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The Land Question and Other Questions

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All Ireland Review.

SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 1901.

VOL. II.—No 23.

EDITED BY STANDISH O'GRADY.

ONE PENNY

Contents.

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THE LAND QUESTION AND OTHER QUESTIONS.

SIR—I read with a gleeful interest your opinion that the very evident result of Irish peasant proprietorship would be the ownership of this island by the Jews. I was reminded thereby of something told me a dozen years ago in Switzerland, to wit, that while the land there was nominally owned by the occupiers of the farms it really belonged to money lenders, who held their debtors, the farmers, in the hollows of their hands. The possibility that this was or is the case points to the suggestion that the history of this land question in Switzerland might be worth study in the present crisis.

Well, if your prophecy come true there will be this satisfaction, that even when landlords are no more there will still be someone to hate, for as an observant and experienced Irishman of my acquaintance remarks, the Irish are capital lovers, but they imperatively must have some one to hate. We could still have the luxury of a grievance and agitate for legal reductions of interest in place of legal reductions of rent.

But leaving such minor matters, might we not, with every respect and admiration for your inspiring words on this question, go a step farther (and that means many steps farther than the ordinary "land questioner"), and beyond the query, "Who owns Ireland?" ask "What sort of Ireland is he to own?" Is it to be, for instance,

1. A good Ireland, or
2. A cheap Ireland, or
3. A happy Ireland, or
4. A wealthy Ireland, or
5. A powerful Ireland, or
6. A cultivated and highly civilized Ireland, or

7. A merely middling, muddling Ireland, or

8. ?

or is there a combination of these or other conditions which should be aimed for? I cannot myself think about this

Would it be libellous to say that at present we appear to be living in No. 7, with a hope that No. 2 will produce 1 and 3. Nos. 4 and 5 might run together; 6 could only apply to a fraction of the nation or of any nation. For my own part I am at 8. Even when you have decided on a choice there will be drawbacks. If it is to be 4, for instance, you must have the factory system, and thereby risk lowering the national stature to that of Lancashire, where an ordinary sized Irishman "could eat bread and butter over their heads." After all, however, the tonnage of humanity would be the same or may be greater in a large population of small people as compared with a small population of large people. Therefore add a 9th definition.

An Ireland of great human tonnage.

When we have settled our aim we can decide whether to keep on shouting that Ireland is an agricultural country and must be treated as such; we can consider whether agriculture tends towards our object and should therefore be encouraged.

In this connection may I venture to question whether the British statesman ever gives a thought to the goal to which Ireland is to be conducted? May I also just whisper a suspicion that in this trying with the Irish Land Question the said British statesman is (perhaps only half consciously) pursuing his traditional game of spoiling Ireland. In older and ruder times he hit straight, and simply ruined Irish industries by prohibitive taxes and other penalizing legislation. But in our day is there not a more subtle method in calmly fooling Ireland to the top of her bent over this Land Question, since so long as the Irishman keeps his nose ostrich like in the earth, he is oblivious to everything else, does no harm to English trade, and is the less likely to worry about the host of other things of importance to the Empire.

It may be said this is far fetched. Is it? We are calmly told that the British taxpayer is to find £120,000,000 for the benefit of the Irish farming industry. Suppose we wished for the same sum for the promotion of an Irish cotton spinning industry would it be as likely?

As an old ancient ancestor of mine

used to put it, we might "wish in one hand and spit in the other, and see which would be full first."

I trust, sir, the force of the phrase will make up for its want of polish. It belongs together with its author to the older and ruder time I mentioned when people spoke and hit straighter and gained their points without the subtle meanderings of modern amenities.

Here in the black North we have, of course, much manufacturing activity, so much that the public highways which once sufficed for agricultural purposes are no longer able to carry the heavy traffic of the manufacturing districts. As a result of a public meeting to protest against this state of the roads, the Irish Roads' Improvement Association, of which I send you a prospectus, has been inaugurated. The Association hopes for support from all parts of Ireland wherever the usefulness and civilizing power of good roads are appreciated.—Yours, etc.,

J. BROWN.

Belfast.

Dear Mr. Brown—Many thanks for your excellent letter. You at least realize the magnitude and complexity of the issues.—Ed.

FLOWER CULTURE.

You will be pleased to hear of Flower Trade this year. About 500 packages a week against 20 or 30 five years ago. I feel I am doing a good part of my duty, but I am miles from the goal to which I am working up. Could you get 5 or 6 men to talk with you, and then with Horace Plunket and with some practical authorities like F. W. —, Colonel —, Lord —, etc., etc., and form a company, not too big at first, but with, say, a nominal £100,000 capital, and a first issue of only £10,000; no further issue to take place till, say, 5 per cent. net has been cleared on first issue, and then another £10,000, and so on. We must go warily and avoid the deadly enemy. I know all his tricks in our trade, and am up to him, and am more than his match, if it comes to a fight. I appeal to results. The Flower Trade (Irish) lives, is, and flourishes; the foreign reduced enormously, and nigh paralysed.

C.

Dear C.—My besetting sin is to assume tasks beyond my power, time, and available energy; so please don't tempt me. But the publication of your idea may be the means of bringing men about you able and willing to co-operate. Ed.