

All Ireland Review

The Irish Land Question and How to Solve It. A Review

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Source: *All Ireland Review*, Vol. 2, No. 42 (Dec. 21, 1901), pp. 345-346

Published by: [All Ireland Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20545709>

Accessed: 22/06/2014 11:38

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1901.

VOL II.—No. 42.]

EDITED BY STANDISH O'GRADY.

[ONE PENNY.]

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Business communications to be addressed to the Manager; general correspondence and contributory and literary matter to the Editor. Cheques and Postal Orders to be made payable to STANDISH O'GRADY. Address all communications to 56 Henry St., Dublin.

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THE IRISH LAND QUESTION AND HOW TO SOLVE IT.

BY DUDLEY S. A. COSBY.
A REVIEW.

This is a clever and well-informed book, written seemingly by a landlord and addressed primarily to educated and thinking Englishmen. It is most readable, and quite a repertory of facts and figures and quotations from speeches on the Land Question delivered by representative public men, English and Irish—Lord Salisbury, Messrs. Bright, Gladstone, Dillon, O'Brien, T. W. Russell, and others. It is one which all who are interested in our Land question ought to read and include in their stock of literature dealing with this problem of problems, now in our time pressing forward so rapidly towards a final solution.

The following quotation shows that Mr. Cosby has grasped two facts in the situation—(1) that the British Government has treated his class with a cynical injustice; (2) that the Irish landed interest has been betrayed by its own natural leaders, men like the Hamiltons, who are in close and friendly relations with the British Government, and who regard things Irish through a certain English medium. Of that order of men, Lord Castletown alone seems to have broken with his British connections, and to be taking his stand in our midst, fairly and squarely, to the degree of his knowledge and experience, and to promote the interest of his order without entanglement in things English or belonging to the public life of Great Britain, knowing that one cannot be at the same time English and Irish. We regard that kind of men as "dangerous" because our landlords are so constituted that they will only follow leaders of

high rank, and the men of high rank, even when they have places and estates in Ireland, are too English owing to inter-marriage or connection, or through the possession of English estates, and by being mixed up in the political game as played in London to be reliable or even well-meaning leaders of our Irish landed gentry. It is certain that they have been always ready to betray the interests of the latter to the real or imaginary interests of the British Conservative Party.

We write out of a certain dismal experience, for we have seen the most hopeful movements on the part of the Irish gentry frustrated or diverted into blind alleys by men of that kind acting under the orders of the English Conservative chiefs.

Mr Cosby writes—

It is, unfortunately, a truism that the English public are utterly weary of the Irish Question, if not, indeed, of the very name of Ireland. Nor can this be greatly wondered at when we consider how often they have been cajoled into believing that measures passed for the benefit of the tenants were sure to bring peace and contentment to that country, whereas they have invariably discovered for themselves shortly after, that the real solution of the problem was still as far off as ever. Unfortunately for the landlords, too, there would seem to be a general idea prevalent in England that the whole body of Irish landlords are represented by those few very wealthy and well-known Irish landlords, some of them members of the Cabinet, who possess large properties in England as well as in Ireland, and of whom, in reality, there are not more than a dozen, if that, in the whole of Ireland. This, of course is an unfortunate error, and may to a large extent, perhaps, account for the apathy shown by the English public, and their strange acquiescence in the spoliation process which has now been going steadily on unchecked and uncommented on for so many years in Ireland. To the few Irish landlords who derive the main bulk of their incomes from English land, and who are, consequently, quite independent of their Irish properties, it may matter little if the Government decide to adopt a policy of conciliating the Nationalists at their expense, especially if it be an understood thing that they shall not be the losers by such sacrifice. But, after all, it is not possible for more than one or two of them at the most to be the lucky recipients of well paid Government appointments either in the Cabinet or elsewhere, and therefore to the great majority of Irish landlords the recent benevolent class legislation of their party has spelt ruin, partial or complete, according to what independent means they may be possessed of. To the majority of Irish landlords it has long become a matter of life and death that the irrational and unwarrantable cutting down of what little rent has been left to them by the Land Court shall cease, while yet there is anything left for them to cut down any further. The reductions already made by the Land Court, as we shall see later on, amount even now to about 50 per cent. over the whole of Ireland, and in individual cases to as much as 70 per cent., or even more than that.

Can it be expected, then, that these men who have been betrayed by their party in this shameful way will sit quietly down and humbly acquiesce in this insane policy of trying to kill Home Rule with kindness? Certainly it cannot, nor would such a policy be

tolerated by any other class in the United Kingdom or out of it.

