitute a policy, each section of which shall be inter-dependent, and which, therefore, must be considered as a whole.

In the present article we propose broadly to sketch, as a whole, the outlines of a possible scheme of Irish policy, in regard to public works, the land, municipal government, and provincial government for defined administrative purposes, and with limited and delegated legislative authority. It must be understood that the proposals we are about to describe are not put forward either as a complete and finished plan, ready stereotyped for acceptance, or as an official programme. No one is committed to the scheme as it stands. It is offered for consideration and criticism; not lightly or without due reflection; but not with such positiveness as to preclude whatever modifications may, after discussion, be shown to be desirable. Those who feel that it is now incumbent upon Liberal Unionists to put before the public a clear indication of their views as regards Irish reforms, by no means present this or any other plan as ripe for immediate legislation. But they recognise the necessity of legislation at the earliest possible moment, they desire to fulfil the promise of reform within safe and constitutional limits, they are not afraid to indicate the direction which, in their view, reform should take; and, therefore, the recommendations we are about to make are offered, tentatively, by way of suggestion, as matters for the frankest and fullest discussion. That the proposals will at once commend themselves to all Unionists, or even to all Liberal Unionists, is hardly to be expected—still less that they will satisfy the great body of the followers of Mr. Gladstone, or those of Mr. Parnell. But the

hope is that, upon these lines, by the aid of debate, and by the contributions of all who desire to arrive at a settlement of the question, a policy of Irish reform may be deduced which will command the adhesion of those who desire to maintain the Union by reasonable means and upon a permanent basis; which will be worthy the serious consideration of Liberals who act under the leadership of Mr. Gladstone; which the chiefs of the Irish Nationalist movement may feel it desirable to accept at least as an arrangement deserving of a fair and honest trial; and which, if accepted, may be put into operation by common consent, and with the happiest prospect of restoring peace, promoting prosperity, and ensuring a real and permanent union between Great Britain and Ireland—union based upon community of interests and a sense of justice. Whatever may be the measure of acceptance according to the scheme, or whatever may be its results, one consequence must follow: It cannot again be alleged, with any show of foundation, that while resisting all measures tending to the disruption of the empire, by the establishment of an independent Legislature and a separate Government in Ireland, the Liberal Unionists have no alternative policy to offer. They stand pledged to accord to Ireland all that is given in the way of local self-government to other portions of the United Kingdom. The statement of these proposals shows that there is an alternative policy. If they should be regarded with sufficient approval to be carried to practical issue, the Liberal Unionists will have more than fulfilled their promises.

We come now to the consideration of the remedial measures which, at this peculiarly favourable moment, it is thought desirable to put forward for considera-

tion, as constituting in the whole a policy with regard to Irish affairs. The proposals may be arranged in three divisions—namely:—

I. PUBLIC WORKS.

II. LAND PURCHASE.

III. LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

We proceed to consider each of these divisions, in the order above stated.

I.—PUBLIC WORKS.

The first of these divisions claims immediate attention, alike on account of the magnitude of its importance and the urgency of its need. All persons who have read with care the reports presented by the Royal Commission on Irish Public Works will acknowledge that to permit delay in taking in hand the evils pointed out by the Commissioners would be culpable in the highest degree. Two reports have been presented, dealing with the three subjects of (1) arterial drainage and river improvement; (2) fisheries and harbours; (3) railway communication. With the statements and recommendations of the Commissioners we shall deal with some detail hereafter. It is enough now to say that the general conclusion enforced by the reports is that unless immediate and liberal help is afforded from Imperial resources there will be little prospect of effecting any considerable advance in the material prosperity of Ireland. Setting aside the manufactures of Belfast and a few other places, ~~...~~ in its various forms, chiefly in the

cultivation of grass lands and the raising of stock, must of necessity permanently constitute the chief industry of Ireland, and her principal source of wealth. To agriculture should be added fisheries on a large and productive scale; the harvest of the sea should be reaped and husbanded, as well as the produce of the land. But how can agriculture be adequately developed when drainage is neglected, when the rivers are permitted to overflow, when bog is left unreclaimed, when there is at one time a flood passing over the land, and at another time a plague of drought? And how can fisheries be developed, of what value are a magnificent coast, and abundantly stocked fishing grounds, if there are no supplies of boats adapted to the work, no sufficient provision of piers, landing-places, and harbours, no places for the curing of the fish, so as to permit of its exportation, no places even where nets are made, no training for fishermen? And, with regard both to agriculture and to fisheries, how is it possible for the people engaged in those occupations to make good use of their produce if the railway accommodation is so inadequate, so ill-connected, so awkwardly managed, and so costly, that produce cannot be moved from the districts where it is abundant to those which are in need of it? These are the conditions brought out by the Commissioners' reports—and, with certain modifications, they apply to nearly the whole of Ireland; invariably to those parts of Ireland which are the poorest, and which most urgently require assistance. This is one of the first undertakings which ought to be set going—a large and liberal contribution from Imperial funds, to improve the arterial drainage of Ireland; to embank the rivers; to improve

and, in many instances, to create the fisheries; to bring the railway system into reasonable co-ordination, and to extend it so as to connect remote parts of the country with the main lines of communication. The Government propose to do something for the drainage, but only on a small scale. Their scheme seems to us to be wholly inadequate. It is not an expenditure of a few thousands of pounds that will serve these material needs of the country. The outlay must be reckoned by millions. We doubt if a smaller sum than ten millions—spread over a term of years—would be too much for the purposes above indicated; and if the railway system of Ireland is to be made really adequate to the wants of the country, we are disposed to believe that the purchase of the existing railways by the State will become imperative. It would not be such a formidable undertaking. The Irish railway system is of no great extent—not more in the whole than the mileage of the Great Western Railway in this country. The capital does not exceed forty millions, and of this a considerable portion pays no dividend, while the average dividend of the whole does not exceed three-and-a-half per cent. It is not necessary that, if purchased by the State, the Irish railways should be worked as a Government department; indeed, there are many reasons why the advantage of local management and local interest should be retained, by the arrangement of some system of leasing; or, under a method of reformed local government, it might be possible to entrust the railways to local authorities constituted for the administration of large districts. But either by purchase, or by guarantee, the State must acquire control

over the railways if the existing system is to be properly consolidated, and if extensions and connections absolutely essential for the prosperity of Irish agriculture and Irish fisheries are to be made. For such extensions and connections capital will not be found from local sources, and under existing conditions it could not be profitably applied. But with a reformed method, with money raised chiefly by State credit, and used to open up vast districts now shut out from direct railway communication, a great extension of the railway system of Ireland would not only pay the State for its outlay, but would go far to enrich Ireland by putting new life and vigour into her principal industries. The first part of the remedial scheme now put forward is, therefore, a large and liberal expenditure on public works in Ireland—drainage, rivers, harbours, fishery appliances, railway extension, and the reform and consolidation of railway administration. All this, of course, should be done by degrees, and upon a carefully-considered system, embracing Government supervision and local agency.

II.—LAND PURCHASE.

Next in order of time, and of even greater importance, is the question of Land Purchase. In regard to the urgency of this matter, general consent may be assumed; and it may be taken for granted, also, that a scheme of Land Purchase must precede, or at least must accompany, any measure for the reform of Local Government. The plan originally proposed by Mr. Gladstone is no longer spoken of by its author, or by any of his colleagues or adherents. The latter,

indeed, assume that it is absolutely dead ; but even if it were revived, the fate it experienced at the general election would again unquestionably be in store for it. In the minds of persons who contemplate practical politics there is no place for any scheme of Irish land purchase based upon an enormous use of the resources of the Imperial Exchequer. It is admitted that it would be a dangerous experiment—probably a fatal error—to substitute the Imperial Government for the present owners as the direct landlord of the Irish tenants. It is admitted, further, that in any scheme for the settlement of the Irish land question the only possible course is to convert the smaller tenants—say those occupying purely farming lands under £50 valuation—into owners of the land they occupy ; and it is also conceded that, in order to effect this alteration of status, the assistance of the State must of necessity be resorted to. The desired purpose cannot be effected by a vast employment of Imperial credit, either by direct State purchase, or by State loans to the tenants on the security of their holdings. These processes would be at once too costly and too full of risk to the Exchequer. How, then, can a change absolutely indispensable be prudently and yet effectually put in practice ? The answer is, by the employment of Irish credit. If the land question is to be settled on a just and permanent basis, Ireland must in this matter work out her own redemption. At first sight the problem may appear to be difficult ; some persons may be disposed to regard it as insoluble. We do not share this desponding view. We think it possible, indeed not even exceptionally difficult, to devise means by which a great body of tenant-owners shall be created in Ireland, with marked benefit to them-

selves and to the country, and without serious risk to the State. The plan by which this object may be accomplished may hereafter be stated in detail; for the present it can be indicated only in its broadest outlines. A Land Bank should be created for Ireland; county authorities, properly reconstituted, should acquire by purchase the lands to be dealt with in each district, and the ownership of such lands should vest in these authorities, payment to vendors being made in land debenture bonds, bearing a fixed rate of interest, and issued by the Land Bank, interest coupons of such bonds being receivable in payment of all Irish local taxes. The rents of acquired properties would be collected by the county authority, and after deducting a fixed proportion for local purposes, the remainder would be paid to the Land Bank, to meet the interest and repayment of debenture bonds. The tenant, under such an arrangement, would be under no necessity to provide or to borrow any capital for the acquisition of permanent right in his holding. He would pay a fair fixed rent, which might be so arranged as gradually to diminish in amount as time goes on, and as the amount of the unpaid instalments becomes less, until it would merge into a perpetual land tax, or State rent, of very moderate amount, which should be maintained, both as a source of revenue to the State or country and also as a means of securing, by those authorities, the observance of permanent conditions intended to prevent subdivision and encumbrances. This ultimate rent, which should not in any case exceed about one-third of the present fair or judicial rent, might, if thought desirable, be ultimately converted into a produce rent. The proportion payable by the Land Bank to the former landowner, capitalised and in-

vested in debentures of the Land Bank, would give him an income less, of course, than the present fair rent, but absolutely secure, and marketable at any time at par, since it would be guaranteed not only by the provision for its acceptance in payment of the local taxes, and by the produce of the land rents generally, but also by another arrangement, which we proceed to describe. The County Board, after satisfying the claims of the Land Bank, would receive for local purposes an increasing proportion of the rental for forty years, and thereafter would have in perpetuity the amount of the perpetual quit rent or land tax. But, suppose the County Board to be remiss in the discharge of its duty in the collection of rent, or suppose the tenants in a particular district to withhold payment? That is a difficulty to be considered; and it might be met in this way. The contribution of the Imperial Government in aid of local purposes should be paid to the Land Bank for distribution, and the Bank should have a lien upon the amount for any deficiency in payment of rent by the County Authority. Thus, loss by default would be prevented from falling upon the public revenue; the power to pay local taxes by the interest coupons of debenture bonds would give each local authority a direct interest in the security; and the contribution of the Imperial Exchequer would be a reserve guarantee for the full payment of interest. The object to be kept in view is the creation of a public opinion in favour of the payment of rent, and this can be secured only by giving the majority a direct interest in maintaining punctual fulfilment of obligations by the minority. When default by the tenant involves possible loss to the whole of the district in which he resides, either in the enforced

acceptance by its local authority of depreciated currency in payment of rates, or by the diminution in the amount of grants receivable from the Imperial Exchequer, the ratepayers, as a class, will resent non-payment, and will approve of legal proceedings to get rid of insolvent tenants. At present public sympathy is with the defaulter. What is desirable and necessary in any safe scheme is that public sympathy should be in future directed against him. Under such a system as that above described, free sale would once more come into operation; and, as there are always numbers of persons ready to take up vacant farms, the incompetent, improvident, or dishonest tenants would quickly be weeded out.

Closely, indeed inseparably, connected with any scheme of land purchase must be a scheme for the relief of congested districts. There are parts of Ireland, mainly in the west, in which, if their land were entirely and immediately free, the tenants of the smaller holdings could not possibly live upon the produce or make a living by the aid of other means of earning money. County Boards, to be created under a Local Government Act, should be enabled to acquire lands in other parts of their district, suitable for such tenants, and should have authority to arrange for the removal of the smaller tenants in hopelessly congested districts to the lands so acquired, increasing the holdings of those who were permitted to remain to such an extent as to afford them the means of earning a livelihood. County Boards should also be empowered to offer the tenants necessarily removed, and who decline migration to other and better districts, the alternatives of compensation for removal, or of emigration under suitable conditions to be arranged by the Board in conjunction with

colonial or other Governments. For these purposes of migration and emigration aid might properly be granted to the County Boards, in the shape of loans, from the Imperial Exchequer.

III.—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

It will be observed that the Land Purchase scheme broadly indicated in the preceding section involves the creation of new County Boards; and this brings us to the final branch of the subject, the reform of Local Government in Ireland. This divides itself into three portions—Imperial Authority; Administrative Municipal Government; Provincial Government, with defined and delegated legislative powers. The first division, Imperial Authority, practically settles itself. The executive power would remain vested in the representatives of the Crown, acting either under the Lord-Lieutenant, or under a Secretary of State for Ireland, being a member of the Imperial Government and in the Cabinet, and having a seat in the House of Commons. The judges and magistrates would be appointed, as now, by the Crown. The Royal Irish Constabulary, reduced perhaps in number, would be, as at present, under the control of the Executive. The various boards and departments now known in their aggregate as “the Castle” might be abolished, and a considerable part of their functions might with advantage be transferred to the local authorities. For the creation of County Boards and other municipal authorities, the English County Government Bill now before Parliament might, with modifications specially required in Ireland, afford a model; but it might be desirable to concentrate in

the hands of the County Boards the administration of the poor-law and some other branches of local administration now entrusted to minor local authorities. The County Boards and the municipalities of the larger cities and towns might further be authorised to provide and control, at their own cost, a purely local police to deal with ordinary offences; the Royal Irish Constabulary being reserved for duties entrusted to them by the Central Executive, and to carry into effect the decrees of the judicial courts. The County Boards would, of course, take over the functions of local administration now discharged by the grand juries and other nominated bodies; and the new Boards would, of necessity, be representative, and elected upon a broad franchise. In case of default in the execution of duties entrusted to them by the law, power might be reserved to the superior courts, or the Irish Judicial Committee, on cause shown, to compel such execution, or supersede the Boards in default, or to order new elections, or to suspend the payment of contributions from the Imperial Exchequer towards the costs of local government.

It is not only, however, in regard to municipal administration that a reform is needed in Ireland. Something more and larger is wanted—representative and executive assemblies which, while not endowed with the name, the authority, or the powers of a Parliament, shall nevertheless, within due limits, and for specified purposes, enjoy and exercise powers of legislation. Such assemblies might be created in each province of Ireland, under the name of Provincial Councils, and to them might be committed numerous subjects of provincial legislation—such, for example, as local taxation, liquor and other licenses, charities, public works within the province, railways and

tramways, matters affecting agriculture and fisheries, emigration, and other subjects from time to time remitted to them by the Imperial Parliament. Private Bill legislation within the province would necessarily go to the Provincial Council, and where two provinces were concerned in private bills or public works, the Councils might, by delegation, unite for the purpose of arranging the requisite measures. Education might also be placed under the direction of the Provincial Councils, necessarily with restrictions against giving preferences to, or imposing disabilities upon, any creed, class, or person. By the same rule all matters affecting religion would be of necessity withdrawn from the Provincial Councils, and they would have no power to deal with the rights of property to the injury of individual or other owners. Questions as to the legal exercise of powers by Provincial Councils might be raised by the Crown, by the Councils themselves, or by individuals, before the Irish Judicial Committee, to whom final authority of judgment should be then entrusted; and if such acts of the Councils were declared *ultra vires*, or in opposition to law, the decrees of the Judicial Committee would be enforced by the Crown, through its Executive.

We have now indicated the main lines of the policy put forward for consideration, namely—(1) extensive Public Works (drainage, river improvements, fisheries, and railways), provided or aided by the Imperial Exchequer; (2) a measure of Land Purchase, based upon Irish credit, and conducted and administered by Irish authorities; (3) reform of Executive Administration and of Municipal Government; and (4) the establishment of Provincial Councils, with defined local legislative powers. The

details of this scheme in its several branches must be filled in at a later period. For the present we venture to commend the proposal to consideration and criticism on behalf of Liberals who uphold the effective union of the three kingdoms ; and as one which, with due modifications, may in time be made applicable not to Ireland only, but to other parts of the United Kingdom.

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PUBLIC WORKS.

ARTERIAL DRAINAGE.

