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ERIN:

HER SISTERS, HER NURSE,

AND

HER DOCTORS,

BY THE

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Late Rector of Marholm, Northants, and Hon. Canon of Peterborough.

"Ireland suffers not only from her Disorders, but also from her
Doctors."—*French opinion on the Irish Crisis.*

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ERIN.

SCENE. *A pretty morning room in a charming country house. Two Sisters, BRITANNIA and SCOTIA, seated at a table, working. Enter DOCTOR COMMONSENSE.*

BRITANNIA.—Oh, Doctor! I am so glad you are come. We want your advice immediately; there is not a moment to be lost.

DR. COMMONSENSE.—Well, my dear young ladies, I cannot say that either of you look as if you wanted a doctor. Excuse my bluntness; but I cannot help saying you are the picture of health.

SCOTIA.—Oh, yes! *we* are quite well, thank you; but we have a very dear sister who is generally the life and soul of our home—so bright and witty and clever; but she is subject at times to terrible fits of depression, and when these come on, she keeps going back on things which happened when we were all tiny little children. She is especially hard at these times upon our elder sister. I dare say Britannia was a little tiresome in those days. I remember that

when I was a little child, I did not half love her as I love her now. Indeed, it was not until our Aunt Bess died, and left us her property, that I learned to appreciate sister Britannia. I know she used to be a little greedy, and I dare say she *did** take away some of sister Erin's sweets and good things, as Erin often tells us she did; but this was long, long ago, and it is only when these fits of depression come on that our darling Erin goes on in this foolish way.

BRITANNIA.—Well, Doctor, now that Scotia has let out this little bit of family history, I may tell you that our dear little sister has lately had the worst attack we have ever known her to have. She went on, week after week, raking up all these stories about our childhood, until she worked herself into a regular fever; and as we are strangers in these parts, and did not know much of any of our new neighbours, we put an advertisement into one of the Bostonville papers for a skilled nurse. A Mrs. Agitator answered our advertisement the very next day. We foolishly took her without making any inquiries about her character, and things have been in a terrible way ever since she came into the house. The first thing she did was to unsettle everything we had arranged in Erin's room. We are really ashamed to take you into so untidy a room as our darling Erin's now is.

* See Appendix A.

DR. COMMONSENSE.—This is indeed most unfortunate. I have often met this wicked nurse in sick rooms, and, I am sorry to say, wherever she goes she does mischief; but tell me, what did she advise as to doctors, for I know that there is no love lost between nurse Agitator and myself. I cannot think why she told you to send for me.

BRITANNIA.—She never told us to send for you. Almost the first word she said, when she came into the house, was that the regular practitioners in this neighbourhood were an ignorant lot, and she persuaded dear Erin to send for a Dr. Homerule, the three Drs. F (who, she said, always went about together), and a Dr. Peasant Proprietary.

DR. COMMONSENSE.—Then my way is clear, for you must understand that it is not etiquette for any doctor to give advice to another doctor's patient without the form of a consultation being first gone through; but these men are arrant quacks, and we have no scruples in dealing with them. Now I will tell you what you must do. You must smuggle me into your sister's room, and hide me behind one of the window curtains; but first we must get that odious woman out of the room. Not one of "the Fitzwilliam" hounds has a better nose for a fox than she has for a beefsteak and onions. I know the old woman well; so you, Miss Scotia—for you look like the housewife of this household—just go down-stairs,

and tell cook to get a steak ready as quickly as she can, and send it into the housekeeper's room for nurse Agitator; and while it is getting ready, you and I, Miss Britannia, will have a little more chat about this interesting patient.

Exit MISS SCOTIA on housekeeping thoughts intent.