Yes, the treatment meted out to them has been historically that reserved by victorious Governments for defeated rebels.

So far we see eye to eye with Mr. Cosby, and, as it were, stand by his side, though there is a whole class of facts very serious and grave—facts of which he takes no cognizance. Rent and landlords can only rightly justify themselves in the eye of reason, justice, and statesmanship where the landlord lives amongst those who pay him rent, uses a considerable portion of it on their welfare and that of his estate, and generally is a sort of captain or ruler over them, or, at least, a teacher, guide, reformer, and improver. This is the high Tory theory of landlordism, and of the high Tory breed we have still a good few left some in every county, but for whom Irish landlordism would have been swept away in the Land League winter, if not a great many winters before.

If Mr. Cosby will think over it he will find that that is so, and also that at the present moment it is this old-fashioned breed of high Tories who are keeping Irish landlordism still on its legs. In fact, it is these men who are fighting the battle of a whole host of degenerate absentees, of widows and orphans with interests in bankrupt estates, mortgagees, annuitants, and so forth. The writer is a cadet, no doubt, of the historic Irish family of Cosby. When he writes about landlords, their rights and wrongs, he has unconsciously in his mind not that non-descript host of people, with their dubious interests, but the chief of his class, at home at Stradbally, in the Queen's County, living on his estate and in the midst of his people.

Arguments and reasons innumerable, we know, may be urged in justification of rents drawn from Meath or Roscommon and spent in Brighton or in the Riviera, but no one really believes in such arguments. The owners and spenders of such rents are entitled to a certain meed of justice surely, but they are an awkward lot of people for any high-minded statesman to deal with, eaters and consumers, who eat and consume and return nothing to the common stock.

Mr. Cosby perceives clearly that the British Government has treated his class with injustice and knows that it will continue to do so, and knows that their agrarian measures in the future, as they have been in the past, will be dictated by expediency and considerations arising out of votes and things of that kind, and never by justice or true statesmanship. He knows indeed, and not to put too fine a point upon it, that the British Government is to be regarded as the enemy of his class.

What then? He maintains, and this is the gist of his book, that Irish landlords should follow the advice of Lord Salisbury and agitate their rights and wrongs in English constituencies *coram populo Anglicano*. But years have

passed now since Lord Salisbury tendered them that advice, and they have not followed it. Pamphlets and letters and magazine articles and books like Mr. Cosby's are all very well. But effective agitation means the descent of men like Lord Londonderry into the English political arena, and speaking face to face and eye to eye with the horny-handed British democracy. Now, our landlords, for very obvious reasons, have not done that, and won't do that. They know, and know well, that the horny-handed would not listen to them. And so, with all respect to Mr. Cosby, we think there is an end of that mode of action, which we do think was suggested by Lord Salisbury in one of his most cynical moods.

We are ourselves in favour of an Irish Convention representing all interests and orders, with the object of arriving at some just, rational, and final solution of the whole question. But that is a work for men alive and awake, not for the indolent and apathetic—men who prefer to lie down and let the waves of things roll over them.

Nevertheless we can warmly recommend Mr. Cosby's book to our readers. The publisher is R. B. Johnson, 8, York Buildings, Adelphi, London.

I never knew, or have read, of a class of men so fond of blind alleys as are our landlords. For example, ever since the Land League winter they have been appealing to the sense of justice of the British statesman. Such a thing, with reference to Ireland in general, and especially with reference to themselves, does not exist; and the British statesman, when he is not posing in public, will admit that that is so, and that there is no more justice in him than there is in a stewed prune, or a well-oiled and freely turning weather-cock. The rogue knows it very well when he is not doing postures in public. This is blind alley No. 1, trodden so industriously by our landlords, who never seem to remember that it is thoroughly well blocked, blocked with a wall like a cliff.

Blind alley No. 2 is that which is favoured by Mr. Cosby and which a great many people like Mr. Cosby periodically penetrate with a sort of desperate hope. It consists in appealing to the sense of justice of the great English people. There are, no doubt, a great many fair-minded English men and women, but, politically, the great English people are doing what we ought to be, but are not, doing ourselves. They are minding their own business, and the redemption of Irish landlords out of the pit into which they have fallen or been thrust does not strike the great mind of the great English people as their business at all. Indeed, if their attention can ever be turned in this direction—I speak of them as a people *en masse*—they will rather consider it their business to thrust Irish landlords yet deeper into the pit; mainly because their sympathy with rent is rather limited, partly because they dislike the sight of suffering. So dear, we are told, butt to death a wounded comrade. If the great English people direct their attention to the Irish landlord they will hurt him. All this is a little shocking no doubt, but I would ask Mr. Cosby and those who think with him to lay their hands to their