The first report of the Public Works Commission was devoted to a subject of the highest importance to Ireland, with special regard to the development of its greatest industry—namely, agriculture. This was the subject of their enquiry the Commissioners dealt with in three divisions—first, arterial drainage generally; secondly, the works necessary for the due control of the principal rivers, the Shannon, the Barrow, and the Bann. The importance of these water-courses may be seen by any one who looks at a map of Ireland and it will be easy to recognise the value of works which may prevent them, in flood time, from discharging their surplus water over the agricultural land on their banks. Bills for the purpose of improving these three rivers are about to be laid before Parliament by the Government; and while awaiting these we proceed to discuss the main features of the principal part of the subject—arterial drainage generally. Arterial drainage is defined by the Commissioners to be the work of placing in an efficient state any watercourse or outfall, or any dam or defence against flooding. The general conditions of the problem to be dealt with are stated in the following description of the physiographical character of Ireland:—“The great central plain, surrounded by high ground near the coast; the humid character of its climate; the few outlets through which

rivers can escape to the sea : these are the salient features of the island, and are of themselves sufficient to suggest at once the need for arterial drainage, and the probabilities of difficulties in carrying it out." Amongst these difficulties a prominent one is the peculiar conformation of the river courses. Generally speaking, the river beds are steeply inclined near the outfalls, they are exceptionally flat in the middle portions, and they are steep again on the uplands. Thus, with the heavy rainfall in Ireland, large volumes of water find their way into the middle parts of the catchment basins of the rivers, and the water thus lodged cannot easily get away, owing to the want of adequate fall in that section of the river courses. In many places the extremely rocky character of the river beds contributes an additional difficulty. Embankment of the rivers, at least in their middle portions, would have afforded a remedy against flooding ; but embankment has been rarely adopted, there having been a desire to use the waterways for navigation. But probably in no instance, or certainly in extremely rare instances, has inland navigation been profitable in Ireland ; and now, so far as the rivers are concerned, it is rendered practically hopeless by the railways which traverse the same districts, not unfrequently following the course of the river channels. Any question as to using the rivers for navigation may, therefore, in the judgment of the Commissioners, be altogether dismissed ; and attention may properly be given only to arterial drainage with the view of aiding the progress of agriculture. Amongst the advantages of such drainage, arranged on intelligent principles, efficiently conducted, and extended over a wide area, the Commissioners point out that land

would be rendered more productive, bogs would be reclaimed, roads which now often become almost impassable by floods would be made available constantly for traffic, and would be repaired at much less cost than at present. They also point out another matter of much importance—namely, that in the central basin of Ireland effective drainage would be likely to produce an effect upon climate; and consequently upon the ripening of the crops and the health as well as the prosperity of the people. Wet land, they show, lowers the temperature; and in proof of this they state the fact, as recorded by the Dublin Meteorological Department, that in the middle of Ireland, where the wettest and most commonly flooded land is to be found, the July temperature is lower not only than that of the south, but also lower than the temperature of the north of the island. Other advantages of a widely extended system of arterial drainage, and some important facts and deductions bearing upon the solution of the problem, are given in a memorandum submitted to the Commissioners by Sir John Ball Greene, the head of the Government Valuation Department in Ireland. This document is of so much interest that we reproduce it in full.

“The area of Ireland may be put down as follows:—

	Statute acres.
Arable and pasture.....	15,357,856
Woods and plantations	339,849
Rivers and lakes	627,761
Bog, moor, and mountain	4,497,024
Total.....	<u>20,822,490</u>

“Or the classification may be made according to elevation, as under:—

	Statute acres.
• Not exceeding 250ft. above sea level.....	8,500,000
From 250ft. to 500ft.	7,500,000
From 500ft. to 1,000ft.	3,750,000
From 1,000ft. to 2,000ft.....	1,020,000
Over 2,000ft.	52,490
	<hr/>
Total	<u>20,822,490</u>

“It may be deduced from these figures that not less than one-half the entire surface of Ireland is within an elevation of 300ft., or 100 yards, above the level of the sea, and it is clear that it would be within this range that arterial drainage works could be carried out with the greatest advantage, either for the purpose of relieving the lands in the river basins from periodical flooding, or for reducing the permanent water level to such a height that reclamation, thorough drainage, or other agricultural improvement of adjacent lands might be effected. Lough Allen, 163 feet above the sea, may be said to be the summit level of the Shannon, and it is between this point and Killaloe that the most destructive flooding takes place. The river Barrow drains a large district on the eastern side of Ireland, and the extensive morasses known as the Bog of Allen, and the other low-lying districts, do not exceed an elevation of 250 feet. The River Bann, Lough Neagh, and the adjoining basin, are at a much lower level, and the height of the Erne at Lough Gowna, which may be said to be its source, is 214 feet.

“Some of the large arterial drainage works hitherto attempted have not been as successful as could be desired. This has been caused by an endeavour to combine navigation with drainage, and the effect has been the depth of water necessary for navigation required a level to be kept up, at which the discharge of the flood water failed to relieve the injured lands to the extent desired or anticipated. This mode of promoting inland navigation has been admitted to have been a failure, and is now to a great extent unnecessary, in consequence of the facilities afforded for the transit of goods and agricultural productions by the development of railway communication. In future projects of this nature, the question of navigation will become a matter for serious consideration on account of the greatly increased cost, and its injurious influence upon any efficient system of arterial drainage. The plan to be adopted must clearly be to remove from the lower reaches of the river, in each case, such natural or artificial obstructions to the free discharge of the flood-water, at a level which would permanently relieve the adjacent low-lying lands from inundation, and permit a proper system of thorough drainage, reclamation, or other agricultural improvements to be carried out.

“Over large areas, drained by the principal river systems, this would be a work of such magnitude that it is believed the increased value to be expected from the improved lands would bring in but a very inadequate return for the expenditure; and opinions have been expressed that in such extensive works of great national importance, as well as local utility, a large proportion of the expenditure should be borne by the State. It would hardly be fair to expect either the owners or occupiers to pay more for the

improvements in their lands than these improvements could possibly be worth; and it would appear to be unjust to require contributions from districts in which no material improvement had been effected. At the same time, when large areas of land are rendered more productive by arterial drainage, the towns and villages in or near the improved area would become more prosperous, where there would be better markets, better trade, and higher rents. In addition to this, to relieve such low-lying districts from the injurious influence of morass and superfluous water must have a very beneficial influence on the climate and the sanitary conditions of such places, rendering them more healthy, as well as more prosperous. This view of the case would lead to the conclusion that there would be nothing unfair in expecting the towns and villages in the districts improved by arterial drainage to contribute something towards the re-payment of the capital expended, in addition to the amount assessed on the actually improved lands.

“The extent of land subject to periodical inundation is probably not immense, comparatively; but there is a great deal of saturated land, marsh, morass, and bog, which, if a proper system of arterial drainage were carried out in the several large rivers and tributaries, followed by reclamation, thorough drainage, and other improvements, would be most valuable for the purposes of agriculture. There are 1,697,445 acres of bog and marsh land, much of which would be capable of improvement. It is principally situated at a low level, and could not fail to be benefited by the opening up of the principal rivers and their tributaries, and be of great advantage to the country. The area and percentage

of this bog and marsh in the several provinces of Ireland are as under:—

Province.	Acres.	Per cent. total area.
Leinster	330,831	20
Munster	334,939	20
Ulster	358,444	20
Connaught	673,181	40 "

We have just seen the conclusions of a specially competent authority as to what needs to be done. As to what has been done, we find it summed up very forcibly by the Commissioners. Speaking of the regulation of the streams, they say: "Confusion reigns in Ireland. There is no system in Ireland for the conservancy of rivers, nor any department of Government charged with the subject; and in many cases where the proper regulation of a river is a matter of public concern, it is under the control of no one, and is often obstructed and neglected." Necessarily, therefore, excessive flooding occurs along the river courses, the land is damaged, the crops are injured or destroyed, the bogs are perpetuated, ordinary farm and field drainage is to a great extent rendered useless, and consequently the main industry of Ireland, that upon which of necessity the larger number of the people must depend for their livelihood, is beset by hindrances which are removable, and is exposed to fluctuations which concerted action might readily avert. It is not for want of legislation that this condition of affairs has come about. Parliament began to meddle with the arterial drainage of Ireland as far back as 1831, when a measure designed to stimulate and assist local action in the matter was passed. This Act failed to produce any appreciable

effect. In 1842, another Act authorised the Government, on the application of owners, to superintend drainage works, and to subscribe to their cost, on the security of the improved lands, the works so executed being thereafter left to local management. Little, however, was done under this enactment. Then came the famine of 1846, and another Act, hastily passed, authorised the Government, for the sake of creating employment for the starving people, by means of relief works, to undertake drainage schemes with the consent of half the owners in particular districts, at a cost of not more than £3 per acre. So much was expended on the Shannon and other rivers, that after the famine the Government became alarmed at the cost, and checked the works, desiring to go back to the restricted provisions of the Act of 1842. But the landowners remonstrated; they pointed out that, by the action of Government, undertaken for a national purpose, extensive and costly drainage schemes had been forced upon them; that if these plans were left unfinished the lands would be flooded and ruined, and that they ought not to be exposed to this calamity, or subjected to the hardship of bearing the whole cost of completion. About half the money expended, and charged upon the security of improved lands, was consequently remitted as a free gift. In 1862 yet another Act was passed, authorising Government loans for local schemes, to be executed and controlled by local authority; and since then there have been other measures, chiefly amending procedure under previous Acts. The net result, as the Commissioners declare, is that the whole system of administration has fallen into a state of well-nigh hopeless confusion; and the effect of the Land Act of 1831 is to introduce another and

serious element of difficulty, by rendering owners and tenants alike reluctant to enter upon new drainage enterprises, with their attendant cost, while the land question remains unsettled. The influence of the Land Act in this respect is manifest from the fact that the only drainage schemes proposed since it was passed involve no more than an expenditure of £55,000, and affect a total area of only 16,600 acres. Previously to 1881 there had been constructed, under the Act of 1842 and during the famine, 120 drainage schemes, costing £1,827,068 (of which £906,786 was remitted as a free gift), and resulting in the drainage, improvement, and reclamation of 266,391 acres; while under the Act of 1862, between that date and 1881, there had been carried out by local drainage boards forty-two district schemes, costing £504,598, and affecting an area of 78,828 acres. As showing the material effect of these schemes, we may add that down to 1881 the total cost of drainage schemes was £2,331,666, the area improved was 342,219 acres, and the increased annual value of the lands dealt with was £98,727. There are now in progress schemes affecting an estimated area of 52,850 acres at an estimated cost of £233,000; but, as we have seen, owing to the operation of the Land Act of 1881, practically no new schemes are being proposed; the work of drainage and reclamation is virtually stopped.

The Public Works Commissioners now propose to give a new stimulus to this essential movement for the prosperity of Irish agriculture by a series of reforms which they sum up as follows:—"1. The establishment of an effective system for the maintenance of all main river courses, and their improvement, where necessary, at the cost of the whole area

which is concerned in the condition of those rivers. 2. The organisation of a system which shall afford every reasonable facility for the arterial drainage of any district in need of it, at the cost and under the responsibility of those who will benefit by such drainage. 3. Improvement and simplification of the existing law and procedure, and their adaptation to the present circumstances of the country. 4. Provision, in each case, of such amount of State assistance and control as may supply the wider experience and more independent judgment of an external authority, without checking individual enterprise or discouraging habits of local self-government." To give effect to these general principles, the Commission propose to create a Government department, chiefly engineering, but to have also financial control, to suggest, examine, approve, and supervise drainage schemes, and to administer Government loans granted in respect of them, on the security of local rates. They propose, also, to create indirectly elective Conservancy Boards (about thirty-one in all), each charged with the control of the river catchment area of its district, and with power to execute approved works, and to rate occupiers and owners for them, the incidence of the rating (as proposed in the English Rivers Conservancy Bill of 1883) to vary according to the position of the lands, as lowlands, midlands, or uplands. They propose further to create minor drainage boards for the execution of particular schemes affecting only limited local areas. They also propose to greatly simplify the process of obtaining sanction (local and Governmental) to projected schemes. Finally, they propose that for the execution of all approved works the Imperial Treasury shall provide the required capital, to be secured on

the rates levied by way of rent-charge on improved lands, and to be repaid by instalments, covering principal and interest, of £4 10s. per cent. per annum, and extending over a period of forty years. Special schemes are recommended for the improvement of the rivers Shannon, Barrow, and Bann, with Government grants respectively of £100,000, of £75,000, and of £25,000 ; and it is further advised that the execution of the works of the Shannon improvement shall be conducted by the Government department.

I.—FISHERIES.

In the opening article of the series under this heading we broadly sketched a suggested general line of policy in regard to Ireland in the several divisions of (1) Public Works—improvement of fisheries, arterial drainage, and reform of the railway system; (2) Land Purchase and relief of congested districts; (3) reform of Municipal and Provincial Government. We now proceed to discuss these subjects in the order indicated. The first division deals with the material conditions of Irish industries such as agriculture and fisheries. In regard to the second of these industries, we do not propose to deal with the salmon fishing in internal waters, but only with the deep fishing in the sea loughs, close along the coast, and in the open waters. We have to ascertain what is the present condition of the Irish fisheries, and what can be done by skill, energy, and capital to develop them, so as to render the fishing industry an increasing and a steady source of employment and of income to the population of the coast districts. The materials for such an enquiry are to be found in the annual reports of the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries, and in the second report of the Royal Commission on Irish Public Works. To these documents the attention of all who desire to master the position and to estimate the prospects of a large section of the Irish population, should be most carefully directed, especially with the view of understanding on what principles and in what direction assistance can be usefully given by the Imperial Government. The reports are full of valuable and deeply interesting information; they are within

reasonable compass, and we venture to say that any serious student who takes them in hand will not put them aside until, so far as the reports enable him to do so, he has mastered a question which so closely affects the prosperity of the Irish people, and thus bears directly upon the solution of the Irish problem. Here we can present the facts and conclusions of the reports only in the broadest outline.

Fish, the Public Works Commissioners report, exist in abundance off the coasts of Ireland, and can be taken by means of deep-sea fishing. This is proved by the visits of fishing vessels from England, Scotland, the Isle of Man, and France. There is also evidence, the report says, that "whenever the native fishermen have been able to go beyond their usual limits their enterprise has been crowned with success." For a considerable part of the year, especially in the south and south-west, the mackerel, and herring, and pilchard fisheries afford good returns; but independently of these migratory fish, "the pursuit of the permanent denizens of Irish waters, whether flat fish or others, is (or might be) carried on with more or less success throughout the year." The principal kinds of fish caught in Irish waters are soles, plaice, turbot, flounders, skate, cod, haddock, whiting, ling, hake, and pollock. The value of the fish taken in a single year (1886) and brought into Irish ports is estimated at about £640,000. The number of Irishmen engaged in the fisheries is put by the Commissioners at about 19,000, of whom, however, only 4,000 are described as wholly occupied with fishing, the rest being mostly occupiers of small agricultural holdings along the sea coast. "The existence," the report says, "of this last-named class of farmer-fishermen, though not peculiar to Ireland,

is an important fact which must be borne in mind in dealing with fishery matters in that country. They may fairly be said to be in some sense professional fishermen, although they have to a greater or less degree other means of subsistence; at the same time they are not of the same class as those composing the crews of the smacks and large decked boats from the Isle of Man or elsewhere, who are entirely engaged in the occupation of fishing, who pass the greater portion of every year on the sea, and who will go anywhere in the pursuit of their vocation." The number of fishermen on the Irish coasts has greatly declined within the last forty years. Evidence taken by the Commissioners (admittedly conjectural, however) was to the effect that in 1846 there were nearly 20,000 vessels and boats, and 113,000 men and boys engaged in the fisheries, whereas in 1886 there were only 5,683 vessels and boats, and 21,482 men and boys. The general statement of the Commissioners is as follows:—

“Over a series of years there is unfortunately but little improvement to record in the general fishing industry of Ireland. The development of the mackerel fishery on the south and south-west coast in the last ten years must have indirectly benefited a large number of the coast population besides those actually engaged in it, and we are happy to report visible progress in the same period in the neighbourhood of Ballimore, County Cork, where the public spirit and generosity of Lady Burdett Coutts, and the energy of the Rev. Charles Davis, P.P., have given a great impulse to fishing, with conspicuous advantage to the inhabitants. Otherwise, however, in spite of the considerable sums which have been spent, and the amount of zeal and labour which have been

bestowed upon its encouragement, this industry, as a whole, cannot be said to have made progress. The number of men employed in it has decreased, and the efficiency of those so employed has improved but little; the class living entirely by fishing as a trade remains confined to a few points, mostly on the east and south coasts, and their business, in common with others, has suffered from the recent fall of prices, which has neutralised the effects of more abundant catches. It must, however, be remembered that a great deal of fish caught in Ireland is consumed by the fishermen, their families, and their neighbours, and on this part fluctuations in price have no effect."

As to the present state of things we may quote the evidence given by Sir Thomas Brady, one of the Inspectors of Fisheries:—"The old fishermen up to 1830, and even later, who knew all the banks round the coast, and how to sail vessels, have died out, and the present generation to a great extent are deplorably ignorant, and having got into the system of fishing from open boats within a short distance from the shore, could not handle a sailing craft such as is at present used in very deep sea fishing. The boats used now on the west coast, and in most places, indeed, round the whole coast—save where the deep-sea fishing has been vigorously prosecuted of late years, such as from Ballimore, Kinsale, &c.—are not fit to go any distance from the land, except on rare occasions. When they do succeed in getting to the fishing-banks, perhaps fifteen or twenty miles from land, they are loaded with fish in a few hours, so much so that sometimes they are not able to bring all to shore, and have to throw a quantity overboard." Sir Thomas Brady speaks generally of inadequate boats. The Commissioners give detailed information

on this important point. The first-class boats—those over 30ft. keel—number only 600 for the whole of Ireland, and of these 500 belong to the Dublin district, Arklow, Kinsale, the Baltimore district, and the counties of Down and Louth, which places cover between them only a small proportion of the coast line. Some of these “first-class” boats are reported as not being decked or provided with proper masts and sails, so as to be able to keep the sea in unfavourable weather. The boats between 18 and 30 feet keel are about 3,000 in number. The great majority of Irish fishermen, the report says—particularly on the west coast—pursue their trade in small undecked sailing boats, or row boats of various sizes, down even to the primitive canoe or *curragh*,¹ made of tarred canvas stretched on a framework of wood; and this on what is probably one of the stormiest seas in the world, and on a coast which, though abounding with naturally sheltered havens and artificial landing-places, is for a great proportion of its extent rocky, and even precipitous. “It is not necessary,” the Commissioners observe, “for us to emphasise the evils which flow from this state of things. Clearly no great development of the fisheries can be looked for on the south, west, or north coasts, in the absence of proper sea-going vessels, in respect either of the total quantities taken, or the certainty of a livelihood being obtained, or of greater enterprise in following shoals of fish from place to place, and in seeking out new grounds and sources of supply. We may say at once that in our opinion the key to the development of Irish deep-sea fishing, elsewhere than on the east coast, is the question how the general use of decked sailing vessels of considerable tonnage may be attained.”

