

## All Ireland Review

---

"The Leader" and "A. I. R."

Author(s): J. O'B.

Source: *All Ireland Review*, Vol. 1, No. 42 (Oct. 20, 1900), p. 3

Published by: [All Ireland Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20544996>

Accessed: 10/06/2014 01:39

---

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.



*All Ireland Review* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *All Ireland Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## "THE LEADER" AND "A. I. R."

What follows is from a member of one of our religious orders. Though I have as a rule given up printing compliments I sometimes make an exception.—Ed.

The thinking public of Ireland owe a big debt of gratitude to the Editors of "A. I. R." and "The Leader" for the determined stand they are making against the powers of cant, necromancy, etc., that have hitherto ruled the destinies of this distracted country. They are as bright stars just appearing above the horizon of our intellectual world, heralding the dawn of a new era in Irish thought, and shedding a vivid light on the obscure and ill-understood phases of our people's character. Midst the clamour and din of political strife, 'tis cheering to witness genuine efforts being made to discover and eradicate the evils that are gradually sapping the foundations of our National life. The forces of obscurantism and narrow-minded party spirit are being assailed, and must ultimately yield to the vigorous assaults of the new revival. The clay supports of the awe-inspiring, all-devouring Almighty "Idol," that hitherto swayed the unthinking public, are beginning to crumble and his fall will be hailed with delight by intelligent Irishmen the world over. Success to the sturdy strikers! Your spicy weekly has helped me to pass many a pleasant hour, and I've recommended it to my friends at home and abroad.

J. O'B.

## FAIRIES AND FOLK-LORE.

Re the Irish language, I fear we are trying to galvanise a paralytic. Nevertheless, if destined to die as a spoken language, which I very much fear (and what if it does? we must die ourselves, a matter of great moment to most of us than the death of all the languages in Europe), we ought to retain it as a subject of study in our schools and of literary cultivation, if possible, in our colleges. But, sir, it is hard to cultivate literature, Irish or English, in Ireland. Readers are necessary as well as writers—and we poor readers have little time to spare to read anything good after they have exhausted themselves with the leading articles of the "Freeman's Journal," "Weekly Times," "Express," etc. The newspaper, from being a necessary engine in the development of opinion, has become a nuisance. It is hard to cultivate any other than newspaper literature in Ireland; the people have no libraries, and consequently little literary taste other than for novels and the gossip of the press. Perhaps our new "Councils" will do something in that direction. A Catholic University might also be a help, though I look forward with doubt to the possible sectarianization of Ireland which a University in Dublin (Protestant), one in Cork (Catholic), and another in Belfast (Presbyterian) would probably tend to bring about. Universities don't destroy prejudices, they often merely concentrate them. Why a strong Government and people like England does not say to the Irish people, "We will thoroughly separate the Divinity School from Trinity College, giving it a local habitation some where else, we shall also give Catholics a voice (equal to other denominations) in its government—we shall exclude priests and parsons from said governing body and open it on the cheapest possible terms to Irish youth," is more than I can understand. I notice your reference to your

contemplated or quasi-contemplated intention to ride on the Fairy Wave of sentiment that seems to you to have come over our Irish writers. Good poetry may of course find Fairyism a fitting material to work on, but I fear much of the so-called Fairy poetry, Celtic glamour, and the rest, is the merest affectation. I am inclined to think this belated fairy business is a symptom of decay—a sort of fever rash more symbolic of disease than health; another sign in fact of the thoroughness with which the great Enchantment is working and has worked. Strange that when the peasant has ceased to believe in Fairies public writers should pretend to believe in them. Surely the living life is under their eyes if they will only open those eyes and look at it. And the Fairies are dead as Brian Boru. I doubt if the peasant ever believed in them at all. He believed in stories; for they fed his imagination, but it is a long time since the peasants believed in Fairies or ghosts as beings having power and influence over his life. The peasant doesn't believe half as much as some people think, and a good deal of what he believes in he doesn't know really whether he believes in it or not. He doesn't bother himself much about the analysis of his ideas. I have read lately certain articles by Irish writers on the spiritual side of the peasant's life; they seem to regard him as a cross between a Mahatma and an imbecile. He is nothing of the kind. His brain tissue is too sound to harbour the vague and misty ideas attributed to him. The microbe of mysticism finds a suitable nidus in the brain of the poet who thinks he has a mission to save the world and not in the brain of a peasant who feels he has an imperious mission to supply himself and his family with potatoes and buttermilk. Some of our Irish folk-lorists who supply the "Saxon" magazines with "typical" Irish ideas must have encountered all the crazed "pishroques" in the country. They must have met with only pathological specimens of the race, or they may have been simply fooled, for a gossiping peasant can invent as well as relate; his fictions are as probable as his reminiscences. One thing I am convinced of, and that is, that the peasant has no more belief in fairy tales than the Lord Chancellor has. Of course he likes Fairy tales, or any other tale for that matter, but only in the same way as one likes a good story or a good anecdote. Perhaps in a thousand years or so the heroes and heroines of our novels will be regarded by the "Research" people as real gods and goddesses. I believe countless hosts of gods and goddesses had a similar origin; for man has always loved stories, and surely he was able to invent long before the 19th century.

M.

DEAR M.—I doubt if you are quite as hard-headed as you think. Otherwise would you have taken the trouble to prepare such a wheel for the breaking of this butterfly? But "disease" or "affectation" at least note it as a sign of the times. There is another kindred Irish phenomenon, the number of apparently rational and sensible people who seem to have the faculty of second sight, at least the power in broad daylight and while wide-awake, of seeing visions and dreaming dreams.—Ed.

**BEST HOUSE COALS, WEIGHT AND QUALITY  
GUARANTEED, try**

J. C. MEYER, RATHGAR.