Irish Review (Dublin)

United Irishwomen by Horace Plunkett; Pilkington; George W. Russell

Review by: Elizabeth Bloxham

The Irish Review (Dublin), Vol. 1, No. 6 (Aug., 1911), pp. 310-312

Published by: [Irish Review \(Dublin\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30062732>

Accessed: 15/06/2014 17:36

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Irish Review (Dublin) is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Irish Review (Dublin)*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE IRISH REVIEW

electoral districts or areas, and a candidate presenting himself to the district could receive votes from voters in any part thereof. Conversely, a voter on any register in the district could vote for any candidate before the district. Every voter would have one vote only. Every ballot paper would contain the names of all candidates before the district; and every elector could give his vote to any candidate on the ballot paper. At the close of the poll the number of votes polled would be divided by the number of seats to be filled, and the quotient or quota would be the number of votes required to seat a candidate. Canvassing would be completely changed. Committees of voters would collect promises of support from electors on any register within the district or area. The committee and candidate would know that the result of the election was a certainty if their voters kept their promises. If the district had ten seats then promises from one-tenth of the registered electors would make the election of the candidate a certainty, and if it had fifteen or twenty seats, then one-fifteenth or one-twentieth would be required. If a committee tried to override or coerce the voters, those who felt the shoe pinch would form another committee with a candidate who would make a better representative. In fact, any collection of voters who amounted to the quotient or quota would be certain to seat its candidate, and all the other quotas combined could not prevent his election. Each quota can make certain the election of its candidate, and no quota can interfere with the actions of other quotas. Some candidates would poll more than the necessary quota, and some would poll less, and the way in which every vote becomes effective, though simple in practice, cannot be described in so short a notice as the present. It is fully described in Mr. Humphreys' book or in a pamphlet, "Real Representation for Ireland," written by Mr. Dobbs, and published by E. Ponsonby of Dublin, with a Map, in 1908, or in "Real Representation for Great Britain and Ireland" by the same author, published in 1910.

"UNITED IRISHWOMEN." By SIR HORACE PLUNKETT, MRS. PILKINGTON and GEORGE W. RUSSELL. Dublin; MAUNSEL & CO. Price 6d.

IT is with curiosity one takes up a booklet dealing with a new society of women in Ireland. *United Irishwomen* sounds political, but the names of an educationist, a reformer and a poet are on the title page. In this book men who have thought deeply, and with vision on the social life of rural Ireland, express their need of woman's co-operation, and invite her help. They find that unless the domestic and social life of the country keeps pace with improved agricultural methods success in the latter will be a very one-sided affair. Mrs. Ellice Pilkington, on behalf of what one hopes is a large body of Irishwomen, responds gladly to the call for help.

The problem which the *United Irishwomen* have set themselves to solve is, how to make home life in the rural districts of Ireland less squalid and more

NEW BOOKS

gracious—how to make the home surroundings in some sort an expression, as they ought to be, of what is best in the people. The problem which the *United Irishwomen* are facing is no easy one. In one shape or another it presses on every class in the community. The discussion of servants has ceased to be—if it ever was—a pleasant topic of conversation. The women who perform the domestic drudgery of the world are in revolt. The fact is, that domestic work efficiently performed is arduous beyond the comprehension of any who have not done it, so that the opening of other fields of labour for women has marked a steady decline in the supply of those who are prepared to undertake it. But it is chiefly with women who do their own domestic work that the new society is concerned. They want to help the small farmer's wife, who, perhaps, has inherited slipshod methods, to become an efficient housekeeper; they want to stimulate her to bring all her intelligence to bear on the various branches of work which come within her domain—cooking, buttermaking, poultry rearing. They aim at bringing this about by friendly co-operation between the women themselves, as an outcome of which there will be more sense of communal life, and less of the stagnation which comes from isolation. It is a generously-planned movement. Mrs. Pilkington frankly admits that the members of the society have no special training in the different spheres in which they are so anxious to bring about reforms. Kindliness and zeal appear to be their principal equipment—and it is no mean equipment. No amount of special training on the part of individuals can bring about reforms in an indifferent and apathetic community, at the present moment trained nurses and domestic economy instructresses are scattered throughout the land, and many of them feel that they are voices crying in the wilderness. The *United Irishwomen* can give invaluable assistance to such workers by creating the atmosphere which will make their teaching fruitful. What, for instance, could be more helpful to an instructress than to find in her rural district a body of women interested in the success of her work, women who would help her to an intimate understanding of local needs, and discuss with her the best methods of making her classes of permanent value. The diffused patriotism which such co-operation implies would act beneficially on a whole neighbourhood.

George A. Birmingham says in one of his novels that good housekeepers have sour tempers. The generalization has in it a large amount of truth, for the foundation of efficient housekeeping is routine—a routine which spoils the temper of many a woman—a routine from which the intellectual and imaginative must break away. The *United Irishwomen* are working to prevent this divorce between intelligence and domestic work. The teaching of domestic economy as a science is a factor in the same direction.

It has been found that successful farming demands the best intelligence the country can supply, and we have awakened to the fact that the same truth holds good of home-making, nor is there any lack of intelligence in Ireland, the difficulty has always been to harness it for practical work.

THE IRISH REVIEW

The feminist movement, which is simply a step in the evolution of women—and therefore of the race—is felt none the less strongly in Ireland because it does not express itself in the same manner as in other countries. The woman suffragist who wishes to make a point in favour of her cause, and at the same time in favour of her country, can call attention to the booklet under review. In it men of experience and intellect acknowledge that their movement, well-planned, and carried on as it is with enthusiasm, cannot succeed without woman's help. The appeal for help coincides with the awakening of a civic consciousness in women. In a country where many things happen strangely the Woman question seems likely to be solved without wrangle or contumely.

Surely it is of good omen that the finest statement of our time on behalf of efficient housekeeping and home-making should be written by a poet. Many a woman to whom the dry bones of domestic economy are repellant will be thrilled to interest and activity by A. E.'s appeal, and we have a right to expect splendid results when the best that is in women is brought to bear on their everyday work.

ELIZABETH BLOXHAM.