Not only are the boats inferior, but so also are the nets and other gear employed by the fishermen. None of the nets used are manufactured in Ireland, there being no machinery for the purpose, and but little knowledge of the art of making them by hand. At the Baltimore Industrial School, recently founded by Lady Burdett Coutts, boys are now being taught to make nets by hand. The lines and hooks used "are often of a primitive character and inferior quality;" and in many places no importance is attached "to the systematical provision of suitable bait." Another great deficiency is that "there are practically no curing establishments in Ireland." Some fish are salted or smoke-dried in plentiful seasons, for local sale or use; but "otherwise no attempt has been made, so far as we can learn, even in a rough-and-ready fashion, at curing fish on a large scale, as is done in Scotland. In consequence of this state of things, when the take of herring or mackerel is abundant, no adequate market exists at the time for fresh fish; great waste and depression of prices therefore take place, quantities of fish being sometimes thrown into the sea, or used as manure. If curing establishments existed, as in Scotland, the satisfactory results achieved in that country would undoubtedly follow, and besides the addition to the national food supplies, a large sum of money would be gained in a few years by the export sale of cured fish, which in Scotland far exceeds in quantity and value the fresh fish sent to market." Cured herrings are brought into Ireland from Scotland in considerable quantities, the fish having sometimes, it is said, been actually caught off the Irish coast. Take, as an illustration, the evidence given by the late Mr. Blake, M.P. :—"Notwithstanding the vast quantities of fish

round the coast of Ireland, there is about £200,000 worth at least of cured fish brought into Ireland, which might be all caught on the Irish coast, and cured, if there were means for it. I may refer to the Artane Industrial School, in the neighbourhood of Dublin. I was out there a short time ago, and enquired how the boys were fed? They said the greater part were Roman Catholics, and were fed on fish on Fridays. I said, 'Where do you get the fish from?' And the answer was, 'Great Grimsby;' and that within a mile or two of Dublin, and in the neighbourhood of Kingstown, where there is a vast quantity of fish brought in; and many of these vessels coming from Newfoundland and Scotland with cured herrings actually pass through hundreds of shoals of the very fish off the coast of Ireland that they are bringing over to us." On the same important subject the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries have the following observations in their report for 1887:—"In a number of places in Ireland fishermen salt the fish in their cabins; but it is done in such an unscientific manner that the fish could not command a market on a large scale. The finest ling and cod are to be had during the season in large quantities, particularly on the north-west coast, and we are assured could be procured at a remunerative price to the curer, if curing establishments were formed. It is to be deplored that while the seas around our island are teeming with fish, nearly a quarter of a million pounds' worth of cured fish, principally herring and ling, are annually imported, while, if some enterprise were displayed, Ireland ought to be exporting more than that quantity. . . . We venture to suggest that if some assistance were afforded by the Government towards the establish-

ment of curing-stations it might prove a powerful stimulus towards an important industry, and encourage private commercial enterprise in the same direction. Once started with any success, it is believed it would rapidly extend." Again, in another part of their report, the inspectors say: "Fresh herrings have been sold in many places last year (ex vessel) at 1s. and 1s. 6d. a 'mease'—that is 636 fish—and we have been assured that, even at this low price, a market could not be had for them, and large quantities had to be thrown overboard. This might have been obviated to a certain extent had there been any organisation to bring the fish into the interior of the country, to many towns where fresh fish are hardly ever seen. Even if such organisation existed, the complaints that the railway rates are so high that the trade would be crushed are sufficient to deter enterprise. It can hardly be believed that even where railways exist along the east coast the fishermen send their fish for many miles by horse and cart to Dublin, alleging that they can do so more cheaply and conveniently than by rail—neither the rates nor the hours of departure suiting the trade." But the great thing is to get curing places established on the coast, by which fish might be preserved for inland transit and for exportation. If this were done, the inspectors declare that "in the foreign market the fish might stand in fair competition with the Scotch branded herrings. On the west coast herrings are taken of prodigious size—we have seen them weighing over 12oz. each. The experiment of curing, we think, ought to be made; but we fear that unless this is attempted at the expense of the State, as a trial, capitalists will not be got to embark in it."

If however, the Irish were provided with proper

boats, and if curing establishments were provided, another difficulty would be encountered, and a most serious one—namely, the deficiency of harbours in which the fishing boats could be received. Since the beginning of this century loans and grants to the amount of £767,798 have been provided by Parliament for the construction and improvement of fishery piers and harbours. Out of these moneys works have been executed at 183 points on the coast, besides at the five Royal harbours. But, in the judgment of the Royal Commissioners, much of the money has been misapplied. “The deliberate policy of the Legislature, down to ten years ago, was to limit the expenditure at any one point to a sum far too small to provide, in ordinary cases, works useful at low water; and during the last ten years the Administrative procedure, though freed from this legal restriction, has mainly been conducted upon the old lines. As a natural consequence of these facts, only three out of the special fishery works are deep-water harbours in the sense of having a maximum depth of twelve feet at low-water spring tides. Most of the remainder are dry at low water, or nearly so, and only afford limited accommodation for even small boats; some of them are valuable in a local point of view, but others are almost useless.” That is, useless for large vessels, by which, if Irish fisheries are to be adequately developed, the work must be largely carried on. Of small landing-places, capable of being used for purely local fishing, there is already a fair supply; though these in many cases require to be augmented and improved. But the Commissioners are strongly of opinion that future grants should be expended mainly in the construction of efficient harbours for sea-going fishing boats. “Instead of

the bulk of the money" hitherto provided "being spent on efficient harbours, little or no attempt has been made to provide such works; and almost all the money has been expended on small piers or harbours inaccessible at low water. Much money has consequently been wasted. We would point to the experience of the last forty years as showing the impossibility of arresting the decay of the Irish fishing industry by the construction of minor and inefficient piers. Deep-sea fishing, in our judgment, as a national Irish industry, in connection with the British and foreign markets, can only be efficiently and profitably carried on by the construction of harbours with a suitable depth accessible for fishing craft at low tides; and it is most desirable that any future expenditure should be mainly devoted to the construction of such harbours, together with such wharves and other appliances as may be necessary within naturally sheltered areas."

Suppose the provision of adequate harbours to be secured, and sufficient fleets of well-equipped boats to be set afloat, another and yet more serious difficulty has to be overcome before the Irish fishing industry can be made profitable. It is of no use to catch vast quantities of fish, and to bring the overflowing cargoes into harbour, unless, when they get there, the fish can be cheaply and easily conveyed to the markets where there is a demand for it. Here the railway system of Ireland bars the way; and must be reformed before the main purpose can be accomplished. Road cartage, the Commissioners very justly observe, is not suitable to permanent trade in fish; it is slow, expensive, and, in the case of fresh fish, most damaging, if not fatal to the distribution of fish which is easily injured by rough usage,

and which, depending for its preservation upon ice, requires shelter from the sun. Railway transit, therefore, is the only effectual means of conveyance. But—we quote the Commissioners' report—the rates of carriage are too high in districts where railways exist; and, besides this, "there is in Ireland a great deficiency in respect of the extension of railways to points where fish are, or may be hoped to be, landed. This is not only the case in the western districts, where the country is poor and mountainous, and the fishing industry but little developed, but even such well-established fishing ports as Baltimore, Dunmore East (county Waterford), and Ardglass (county Down), are quite without railway communication; while at Bantry and Kinsale the existing lines of railway do not run down to the quays." On the same subject the Inspectors of Fisheries give some very striking examples, and add certain observations which appear to us to possess much weight: "There is a great drawback in the want of proper railway accommodation, even to some of our most important fishing ports. We would quote several places on the south and south-west coasts—Kinsale, Baltimore, Bantry, and other places. It is true that railways run into Kinsale and Bantry, but have their termini at such inconvenient and almost inaccessible places that the expense of carriage is a considerable item in the cost of transit. At Baltimore, one of the most important fishing places on that coast, the railway is over eight miles distant. In Donegal the railway to that town falls short of four miles, while none exists to one of the finest harbours in Ireland—Killybegs—which ought to be a first-class fishing station. The same remarks may be made of the west coast northward of Galway to Westport. No railways to

Clifden, Achill, Belmullet, which are at least forty miles away from such a centre.

“On the east coast, the great centre of herring fishing, the harbours of Kilkeel, Annalong, and Ardglass are all remote from railways. The expense of land carriage from such places renders the benefits to be derived from fishing of little value to fishermen. Facilities for landing fish have been provided under the Piers and Harbours Acts in many places along the coast for the small class of boats that at present frequent it. It is, however, the fact that little benefit, comparatively speaking, has yet accrued to the fisheries by the expenditure of the various grants made for this purpose, owing to the great want of facilities of transit to market. We are of opinion that it is next to useless to provide accommodation for large fishing vessels, unless the landing-places are put in communication with leading markets, either by rail or steam, or both. At first, extensions of the railway system might not prove remunerative; but it is a question whether it would not be of vast importance to the State to develop at the public expense this industry in Ireland. There is little doubt that should facilities for transit of fish be afforded, a trade would soon spring up at important centres which would not only benefit the fishermen themselves, but the entire district.”

II.—FISHERIES.

In our last article on this division of the subject we described the actual condition of the Irish fisheries—their gradual decline, the hindrances

towards their revival, the necessity of immediate attention to various important remedial measures if the fisheries are to be preserved and developed. The Public Works Commissioners, in their report, indicate the nature and extent of the remedies they consider imperative. They recognise in the clearest and strongest manner the necessity of State aid, and in this they concur with the views of the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries, and, indeed, with those of all enquirers who have looked into the matter. Having arrived at this conclusion, the Commissioners lay down the general principles upon which State aid to the fisheries should be based. "Such aid should be given primarily towards encouraging professional fishing, and preference should be given to fishing carried on from vessels which can remain at sea for prolonged periods and in unfavourable weather. The attainment of this end involves (1) decked boats of considerable size; (2) provided with proper gear; (3) manned by crews possessing adequate knowledge of seamanship, fishing, and fishing grounds; (4) having harbour accommodation sufficient both for shelter and the discharge of their cargoes; (5) such harbours having convenient communication with markets."

As to boats and gear, there are in existence two funds, amounting in the total to £90,000., for providing these necessaries, by means of loans. These funds are administered separately by two departments of Government in Dublin, which are often in conflict with each other. Both funds, the Commissioners recommend, should be brought together into one sum (and should be administered by one authority specially adapted to dealing with them), under the name of the Sea Fisheries Loan Fund.

The fund, they advise, should be lent out mainly for the purpose of providing first-class boats and gear, and for the establishment of curing-houses ; but they would also lend money for the provision of small boats—in this case supplying the boats and gear, rather than paying over the money—so as to secure the direct application of the fund for its intended purpose. The money, the Commissioners urge, should be lent, not given—experience showing that, in regard to loans already made, repayments are very fairly kept up. “ We would,” they observe, “ earnestly deprecate an eleemosynary view or treatment of these loans. The object aimed at should be the encouragement, by every legitimate means, of efficient professional fishing in Ireland ; and from this point of view a loan to a local fishing company, on a commercial basis, seems to us a perfectly legitimate means of employing the fund, and quite as likely to be of permanent benefit to the coast population as a number of small loans, which may perhaps encourage a continuance of the present backward condition of the fishing industry.” For some time to come, administered on these principles, the existing fund might suffice ; but the enquiry of the Commission points to a considerable development of the aid which can be given, and which, if the Irish sea fisheries are to be developed, must be given. On the western coasts, in particular, further assistance is required. “ The deficiency of the western Irish in knowledge of seamanship and of improved methods of fishing must, so long as it continues, tend to render nugatory any provision that may be made of better boats and gear.” There should, therefore, be established technical schools of fishing. Such a school, with much promise of success, has been

founded by Lady Burdett Coutts at Baltimore. "Two or three more of such schools, established at certain deep-water harbours round the coast, would, if properly managed, do a great deal of good in training lads to make, mount, and repair nets and gear, and to manage the large sailing craft required for deep-sea fishing." Here private and State help should be combined:—"We think the precedent of the Baltimore school might be followed, the initiative being left to private persons or local enterprise; but Government should encourage such initiative in any way which is not inconsistent with private management and superintendence. As an instance of such assistance, we think that besides the annual contributions under the Industrial Schools Acts, Government might, as in the case of Baltimore, subscribe a capital sum towards the foundation of the institutions." Training should also be given by taking extra hands, or apprentices, on board sea-going fishing boats. The navy should also give help by making soundings, indicating fishing grounds, &c. Finally, the Fishery Department in Ireland should be altogether reformed and reconstructed, with the view of acting more quickly, and cheaply, and effectively than the existing system permits; and some fund should be placed at the disposal of the department for telegraph extensions, experimental boats, and curing establishments.

Proper fishing, the Commissioners go on to point out, means suitable harbours—namely, "harbours with an adequate minimum depth of low-water spring tides." By personal inspection and the examination of numerous witnesses, the Commissioners are enabled to show in what places round the whole coast of Ireland such harbours are required;

and these they examine in detail, and also mark their positions upon an illustrative map. Altogether there are about fifty harbour works reported as being necessary, either new harbours or existing ones needing improvement, the magnitude of such works varying considerably in extent. One observation, of an extremely significant character, is applied to all of them :—"Most of the harbours to which we have alluded are devoid of leading marks and lights to indicate the line and direction of their entrance channels, and it is most necessary that these should be provided. On the west coast, especially, such adjuncts would tend very much to ensure the safety of large fishing boats and other vessels frequenting that district, particularly during night." The Commissioners suggest that £400,000, spread over a period of ten years, should be spent on these harbour works ; but, looking to the amount of provision to be made, it is obvious that the sum above mentioned will need to be very largely extended before the necessities of the case are reasonably met. Indeed, the Commissioners admit that they are not able to form "even approximate estimates of the amount of expenditure desirable" at each of the places mentioned. Whatever is done, they say plainly, must be done at the cost of the State. "Local contributions should not be deemed essential in any case ; but every effort should be made to obtain them in any available form, provided that this be not done at the price of the adoption of any scheme of which the Government does not approve on engineering considerations." Maintenance of such works should be directed by the central authority, the funds being derived from tolls. Management of the harbours should be based upon the principle of "securing,

wherever possible, local control subject to Government supervision."

The next point taken up by the Commissioners is that of communications between the fishing harbours and the markets to which the produce of the fisheries must be sent for sale, if the industry is to be developed and a remunerative trade created. "It seems," the report observes, "almost a truism that no industry worthy of the name can flourish without ready access for its produce to the markets at which it is saleable. Thus boats and harbours will not suffice for the development of the fishing industry, unless suitable means of transport are available. This point seems not to have been sufficiently considered in the former action of the Executive with regard to the selection of sites for harbours. We would contrast with this the private schemes for harbours, mainly commercial, at Larne (county Antrim), Fenil (county K erry), and Rosslave (county Wexford), in which the provision of railway communication has rightly been seen necessary to the success of the harbours. As matters now are, fine natural harbours have been left without railway communication, while railways have been carried to the coast at points where there no harbours, or have stopped just short of natural havens." There are points, no doubt, where railway communication is difficult, perhaps impossible. Parts of the county of Donegal are indicated as presenting difficulties of this kind; and here the natural means of conveying fish from the fishing grounds to the markets would be by sea, and harbours of suitable depth for the reception of coasting steam-vessels should be provided there. At the same time, the Commissioners observe, "we must maintain that, with few and limited exceptions, a thorough improvement of communication

can only be effected by means of the extension of railways. Such extension, moreover, is of general benefit to the district served, as well as necessary for the development of the fisheries; and we have borne this fact in mind in making our recommendations on the subject of railway extensions." In accordance with this view, the report proceeds to indicate the fishery railway extensions which are of most pressing importance—on the east coast to the quay at Arklow; on the south coast, at Dunmore, Dungarvan Bay, Kinsale, Skibbereen, and Baltimore; on the west coast, at Bantry, Tralee, and Dingle, Galway to Clifden and Killary Bay, and from Ballina, *via* Killaloe, and the north coast of county Mayo, to Bellmullet and Donegal, Killybegs, and Buncrana; on the north coast no extension for fisheries is required; but on the north-east coast a line should be constructed from Downpatrick to the important harbour of Ardglass. These railway lines the Commissioners declare, cannot be made by the districts concerned, and will not be made by private enterprise or by the existing railway companies. "We recommend," they say, "that a Government guarantee should be given, feeling (1) that railway extensions cannot be made without State assistance in the parts of Ireland most in need of them; (2) that if the State determines to grant such assistance, it should give it in the clearest and most direct way consistent with the preservation of local responsibility, and with the existence of some provision for its ultimate discontinuance." The manner in which it is proposed that these conclusions shall be carried into practical effect will be explained in the succeeding articles on the railway system of Ireland.

I.—RAILWAYS.

