"In Ireland, Justices of the Peace have, under the Irish Act of 1867 (30 & 31 Vic., c. 118), only the powers of the earlier English Act of 1837 in a modified form, and none of the powers of the later English Act of 1853.

"They consequently had, before committing lunatics, to wait for evidence '*of an intent to commit a crime,*' and the 1,099 lunatics committed by them were necessarily classed with the criminal lunatics.

"The earlier stage at which lunatics were sent to asylums in England and Wales led to the satisfactory result—that the number of actually criminal lunatics there in 1873 was only 35 in a population equal to that of Ireland; while the number of lunatics in Ireland committed, who had gone beyond an intent to commit a crime into actual crime, in 1874 was 64."

The Committee are of opinion that Justices in Ireland should now have the salutary powers of the English Act of 1853 entrusted to them, and should not be left with only the earlier and less effective powers of the English Act of 1837.

Medical officers and relieving officers in Ireland should also be placed under the same obligations, as to giving notice respecting the lunatics above referred to, as the corresponding officers in England and Wales have been under since 1853.

The adoption of this change in the law is greatly facilitated by the provisions of the Act of 1875, under which the asylums can be relieved of harmless and incurable lunatics, without altering the chargeability on the county at large, or depriving the counties of the contribution for the support of this class from the imperial taxes.

Whatever may be thought of the policy of using workhouses as a place of reception for these cases, their removal from the asylum will make more room for the curable cases, which should, as far as possible, be sent to asylums at the earliest moment, and before the lunatic has shown an intent to commit, or has been irritated into the actual commission of crime.

2° *Report on Amendment of the Law as to Ruined Houses in Towns.*

The Council of the Charity Organisation Society of London having entered into the subject of the defective state of houses in London, and had a committee of inquiry, and having made representations to the government on the subject, the Committee have had under their consideration the subjoined proposal of Dr. Hancock, to extend the Scotch law as to ruined houses to England and Ireland.

The Committee have decided to recommend the proposed extension of the Scotch law, and to ask the Council of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland to seek, as to Ireland, the co-operation of the Irish Town authorities, and as to England, the co-operation of the Charity Organisation Society of London to have the extension made. Miss Octavia Hill has already stated her opinion of the importance of the reform for London.

The Committee are of opinion that the subject falls peculiarly within the province of charity organisation, as it is persons whose poverty compels them to live in any houses that offer, who are the chief sufferers from the defective state of the law as to ruined houses.

PROPOSAL OF DR. HANCOCK TO EXTEND THE SCOTCH LAW AS TO RUINED HOUSES TO ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

The loss of life from the falling of a house in George's-street, preceded by the fall of a house in Sackville-street, and followed by one in Moore-street, has attracted attention to the state of the law as to such houses. The Town Council are actively engaged in putting the only powers they have in force for the protection of the public who pass by, and the poor occupants of the houses. Their powers, however, only extend to pulling houses down, or compelling repairs, without any regard to the question whether the person sought to be compelled has legal security for his repairs against others.

In Scotland, the town authorities have for a century or more had a very useful law for dealing with the subject, which is thus described by Mr. MacNeel Caird, in his "Essay on Local Government and Taxation in Scotland," published by the Cobden Club last Spring.

"The Dean of Guild, one of the Burgh Magistrates, has a very special jurisdiction which has been overlooked by the law commissioners.

"In order to prevent town buildings from falling into a state of dilapidation, a person whose title is doubtful or insecure may apply to the Guild Court to have them inspected, and for a warrant to execute such repairs and building operations, as the Court shall sanction. After public notice, and notice to any persons who are supposed to have an interest, that they may be heard, the works are executed under due supervision, the cost is ascertained, and by a decree of the Court is made a charge on the property, in case the applicant should ever be dispossessed. With a similar object, the burgh magistrates have an ancient statutory power to warn those who have a right to, or interest in houses within the burgh which have for three years been 'waste or not inhabited' to build or repair 'in a decent way.'

"Where the owners are not known, they are to be called by proclamations at the market cross or parish kirk; if out of the kingdom, they are to be called, on sixty days' notice at the market cross of Edinburgh and pier and shore of Leith; and if for a year and a day after the expiracy of these notices, the persons interested fail to comply, the magistrates are to have the property valued and sold, preserving the price for the owner."

After this description, Mr. Caird adds:—

"These are useful powers in the public interest, and there has been no complaint of their having been abused. But the notices at the cross, kirk, and pier, would now have a better chance of reaching the parties for whom they are intended, if published in the newspapers; and judicious magistrates are likely to require that this should be done."

The want of similar provisions in the Irish law is well known to those who have investigated the causes of ruined houses in towns in Ireland. Some twenty years ago an investigation was made in Lurgan, the old part of which is built on leases dating from an early period of the past century, and in a very large proportion of cases some serious defect of title was discovered, such as a doubtful will, an absent heir, an unsettled bankruptcy.

It was at first thought that these difficulties might be got over by breaking the leases by ejectments, and so terminating the complication, on the terms, however, of the actual occupiers getting new building leases for lengthened terms at the old rent. The law or graft, however, presented an insuperable barrier, for the new lease

would in law be deemed a graft on the old one, and subject to all the defects that had arisen to the tenant's title under the old lease. The outstanding claimant, if he recovered the tenant's interest would recover at the same time the improvements of the tenant.

In the case of one of the houses that have recently fallen, I have ascertained that there is a serious defect of title, to which the Scotch law would be exactly applicable.

Under these circumstances, I would suggest that in every case where a house has fallen, or where the Town Council take proceedings, inquiry should be made as to whether the case falls within the circumstances that would be met by the Scotch Town Law; and that steps should be taken to have this wise law, so long in successful operation in Scotch burghs, extended to Irish towns.

IV.—*Essay on the Simplification effected by the Codes of Law prepared and adopted for British India, and the desirability of framing similar Codes for England, Ireland, and Scotland.* By Francis Nolan, B.A., T.C.D., Barrister-at-Law.*

[Selections from read, 15th February, 1876.]

"Owing to the growing bulk and intricacy of the English law (a bulk and intricacy which must go on increasing), it is most probable, nay, it is almost certain, that before many years shall have elapsed, attempts will be made to systematize it—to simplify its structure, to reduce its bulk—and so to render it more accessible. . . . . And, owing to the rapidity with which the accumulation of law goes on, to the incompatibility of many of its provisions with the changed circumstances of society, and to the turn for legal reform which public opinion is taking, it is most probable, nay, it is almost certain, that the necessity for such changes will, in a few years, be felt or imagined, and that such changes will be attempted skilfully or unskilfully." *Austin's Jurisprudence,* vol. iii., p. 376.

The formation of codes, or of consolidated statutes relating to portions of Indian law, has taken place within the last few years. The greater portion of this work was carried out in the year 1872. The first statute on this subject became law in 1859.

The public are still ignorant of the extent of this great legal reform—the difficulties encountered and the success achieved in this undertaking. In order to form a judgment as to whether what has been carried out in India can or ought to be attempted in England, it is necessary to consider precisely what has been done in the former country.

It is necessary to examine shortly, in the first place, the state of the Indian law, previous to the passing of these statutes; secondly, the form in which they have been passed; lastly, whether, tested by experience, they have proved successful.

I.—(*a*) *Origin of English Indian Law.*

It is not the object of this article to dwell on the circumstances

* This is one of the prize essays to carry out suggestion of Jonathan Pim, Esq., to have Essays on the Differences in the Laws in the several parts of the United Kingdom, and on the best means of effecting assimilation where desirable.