BRITANNIA.—I could talk to you by the hour about our darling Erin. She is not only so attractive and amusing, but so clever and active, it would take hours to tell you all she has done for us. I remember, when we were all quite little children, all the children in our neighbourhood were frightened out of their lives by a savage French poodle dog that at one time or other, I believe, had bitten every child in Newrope but ourselves. He was once very nearly caught in a trap that a big boy named Alexander Ross cleverly set for him in the snow, but he escaped with the loss of one of his paws; this however only made him more savage, and one day we heard him barking in Leopold's garden,* just at the other side of our stream. Brave little Erin jumped across the stream, and took the dog up in her arms, and carried him off to an out-of-the-way little kennel, and there shut him up for the rest of his life. And only the other day, when we got a letter telling us that one of our cousins who lives a long way from this, and who had given us an enormous jar full of

* See Appendix B.

sugar candy, had changed his mind and was going to take it back again, she ran off ever so many miles in ever so few hours,* and before almost anyone knew what she was about, she snatched the candy jar out of our treacherous cousin's greedy grasp. Another time—but listen, what noise is that? Oh, it is that dreadful nurse—(a harsh voice is heard from the top of the landing)—“Coming directly, Miss Scotia, but you must come up here to Miss Erin's room first; you heard what the doctors said this very morning; to be sure they didn't agree about the different medicines, but they all agreed that Miss Erin was not to be allowed to be quiet for one moment. ‘Excitement,’ they said, ‘Excitement, remember that, nurse Agitator; keep up excitement in every way you can, don't let the patient go to sleep or have a moment's rest; she will slip out of our hands, all in a moment, if this treatment is relaxed for one instant, remember that,’ said they, ‘Nurse Agitator,’ and remember that says I now to you, Miss Scotia.”

Nurse Agitator having been got out of the sick-room, Britannia and Scotia smuggled the good doctor into their sister's room and hid him safely behind the window curtains.

“How do you feel now, darling Erin?” asked Britannia, tenderly leaning over her sister. “Oh, I

* See Appendix C.

have had a terrible time," gently answered little Erin, "ever since that nurse and those doctors came to me; you know what a noise the doctors made, fighting among themselves about the treatment I ought to get. Well, no sooner had they left than that dreadful nurse set to work following out their horrid directions. My nerves quivered as she threw down the dinner tray, and tumbled over the fire-irons, and poked away at the fire until I thought the bricks would all fall down the chimney; and then as I was just dropping off to sleep, fairly exhausted, she came up to my bed, and shook me so roughly by the shoulder, and scolded me so dreadfully for feeling sleepy, and disobeying the doctors' orders, and all that; but now that she has gone out of the room, and you and dear Scotia are nursing me, I feel almost well again.—Oh, if I could only be allowed to be quiet just for a few hours!" Just then a ring was heard at the hall door; and nurse Agitator, reeking of onions, ushered in the five doctors.

After a preliminary squabble for precedence, Doctor Homerule roughly seized poor Erin's arm, by way of feeling her pulse, and began to give his opinion of the case.

"You must leave this room at once, Miss Erin, and cut all ties between you and those unkind sisters of yours. Don't speak. You know very well what you have so often told us of their dreadful treatment of

you when you were a child, and I can see with half an eye that they are as bad as ever they were; and if you stay in the house with them for another day I will not answer for the consequences. No; you must go off at once to that piece of bog-land which is your own. It is your good tenants out there who are sending us money to cure you. I know you will be very poor, and have no comfortably furnished room like this, and no cozy coal fires and all that sort of thing; but you will be free from those wicked sisters of yours, who are killing you by inches. That's my prescription,* Miss Erin, and the sooner you take it the better it will be for you."

"Faugh," broke in the three Drs. F all together. "No, no, my dear young lady; listen to us."—Doctors "Fairrent," "Fixity of Tenure," and "Freesale" set up such a Babel of talk, that poor Miss Erin could not make head or tail of what they were saying. They contradicted each other so flatly, that it was impossible to make out what they wanted to prescribe: the only clear point in the matter was that Dr. Freesale's prescription was exactly the reverse of Doctor Fairrent's.†

In the midst of this Babel of talk the clear voice of Doctor Peasant Proprietary now made itself heard. "Whisht," shouted the burly doctor in a rich Irish accent, "Whisht, will ye, and just listen to raisin and

* See Appendix D.