The railway system in Ireland is inadequate in its extent, dislocated in its arrangement, costly in its working, and requires both extension and consolidation. That is the general conclusion of the Commissioners of Public Works ; and they are further of opinion (though they do not advocate the State purchase of railways) that these defects can be cured only by a large expenditure of money, and by the intervention of the State. Originally it was proposed that the Irish railways should be largely made by the Government. When railway development was begun in Great Britain, a Royal Commission was appointed, in 1836, to consider in what way the new means of communication could be best dealt with in Ireland. That Commission reported that every effort should be made to combine in one interest, and under one management and control, the whole of the southern system of inter-communications between Dublin and Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and Kilkenny ; and that the northern line by Navan, to Armagh at least, be treated according to the same principle, and considered as one concern. If no large body of capitalists could be found to undertake these works, the Commission recommended that "to avoid the evil of partial execution, and to accomplish so important a national object as that contemplated in the completion of the entire system, we may look forward to a certain degree of assistance from the State, as great at least as has been given for the encouragement of

other public works in Ireland." The Commissioners advised that local co-operation should be invited, by means of companies, or of county authorities, and they then proceeded to suggest "that the Government should undertake either or both of the proposed combined lines, on the application of the counties interested, the outlay to be repaid by small instalments, at the lowest admissible rate of interest," the counties supplying the deficit in case the returns failed to provide for the interest. The Government approved of these recommendations, and submitted to the House of Commons certain resolutions founded upon them—namely, that the lines indicated should be undertaken as public works, the management to be vested in the Board of Works, the Commissioners to fix rates of carriage, to give facilities for the construction of branch lines by private undertakers, and to provide for the repayment of capital by the local authorities. These resolutions were carried, and if they had been acted upon Ireland would now be in possession of a well-ordered railway system, capable of easy extension, offering great advantages in regard to fares and rates of carriage, and yielding a revenue to the local authorities. And nothing was done—that sadly too common experience in Irish affairs—the idea of Government interference was dropped, and the Irish lines were left to private enterprise. It was, however, found impossible to do without State assistance. Grants in aid, by way of loan from the Treasury, were made to various companies. The aggregate of these loans, up to the present time, is about £4,000,000., of which £3,000,000. have been repaid. The total length of Irish railways is 2,632 miles, of which 2,044 miles are single lines; the capital expended on construction

is about £36,000,000., on about £3,000,000 of which no dividend is paid. There are twenty working companies, with an average length of line of 131 miles; these companies are managed by over 300 directors; the average cost of working is 55 per cent. of the receipts, and the net receipts in 1886 showed a return of slightly over $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the total paid-up capital, which is about the same rate as in 1865, twenty years previously. During the last twenty years the Irish railway system has extended at an average rate of only 36 miles a year; and the proportion of accommodation to area and population now stands at one mile of railway for each 12 square miles of area and each 1,800 of population.

Two points, the Commissioners of Public Works report, demand immediate attention if Irish railways are to be made adequate to the wants of the country—namely, (*a*) reorganisation and (*b*) extension; and both these are, in their judgment, matters calling for intervention and assistance by the State. We will take first the question of organisation—the consolidation of management, with a view to increased efficiency of service, to development, and to reduction of cost of transit, both for passengers and goods. Simplification of the system of control is, in the opinion of the Commissioners, absolutely essential to the proper working of the Irish railway system. The most obvious method of obtaining this uniform control is the purchase of the railways by the State. This is a proposal which has often been made, and still more often discussed. The Duke of Devonshire's Commission, in 1867, reported against State purchase but in favour of State assistance, with certain powers of control. A separate report was presented by Mr. Monsell (now Lord Emly) in favour of State purchase

of Irish railways. He based this conclusion on (1) the comparative smallness of the financial operation involved; (2) the unsatisfactory pecuniary results of the existing system to the capital employed under it; (3) the bad results of divided management in respect of convenience to the public; (4) the saving in working expenses which would be effected; (5) the advantages which would ensue to the public upon a reduction of rates, both for passengers and for goods, and the increase of traffic which would follow on such reduction. As to the working of the system when so purchased, Mr. Monsell recommended, in preference to direct State administration, that it should be leased, under proper conditions, to a company existing for this purpose only. Sir Rowland Hill, who also made a separate report, agreed with Mr. Monsell in recommending immediate purchase of the Irish lines by the State.

In 1868 a Commission, appointed to consider the state of the Irish railways, reported strongly in favour of concentration in the system of management; but no action was taken on the report of the Commission. In 1861, and again in 1873, proposals were brought forward in the House of Commons for the State purchase of Irish railways, but with no effect. In 1882 the House of Commons Committee on Railway Rates and Fares recommended that "the amalgamation of Irish railways be promoted in every way, including, if necessary, direct Parliamentary action." Again nothing was done. Now we have the report of the Public Works Commission, which enforces the lessons taught by previous enquiries—that if the Irish railway system is to be made adequate to the needs of Ireland, the management must be consolidated, and the lines must be connected in places and extended

in others. The Irish railways, the Commissioners say, have improved during the last twenty years in respect of finance, permanent way, and rolling stock. The credit of the principal lines has advanced, but does not stand so high as that of corresponding railways in Great Britain. The permanent way, also, is "universally inferior," and the rolling stock generally "is not of equal quality" to that employed in Great Britain. On some lines "there has been but little progress during the period referred to. The lower standard of comfort which generally prevails in Ireland may, perhaps, be held to excuse the absence in that country of some of the amenities of railway travelling elsewhere." As to consolidation of management, the Commissioners report that "there has been one important amalgamation, which resulted in the formation, in 1877, of the Great Northern Company out of at least four separate companies; and in that and other cases several branches, owned by independent companies, have been absorbed by the trunk lines. As a consequence, the average mileage worked by each company has increased by about 20 per cent.; but this figure is still only 131 miles, exclusive of light railways under the Act of 1883, which have an average mileage of 23 miles. These figures are extremely low—far too low to give any hope that a high standard of efficiency can be obtained without excessive expenditure on the system as a whole, or on most of its parts. Excluding the three principal companies, the remaining seventeen working companies work an average of only $65\frac{1}{2}$ miles each, and fourteen of these work less than 100 miles each. The number of separate Irish railway companies recognised in the Board of Trade returns is forty-one, and it must be remembered that

each of these implies a board of directors and an official staff more or less numerous. These figures strengthen the argument as to the great expense of the present system." The growth of Irish railways, the report states, "seems now to have stopped, except as regards lines constructed under the Tramways Act of 1883, as we cannot learn that at the present moment (1887) a single extension line is under construction by or on behalf of any existing railway company. After making every allowance for the circumstances of the country and of the present time we think it may fairly be said that the policy of Irish railway management is distinctly unfavourable to extensions; and we attribute this fact, among other causes, to the insufficient appreciation of the value of extensions as feeders to the parent system."

This being their general statement of the position of Irish railways, the Commissioners next describe some of the defects resulting from it. "The accommodation provided for passengers, as regards both the number and the speed of trains, has been but little increased for many years past, except as regards the day mail trains to and from Dublin, which have been expedited in consideration of largely increased payments by the Post Office." As regards goods traffic, "there is very general complaint as to the difficulty of obtaining through rates on cross-country routes in Ireland; this difficulty is partly due to the existence of so many separate companies." The rates charged on heavy goods, such as coal and building materials, are generally higher than in England, so much so in the latter case as to be prohibitive of trade. "Generally there seems to be a want of elasticity in the management of the railways, and a want of adaptation of the system to the

needs of the public." In the railway system of Great Britain, so far as passenger traffic is concerned, a great revolution has been wrought within the last few years by reductions in fares, increase in the number and speed of trains, and enlarged facilities to third-class passengers. For example, in England and Wales, in the period from 1870 to 1885, the third-class passengers increased from 199,133,000 to 541,333,000; and the receipts for third-class fares increased from £6,177,000. to £15,212,000. In Ireland there has practically been no increase. The cheap fares have either remained stationary, or have actually been advanced. There has been little transfer of passengers from second class to third class. "The ordinary third-class fares are at the rate of 1d. per mile, which is as low as that in England; but the public are deprived of the full advantage of these fares by the fact that third-class passengers are not carried by several of the most important trains; and even this rate is high in proportion to the means of the great mass of the Irish population. Whatever may be the cause, there has not been in Ireland that growth in third-class traffic which has been so remarkable in recent years in England, which fact would seem to indicate that Irish railway management has not adapted itself to the necessities of this class." Examples of this neglect are given. Dublin is the only large city in the United Kingdom "in which there is no night train provided for third-class passengers to the principal centres of population." The night mail on the Great Southern and Western line has no third-class carriages attached, "in spite of repeated remonstrances." On the Great Northern a third-class carriage is run from Dublin to Drogheda by the night mail, but is there detached, "so that

third-class passengers wishing to reach Belfast have to pay an excess fare." From Dublin to Belfast (with populations respectively of 230,000 and 207,000, not reckoning the outside districts) "there is no train between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. which traverses the distance—113 miles—in four hours." Third-class season tickets "are practically non-existent." There is abundant evidence of "goods being carted and cattle driven for long distances because of high railway rates, or want of facilities in dealing with the goods and cattle, or in arrangements for their carriage without trans-shipment." Finally in the case of one company—the Waterford and Limerick—owning or working a system of 270 miles, "no trains are provided with any sort of continuous brake—a want of precaution which cannot be defended."

II.—RAILWAYS.

When discussing the future of Irish railways, the Public Works Commissioners deal in the first place with the question of State purchase. The subject, they say, can be approached from two sides—"that of the general public, who desire certain ends," and that of experts and others "who study the means whereby the desired ends may be attained." From the former point of view—that is, the public, who seek for adequate extensions, improved means of communication, and lower fares and rates—"it is our impression (the Commissioners observe) that a widespread desire for State purchase of railways exists in Ireland. The evils of the present condition of things are strongly felt, and recourse is naturally desired to

that panacea for them which has been so frequently advocated. Moreover, in Ireland people turn to the State for assistance far more readily than in England; and State ownership of railways has in itself an attraction for many minds." Still, opinion does not look to State purchase "as the only, or the best remedy for grievances; but any other measure by which the same result could be attained would be equally welcome." For example, "the suggestion of a general amalgamation of the existing companies was usually approved by witnesses, provided some sort of Government control were exercised, so as to prevent the abuse of the monopoly which would thus be left in private hands." On the side of the experts in railway management, and others agreeing with them, "the weight of practical opinion is opposed to State purchase. The main reason for this conclusion is the belief that no Government department could successfully carry out such a duty as the management of even the Irish railway system." The Commissioners themselves (Sir James Allport, Mr. James Abernethy, Mr. J. Wolfe Barry, and Mr. J. T. Pim) "completely agree with the consensus of practical opinion, which is unfavourable to State management. Many of those who differ from this conclusion would probably admit that recourse to State purchase should only be had in the last resort, whether with a view of leasing the lines to one or more working companies, or to direct administration by a public department." What is wanted, in the first instance, in the judgment of the Commissioners, is the creation of a special Railway Commission. The existing Commission can deal with Irish railways, and occasionally has held sittings in Ireland, but the legal expenses involved in an appeal to it are

“such as to make it of but little practical utility in a country where the interests involved in any particular complaint are comparatively small, as compared with the cost of procedure.” It should be replaced “by a cheap and expeditious machinery for securing attention to complaints, and redress where a genuine grievance is substantiated. The new authority should be, not judicial, like the present Railway Commission, but administrative: a department of the Government.” The Commissioners then proceed: “The remedy we propose for the present defects in Irish railway organisation and management is two-fold: on the one hand centralisation in the hands of a single company, and on the other an external controlling authority, with powers to enquire into and to remedy grievances. We wish it to be clearly understood that we would not recommend the first of these without the second; and at the same time the second without the first, though it would be very useful, would still be an insufficient remedy without the first.” To the proposed new Board the Commissioners would give very large powers—including those of issuing orders to the companies to remedy grievances, and to impose penalties in case of neglect; and it should also be “entrusted with the duty of arranging or approving the terms on which existing companies should be amalgamated.” Shareholders in railway companies should be permitted to petition for amalgamation; terms might be fixed by agreement or arbitration. These voluntary proposals should be permitted for a period of five years, “after which time the Act should empower Government to take action with a view to combining the whole system in the charge of a single company.” In any such measure regard should be had to fixing “a general

scale of rates and tolls applicable to all Ireland, to come into force as each particular amalgamation takes effect." If Parliament should order in the new arrangement a reduction of the present statutory charges authorised to be made by railways, the shareholders should be protected by a State guarantee. "Such a guarantee," the Commissioners propose, "should take the form of a guarantee, for a term of years, of the present gross receipts, thus leaving with the direction the responsibility of management." The public should be protected against any reduction of facilities "by the presence of a Government representative at the Board of Management, with a right of appeal to the Irish Railway Commission." Then follows another suggestion—one of State partnership: "It will be for Parliament to consider whether the State, having taken upon itself the risk of loss under the guarantee, should not be entitled to a share in any increase in the gross receipts above the guaranteed amount." Finally, the Commissioners observe that "as regards railway extensions of any kind which may be desirable after amalgamation is complete, we recommend that Government should have the power to call upon the amalgamated company to make any such extension which Government may decide to be desirable in the interests of the public, upon such terms as may be agreed upon, or, failing agreement, may be settled by the Irish Railway Commission. In making this recommendation we contemplate the grant by Government of assistance of the same kind, and under similar conditions, as would arise under the Tramways Act of 1883, amended as proposed by this report."

This reference to the Tramways Act takes us back to that measure, and to the system of railway exten-

sions generally as contemplated by it. As we have already seen, Government aid has been given, by way of loan, to Irish railways in many instances, and for a longer period, extending from 1849 to 1882, and amounting in the whole to about £4,000,000, of which over a million of capital remains unpaid, besides considerable arrears of interest. The actual figures up to 30th December last were—Amount advanced, £4,101,401; principal repaid, £2,921,414; principal and interest remitted, £37,772; still outstanding—principal in arrear, £200,339; principal not yet due, £1,053,976; interest overdue, £114,720. The local authorities, in some instances, have also been authorised by special local Acts to assist railway companies by guarantee; and by an Act of 1880 an attempt was made to combine both State and local assistance with regard to certain scheduled schemes, the Treasury being empowered to lend, on favourable terms, on the security of a baronial guarantee. “In few, however,” the report says, “of the schemes referred to was it found possible to make practical use of this concession; and it became apparent that if railway extensions were to be made, especially in the districts which most needed opening up, further assistance must, in some form or other, be granted by the State.” The result of this conviction was the passing of the Tramways Act of 1883, to authorise the construction of light lines of railway with the view of making necessary connections and of opening up new districts. The Act, the report says, “forms a systematic attempt to promote railway extension in Ireland, based on the principle of resting primarily on local responsibility as regards both finance and control, but placing a partial Imperial guarantee, as regards the former, behind the local

guarantee, with a view both of diminishing the pecuniary burden on the locality and of improving the value of the security." In plain English, the lines were to be promoted and the capital provided by private companies, the local authority (the grand jury of the county) was to be allowed to give a guarantee for interest on the capital, and if the county guarantee was called for, the Treasury was to repay to the county one-half the amount it had paid on account of any half-year's working—provided that the line was maintained in working order and had carried traffic, and that the Treasury payment should not amount to more than 2 per cent, on the capital. It was further provided that the liability of the State should be limited to £40,000 per annum in all, thus contemplating a State guarantee on a maximum total capital of £2,000,000 for lines under the Act. This measure, however well intended, has been a failure. Seven lines have been opened, or are now in course of construction, under it, with a total length of 162 miles, and a total guaranteed capital of £676,000. Ten other schemes have been sanctioned under it, with a projected length of 141 miles and a proposed capital of £581,648; but none of these are in progress of construction. Of the lines made, only two—the Schull and Skibbereen (14 miles) and the West Clare (27 miles) are in the poor and undeveloped regions of the west. "Of other schemes situated in such districts, some were rejected by the Privy Council on the ground of the excessive local taxation they would involve, and others, after obtaining the requisite Orders in Council, have hitherto failed in raising the requisite capital."

The causes of this failure are that the process of obtaining authority to construct the lines is far too

cumbrous and expensive. The formalities to be gone through are endless, the authorities, local and Governmental, to be satisfied are innumerable. At every step great expense has to be incurred, and the whole system is so arranged that the result is a mere lottery. And all this has to be done before capital can be raised, so that the promoters of such lines are compelled to engage in a most hazardous speculation. The local authorities are by no means eager to engage in such lines, because while their guarantee runs from the payment of each instalment of capital, they cannot touch the State guarantee for at least half a year after the line has been in working order, and there must always be a half-year's delay in making each State payment thereafter. Nevertheless earnest attempts have been persisted in, until failure became incontestible. "The amount of money spent or liability incurred in the promotion of schemes under the Act has been very great—one witness puts it as high as £100,000—and the unfortunate consequence is not only that there is very little result to show for all this labour and expense, but that the class of persons who would be likely to promote schemes of this character appear to be thoroughly discouraged by the small measure of success achieved." To make confusion worse confounded, the Act forbids existing railway companies to make these light lines; it imposes upon the County Grand Jury (a fluctuating, nominated body, on which the ratepayers have no voice) the task of finishing and working lines in case the promoters fail to complete the work they have begun; and it allows the Government to fix the gauge of the lines. Acting on this power the Lord-Lieutenant has, for reasons which seem to be

inscrutable, so fixed the gauge of the light lines made or authorised under the Tramways Act that, by being made narrower, they differ from the gauge of the ordinary railways, and thus compel the shifting of goods and passengers at each point of junction, and consequently the existing companies refuse to work the light or narrow-gauge lines. By the failure of this Act—owing to its inherent and incurable defects—the poorer districts have lost the benefit of railway communication, the hope of which was held out to them. One of these benefits, and an important one, is thus described by the Commissioners :—“In villages far removed from a railway, and with no very convenient sea communications, prices of all kinds of local products are extremely low ; business is a monopoly in the hands of one or two buyers ; and, the demand being purely a local one, is fluctuating and uncertain. The railway brings with it higher prices, new buyers to break down the monopoly, and opens communication with markets more to be relied upon, because supplying a larger area. These remarks extend to all agricultural produce, and apply with especial force to the case of minor products, such as fowls, and eggs, and butter. The importance of railway facilities in the matter of fish has been discussed already.”

The remedy proposed by the Commissioners may be briefly stated. They would sweep away the complexities of the Tramways Act, would require a Government enquiry and approval of proposed lines, would authorise Government to supervise the execution of the works, and would then establish the following financial regulations :—“(1) Government to guarantee to those who construct any approved

line 3 per cent. on the capital as it is paid up, and certified by the Government engineer to have been properly required, at cash prices, for the construction of the line; and, in addition, a provision for rolling stock and working capital, when required, not exceeding one-third of the cost of construction.

