

1897, the beneficial effects of which are manifest in every department of Irish life. A review of the past year has appeared in several of our old country contemporaries, in which special attention is given to the affairs of the Emerald Isle in 1897. The entire absence of any incident of political importance is commented upon as a very hopeful and gratifying feature.

#### IRELAND TRANQUIL AND PROSPEROUS.

"The country is in a state of absolute tranquility and order. All traces of agrarian agitation and excitement are gone. Various causes have combined to bring about a new state of mind in the people, and their thoughts and energies are now diverted from visionary to practical objects. They are animated by a laudable ambition to improve their social position and to take advantage of the opportunities and facilities afforded by legislation and by the efforts of voluntary associations to advance their material interests." The only exceptional event in 1897, which will be treasured in remembrance, was the Royal visit, which appealed to the best feelings of the Irish people, and revived the generous spirit which it was thought had died out under the blighting influence of disappointment and the bitter sense of neglect. It called forth a welcome in which not only cordial respect but loyal enthusiasm was shown to an extent which surprised all who witnessed it. The event is memorable for the universal joy which it diffused and for the practical benefits which have flowed from it in making the country known to thousands who were strangers to it, and exciting an active interest in its welfare. Although the manufacturing industries of Ireland are highly important, they rank far below those of an agricultural character as an element in the productive, the wealth-producing power of the country. The depressed condition of those engaged in agricultural life has ever been the main cause of agrarian agitation, which is the special phase of Hibernian politics.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF DAIRYING.

It is, therefore, highly gratifying to find that one of the most interesting and hopeful signs of advance is the progress made by the co-operative movement started by the Right Hon. Horace Plunkett some few years ago, for the material improvement of the country by the voluntary and united efforts of the people themselves. It is not too much to say that a great social revolution has been at work, unseen by superficial observers, and has already effected a marvellous change in the ideas and habits of the farming classes. A few figures will illustrate its importance and the hold it has upon the country. On October 1, there were 90 dairy and agricultural societies, 11 auxiliaries, 49 distinctive agricultural societies, four credit banks, five miscellaneous societies, and two federations or local groups, making a total of 161 societies with 17,000 members. There are 93 creameries with 8,750 members, and their output for 1896 amounted

to £283,458. The average price of their butter was 95s. 8d., and the quantity produced 2,791 tons. The average price paid for milk was 3.55d. per gallon—a slight increase on the price for 1895.

The cattle trade of Ireland has long been considerable. It is feeling the effects of exportations from this continent, but it is still carried on very extensively. The official returns published are only for 11 months of last year, Jan. to Nov., in which time the exports of live stock were as follows:—

Cattle.	Sheep.	Swine.	Horse.
695,831	781,461	664,267	36,786

In 1894 the exports of cattle were 826,954, in 1895 791,607, and in 1896 they were less than last year. The exports of sheep were larger than in preceding years, but those of swine less, the competition with this continent being chiefly in cattle and in hog products.

#### THE IRISH FISHERIES

report a good year in 1897, the total value of their products being \$1,915,000, an increase of \$200,000 over 1896. It is a matter of surprise, however, that, with such an extensive sea-board, and markets available, the fisheries yield so little, but, as agitation disappears, there will doubtless be a development of this industry to the great advantage of the Irish fishermen, and the country generally.

The advances for public works made by the Government in 1897 were considerable. Loans were made to landlords and to tenants for improvements in buildings, drainage, etc., also for other purposes which, in Canada, are under the charge of municipalities. The present system in Ireland is altogether too complicated, too centralized. The Government Board of Works is carrying on the business of a Mortgage Loan company; of a School Board; of a Department of Public Works; of a Municipality; of a Board of Arbitration; of a Marine and Fishery Department, and of a Real Estate corporation. It has no less than 31,000 accounts to keep and 1,200 buildings to maintain, besides harbours, ports, railways, drainage works, all over the country. Such centralisation is not desirable, and we believe it is the intention of the Salisbury Government to place the management of a large part of the business now transacted by the Board of Works in the hands of local corporations, as is done in Canada. The Board of Works advanced \$8,120,000 for land grants last year under the Land Purchase Acts. The rate of interest on loans charged on rates has been reduced to 2 3/4 per cent. where the term does not exceed 30 years; 3 per cent. for terms not exceeding 40 years, and 3 1/4 for those not exceeding 50 years. Repayments of these loans have been very satisfactory.

The banks of Ireland are reported to be in a very favourable condition. Bank of Ireland \$500 shares are quoted at \$1,965. Other banks have been paying dividends ranging from 6 1/2 to 15 per cent. The