† See Appendix E.

common sinse for a few minutes. Shure its nothin' but the thruth that me frind Sir Stafford Southgate said when he called you three docthors by those ugly names ; shure the three proscptions could niver go together at all at all, they'd mix mighty quare inside anny poor body that tuk them. Shure it's meself that has the raal rimedy, only I'm afeerd that them that have the medicine won't sell it to me ; and even if they wud sell it, faix it's so mighty dear that I don't for the life of me know whare in the worrld we'd be afther gitten the money to pay for it ;* and, mosha, may be afther all it wud only do good for a bit, for may be the ould disase, Landlordthism, 'd only break out again, and that may be worse than iver ; but I'd loike to thry it anny how, and may be I shall yit."†

At this moment Doctor Commonsense stepped out of his hiding-place, to the astonishment and confusion of the nurse and doctors. When the confusion had a little subsided the worthy Doctor said, addressing himself to Doctor Peasant Proprietary, " You, sir, are the only man of the lot who has talked anything like sense during the whole hour that I have been listening behind that window curtain ; you see, however, as plainly as I do, the great difficulties in the way of your proposed treatment ; still, although you are only a quack "—at this word the pent-up indignation of the

* See Appendix F.

† See Appendix G.

five doctors found vent in angry ejaculations at the trick which had been played them; and no doubt Doctor Commonsense would have been roughly treated had he not taken the precaution of posting himself close to the bell. Gently but firmly laying his hand on it, he went on to say, "It is not for nothing, gentlemen, that I have passed by this house night after night lately; I was puzzled at the hubbub and noise which I so often heard here, and when I was sent for by these young ladies this morning, I took the precaution of bringing a dozen stout men armed with stout cudgels. My twelve friends are now in the servants' hall, and they have orders to come up here when I ring this bell; so if you wish to get out of this house with a whole skin, I advise you to be off at once. I have a great mind to have you all taken before the magistrates for getting money from those poor ladies on false pretences. Don't let me find you at this sort of work again. Mind that. And now off with you."

The doctors were soon out of the house; the moment they heard of the twelve men with the big cudgels out of the room they tumbled in a jiffy, but in their hurry to get out of the house they tumbled one over another down the stairs, and they will carry the marks of their visit on their shins for many a day. One angry look from the Doctor was quite enough for nurse Agitator. She sneaked out of the room, cowed and terrified, and the three sisters could scarcely

believe that this abject wretch was the noisy bump-tious tyrant that had ruled the house with a rod of iron for the last few days.

“And now, young ladies,” said the kind old doctor to the three sisters, “I will leave you to yourselves. I will call again in a few days, and perhaps I may prescribe a few simple remedies for you, Miss Erin, for you are a little shaken by all that you have gone through of late, but it will be time enough for tonics a few days hence. Our little patient, my dear young ladies, wants rest and quiet above all things. As soon as I am gone just close the shutters, and draw the curtains in this room, and my name is not Common-sense if Miss Erin does not drop off into a quiet sleep before half-an-hour is over; and when she awakes in the morning and finds that that dreadful nurse Agitator has left the house for good, and when she feels her own dear sisters’ arms round her once more, she will be her own sweet bright self again, and then I think you will be the blythest, happiest family under the sun. Forgive an old man, my dear young ladies, for saying that you have each and all taken possession of his old heart. I do not believe that there is a handsomer group of sisters in all Europe; and after what has happened to-day I do not believe a more united trio could be found on any one bit of the road, from your own pretty house right on to the other end of the world.”

APPENDIX.

A.

It is only too true that trade and manufactures in Ireland were not only discouraged but hindered, and even put down, by England in days long past.

B.

The Author need scarcely to point out that this alludes to the Duke of Wellington's victory at Waterloo. "Leopold's Garden" is a pardonable misnomer for Belgium in 1815.

C.

Sir F. Roberts' famous march on Candahar.