(2) The district to guarantee to the same parties, in addition, the equivalent of a rate of 6d. in the pound on the annual rateable value." Other provisions are proposed for the treatment of working expenses and profits, the sum of the recommendations being this : " The practical effect of these proposals would be that Government would guarantee 3 per cent. in every case, and that a sinking fund would also be provided, which would operate most rapidly in the more prosperous districts, and in all districts proportionately to the wealth of the locality." Then the Commissioners state their ultimate conclusions : " (1) That railway extensions cannot be made without State assistance in the parts of Ireland most in need of them ; (2) that if the State determines to grant such assistance, it should give it in the clearest and most direct way consistent with the preservation of local responsibility, and with the existence of some provision for its ultimate discontinuance."

To these proposals of the Public Works Commissioners we append another scheme, included in an appendix to the report. It is drawn up by a great railway authority who was examined by the Commission—namely, Mr. Findlay, general manager of the London and North-Western Railway. This scheme is as follows :—

1. That an Act should be passed granting to the Government permissive powers to guarantee to the shareholders of the principal railways in Ireland a

dividend based upon the average of preceding years, and that the principal railway companies be empowered to purchase, lease, or work the smaller existing independent branch lines on terms to be agreed upon, or settled by the Railway Commissioners.

2. That in consideration of the guarantee the Government be empowered to appoint a Chief Commissioner of Irish Railways, with a seat at each Irish board, and powers similar to those of the Government Director of Indian Railways.

3. That the management and working of the principal railways be conducted by the various boards of directors of the companies, as at present constituted, with the addition of the Chief Commissioner of Irish Railways, who should have the power to initiate a revised tariff of rates and charges, not necessarily upon an absolute mileage principle, which, if not agreed to by the Irish companies, should be settled in case of need by the Railway Commissioners.

4. Any profits accruing, after the revision of the tariff of rates and fares, over and above the amount required to pay the guaranteed dividend, to be equally divided between the railway company concerned and the Government.

5. The Tramways and Public Companies (Ireland) Act of 1883 to be repealed, in so far as it relates to the extension of railway tramway communication in Ireland.

6. The Government to find the necessary capital for the construction of light railways of the existing gauge, or of a narrow gauge in poorer districts of Ireland. The suggestions for the making of such railways to emanate in the first place from the Chief

Commissioner of Irish Railways, the details of engineering being submitted to, and approved by, the inspecting officers of the Board of Trade, and, when so approved, the Government to authorise the outlay. The contract for the carrying out of the work to be executed under the direction of the Board of the railway company in whose district the proposed branch or extension may be, the intention being that any branch or extension, when completed, shall be worked by the existing railway company in whose district the branch is authorised, on terms to be agreed between the company and the Chief Commissioner of Irish Railways, or in case of difference to be settled by the Railway Commissioners. In any case the agreement to be approved by the Railway Commissioners.

7. The Government guarantee may be for ninety-nine years, with option afterwards of purchase by the State.

PUBLIC WORKS: SUMMARY AND PROPOSALS.

In the preceding articles of this division of the subject we have dealt with the necessities of Ireland in regard to public works—that is, works of improvement necessary for the development of material progress—for the execution of which State aid is requisite. These works are (1) sea fisheries, (2) arterial drainage, (3) railway consolidation and extension. The facts illustrating the present position of affairs have already been stated. It now remains broadly to sum them up in one view, and to indicate the direction and extent to which assistance must be given.

As to Fisheries, it has been demonstrated that on the coasts of Ireland there is an abundant and constant supply of various kinds of fish, easily captured, readily marketable, and capable, if the natural advantages are properly used, of yielding large profits from the practice of a permanent industry. It has been shown that, owing to neglect, to want of capital, to lack of enterprise, the sea-fishing on the Irish coasts, so far as it is conducted by Irish agency, has most seriously declined, and is now practically stagnant. It is estimated that little more than forty years ago there were 113,000 persons and 20,000 boats of all kinds employed in sea fishing, and that there are now only about 20,000 persons and under 6,000 boats so employed; that of the persons (men and boys) engaged on the sea fisheries not

more than 4,000 give their whole time to the occupation; that the boats at their disposal are inadequate in number and defective in quality—for all Ireland there are only 600 boats of more than 30ft. keel, and some of these are not decked, or provided with suitable masts or sails, so as to be able to keep the sea in all weathers. It has further been shown that much of the fish actually caught has either to be thrown back into the sea or to be used as manure, because there are no curing establishments to prepare fish for exportation, and no sufficient railway system to allow of the produce of the sea being quickly and cheaply brought inland for sale. Finally, it has been shown that the existing harbours on the coast are unfitted for the reception of sea-going fishing-boats. Consequently, the fishing industry, so far as it is conducted, is carried on under conditions which are most discouraging in almost all districts, and in some districts are prohibitory of development. The result is that a trade which ought to be constantly expanding, is steadily on the decline; that Ireland, which ought largely to export fish, is actually importing cured fish in great quantities for her own consumption; and that while an important source of national wealth is thus sacrificed, a vast amount of cheap and wholesome food is lost not only to Irish markets, but also to those of Great Britain. The means of remedy are indicated in the reports of the Commissioners of Public Works. The key of the position, the Commissioners declare, is the provision of a considerable number of decked sailing boats, of adequate tonnage, fitted with suitable appliances and fishing gear, able to go far enough afield to reach the best fishing grounds, and able to keep the sea in all weathers, on equal terms with the boats of the English, Scotch,

and French fishermen who now visit the Irish coasts, and reap a rich harvest from the Irish seas. Without such boats, it is obvious, no movement can take place in the fishing industry. But boats, though essential as the first reform, are not all. To render the fish available for carriage into the country, or for exportation, there must be means of keeping it, and therefore curing establishments must be set up. Such establishments can be provided only at harbours capable of receiving vessels of sea-going capacity; therefore existing harbours must be improved, and new harbours constructed. Next, when fish is brought in, and cured, there must be provided means of getting it away from the coast; and this involves an extension of the railway system of Ireland, for, as matters now stand, the best fishing districts are in many instances wholly wanting in railway communication; and even where railways are directly available, or are within comparatively easy reach, the rates of carriage are too high, and there is no special provision for fish traffic.

The Public Works Commissioners recognise the necessity of grants or loans from the Imperial funds for the development of the Irish fisheries, and of the railway system, upon which, as a secondary means, their development must depend. Money, they say, is wanted for boats, for nets, for curing-houses, for harbours, for railway connections; and they advise that assistance shall be given in each of these departments, and especially in those of harbours and railways—the former being clearly a matter of national concern; while as to the latter, all the evidence taken by the Commissioners establishes the conclusion stated by Sir James Allport and his colleagues, that the new collecting lines required

cannot be made by the districts which most urgently need them—they are too poor, and are already too heavily burdened; that they will not be made by existing railway companies—because at the outset they cannot be expected to pay, and the companies are not doing well enough to tempt them to public expenditure on the chance of remote profit; and that, consequently, they must be made either by the State itself or by local authorities aided or supported by a State guarantee. But, while making these recommendations, the Commissioners hesitate to go far enough. They advise the expenditure of a few hundred thousand pounds, whereas to produce a decided effect, and to ensure a real development of the fishing industry, the outlay must of necessity be reckoned by millions. It is not for us to indicate the amount which can be profitably employed—that can be ascertained only after enquiry into local circumstances by the responsible authority—but we do not hesitate to say that any Government which undertakes to develop the practically illimitable resources of the Irish fisheries must be prepared to expend at least from four to five millions—not, of course, in a single year, but spread over a series of years; not broadcast, but upon careful local enquiry; not necessarily as a gift, but as an investment which will ensure the ultimate repayment of the capital sum, and which, meanwhile, will yield enormous interest in the cultivation of a great national industry, in the creation of prosperity in districts now impoverished and almost hopeless, in the development of habits of self-help amongst the coast population, and in securing to Ireland at large new supplies of cheap and useful food, and a source of wealth by the exportation of a com-

modity inexhaustible in amount, but now neglected or unused or want of means of turning it to profitable account.

In regard to Arterial Drainage, it has been shown that, although something has been done, and more (not always wisely) has been attempted, the principal river courses still require to be brought under control, to prevent flooding of adjacent lands, and also to aid in the reclamation of the vast extent of marsh, morass, and bog land—not much less than a fourth of the whole area of the island—which now lies waste, although a considerable portion of it might be rendered suitable for cultivation. The official reports also show that, while the greater river-courses need attention, the minor streams are also in a most neglected condition, and that upon dealing with these depends the thorough drainage required by arable and grass lands in their respective districts. Measures of reform are imperative in this department of public works, because agriculture, in its various branches of corn-growing, stock-raising, and butter-making, must of necessity continue to be the primary industry of Ireland, and also the most profitable of her industries. Already, besides supplying her own wants, Ireland exports about twenty millions of produce to Great Britain, chiefly to England—her best, indeed practically her only, customer. Granting the settlement of the land question (which is at the root of the whole Irish difficulty, political and material), this amount of export value might be enormously increased, perhaps doubled, in the course of a few years, provided that measures were taken for the development of Irish agriculture by the regulation of the greater river courses, the control of the minor streams, the efficient drainage of good land, the reclamation of

waste land, and the provision of adequate railway accommodation; for here again, as in the case of the fisheries, the consolidation and extension of the railway system is essential to the solution of the agricultural problem. But these are works which, if they are to be efficiently conducted, must be undertaken under the direction and with the assistance of the State. The existing condition of affairs as regards drainage is, as we have shown, one of absolute chaos—conflicting authority at headquarters; conflicting interests, and divided counsels, and paralysed action in local administration; hopeless difficulty in the provision of requisite funds; endless delays and hindrances in applying the funds, even when they can be obtained. The plan of the Commissioners, explained in a previous article, seems well suited to the necessities of the case—namely, a central authority for the projection and supervision of drainage schemes, and for the allocation of Government aid, combined with large representative and permanent Conservancy Boards for the catchment basins of the greater rivers, and temporary local authorities for the execution of minor works—the cost to be provided by grants in aid (repayable on easy terms) and by local rates levied on an equitable basis of apportionment. But here, as in regard to the fisheries, the Commissioners appear to under-estimate the amount of aid required from the resources of the State. An expenditure of a quarter of a million on the three rivers—the Shannon, the Barrow, and the Bann—chiefly dealt with in the report, would be wholly inadequate to the necessities of arterial drainage in Ireland. The Government must steadily face a very much greater outlay, if a thoroughly

satisfactory effect is to be produced. The central and local authorities advised by the Commissioners cannot too soon be created and set to work; but, when constituted, they must be authorised to dispense adequate funds, secured upon local rates, or they will prove to be practically useless. We advocate, therefore, in regard to arterial drainage and the reclamation of waste lands, these two reforms—first, the entire and immediate reorganisation of central and local administrative authorities; and, secondly, the provision by the State of loans, spread over a term of years, and secured, as to repayment, on local rates. It is not desirable to rush into extravagance, and it is necessary to keep a firm control both of the schemes undertaken and the money to be expended upon them; but at the same time it is essential that advances should be made upon a liberal scale, for work of this kind, if it is to be done effectually, must be done well.

We come now to the question of Railways. The consolidation and extension of the railway system of Ireland is admitted by all who have examined it to be essential to the prosperity of the country. The main defects of the Irish railway system are that it is inadequate in extent, dislocated in arrangement, costly in working, and largely unprofitable to the shareholders. The material conditions of the system, as affecting the interests of passengers and of the commercial and agricultural classes, have already been stated generally, and illustrated by examples. Briefly summed up, they are—that large districts of the country are destitute of railway communication; that the lines do not connect, even when they approach each other; that passenger fares and rates for goods traffic are too high; that trains

are comparatively few, are slow, and are ill-timed ; that station accommodation is wanting, often for many miles, along the lines ; and that the companies are burdened with an excessive number of directors and officials. These are defects which cannot be cured, or even sensibly reduced, while the conditions of Irish railways remain as they are. The companies will not, or cannot, afford greater facilities, because they shrink from further expenditure, lest it should deplete their already very small dividends, without securing them an adequate increase of traffic. Yet, unless the defects of the system are amended, and unless a large extension is given to the means of railway communication, the material prosperity of Ireland cannot be secured ; the fishing stations cannot be placed in connection with the rest of the country ; agricultural produce cannot be cheaply and readily conveyed from place to place ; mineral resources cannot be opened up ; the monopoly of trading in the remoter districts cannot be broken down, by the ready carriage of supplies in one direction and of produce in the other ; and the free movement of the population, necessary to the equalisation of labour, cannot be facilitated. How, then, is the difficulty to be dealt with ? The Public Works Commissioners advise a consolidation of the existing railways into one system, under one management, with certain powers of State control, with an obligation to make additional lines where these are needed, and with a State guarantee in case of failure of adequate returns. This, after all, would be little better than a makeshift, and, in proportion to the extensions required by the State authority, the State guarantee would necessarily expand, while there would be almost the same difficulty as now exists to

induce the directorate of the consolidated system, or the shareholders in it, to undertake new responsibilities, or to meet the varied demands of the public for administrative reforms. The simplest, the most effective, and in the end the cheapest remedy for the defects of Irish railways would be the purchase of the entire railway system by the State, and the development of it by the agency and at the first cost of the State. It is not necessary, it might not even be desirable, that the Irish railways, when acquired by the State, should be managed by a Government department. It might be worth while still to enlist local interest, and to use local capacity, in the work of administration. That is a detail which would have to be considered ; at present, in dealing with the general question, it may be put aside. The points to be kept in view are that Irish resources cannot be effectively developed unless the railway system is reformed and extended, for quick, easy, cheap, and diffused means of communication are of vital importance ; that no such reformation and extension can possibly be effectual under the present arrangement of railway ownership and management ; that ownership by the State (whether administration were retained under its own direction, or delegated, on terms, to other agency) would sweep away all existing difficulties, and would enable the railway system to be so organised and extended as adequately to meet the wants of Ireland, and thus to play a most important part in the future development of the country. The State purchase of Irish railways is not a new proposal. It has been urged over and over again. Before the railway system actually came into existence it was proposed by a Royal Commission that, on grounds of national advantage, Irish railways

should be laid out, made, and managed by the Government. In one form or another the same proposal has been repeatedly advocated since, and has invariably found favour in Ireland itself.

The first question that will be asked, naturally enough, will be—Is the State purchase of Irish railways possible upon any terms which Parliament ought to think of? The answer seems to us to be unequivocally in the affirmative. In the first place, the operation is not a large one. The whole of the Irish railways do not equal in length or in capital expenditure the single system of any of the great English lines: the North-Western, the Great Western, or the Midland. The Irish lines have a total length of 2,634 miles, and of this total 2,044 miles are single. The total authorised capital is just under £40,000,000. The paid-up capital is, ordinary shares, £16,486,799.; preference and guaranteed, £9,272,204.; loan and debenture stock, £9,905,248; total, £35,664,251. The preference, guaranteed, and debenture stocks carry a moderate rate of interest—from 4 to 4½ per cent. The ordinary share capital yields on the average an extremely low rate. In only fourteen lines out of the thirty-eight lines in existence are dividends of any kind paid on the ordinary stock. On three-and-a-half millions of such stock no dividend is paid. In the lines which do pay dividends on their ordinary stock the rates are very small—one line, Waterford and Limerick, with £1,600,000. of ordinary stock, pays ½ per cent.; others pay ¾, 1½, 2, and 2½ per cent. With a single exception—the Dublin and Kingstown, a special case, which pays 9½ per cent.—the highest rate on ordinary stock is that paid by the Great Southern and Western—namely, 4½ per cent. The purchase of stocks like

these could not be a very formidable transaction when taken upon the average. Nor, if looked at by the light of the traffic returns, would the enterprise be any more arduous, for the total receipts in 1886 were only £2,752,000., or an average of £1,046 per mile; an actual decline from 1878, when the receipts were £2,800,000, or an average of £1,239 per mile—considerably more than half the receipts, in each year, and as a rule, going in working expenses. Here, for the present, we must stop, merely adding that a State guarantee of moderate dividends on the capital which has value in it should enable the State to acquire the Irish railways without any fear of loss; and that wise expenditure on extension lines should create a large amount of additional profitable traffic, and should thus go far towards providing a redemption fund for the capital expended, and at the same time secure to the Irish people railway facilities which under existing conditions are denied to them, and while these conditions remain in force must continue to be denied.

I.—LAND PURCHASE.

