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From the North

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FROM THE NORTH.

Upon the first announcement of your Journal I decided upon becoming a subscriber. Later, when the "A.I.R." became an accomplished fact, I did so. When the first three or four issues were in my hands I resolved to write to say how interesting I found it, and to ask you to persevere in the attempt. Later on again, when you published some sentences from "P's" letter re "Club Soda" and "Kennedy's Bread," my resolve was renewed.

Time passed, and pressed so, that I never managed to write that letter! Then came a break in my receipt of the Review, as my newsagent did not receive it. I knew this would happen from your remarks, but had no time to make other arrangements.

Last week my looked for "A. I. R." came again, and in it I read the unthinking—the politely impolite—epistle of "C." This decided me to lose no more time in sending my mite of encouragement, and I commenced this letter, and was interrupted ere I got three lines written, and now No. 20 of the "A. I. R." in its new coat has reached me. Certainly it is a great improvement as far as the eye goes, but after all the test of a book is never the cover, and in spite of "C's" caustic criticisms I am one of those who consider the "A. I. R." well worthy of a renewal of subscriptions.

I do not profess to be en rapport with the present Gaelic movement, but I take an interest in it, and from my heart wish it success. I admire the spirit of your "A. I. R.," and I am sincerely glad to see the signs of future success, and to think that you will carry the kopje.

E.

What follows is the work of the sternest and even cruellest critic in all Ireland, and the gentleness and benignity of his criticism on this occasion seems to me proof positive either that his powers are on the wane, or that he thinks "A. I. R." so delicate that it needs very delicate and tender treatment. Thanks nevertheless, dear D. I have very weak moments as well as my strong; and I want my strong now; awfully; for I am getting on to a big war. And you have not written one word about "the flower of my flock"!

Sunday came round again, and I have time to consider my mind about the "A. I. R."

I have wondered what C., and such surprising people like him, expected from a penny weekly.

You had a pretty talent yourself for ignoring the gap between an end prepared and the means to its realisation; but no one who has done work fails, at last, to respect that frame of the great Alexander's mind. "My life's an agony of means to ends," as Mr. de Vere makes him say in his fine drama.

This is the best of human life. Consider Baden-Powell whistling meditatively down the street of Mafeking.

I do not know how to divide my desire for the "A. I. R." between a criticism of its merits and my interest in its writers. Those who are my friends and those of whom I have inquired from my friends.

At least I note that the paper is civilized. Anyone may come in—may say anything, no matter how imperfectly; if only he has the true stuff of thought, purged from vanity, self-seeking and anger.

As I read the "Gates of the North" I feel the old doubt, how much is translation how much invention.

I know well that the heroic conception of the story of the Red Branch, as it appears among our very modern Celts, has its source in our early myths; but did you invent or discover it? You think it is in the original. Probably it is. That description of the bow of Tireba Lama is "out of you, out of you."

[I shan't tell you.—ED.]

Mr. Goodenough I find most amusing.

I always liked your intolerance of commonplace, and your personages are not cranks, though you call them so; or did you say "originals"? Yes, that is the right word. They are bold characteristic developments on the general lines of human nature.

It is a poetic licence to assume that a man of Mr. Goodenough's prowess could have remained so long ignorant of it; yet experience might, perhaps, match him; and the very fervour of his mind, applying itself wholly to the matter in hand, accounts well enough for his gaps.

The rest of the paper is to me rather Dead Sea apples—ashes in the mouth, yet it is good. Rolleston is always grave and interesting. How rich and

musical were those poems of Percy Somers Payne? I wish you could give us more of them.

[There were only two really good; the rest were—nothing!—ED.]

Then the "National Calendar" is admirable for its research and quaint scraps of folk-lore.

[Glad you like this.—ED.]

If the author is giving you that you have to thank him for a very valuable present.

[Yes, and I am very grateful.—ED.]

Is this bit of March weather of any use to you. I quote from memory, but I must have had it out of some Scotch song book.

D.

Dear D. with the best intentions in the world I do believe those outlandish verses to be a sort of dog-e and quite unfit for our refined and elegant columns.

DEAR SIR—In reference to the suggestion of Mr. T. W. Rolleston in his interesting articles on "Recent Translations from the Gaelic," that some of our classical Gaelic literature should be done into modern Gaelic, the same idea has occurred to others. At this year's Oirachtas a prize was offered for the best modernisation of a mediæval Irish tale. It was secured by Mr. Taddy O'Donoghue, of Dublin, a very capable modern Gaelic writer.

I may say that I have already made some progress in reducing to modern form the very tale of Bricrin's Feast which Mr. Rolleston reviews, and there is another work on the series promised us by the Irish Texts Society, which I intend to submit to the same process. My aim is to publish these works in handy and cheap book form, untrammelled by English translations, vocabularies, or notes, and available for popular reading. Perhaps when the Editor of "A. I. R." goes into the publishing line he will help us to get out a few of these cheap Irish books.

I may say that the amount of alteration to the texts is inconsiderable, and applies to obsolete words mainly, the forms of expression being generally quite intelligible to a modern Irish reader. The spelling has to be greatly altered.

P. T. MACGUILLEY.

Belfast, 4th June, 1900.

P.S.—For most modern writers of Gaelic it is necessary to wait until our manuscript literature is edited with translation or vocabulary by scholars like Dr. Hyde and Mr. Henderson, as many of us would be totally unqualified to deal with an unedited text.

P. T. MACG.

OVER-TAXATION.

Dear——I think this is the only subject upon which we differ; but I do very sincerely believe that the root of all our troubles is over-taxation, and that the Land League war and all the agrarian strife, and all the murders, outrages, and mutilations have arisen out of this great central injustice. Still, I don't forget your good word of counsel that we in Ireland should not rely too much on "the Act of Union," but ought rather to make common cause with the agricultural and pastoral industries of Great Britain which, as I understand, have been hit very hard too by modern legislation.

I have not had sufficient time or energy to answer your last yet, but, please, regard me ever as amongst the truest of your friends and admirers—especially as you are an English lady who takes a warm and tender interest in the welfare of this poor country, which you and I and a few others—English and Irish—love, perhaps, more than it deserves—for it is a very "Lose Land," dazed and drowned in the tide of the avenging "Enchantment." You know a great deal more than I do about this poor County in which I write; but do you know that the Imperial taxation of the County is a great deal more than the rent, and that nearly all of both streams year by year across the Channel and does not come back to the poor people again in expenditure, for not the tenth part of the rent or the twentieth part of the taxation is spent here. And I fear greatly, dear——that besides our substance, and owing to all these tribulations we are losing too our sense of honour and our self-respect, for I perceive all the excellent County institutions which you remember going steadily to decay.