D.

"Suppose that Ireland, by some political cataclysm, should succeed in recovering her independence; would her situation in consequence be ameliorated? She now contributes the modest sum of only £6,781,000 to Imperial taxation, while England and Scotland contribute £62,803,000; in other words, she is a

source of expense to her two partners. If she were to become independent, she would be obliged to bear all the cost of her government, both internal and external; her expenditure would be at least doubled, and consequently so would the amount be which it would be necessary to raise by means of taxation. Then comes the question, Would Ireland, if she were independent, be better governed? It is evident that her local administration leaves much to be desired. I was struck by the wretched appearance of the workhouse in Galway; and the newspapers contained numerous revelations by no means edifying as to the administration of the workhouse at Belfast. The towns in Ireland are ill-paved and dirty, although the municipal budgets rapidly increase. . . . Those, again, who derive benefit from the public services, and who constitute the great mass of the population, have nothing to gain from the establishment of a national government. I would say the same for that intellectual *élite* which now shares in the vast outlets which the British Empire affords to every description of talent. Assuming, then, that the politicians, journalists, and others, clever but terribly restless people, were thrown back upon the limited resources of a nationalized Ireland, I would ask, Could they find, with the facility they would wish, positions corresponding to their talents, and would their rivalries tend to consolidate the public peace? . . . Is it

necessary to add that an agitation set on foot for the purpose of realizing the most chimerical of political Utopias, turns the mind of the people from the path of possible progress, frightens away capital, and obliges England to reinforce her garrisons? Behold, then—without speaking of Coercion Bills—or Peace Preservation Bills, the benefits of Home Rule!”—*French opinion on the Irish Crisis*, page 12.

E.

“It is not only Conservatives and landlords who are opposed to the ‘Three F’s,’ but many Liberals like Lord Dufferin; while Mr. Parnell and his followers repudiate the scheme root and branch. The truth is, that the ‘Three F’s’ must be separately considered. ‘Fair rents’ stand upon a very different basis, both morally and economically, from ‘fixity of tenure’ and ‘free sale,’ and each part of the system may be established either unconditionally or subject to varying limitations.”—*Leading article in The Times*, Jan. 13.

“Let us consider the third of these panaceas—‘Right of sale by the outgoing tenant.’ This is a custom which sprang up in the north of Ireland, at a period when payment of rent was very unpunctual. The landowners authorized their tenants to transfer their farms on condition of paying the arrears out of the price of the transfer. But has the condition of the new tenants thereby been improved? Instead of

paying one rent they pay two—that due to the landlord, and that represented by the interest of the sum paid for the transfer. Besides, the obligation of providing this sum—often considerable and always heavy, in proportion as the rent is moderate—deprives the incoming tenant of the capital necessary for the proper working of his farm.”—*French opinion on the Irish Crisis*, page 19.

That “free sale” and “fair rents” contradict each other may be clearly seen from the following illustration:—About two years since the author of “Erin and her Doctors” let a small farm at what he considered a “fair rent”—viz., £30 per annum. This farm was let on a thirty-one years’ lease. Within a week of this lease being signed the tenant asked leave to sell the interest in it. As the tenant held eight acres from another and an adjoining landlord, and had already made arrangements for the transfer of those eight acres, the permission asked was given. The new incoming tenant gave the seller £500 for his interest in these two small farms of thirty acres and eight acres each. Thus, instead of paying one rent, the new tenant now pays two—that due to the landlord, and that represented by the interest of the sum of £500 paid for the transfer. It will scarcely be believed that this new tenant lately asked his landlord for a reduction of rent, on the ground that he was over-rented!! No doubt his rent is now “a rackrent;” but this is owing

to his having given £500 for the interest in a farm for which the landlord only asks and receives "a fair rent." "Free sale" and "rackrent" go hand-in-hand; but "free sale" and "fair rent" are simply contradictory.

F.