Before proceeding to consider a scheme of land purchase in Ireland, it is desirable briefly to explain the actual position of the question. In 1885 an Act was passed, commonly known as Lord Ashbourne's Act (amended in 1886), by which, through the agency and subject to the approval of the Land Commission, landlords and tenants were enabled to enter into and complete voluntary agreements for the sale and purchase of estates; the whole cost of purchase, repayable by instalments extending over forty years, being advanced to the purchasing tenant by the State, the landlord leaving in the hands of the Land Commission a deposit of one-fifth of the purchase money as a guarantee against failure in payment of the instalments by the tenant purchaser. For the purpose of such advances to purchasers, the sum of £5,000,000 was authorised by Parliament to be expended. The whole of this amount has now been appropriated, and unless further provision is made no additional transfers can be effected under Lord Ashbourne's Act. In 1886 Mr. Gladstone, by the bill he introduced, proposed a scheme of purchase, at the option of the landowners, extending over the whole of Ireland, with the intention of making tenants the owners of the fee-simple of their holdings; the State to acquire the land from the landlords at twenty years' purchase of the net rental, and to resell it to the tenants; the purchase-money to be advanced by the State; repayment to

be made by instalments ; and the State—that is, the Imperial authority—being thus constituted the legal owner until the instalments, of the loans had been repaid. The enormous cost of the operation thus contemplated, and the extreme risk of constituting the Imperial authority the direct landlord and rent-collector throughout Ireland, alarmed the country and compelled the withdrawal of Mr. Gladstone's scheme, which, by common consent, is now understood to be finally abandoned. The Government of Lord Salisbury are pledged to deal with the question by some scheme of land purchase at present unexplained, and probably undefined. The ground is, therefore, cleared for the proposal and consideration of a scheme for dealing with Irish land, on a reasonable scale, and on conditions which will not impose serious obligations upon the Imperial authority, or intolerable and improvident burdens upon British taxpayers. The germ of this plan is to be found in the speech of Mr. Chamberlain at the meeting of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association, at Birmingham, on the 23th of May last. Referring to the proposal which had been indicated in our columns, Mr. Chamberlain said "he was convinced that they could never deal satisfactorily with the Irish land question until the majority of the occupiers of the land had been transformed into the owners of the soil which they tilled. The present proposal was that this object, which everybody agreed to be desirable, should be carried out by Irish credit." The time for seriously considering a scheme based upon this principle of using Irish credit alone, and for effecting the purpose of converting tenants into owners, is not only opportune, but urgent, because pressure is now being put upon the

Government, on the one side by Irish landlords, and on the other by Irish Nationalists, to apply to Parliament for another advance, presumably of a second five millions, for land purchases under Lord Ashbourne's Act. Although these opposing sections are in agreement in their object, their motives for the combined pressure are essentially different. The present landowners do not desire the adoption of a scheme of compulsory purchase—notwithstanding the exceptional and undue favour shown to them in Mr. Gladstone's proposal, they abstained from supporting it—for they believe that under the present system of administration they can obtain a higher price for their land, and consequently they would prolong that system so as to enable as many of them as possible to sell their estates, and to leave the country with the produce of the sales safely invested elsewhere. The landlords have already benefited largely by sales under Lord Ashbourne's Act—voluntary bargains between themselves and the tenants, in which the eagerness of the latter to acquire land has considerably enhanced the price—and, looking forward to the Government promise to introduce a comprehensive proposal to abolish dual ownership, they believe that an immediate extension of the operations of Lord Ashbourne's Act, by means of a large additional Parliamentary grant, would practically bind the Government to that system, and thus ensure benefit to the landowners at the expense of the State. That it might do so is evident, for either the Government might be induced to proceed so far, piecemeal, with the system as to be unable to escape from it; or the further development of Lord Ashbourne's plan might be used to delay a comprehensive measure, under the plea of giving a fair chance to voluntary agreements.

As a consequence the Imperial authority would be committed to a series of embarrassing experiments, the burden upon the British taxpayer would grow surely and rapidly, and there would be no security for the repayment of the advances made ; for it is not pretended that the Imperial Government, or the Land Commission as representing it, could have any greater powers of enforcing payments of instalments of the purchase money than are now possessed by the landlords of enforcing payments of judicial rents. Thus, a growing expansion of the Ashbourne system of purchase might lead ultimately to a financial transaction, not less extensive, and certainly not less dangerous to security, than the scheme embodied in Mr. Gladstone's bill. The essential defect of that proposal—apart from the vastness of the loan involved by it—was that, by making the State the direct rent-receiver in Ireland, a temptation would be offered to resist the payment of rent, as part of a scheme of political agitation. The same danger is provoked by Lord Ashbourne's scheme ; here, also, the State is made the direct rent-receiver, and supposing the plan to be largely extended, the same temptation and opportunity to resist payment are necessarily offered.

The motives of the Irish Nationalists in desiring to prolong the application of Lord Ashbourne's Act can be readily understood. They feel, indeed some of the more candid of them have said, that there will be little difficulty in starting an agitation against payment of the instalments in cases where the tenant purchasers may think they have bought at too high a rate ; emphasis being laid on the inducement that repudiation would injure only the British taxpayer. It is recognised that no pressure will exact from the Imperial Parliament larger advances than are requisite

to keep alive a limited system of purchase by which a *modus vivendi* may be opened to tenants on the point of eviction, or unable, through stress of circumstances, to pay their rents. At the same time the main body of the tenants are warned not to buy until the land agitation has brought down rent to "prairie value," or until an Irish Nationalist Parliament is brought into existence, with power to settle the land question on its own terms. It is true that Lord Spencer, Mr. John Morley, and others of Mr. Gladstone's adherents, have always declared that the land question cannot be trusted to a Nationalist Parliament—that it must be settled before a separate legislature and executive are conceded; but it is apparent that the majority of the Irish party take a different view, that they desire and, if possible, intend to dispose of the land question for themselves, though probably they might be willing enough, according to Mr. Gladstone's project of 1886, to allow an enormous amount of British money to be granted for the purpose, knowing perfectly well that, with a hostile or reluctant Irish Parliament in existence, repayment of such a loan could never be enforced by any process short of civil war. Therefore the Nationalists do not want the land problem to be now finally solved, for they know that the solution would abate, and probably destroy, the agitation for a separate Parliament; and still less do they desire such a solution of the question as would cause any attempt to repudiate payment in respect of land to recoil upon those responsible for the administration of Irish resources under any future enlarged system of local government. This review of the position demonstrates the necessity of settling the Irish land question upon a final basis. As matters now stand, we are drifting into a course

which threatens perpetually increasing embarrassment. This is shown in a remarkable way by the departure from the principles originally laid down by Mr. Bright, and the contrast of his method with that advocated by Mr. Gladstone. From the first moment when he dealt with the land question, Mr. Bright urged that the only solution consisted in a great transfer of ownership; and if his view had been carried out, all Irish land legislation would have been directed towards achieving this end. Mr. Gladstone, however, from the first proceeded on different lines. He desired to make the conditions of tenancy more equitable and satisfactory, and to preserve the dual ownership. By the bill of 1881 he went so far in this direction that the inducement to ownership was greatly lessened, and tenants have been content to wait, with the security they have obtained, until they can realise the dream of acquiring the land at prairie value. If Mr. Bright's plan had been carried out, their position as tenants would have been such as to induce them to accept any reasonable plan of becoming owners. The practical result is manifest in the increasingly advantageous terms which have had to be offered in successive schemes of land purchase. The Bright clauses in the Act of 1871, imperfectly as they were embodied in that measure, show the starting point. The difference between them and the provisions of Lord Ashbourne's Act is enormous. In Mr. Bright's scheme the tenant was required to pay something more than his rent for the privilege of becoming owner. In Lord Ashbourne's Act he is tempted to become owner by a reduction of the payment instead of an increase. The legislation is almost paradoxical. A man pays, say £100. a year as a tenant, whereas, if he agrees with his landlord,

he may, with the help of advances from the State, become owner by paying £80. a year for a term of forty-nine years. Yet under these favourable conditions numbers of tenants have preferred to wait, rather than risk the operation of purchase, until the final irreducible minimum in the value of land has been obtained.

The conclusions to be drawn from the preceding observations may be stated as follows:—If, yielding to pressure from landowners and Nationalists, the Government decide upon asking Parliament to expend further grants under Lord Ashbourne's Act, the Unionist majority would probably support Ministers in their proposal, rather than see their position endangered; but such support would be given with reluctance, and with grave apprehensions that there would be little security for the ultimate repayment of the advances, or that purchases so carried out would really aid in establishing the pacification of Ireland. Of course, if the British people consider that as a matter of honour Irish landlords must be bought out, and if they consent to this course as a means of putting a stop to the land agitation, without regard to the dangerous influence which such a concession to pressure and menace must exert upon the Irish people—if they are willing to spend a vast amount of money for the sake of temporary quiet, and with no substantial guarantee for repayment—then there is nothing more to be said. But, looking to the result of the last general election, and to public opinion expressed since then, the British taxpayer may reasonably be expected not to accept the view above stated. If, however, a scheme can be devised and put into operation by which it will become the interest of Ireland itself to

see that instalments of purchase-money are duly repaid, the state of the case is wholly changed, and a settlement without pledging British credit becomes possible. The buying out of the present race of Irish landlords, to a great extent, is recognised as inevitable. The danger is that by pledging British credit for this object, we shall render inevitable an agitation against the British taxpayer; the temptation in Ireland will be to "job" not with Irish money, but with the money of the other parts of the United Kingdom. To prevent this, and to bring home to the Irish people that honesty is the best policy, the only course open appears to be that suggested by Mr. Chamberlain—that the expropriation of Irish landlords must be carried out by means of Irish credit, under a system by which any attempt at repudiation would be most severely felt in the locality in which it occurred, with gradually widening circles of security, so that ultimately, if necessary, all Irish public resources could be rendered available to make good any default. Under such a system regularity of payment would be naturally enforced, because defaulters would become unpopular; and Irish landlords would find that they held unimpeachable security for the capital value of their land. If the problem can be solved on these lines—and we shall endeavour to show that it may be so disposed of—the sooner the work is taken in hand and completed the sooner will the Legislature be freed from an obstacle which is impeding all real national progress.

To sum up, we put, in the following propositions, the objects to be aimed at in any measure for the solution of the Irish land question:—

1. To make the tenant practically the owner of

his holding, subject to an ultimate fixed payment, or land tax, of a moderate amount, and to conditions which it may be in the interest of the State to impose, in order to prevent subdivision and the growth of encumbrances.

2. To give to the present owner of the land its fair capital value, in a security easily marketable at par.

3. To relieve the British taxpayer from all risk of loss.

4. To interpose a local authority as creditor of the tenant, with direct interest in enforcing payment of any rent or tax which may be imposed.

5. To make the tenant debtor to an Irish local authority, instead of to an individual landlord, often an absentee.

6. To secure the proper use of the land, and prevent undue subdivision, by the action of the local authority, in the interest of the whole community.

7. To ascertain the true market value of estates as a basis for compensation, with special regard to the circumstances of each estate.

8. To secure present relief to the tenant by an immediate reduction of rent.

9. To relieve congested districts by a rearrangement of the smaller holdings where these are insufficient to provide means of existence for a family.

10. To provide, if necessary, for a fluctuating annual payment, varying with the price of the principal kinds of produce.

II.—LAND PURCHASE.

THE PROPOSED SCHEME OF PURCHASE.

In the preceding article we stated the objects to be aimed at in any measure by which a solution of the Irish land question may be hoped for. These objects are to make the tenant practically the owner of his holding, subject to an ultimate land rent; to give the landlord the fair value of his land, in an easily-convertible security; to guard against undue sub-division or burdening of land transferred from present owner to tenant owner; to interpose a local authority as creditor of the tenant; to give such authority an interest in the rent, and thus, while relieving British taxpayers from risk of loss, to secure at once the interest of the tenant owner and of the former owner. We now proceed to sketch the lines of a measure by which these objects may be attained.

I.—*Land to be dealt with.*—The operation of the Act to apply to all the agricultural land of Ireland, subject to the following limitations:—

- (a) Any estate not in the main agricultural or pastoral, or partly agricultural and partly pastoral.
- (b) Any estate within the limits of a town.
- (c) Any estate or part of an estate which is demesne land, or forms part of a home farm, or is ordinarily occupied by a landlord.
- (d) Any holding above £50 valuation.

II.—*Compulsory Purchase.*—The operation of the Act to be compulsory.

III.—*Land Bank.*—To create a Land Bank for Ireland; the Land Bank to be a Government department, with specified powers and duties, and not to be a bank transacting business of the ordinary kind. The Land Bank to be authorised—

1. To receive rents from local authorities.
2. To pay interest at the rate of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on land debenture bonds.
3. To set aside $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. as sinking fund to provide for annual drawings.
4. To receive Government contributions in aid of local purposes, and to distribute the same subject to lien for any deficiency in payment of rent by the local authorities.

IV.—*Special Valuations of Estates Purchased.*—Each estate to be separately valued by valuers appointed respectively by the tenants and the landlord, with an umpire appointed by the Land Commission.

V.—*Compensation to Owners.*—The compensation ascertained to be due to the landlord to be paid to him in land debenture bonds, with coupons for interest payable to bearer at the Irish Land Bank. The interest to be $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum. Bonds to be repaid at par by annual drawings.

VI.—*Land Debentures.*—The land debentures to be secured—

1. By the rent receivable from all purchased estates in Ireland.

2. The coupons and drawn bonds of the land debentures to be receivable in payment of all Irish local taxes.
3. The Imperial Government to pay to the Land Bank a sum of £2,000,000. in aid of the contributions from the Imperial Exchequer to local purposes. The Land Bank to have a lien on this sum for any deficit in the amount receivable from any local authority on account of the rent of land in its district.

VII.—*Local Authority*.—A County Board to be created in each district, in whom all estates purchased in that district will be vested.

1. The County Board to collect and receive the rent.
2. To retain (say) 20 per cent. of the rent for the cost of collection and for local purposes.
3. To pay the balance to the Irish Land Bank.
4. To decide on all applications for sub-division, sub-letting, amalgamation of holdings, new tenancies, &c.
5. After payment of interest and repayment of bonds have been provided for, to hold permanently, without power of alienation, the reserved State rent of (say) 35 per cent. of the judicial rent, and to apply the same in aid of local purposes.
6. To hold and deal with, for the benefit of the community, bog with right of turbary, and waste and forest lands.

VIII.—The tenant to pay the fair rent, as fixed by the Land Commission, less 10 per cent. for the

first ten years, less 20 per cent. for the second ten years, less 25 per cent. for the third ten years, less 30 per cent. for the fourth ten years, and afterwards in perpetuity a fixed land tax of 35 per cent. per annum, or about one-third of the original fair rent.

The periodically fixed rent might be converted into a produce rent, based for each or for any period on the fixed rent as a normal one, but rising or falling with the alteration in price of the chief articles of produce.

Having stated the provisions of the scheme, we now proceed to show how it would work out in practice. The position of the tenant, and the benefit he obtains, are clear. He has control of his holding, and security in it; he has an immediate reduction of rent, followed by successive periodical reductions until the final reserved rent is reached; and when that period arrives, he pays, not to a landlord, but to the community of which he is a member, and for the general benefit, a fixed moderate rent, about one-third of the original fair rent. Consequently, with the progress of time his burdens diminish, the value of his holding increases, and he reaps the full reward of his industry. The present landlord also derives permanent benefit from the arrangement, though he may have to submit to a present sacrifice. He receives a smaller interest, but a better security. At present his income is subjected to the caprices of the tenant, inspired by agrarian and political agitation; and he is driven, too frequently, either to make large concessions for the sake of obtaining rent at all, or to exact by process of law the amount which is legally due to him. In future he would escape the liability to loss, and the cost of legal process, and the

pain of eviction. His rent, payable on debenture bonds, would be receivable with regularity, and without deduction. The risk of loss would be inappreciable, for, in the first place, the liability would be spread over the whole land rent of Ireland, instead of being separately applicable to each particular estate. A second security is afforded by making the interest coupons on debenture bonds applicable to payment of local taxes, which would give each local authority a direct interest in maintaining the payment of rent. A third security consists in the lien given to the Land Bank on the contribution of the Imperial Exchequer towards local expenditure. A fourth consists in the gradual redemption of debenture bonds, by annual drawings, provided for by a sinking fund. The County Board, in other words, as the representative of the community, benefits by retaining a proportion of the rent for the cost of collection and for local purposes; this proportion finally assuming the form of a fixed contribution which the tenant will be able to pay without effort, and which would then constitute a regular and permanent source of municipal income, applicable to the purposes of local government within the district. The Land Bank will receive from the local authority its proportion of the rents, and after paying interest on the debenture bonds it will invest the remainder at compound interest, and thus, at the end of the term, will have paid off the owners, and will leave the local authority in free enjoyment of its reserved rent.

As illustrating the working of the scheme, take a fair rental of £100 a year. According to Mr. Gladstone's calculations, in the explanation of his Land Purchase Bill, for each £100 of fair rent the net rent receivable by the landlord would be

£70. Assume this to be the case, and assume twenty years' purchase of the net interest of the landlord, land debenture bonds would have to be issued to the value of £1,400, on which the interest and sinking fund would be £56. The tenant, according to the present scheme, would pay £90 a year for the first period of ten years, £80 for the second period of ten years, and £75 for ten years, then £70 for ten years, and thenceforward £35 a year as fixed State rent. The County Board would have 20 per cent. of the gross rent—namely, £18 for ten years, £16 for ten years, £15 for ten years, and £14 for ten years. After forty years it would have the value of the remainder absolutely—that is, the amount of the perpetual quit-rent or land tax of £35 a year, less what might be required to repay the Land Bank for any advances previously made. The Land Bank would have £72 a year for ten years, £64 for the next ten years, £60 for the next, and £54 for the next period of ten years respectively, together with such further proportion thereafter of the £35 reserved or State rent as might be required to balance accounts. The Land Bank would have to pay £56 for fifty years—the interest and repayment of debenture bonds—therefore for the first period of ten years it would have a surplus of £16 a year and compound interest; for the second period of ten years a surplus of £8 a year and compound interest; for the third ten years a surplus of £4 and compound interest, and for the remainder of the term a deficit of £22. If these amounts do not balance, the reductions of rent will have to be less in amount, or must take effect after longer periods. The landlord would have £56 for fifty years, of which £49 would be interest, and

£7 sinking fund to repay the principal within that period. This is on the assumption that the landlord retains the bonds and does not sell them. With the guarantees described in this scheme, these bonds, which will bear interest at $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. above the rate for Consols, will always be saleable at par. They would probably go much higher if they were not made redeemable at par for the purposes of extinction.

At present the landlord has a bad security but a high rate of interest. Under the scheme he will have the choice either of substituting an absolute security at a low rate of interest, or, if he is willing to speculate, he will be able to sell his bonds and to reinvest in any other security that will give him the same amount of interest as he is now receiving from the land—of course, at a risk proportionate to the annual return he endeavours to obtain.

There are some other points to be noted to complete this explanation of the scheme. In any Act putting the scheme into operation provision would have to be made to limit the power of mortgage, and to prevent undue sub-division and sub-letting, or the existing difficulties might easily recur. A land registry should also be created. The sinking fund should be invested in the purchase of land debenture bonds, bought in the open market; and in order to prevent speculative premiums, it might be provided that the bonds may be redeemed at par value. It is possible, but on this we express no decided opinion, that some relief might have to be given to landowners, by provisions for effecting reductions in existing charges and mortgages upon purchased estates, in equitable relation to the reduced sale value under the Act.