hearts and say whether it is not true. Therefore, this intermittent appeal to English public opinion on this issue is also a blind alley, it is blind alley No. 2. Both these alleys, which are as blind as blind can be, are smooth, and level, and supply easy travelling. Alley No. 3, which we may have some time the pleasure of describing, is not at all easy. Walking down that alley is like walking over a succession of very rough and boulder-strewn kopjes; but on the other hand it is not blind. It involves self-reliance, and self-help, and an appeal to the understanding and the sense of justice of this Irish nation, and aims at a convention of all Ireland to consider the matter. — ED.—A.I.R.]

SONG.

She sat among her maidens fair,
Love sighed soft on the Summer air,
'Till one came in the rising dew
And looked the maiden through and through.

The flocks were gathered in the fold,
The west had garnered all its gold,
And waiting till the day was done
The stars were coming one by one.

"Will come with me?" the young man said;
She answered not, she hung her head.
Her maidens whispered in her ear:
"A stranger's lands are cold and drear,"

"Your eyes are blue, your lips are red;
"Will come with me?" the young man said:
"With me alone the wide world share,
"Love is Country everywhere?"

She placed her hands within his hands
She wandered far to stranger lands,
The Birds of Angus sang all night:
"Love is Country, Love is light."

G. C.

TO CATHOLICUS.

[No, Catholicus, I don't think that even as a devout person you will incur much "contamination" from the perusal of A.I.R. One of A.I.R.'s latest subscribers, writing me a very friendly letter too, is a distinguished bishop of your Church who presumably knows more about these things than you do, O Catholicus.—ED.]

THE STREAMLET.

Laughing in the sunlight,
Singing in the shade,
Merry little streamlet
Dancing down the glade.

'Neath thy silver ripples
Tiny fishes play,
O'er thy pebbles darting
All the bright long day.

Gayest little streamlet,
Happy little fish,
Tell it in the sunlight
I have got my wish.

C. I. L.

BITS OF IRELAND.

I. IN THE PETTY SESSIONS COURT.

Presiding Magistrate.—Gentlemen, allow me for a moment. It is right that we should say a few words. A brother Magistrate, universally esteemed and respected, has gone to his reward. I have the greatest pleasure—a—a melancholy pleasure I should say—in moving that a sincere vote of thanks be conveyed from this bench to his relatives.

II. IN THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

Inspector.—Now, which of you lads can tell me what a centimetre is?—Quite right; one twenty-fifth of an inch. Now here is a centimetre scale. These scales are not always made quite accurately. Suppose I ordered, say, a piece of brass to be made, to fit some instrument, just 40 centimetres long, and that I found it to be $1\frac{1}{2}$ centimetres too short; and suppose I took it back to the maker and said, "This won't do—it's too short," and he pulled out *his* scale, and showed me by that scale that it was exactly right, what should we do then? Which of you can tell me how we are to settle that question? Well, what do you say?

Pupil.—Split the difference, sor!

III. BY THE RIVER.

Visitor.—This is a magnificent river you have.

Native.—'Tis indeed, and it's as broad as that for six miles up.

Visitor.—You ought to have a first-rate rowing club here.

Native.—Well, we had one, but now they say we have the finest river and the worst rowing club in Ireland. The young men never seem to go out on the river now.

Visitor.—And what do they do with themselves?

Native.—Well, they play ping-pong.

INADMISSIBLE.

DEAR SIR,—It cannot but be gratifying to your readers to find that you are making efforts to bring into more friendly relations with each other the Protestant and Catholic bodies in this country, and that you are endeavouring to induce the former to make amends for the great wrongs inflicted on the latter in the past. Perhaps the following quotation from Newman (who was so well acquainted with the Protestant mind), may not be inappropriate at this juncture. :—

A CATHOLIC READER.

[Dear Catholic Reader, I cannot allow a long quotation from the writings of an English ecclesiastic to be used for or against anything here. Let us manage our own affairs and form our own opinions without appealing to any external authority.

Indeed quotations of all kinds are, I think, a little irritating. Do you remember Dean Swift's advice to the young clergyman about preaching? "When you have something to say, say it and have done with it. You won't improve matters by adding"—(as was very pertinently observed by a late eminent dignitary of our Church," etc., etc.—ED. A.I.R.]