

# CURRENT TOPICS

THE IRISH LAND BILL RECENTLY INTRODUCED at the instigation of the Balfour ministry by the chief secretary of Ireland, is the most important measure relating to Ireland that has been presented for consideration since Mr. Gladstone's famous home rule bill. In brief, the purpose of this land bill is to enable the tenant farmers in Ireland to purchase farms and the bill provides that to this end the British government is to advance the cash. The measure provides so distinctly a step in the right direction that it has met with popular approval throughout the civilized world. It is evident that there are some English politicians who do not take kindly to the plan, but it is not likely that these will openly oppose it, while the general recognition of the fact that the time has come when the British government must do something by way of solving the Irish problem will doubtless ensure the adoption of the measure.

AT A RECENT CONFERENCE OF THE LANDLORDS and tenant farmers, the chief features of the Irish land bill were agreed upon. According to the terms of the bill the British government appropriates the sum of \$60,000,000, which is to be a free gift in order to supply the difference in some instances between the price demanded by the landlord and the price which the tenant can afford to pay. In addition to this large sum provision is made for a system of loans, out of the British treasury. It is estimated that these loans will aggregate \$500,000,000. This sum is to be raised on a new government loan guaranteed at 23-4 per cent interest, the bonds to be issued as the money may be needed. This money is to be loaned to the Irish tenants at 31-4 per cent interest. Three commissioners are named in the bill and their duties will be to carry out the provisions of the measure. If the measure should become a law it will take effect November 1, 1903. It is of course not compulsory on the part of the landlords to sell, but it is believed that the majority of them will be glad to dispose of their interests.

AMONG IRISH LEADERS THE MEASURE appears to be a popular one, not entirely because of the immediate relief which it will provide to the Irish tenantry, but more because it is very generally believed that this measure is but the forerunner of home rule, an accomplishment which has been very near to the Irish heart. Speaking of this bill, John Redmond says: "It marks an enormous advance on any measure of its kind which has ever been proposed by the English government." And Michael Davitt, founder of the Irish land league, says: "When I remember that in 1879 I served my first term of imprisonment for proposing almost exactly what a conservative Irish secretary proposed today, I realize how times change."

THE SCENES WITNESSED AFTER THE presentation of the Irish land bill have a deep significance. The cable dispatches to American newspapers say: "The passing of the first reading of the bill was followed by a rush to the lobby, where ensued scenes that might well make the body of Parnell turn in his grave. The tall form of the Earl of Dudley (Lord Lieutenant of Ireland) could be seen amid a crowd of nationalists, who scarcely a year ago would rather have suffered every penalty than associate with the official head of the Irish government. Beside Lord Dudley stood grizzled little Sir Anthony MacDonnell, the first assistant Irish secretary. He it was who drafted the bill. Horace Plunkett, Lord Iveagh, Lord Ashbourne, and many unionist members joined the group. The Duke of Abercorn, the most powerful landlord in Ireland, asked to be introduced to John Redmond, and a mutual friend brought his grace to the leader of the nationalist party, with whom the leader of the Irish landlords heartily shook hands. They patched up the peace of Ireland over the house of commons refreshment bar."

NEWSPAPER COMMENT IN THE UNITED States with respect to the Irish land bill is all favorable, and it may be said that newspaper comment in Great Britain is encouraging. The London Standard, while saying that it remains

to be seen whether the terms offered "will prove sufficiently tempting to overcome the inertia of the situation," adds that if the secretary's financial forecast proves to be correct, "concord will be cheaply purchased by adopting his scheme." The Post says that the scheme is large and bold, that it is a mixture of good and evil, but if certain defects can be remedied, the bill will be of considerable benefit of the tenant farmers. The Telegram declares that the bill will be received in England with positive relief. The Daily Mail thinks that the measure will be at least proof to the world of the generosity and disinterestedness of the British nation, and that "if it ends the weary period of disloyalty and discontent, the result will be cheap at the price." The Chronicle says that the British ministry realized that the opportunity was a great one and sanctioned a large measure of reasonable expectation. The News says that it requires time for the tory party to learn its lesson and recant its errors, but still it learns; and it asserts that the secretary's speech destroyed half of the case against home rule at the same time that it admitted the claims of the agrarian reformers up to the hilt. The News adds: "If this poverty-stricken tenantry could be trusted with a hundred millions of British money, they can be trusted with something more, the right to shape their own affairs as a nation." The Dublin (Irish) Times declares: "The bill furnishes a better prospect for closing the melancholy chapter in Irish history than was ever before provided." The Belfast (Irish) News thinks that "the provisions of the measure appear to be an honest and courageous effort to settle the burning question."

THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES MAY not fully appreciate what this measure means to the people of Ireland. "What the restoration of their land to the Irish people means," says the Philadelphia Public Ledger, "can in no way be conceived by those who have not gazed upon the extreme of human misery as it is shown in Ireland today." The Ledger adds: "Since Cromwell's armies overran the country, and the land was parceled out among his generals, its people have been subjected to a long and merciless exploitation. The landlords have been mere exactors of tribute; none of the money wrung from tenants has gone back in the form of improvements; little of it was ever allowed to circulate again in the country, which was drained and sucked dry. Each generation paid for the land, without acquiring an acre; the next generation paid for it again, and still owned nothing. Usually the people were allowed to retain enough of the products of their own toil barely to keep their souls in their bodies, though between 1845 and 1848 a million of them died. After the famine year matters were even worse. Landlords, despairing of regular rents from the starving people, drove them off of large tracts, which they now gave over to pasturage. Today out of 15,000,000 acres of arable land in Ireland, less than 2,500,000 acres is under the plow. The best land is given to cattle. The people are in many regions huddled together in bogs, trying to eke a living out of mudholes such as an American farmer would turn over to his pigs for a wallow. The mass of them live in huts of one or two rooms, often without windows. One in seven of the population is 'on the rates'—supported by the parish; half the rest live on the ragged edge of hunger, and half the remainder are fed largely by the sons and daughters of America. Mr. Wyndham on Wednesday instanced a village in which the landlord was in the workhouse the greater part of the year, while the tenants lived under conditions worse than those found among the Kaffirs in Africa."

THE FIRST ANNUAL REPORT TO THE stockholders of the steel trust was recently made. This report covers the fiscal year ending December 31, 1902. The income account for the year shows total net earnings of all properties, after deducting expenditures for ordinary repairs and maintenance, also interest on bonds for the subsidiary companies of \$133,308,764; less sinking funds on bonds of subsidiary companies, \$642,064; depreciation and extinguishment funds, \$4,834,710; extraordinary replacement funds, \$9,315,615; special funds for depreciation and improvements,

\$10,000,000; total, \$24,774,389; balance of net earnings for the year, \$108,534,374. A supplementary report shows that the net earnings of the steel trust for the first quarter of 1903 ending March 31, after deducting outlays for repairs, renewals, maintenance of plant, interest on bonds, and fixed charges amounted to \$24,656,136. The net earnings of the first quarter of 1902 amounted to \$26,279,599.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF Yale university a student of African ancestry has won a prize. The prize winner was William Pickens, a member of the junior class in the academical department. Pickens was awarded the Henry James Ten Eyck prize for excellence in public speaking. The New Haven correspondent of the Philadelphia North American says: "Pickens was one of thirty-seven juniors who originally entered the contest. He was fourth of the five remaining for the final trials to speak before an audience of about three hundred leading professors of the university and the members of the junior class. Pickens' masterly oration caused a wave of enthusiastic approval to sweep the hall and gave evidence that although the audience might not look to him as the probable winner, they generously acknowledged his ability. The committee of judges was out but a few moments, and by practically unanimous vote gave the prize to Pickens. The prize is the income from \$2,600, about \$100 a year, annually awarded. The fund was given by the class of 1879 more than twenty years ago as a memorial to Henry James Ten Eyck, a member of the class. William Pickens, the prize winner, is a resident of Little Rock, Ark. His father is a shop-keeper in that town."

AN ANTI-UMBRELLA CAMPAIGN IS IN progress in the city of Philadelphia. According to the Philadelphia correspondent of the Chicago Tribune, some one has figured out that the cost of umbrellas lost in one year will pay for the construction of the universal umbrella and sunshade. At the same time the wear and tear on human patience occasioned by the loss of umbrellas and the failure to take them away from home when they are needed will be done away with. It is therefore proposed to build porticoes over the sidewalks which will serve the double purpose of protection from the sun and shelter from the rain.

PHILADELPHIANS INSIST THAT THIS PLAN is not original with them. They point out that the plan was utilized in the construction of Grecian and Roman buildings, the agora or market place of nearly every Greek town being surrounded by colonnades which afforded protection from the rain and sun. The Tribune correspondent says: "There is an amusing story by Athenaeus which suggests the possible origin of the phrase: 'He does not know enough to come in out of the wet.' According to the entertaining grammarian referred to, a town in Greece, under stress of evil circumstances, borrowed money from a rich man, who took as security for the loan a mortgage on the handsome portico which surrounded the market place. He was not an ungenerous creditor, for when it rained he caused the town criers to announce that the citizens had permission to take refuge under the colonnade. Strangers visiting the town who failed to have the matter properly explained to them were so impressed by the extraordinary circumstances that they spread abroad the report that the people were so stupid that they had to be told when to come in out of the wet."

A NOVEL PLAN HAS RECENTLY BEEN INSTITUTED at the Union Bethel at Cincinnati. It is called "kitchen gardening," and its purpose is to teach little girls how to keep house by means of toys. The Cincinnati correspondence of the Chicago Inter-Ocean says: "The little 'kitchen gardeners' are a class of tiny girls, who are being taught how to make beds, set tables, sweep rooms, dust and place things in order in a very quaint manner. The children meet every Thursday. Little sets of doll dishes are given the children and little doll tables are in evidence. The little children are shown how to set the doll tables and place the knives and forks properly at each plate. They are taught the proper way