There are three proposals which call for further

observation. It is suggested that the operation of the scheme should be compulsory. It may, however, be open to question whether it might not be limited in the first instance to cases in which both the tenant and the landlord desired to come under the arrangement ; or where either four-fifths or a smaller proportion of the tenants, or the landlords, as the case may be, applied for the benefits of the Act. In this case the operation of the scheme would be more gradual, and the total sum required would no doubt be much smaller.

It is also suggested that a special valuation should be made of estates acquired by the County Boards under the compulsory power of purchase. This, of course, is a matter of much difficulty, and one which can be dealt with only tentatively, and subject to modification after due examination ; but in favour of it there is the obvious consideration that the value of a property for sale cannot be wholly measured by the rent, even where that has been fixed by a judicial tribunal. For example, in the small holdings in the western counties a fair rent would be such a rent as the land would bear on an average if it were in the hands of capable cultivators, with a reasonable amount of capital to work it ; but it would frequently happen that the existing cultivator would be unable to pay even this rent, and, as the landlord could not get the full rent, the land would consequently be worth a lesser number of years' purchase than might fairly be given for the judicial rent of a grass farm in Meath, which can, and would, be always regularly paid. Therefore a new valuation for selling purposes would seem to be not merely justifiable, but in a large number of instances necessary.

The third proposal referred to is that the operation of the Act shall be restricted to holdings of not more than £50. annual valuation. Some provision would have to be made to prevent injurious severance; and where an estate consists of both small and large holdings, and where the larger holdings could not be properly worked if the smaller ones were taken away, the whole estate would have to be purchased. The Land Commission might be authorised to decide in all cases whether such severance could be made without serious injury to the interests of the landlord. The object of excluding larger properties is obviously to keep within manageable limits the amount of land to be dealt with, and also to benefit the class of tenants whom it is most desirable to settle in possession of the land. The large farmers may fairly be left to make their own terms with their landlords. They have already the benefits of judicial rents, they enjoy the other advantages conferred by recent legislation, with rare exceptions they find no difficulty in getting on reasonably well with their landlords, and they are comparatively few in number. In all Ireland there are only about 8,000 holdings of between 200 and 500 acres, and there are no more than 1,548 holdings of over 500 acres. The aggregate acreage of these holdings is 2,890,000 acres in the first class, and 1,548,000 acres in the second class. The great bulk of the holdings is to be found in the classes intermediate between those just mentioned, and the very smallest—namely, of from one to five acres. The following figures, based upon official calculations, give the total number of holdings in classes, and the acreage in each class:—

ULSTER.	No. of Holdings.	Total Acreage.
1 to 5 acres ...	20,258	60,744
5 to 15 „ ...	66,112	661,120
15 to 30 „ ...	54,735	1,231,593
30 to 50 „ ...	24,736	989,440
50 to 100 „ ...	13,839	1,037,925
100 to 200 „ ...	3,454	518,100
200 to 500 „ ...	998	349,300
500 and above ...	270	270,000

Total.....	<u>184,402</u>	<u>5,118,198</u>
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LEINSTER.	No. of Holdings.	Total Acreage.
1 to 5 acres ...	17,892	53,676
5 to 15 „ ...	25,435	254,350
15 to 30 „ ...	22,415	504,340
30 to 50 „ ...	15,352	614,080
50 to 100 „ ...	14,001	1,050,075
100 to 200 „ ...	6,849	1,027,350
200 to 500 „ ...	2,763	967,050
500 and above ...	395	395,000

Total.....	<u>105,102</u>	<u>4,865,921</u>
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CONNAUGHT.	No. of Holdings.	Total Acreage.
1 to 5 acres ...	13,202	39,606
5 to 15 „ ...	46,418	464,180
15 to 30 „ ...	33,595	755,889
30 to 50 „ ...	11,223	448,920
50 to 100 „ ...	6,199	464,925
100 to 200 „ ...	3,161	474,150
200 to 500 „ ...	1,728	604,800
500 and above ..,	511	511,000

Total.....	<u>116,037</u>	<u>3,763,470</u>
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MUNSTER.		No. of Holdings.	Total Acreage.	
1 to 5 acres	...	10,524	...	31,572
5 to 15 "	...	18,773	...	187,730
15 to 30 "	...	24,153	...	543,444
30 to 50 "	...	22,166	...	886,640
50 to 100 "	...	22,133	...	1,659,975
100 to 200 "	...	9,138	...	1,370,700
200 to 500 "	...	2,769	...	969,150
500 and above	...	372	...	372,000
Total.....		<u>110,028</u>		<u>6,021,211</u>

TOTALS FOR IRELAND.

		No. of Holdings.	Total Acreage.	
1 to 5 acres	...	61,876	...	185,628
5 to 15 "	...	156,738	...	1,567,380
15 to 30 "	...	134,898	...	3,035,213
30 to 50 "	...	73,477	...	2,939,080
50 to 100 "	...	56,172	...	4,212,900
100 to 200 "	...	22,602	...	3,390,300
200 to 500 "	...	8,258	...	2,890,300
500 and above	...	1,548	...	1,548,000
		<u>515,569</u>		<u>19,768,800</u>

In endeavouring to estimate the number, extent, and value of holdings of £50. annual value proposed to be dealt with under this scheme, guidance is afforded by the decisions of the Land Commissioners in fixing judicial rents. Taking the decisions which affect cultivated land, and striking the average rents fixed, the annual value per acre is—for Ulster, 11s.; for Leinster, 13s. 6d.; for Munster, 11s.; and for Connaught, 8s. Taking the average of all Ireland on these bases, the revised rental of the cultivated

land may be assumed at slightly under 11s. per acre; but if waste or bog lands are included, it is possible that 10s. may be assumed as about the true figure. Holdings up to 100 acres would therefore come under the scheme—or 483,261 holdings out of the total of 515,569; and the acreage dealt with would be 11,939,400 out of the total acreage of 19,768,000. Deductions, which could be ascertained only by specific enquiry, must be made for holdings which are in occupation by owners, or in which, owing to special circumstances, the annual valuation of £50. might include a larger area than 100 acres. With regard to the monetary operation involved, the returns do not enable us to separate the annual value of the respective classes of holdings, as given in the preceding table; but a sufficient general indication is afforded by the agricultural valuation under schedule B of the Income Tax returns (the occupiers' valuation). This is, for Ulster, £2,894,491.; for Leinster, £3,031,190.; for Munster, £2,588,414.; and for Connaught, £1,276,814.—total for Ireland, £9,790,909. But this valuation, it must be remembered, includes much more than agricultural holdings proper—namely, woods and plantations, home farms, and parts of demesne lands—and a considerable deduction would therefore have to be made from the total rental open to be dealt with. Taking the proportion of holdings (above £50.) excluded, and having regard to the average rentals fixed by the Land Commissioners, and to the acreage of holdings above 100 acres, the rental to be dealt with would probably not exceed £6,000,000., and might fall below that amount. Assuming the larger sum, the general finance of the scheme, if on a compulsory basis, would be somewhat as follows:—

LAND PURCHASE.

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Gross rental	£6,000,000	
Net rental now received by landlords	4,200,000	
Bonds to be issued if 20 years' purchase should be the average rate	84,000,000	
Interest and sinking fund on these	£3,360,000	
Security for the annual payment of this sum consists of—		
(a) Rent of land, less 10 per cent, re- duction to tenant	£5,400,000	
And less 20 per cent. retained by Local Authority	1,080,000	
		4,320,000
<p>(This is the payment for first ten years, after which it would be subject to fur- ther deductions at intervals of ten years.)</p>		
(b) Contributions from Exchequer...	2,000,000	
(c) Forced currency for local taxation, not less than	2,000,000	
Total security	£8,320,000	
For an annual payment of	£3,360,000	

. CONGESTED DISTRICTS.

No scheme of land settlement in Ireland can be complete or efficient for its purpose which does not include the means of dealing with congested districts—that is, with parts of the country where the population is hopelessly dense as compared with the area of land occupied, the size of the holdings, and the chances of the cultivators making a living partly by the land, and partly by other forms of industry. There is no need to insist upon the necessity of dealing with these districts. That is established by every report which has been presented on the land question, and by the testimony of every person who has enquired into the subject. One passage, however, from Mr. J. H. Tuke's report on the distribution of the Seed Potato Fund in 1866 may be quoted as illustrating a state of things which throughout the West of Ireland is not local but general:—"The failure of the potato crop brings this dreadful condition forcibly before us, and for a time we feel that it is unbearable, and with such kindly aid as is in our power we seek to relieve it, and save the people from the fate which would otherwise overtake them. But this relief does not, and cannot, reach down to heal the permanently impoverished condition of the people overwhelmed with shop debts and arrears of rent. For this more continuous and heroic remedies are needed. The fact that the small holdings of worn-out land cannot support the crowded population is no longer a debatable question. It is unanimously borne witness to. From priest to landlord, or tenant, there is but one response: 'Without other means of earning money there is no possibility

of living out of the land.' 'The living isn't in it, rent or no rent, your honour!' And can it be otherwise? Consider Achil, with its thousand families, of whom three-fourths are living on holdings so small that the rental or valuation does not exceed £4 a year. Take another instance, in Connemara, of one thousand families attempting to live in 1,700 acres of arable bog land—mere patches of soil lying among great boulders." This passage describes the condition of the population in many parts of the West of Ireland: miserably small holdings, overcrowding on plots of scarcely cultivable land, dwellings that are no better than hovels, almost entire dependence upon the potato for food. For these districts, speaking generally, much may be done, as we have already shown, by developing the fishing industry, by an intelligent system of land drainage, and by the provision of railways to enable the people to get the produce of the sea away to parts of the country where it may be sold at a profit. But even these means, supposing them to be speedily available, would prove inadequate to the necessity of the case. For permanent improvement other measures are required. These consist in so arranging the holdings, as regards area, as to give the occupiers a chance of maintaining themselves and their families on the produce of the soil. But in order to effect this indispensable reform, and to allow of an extension of the area of holdings, it is essential that there shall be a movement of the population—partly by migration to other districts conveniently available; partly, for those who cannot even by migration find room and means of subsistence, by some well-organised scheme of emigration. We have now to see by what machinery this double object can most easily be accomplished.

First, however, let us look at the position of the congested districts. These lie mainly on the west of Ireland, in the counties on the Atlantic seaboard. A diagonal line drawn from Londonderry in the north-west to Skibbereen, in the south-west marks off from the rest of Ireland the district to be dealt with—namely, the counties to the west of the line. These, going upwards from Skibbereen, are Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon, Leitrim, and Donegal. The subjoined table shows how they stand :—

County.	Holdings 1 to 15 Acres.	Total Acreage of such Holdings.	Total Holdings in County.	Total Acreage of County.	Agricul- tural Valuation of County.
Cork	6,862	53,346	31,965	1,891,804	£855,701
Kerry	4,370	33,179	17,927	1,121,299	244,375
Clare.....	4,297	34,115	16,630	801,475	287,486
Galway.....	16,901	135,991	33,850	1,375,234	415,470
Mayo	18,760	161,469	34,119	1,097,952	282,628
Sligo.....	7,319	62,361	14,655	401,141	182,186
Roscommon...	10,555	89,464	19,454	545,097	269,568
Leitrim.....	6,085	53,501	13,959	344,046	126,692
Donegal	12,984	111,577	30,001	1,067,490	260,399

Taking the average of the holdings from 1 to 15 acres, the result is that in Cork, Kerry, and Clare these holdings are of an average of under 8 acres ; in Galway, 8 acres ; and in Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon, Leitrim, and Donegal, between 8 and 9 acres. In all Ireland there are 219,000 holdings under 15 acres. Out of this total there are 88,000 such holdings in the nine counties above named. The total area of these is about 750,000 acres ; the population upon them, assuming five persons to a family, would be something like half-a-million people.

The work of dealing with the congested portions of the counties mentioned might be undertaken by local agency—that is, by the County Boards to be

established throughout Ireland for purposes of local government. Or, as alternatives, the requisite machinery might be provided by means of a Government department, specially charged with the re-organisation of congested districts; or the functions of the proposed Land Bank might be so enlarged as to give it the necessary authority to carry out the suggested transference of the population. As the whole scheme is put forward tentatively, and as a subject for discussion, it is desirable to indicate these alternative methods of giving effect to the main purpose—the relief of the smaller tenants and cultivators in districts where, under existing conditions, it is impossible for them to make a decent living. For the sake of showing how the treatment of congested districts might be worked out, we assume, for the moment, that it is undertaken by County Boards. The nine counties should be scheduled as containing congested districts. The County Boards of such counties should cause an examination to be made of such lands within their respective counties, in pasture, or mostly pasture, to which tenants in congested districts in those counties might be most advantageously removed. Certain lands must, of course, be excepted from the range of selection—for example, (*a*) pasturage of superior quality, the productive value of which would clearly be materially diminished by conversion into small arable or partly arable farms; (*b*) holdings under (say) £50. valuation which are the only pastoral or agricultural holding of a tenant; (*c*) lands the breaking up of which interfere with the amenity of a residence. Schedules of lands examined and found suitable should be published, with notice to tenants, and to owners and their agents. An appeal should

be allowed as to the exceptions above mentioned, the appeal to be to the Land Court, whose decision should be final. Subject to such appeal, the County Boards should be empowered to acquire scheduled lands by compulsory purchase; in case of disagreement as to price, the County Board and the owner each to appoint an arbitrator, and the Land Court to appoint an umpire. Compensation for disturbance, in accordance with the terms of the Land Act of 1870, to be allowed to tenants removed under the operation of the proposed measure. Then, as to removal of occupiers from congested districts. The County Boards of the scheduled counties should cause examination to be made of the portions of such counties reported to be congested, and on such examination should declare such portions as may seem to them proper to be dealt with as congested districts. They should then report on holdings in such congested districts of which the poor-law valuation is £7. or under, and should make schemes for the resettlement of the land, showing which of the tenants it is desirable to remove, and which of the existing holdings might be with advantage enlarged by the addition of land rendered available by the holdings vacated.

The tenants coming under the operation of the scheme should be those whose holdings are below the valuation of £7. per annum, and who, in the opinion of the County Boards, cannot make a fair living out of the cultivation of their holdings, combined with such extraneous employment, whether in the neighbourhood or not, as from their antecedents they may be reasonable supposed to be able to obtain. The County Board should be empowered to take possession of any holding from which it is

desirable that the tenant should be removed, in order to carry out the scheme for the resettlement of the land. On removal the tenant should be allowed the choice of the following alternatives:—
(a) migration to other lands in the possession of the County Board; (b) emigration under conditions to be arranged by the Board; (c) removal on payment of compensation for disturbance, in accordance with the provisions of the Land Act of 1870. If the tenant chooses migration he would be removed to a farm provided for him by the County Board, which would be empowered to lend him the necessary funds for buildings, fences, implements, and stocking the farm. Farms thus allotted should not be under a valuation of £8. nor over £12., which, according to the average rentals in the western counties, would give farms with areas of from 16 to 25 acres. The holdings from which tenants have been removed should be distributed amongst the remaining tenants in the neighbourhood, as the County Board may deem advisable, but so that no tenant should be placed in the occupation of a holding, or of holdings collectively, of more than £12. or less than £8. valuation; and as far as practicable every tenant whose holding shall have been declared to be one which ought to be increased should be placed in the occupation of a holding of not less than £8. fair valuation; the additions to holdings to be adjacent, or as nearly as possible so, to the original holdings. The County Board to be empowered to lend money in the case of the increase of holdings, as in the case of new holdings allotted to displaced tenants. New roads of general utility to be made by and charged to the County Board. New approaches to holdings or

sets of holdings to be apportioned by the Board, and charged to the new tenants in connection with the rent for their holdings. If the displaced tenant chooses emigration, he and his family might be sent abroad by the County Board, under such rules and regulations as might be from time to time agreed upon with her Majesty's Government; and the County Board should be empowered to enter into arrangements with colonial and other Governments for assisted emigration or for the collection and repayment of loans made to emigrants by County Boards.

In connection with this subject of congested districts it should be considered whether aid should be given, by loans or otherwise, by the Imperial Exchequer. It is suggested that any such assistance might be specially given in larger proportion in the case of expenditure for emigration than for other matters. It is possible that the area of contribution for this expenditure might with advantage be larger than the area of the county, and that a proportion of the cost or risk might fall upon the province in which the county is situated.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The following scheme is submitted for discussion and criticism, and as a practical illustration of the views expressed in a previous article. It will be evident that the details as regards the constitution of the new local bodies, the powers to be given to them, and the changes to be made in connection with Imperial Administration, may all be altered without affecting the principle; and these proposals are submitted merely as one method of carrying into effect the object which Mr. Gladstone has stated that he had in view in introducing his Home Rule Bill—namely, to secure the largest possible extension of self-government in Ireland consistent with the maintenance of the integrity of the Empire, the unquestionable supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, and the rights of minorities.

I.—LEGISLATIVE BODIES.

Statutory legislatures to be created for each of the four provinces of Ireland. Such legislatures to consist

- (a) Of a legislative Council to be nominated for life by the Crown;
- (b) A legislative assembly elected on the franchises now existing by the different constituencies, the duration of the assembly to be for five years, casual vacancies to be filled up, and all laws now existing affecting the vacating of seats, disabilities, mode of election, corrupt practices, to be generally applicable.

An annual session of the legislature to be imperative.

II.—POWERS OF LEGISLATURES.

The powers of legislation to be conveyed by words of express delegation specifically enumerating the subjects of legislation, subject to certain conditions to be imposed by statute on the exercise of the powers delegated.

The powers to be delegated to the provincial legislatures to be

1. Direct taxation, including licenses, in order to provide revenue for all provincial purposes.
2. Borrowing of money on the credit of the province.
3. Establishment and payment of all officers constituting, or serving under, local executive.
4. Asylums, hospitals, charitable institutions, and endowments.
5. Municipal and local institutions.
6. Public works and undertakings within the province, including private bill legislation.
7. Incorporation of companies with local objects.
8. Education and industrial schools.
9. Liquor laws, including license.
10. Fisheries.
11. Agriculture within the province.
12. Emigration.
13. Irish lights and beacons.
14. Status and civil rights of persons, including marriage, divorce, legitimacy, inheritance, testamentary disposition, but excluding naturalisation and alienage.

15. Rights of property, whether real or personal ; contracts, wrongs, and civil remedies in respect thereof, including bankruptcy and liquidation, but excluding copyright and patents.
16. Laws relating to franchise and elections, including the rules of procedure in the provincial legislatures.
17. Such other matters as may be from time to time delegated to the provincial legislatures by the Imperial Parliament. Provided always that the provincial legislatures shall not make any law
 - (a) Respecting the establishment or endowment of any religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;
 - (b) Imposing any disability or conferring any privilege on account of religious belief;
 - (c) Abrogating or derogating from the right of establishing or maintaining of any place of denominational education or any denominational institution or charity;
 - (d) Prejudicially affecting the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending the religious instruction at that school;
 - (e) Depriving any person of legal property without fair compensation;
 - (f) Conferring any privilege or imposing any disability upon any particular person or class.

III.—POWER OF CROWN AND IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT.

1. All acts of the provincial legislature to be subject to the controlling veto of the Crown.
2. The power of the Imperial Parliament over all subjects of legislation to be expressly reserved, as in Colonial Laws Act 1865.
3. Imperial Parliament may levy any tax in Ireland.
4. The Lord-Lieutenant to continue to represent the Crown in Ireland.
5. Ireland to be represented by a Secretary of State in the Imperial Government and House of Commons.

IV.—TAXATION.

1. Taxes to be voted and levied in Ireland for all local purposes by authority of provincial legislatures.
2. Provincial legislatures to have no right to impose or levy taxes by way of Customs or Excise.
3. No tax to be voted or appropriated by provincial legislatures except on recommendation of Lord-Lieutenant.
4. Imperial Exchequer to contribute to the exchequers of the provincial legislatures their due proportion of moneys contributed in aid of local expenditure in respect of subjects delegated to the provincial legislatures; but so that, in the event of the land scheme being adopted, the Land Bank shall have a lien upon this contribution to

the extent of £2,000,000 sterling, to provide against any deficiency by local authorities in the payment of the land rent.

V.—POLICE.

The Royal Irish Constabulary and Dublin Metropolitan Police force to remain subject to the control of the Lord-Lieutenant. Upon a resolution of any provincial legislature that any locality, county, or borough should be allowed an independent police, subject to local authority, the Lord-Lieutenant to have power by order to approve of such resolution and grant such power, under such conditions as are defined in the order.

VI.—JUDICATURE.

All judges and magistrates to be appointed by the Crown through the Lord-Lieutenant as at present, and to be removable by address of the Imperial Parliament. Judges to be selected from Members of the Irish Bar.

VII.—QUESTIONS OF ULTRA VIRES.

1. All questions as to the powers of the Irish provincial legislatures may be raised by individuals claiming to be aggrieved, or by the legislatures themselves, or by a vote of the Imperial Parliament, or on the application of the Lord-Lieutenant, and shall be determined by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.
2. If any part of an Act be determined to be

ultra vires, the whole to be remitted to the provincial legislature for reconsideration.

3. Irish judges may be added to the Judicial Committee *pro hac vice*.
4. If any provincial legislature shall act in contravention of any judgment of the Judicial Committee such provincial legislature may be declared by the Judicial Committee to be "in contumaciam," and thereupon may be dissolved by order of the Lord-Lieutenant, and no new election shall take place till the expiry of its natural term of office. In the meantime its duties and privileges shall be taken up by a Council to be appointed for the purpose by the Crown.

VIII.—REPRESENTATION OF IRELAND AT WESTMINSTER.

1. The representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament to be reduced to a number proportionate to the population.
2. Irish members to take no part in legislation for Great Britain in relation to subjects delegated to the provincial legislatures.

IX.—Where the subject matter of legislation must necessarily extend beyond a single province, such legislation to be effected by the Imperial Parliament.

It will be observed that in the constitution of provincial legislatures a second chamber is indicated. This, it should at once be said, is a point which is fairly open to discussion, both as to the establish-

ment of such a body and as to the method of its creation. There are obvious advantages in a double system; it affords opportunity for the representation of classes and interests in danger of being overlooked or over-weighted in a scheme dependent wholly upon popular election; it places at the disposal of the community the benefit of official and administrative experience; and it secures the full consideration of disputable measures, and of proposals involving the application of new principles. But the useful acceptance of a second chamber must depend, to a great extent, upon the opinion and the feeling of those who will be directly affected by the action of the proposed legislatures; and it is most desirable that their wishes, and the reasons on which they are based, should be freely expressed. A second chamber, if adopted, need not be a purely nominated body. Valuable precedents exist in the constitution of the Senate of the United States, the French Senate, and the Second Chamber of the Dominion of Canada; and these might, either entirely or partially, be applied in the case of Ireland.

Particular attention will naturally be directed to the powers of legislation proposed to be devolved upon the provincial legislatures. These cover all the subjects with which such bodies can properly deal, if the supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament is to be maintained in regard to legislation common to the three kingdoms. It may be objected that the devolution of powers is too extensive—for example, that laws affecting marriage and divorce ought to be reserved to the Imperial Parliament; and that the delegation of powers to legislate on the rights of property is larger than it should be. But, in regard to the latter question, it must be remem-

bered that an essential safeguard is provided by the assumption that, as a condition precedent to the establishment of provincial legislatures in Ireland, the land question will have been settled by legislation by the Imperial Parliament itself; and thus the chief element of danger to be apprehended in this particular will have been removed. Other safeguards, amply sufficient for their purpose, are provided by the restrictions to prevent injustice to classes and interests. Under these there can be no interference of an injurious character with regard to religion, education, political or personal disabilities or privileges, or the enjoyment of property. These restrictions, it should be pointed out, are not based upon mere theory as to what is desirable, but have been tested in practice, for they follow in principle the precedents both of the constitution of the United States and of the internal constitution of Canada. Power of concurrent legislation on the devolved subjects, it will be noted, is reserved to the Imperial Parliament, in accordance with the provisions of the Colonial Laws Act of 1865. It is a question for discussion as to how far it is desirable to incorporate this power. It has not been used in regard to the Colonies; it probably would not be used in the case of Ireland, and therefore might be safely omitted. But concurrent right of taxation is absolutely necessary, so far as Imperial purposes are concerned, for the cession of this power would be equivalent to the concession of independence; and as Irish representatives would still sit, for all Imperial purposes, in the Parliament of Westminster, no injustice could, in respect of taxation, be inflicted upon Ireland. Strong objection will no doubt be taken to the institution of a nominated council for a provincial legislature, in

case of deliberate contumacy by the latter. But it is difficult to see how any scheme of devolution of legislative powers could work unless there were self-acting provisions for enforcing the judgment of the highest court of law in case of excess or abuse of powers by the subordinate legislative body. The existence of such a check, capable of application under pressure of extreme necessity, would almost certainly prevent recourse ever being had to it, for it would deter the provincial legislatures from committing any breach of the statutory conditions of their existence.

Nothing is said as to the executive authority. It is, of course, assumed that the Lord-Lieutenant, or some personal representative of the Crown, would reside in Ireland, and that the executive power of the Crown would continue to be vested in him. There is, however, no reason why the provincial legislatures should not be authorised to elect a responsible Ministry which, in each case, would form a council to advise the Lord-Lieutenant as to provincial legislation. Or, on the other hand, it is possible that a provincial legislature would prefer a less formal government, and would appoint committees, without seeking to imitate in all particulars our system of Parliamentary and party government. This part of the matter might therefore be wisely left to the provincial legislatures themselves. In any case, a free hand would be given to the legislatures within the conditions prescribed; and this would of necessity assume the abolition of what is called Dublin Castle, with its varied boards and officials—the business now transacted by them, excepting so far as it relates to purely Imperial concerns, would be transferred to the provincial

legislatures and their administrative officers; and this transfer would be rendered more complete, and the disappearance of the Castle Boards would be more thoroughly effected, if provincial legislatures received power to unite, by delegation, for legislation affecting such works as railways, canals, and main drainage, extending over more than one province. The appointment of the judges and resident magistrates must necessarily rest solely in the representatives of the Crown; but such judges, resident magistrates included, should be removable only on an address of both Houses of the Imperial Parliament; and henceforth only lawyers should be appointed as resident magistrates. Intimately connected with the judiciary and magistracy is the question of police. There must be at the disposal of the Central Government and of the Courts an adequate force for the execution of decrees and the maintenance of order. This would be provided by the Royal Irish Constabulary, which, as Ireland became quiet and orderly in the districts now disturbed, might be gradually reduced in numbers, and ultimately might possibly be dispensed with altogether. In the meantime the constabulary would be a quasi military force for the security of the country and for the observance of statutory conditions. To the constitution of local police forces, for the local execution of the ordinary law, there could be no valid objections, provided that the land question were settled, and reform of local government instituted; and provided, of course, that these measures produced the good effects naturally to be expected from them.

The provision of local, in the sense of county and municipal, administration need not now be considered in detail. Generally speaking, changes in these

respects would follow, at least in principle, the lines which, in the Local Government Bill, are being traced for England, and are designed to constitute the basis of a reformed system for Scotland. That some modifications might be required for Ireland is probable; and these, together with other questions relating to purely local administration, will develop themselves in due time. As to the larger subject—that of local government in its wider sense of legislative as well as administrative powers—it is submitted that the scheme which has now been offered for discussion and criticism would secure the objects professedly aimed at in Mr. Gladstone's Bill, in regard to the unity of the three kingdoms and the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, while at the same time it would practically give the Irish the management of their own local affairs. It would not establish a separate nationality or a co-ordinate Parliament; but every matter of strictly Irish concern would, under its provisions, be dealt with by Irishmen, for the benefit of Irish interests, and in accordance with Irish sentiment.

CONCLUSION.

In bringing to a close the series of papers under this heading, designed to indicate a possible Unionist policy with regard to Ireland, we have briefly to recapitulate the principal suggestions which have been made, and which are now, in their completed form, submitted for consideration and criticism. The proposals of the latest paper of the series, that on Local Government, will naturally be compared and contrasted with the provisions of the scheme laid before Parliament in 1886 by Mr. Gladstone. Though aiming at the same nominal purpose—the establishment in Ireland of a system which will give Irishmen the control of their local affairs—the two schemes differ essentially. Mr. Gladstone's bill proposed broadly to establish a Parliament in Ireland, with power to legislate on all Irish subjects, with a few exceptions named in the bill. It proposed to entrust this Parliament, sitting in Dublin, with authority over the whole of Ireland. It proposed to create an Irish Executive—that is, an Irish Government, dependent upon the will of the Irish Parliament; it left, as the sole link of connection between the two countries, the authority of the Crown, to be exercised through the Lord-Lieutenant and the Irish Ministry; and so thoroughly did it separate the Legislatures and Government of Great Britain and Ireland that it excluded the Irish people from all representation in the Parliament of Westminster. In regard to finance, Mr. Gladstone's bill enforced upon Ireland the payment of a contribution towards

the maintenance of the army and navy, the judiciary, the police, and some other branches of general administration; and though not so described in the measure, or so intended, this contribution assumed the appearance of a tribute payable by the one country to the other. Thus, so far as concerned Irish legislation and internal administration, Mr. Gladstone's scheme practically separated Ireland from Great Britain, and placed her in much the same position as a self-governing colony; but with limitations and contributions such as no self-governing colony would permanently submit to. The scheme now suggested is based on the principle that for all but really local legislation Ireland remains an integral portion of the United Kingdom. There is no central and virtually co-ordinate Parliament, no central executive dependent upon the Parliament, and therefore no provocation to conflict between the Legislatures and Administrations of Great Britain and Ireland, or between the latter and the Crown as embodying Imperial executive authority. But in all matters relating to purely Irish local affairs, the scheme leaves Irishmen a perfectly free hand, by means of the proposed Provincial Councils, which would be authorised to deal with legislation extending over the wide range included in the delegated subjects. In this respect of delegation, in the reservation of general legislative powers to the Imperial Parliament, and in the maintenance of the Imperial authority, the scheme now proposed is based upon the precedent of the United States Constitution, and still more on the internal constitution of the Dominion of Canada, with such modifications as the difference in the respective situations of Ireland and Canada require. "The cardinal

features of the Canadian Constitution (we quote from a memorandum by Sir Alexander Galt) is that the local powers of the several provinces are all delegated to them; the Federal Parliament in the first instance, and the Imperial Parliament in the last resort, being the repository of all undefined powers, and having supreme legislative control. In this most important respect the Canadian system is distinguished from that of the United States, where the powers of the Federal Congress are derived from express concessions by what are regarded as sovereign States." Those who desire to see the scope and character of the powers delegated under the Canadian Constitution, will find them enumerated in Clause 90 of the Canadian Union Act of 1867. They will be found to correspond very closely with those embodied in the scheme of delegation to Irish Provincial Councils, as explained in the plan of local government we have published. This plan, we submit, gets rid entirely of three cardinal difficulties of Mr. Gladstone's scheme—namely, (1) the continued representation of Ireland at Westminster; (2) the separate treatment of Ulster; and (3) the financial arrangements. As regards the first, it maintains Imperial unity by the presence of Irish members in the Imperial Parliament for all purposes, and at the same time it relieves the Imperial Parliament from the pressure of purely local business now coming to it from Ireland. As regards the second point, it places all the provinces of Ireland on the same footing as to local legislation and administration. And, as regards the third, it leaves Irishmen free, in the Provincial Councils, to tax themselves for local expenditure, and at the same time continues Imperial contributions for Imperial

purposes, without requiring Ireland to pay tribute to the Imperial exchequer. The plan now proposed, it may be observed, is capable of extension beyond Ireland. If it should become desirable to give to Scotland and Wales the conduct of local business by local assemblies, this proposal would, within safe limits, concede all that the advocates of local government in those countries can require; and it would be a step in the direction of the general federation of the empire, should such a project ever come within the range of practical politics.

To sum up generally the scheme of Unionist policy for Ireland, it consists of three main divisions — Public Works, Land Purchase, and Local Government. The first of these divisions involves development and support of Irish industries, especially the great national industry of the sea fisheries, by means of aid afforded, wisely and liberally, from Imperial resources. We have shown that the fisheries are now languishing and even declining, that they may be easily rendered most productive, and may thus be made an important source of national wealth; but that, in order to attain this end, the fishing industry must be aided by the State, in the provision of boats, nets, curing establishments, harbours, and means of communication with the markets of Ireland and of Great Britain. We have shown, also, that the agricultural industry needs assistance by the provision of an intelligent and effective system of arterial drainage, by which flooding in the river basins may be prevented, and waste or neglected land may be brought into cultivation. Intimately connected with fisheries and agriculture, and with the general commercial and industrial prosperity of Ireland, is the reform of the railway system. At

present, as we have shown, this is imperfect, dislocated, and inefficiently managed. The remedy we have suggested—as we believe, the only effectual remedy—is the acquisition of Irish railways by the State, the consolidation of their management, and the due extension of railway lines to parts of the country which are now left destitute of such means of communication, or are most imperfectly supplied with them. In all these respects—fisheries, drainage, and railway extension—the assistance of the State must be afforded on a liberal scale if the resources of Ireland are to be developed, and if her population is to be maintained in comfort, and to be afforded the means of creating and sustaining material prosperity throughout the country.

The land question, it is admitted, is at the root of the Irish difficulties, and it is admitted that no solution can be provided otherwise than by creating a vast class of cultivating owners. Here it would be impossible to effect the requisite improvement by means of Imperial grants for wholesale land purchases; an attempt to do so would simply burden British taxpayers to an intolerable degree, and would at the same time create a new difficulty, by making the Imperial Government the direct landlord and creditor of the Irish cultivators, thus offering a provocation to renewed agrarian agitation, and a temptation to refuse to pay rent, which could then be levied only by force. We have endeavoured to show how the difficulty may be overcome, and how the danger above indicated may be averted, by a scheme of Irish land purchase, within practicable range, dependent upon Irish credit, and administered by Irish representative authorities. With this we have sketched a method by which the congested districts

of the west and south of Ireland may be so dealt with and relieved as to give the agricultural population the means of earning a decent livelihood, and of thus lifting them out of the wretched and hopeless condition in which at present they are placed. Finally, by means of Provincial Councils, and of minor authorities in accordance with those now being created for England and Wales, and to be hereafter established for Scotland, we have indicated a scheme by which the local legislation of Ireland may be delegated to Irish assemblies, without impairing the unity of the three kingdoms, or weakening the authority of the Imperial Parliament.

These proposals are not offered as embodying a complete or unalterable scheme of policy. They are in reality what they profess to be—suggestions which are capable of being reduced to practice, and which meanwhile are open to discussion, to criticism, to objection, and to alteration, wherever that can be shown to be desirable. The aim with which they are put before the country is to benefit Ireland, and to relieve the Imperial Parliament of a difficulty, which grows increasingly serious, and which must be settled, if Ireland is to be made peaceful and prosperous, and if long-delayed legislation for the rest of the United Kingdom is to be proceeded with. While still firmly resolved against schemes which, while professing to grant local government to Ireland, proposed to do so at the sacrifice of unity and the weakening of the Imperial Parliament, the Liberal Unionists are prepared to give Ireland such control of her local affairs as can with safety and honour be given to other portions of the kingdom; and they are prepared, also, to deal effectively with the land question, and with the development of the material

resources of Ireland. With this view the policy we have sketched is proposed, in the conviction that it is just, that it is practicable, and that, if fairly considered, it may ultimately command general assent, may be embodied in acts of legislation, and may thus put an end to a long-standing strife, restore peace to Ireland, and strengthen and consolidate the United Kingdom.