"The panacea, *par excellence*, which Socialist Radicals and Liberal Philanthropists unite in extolling, is the transformation of tenants of every degree into "peasant proprietors," by an operation similar to the emancipation of the serfs in Russia. The Government would acquire land at a fair price, and make over the ownership of it to the tenants, on the understanding that the latter should pay off principal and interest in thirty-five years. Thanks to the exceptional credit enjoyed by the English Government (notwithstanding that its enemies predict for it a speedy decline to the condition of the Government of Turkey), the increase in the annual payments by the tenant would be insignificant, and all his evils would be infallibly cured by a plunge into the sacred pool of property. Examples in support of this view are not wanting. In particular the case of the peasant proprietors of France and Belgium is quoted. The advocates of this system, however, fail to add that the subdivision of property in France and Belgium has been the work of centuries, and that the peasantry, before becoming proprietors, acquired those qualities of order and economy

which are indispensable to the good administration of property. They worked and saved, sou by sou, the capital which they employed, first to acquire and afterwards to extend their little possessions. Nothing of that kind is sought on behalf of the Irish tenants. It is proposed in their case to do away with this apprenticeship to property—merely substituting during a period of thirty-five years, more or less, the Government for the landlord. I am aware that something of this kind has been done in Russia; but it has not been shown that the popularity of the Russian Government has thereby been promoted, still less the welfare of the peasant, who now groans under the burden of taxation augmented by the yearly instalments of the purchase-money. It may be remarked also, that while the Czar was regarded and venerated as a father by the Russian peasant, the Irish peasant has no such filial feeling for the Government of the Queen. In some cases he even detests his landlord, *although this sentiment is far from general*. What will his feelings then be when the landlord is replaced by the English Government? . . . Let us not forget, moreover, that this new landlord will be obliged to exact regularly the instalments due, without any abatement such as landlords usually make in bad years. Can any one suppose that the position of this new official creditor will be a pleasant one?"—*French opinion on the Irish Crisis, page 20.*

Mr. Cliffe Leslie, in a thoughtful article in the December number of *Frazer's Magazine*, advocates a limited application of the doctrine of peasant proprietary. He wishes to see the large farms in Ireland owned by the occupiers. May we ask Mr. Cliffe Leslie what he proposes doing with the small farms? Surely he could not expect any owner of landed property only to sell his large and well-circumstanced farms, and keep only the small and unpaying farms. The able author of "Confiscation or Contract" touches admirably upon this subject (*vide* "Confiscation and Contract," page 35):—

"The utmost that the most advanced organs of public opinion suggest, is a partial confiscation of the landlords' rights, with compensation for the confiscated part. But this is not compatible with English justice. If the State is entitled to buy out the landed proprietor, the landed proprietor is entitled to call upon the State to buy him *out*. The State has no right to leave him with a mutilated property upon his hands. The State, if the landlord so requires, should purchase the whole of his property or none. It should buy it out and out."

"A *peasant proprietary* is Mr. Parnell's nostrum. Of a peasant proprietary, when it co-exists with justice, the historian and the economist must speak with all respect. . . . A peasant proprietary, arising by free

contract, might be an element of good. If the tenant wishes to buy, and the landlord is willing to sell, the State might well consent to facilitate and aid the contract. . . . A class of small proprietors would then be created eventually by the natural operation of economic laws. It is by such means that Mr. Arnold and Mr. Kay, the authors of 'Free Land' and 'Free Trade in Land,' propose that such a class should be created. But this would be a work of time; and the Irish agitator does not care to wait. He is impatient. He demands the creation of a peasant proprietary on the instant, and that can only be effected by a general confiscation. It may be effected by open and avowed confiscation, such as that by which the French Revolution effected the robbery of the French *noblesse*; or it may be effected by expropriation, which is only confiscation in disguise.

“The expropriation of the existing race of Irish landlords is no mere amusement for a summer's day. The value of the fee-simple of the Irish soil amounts to some £305,413,020 sterling. . . . The State cannot afford to buy out the landed proprietors of Ireland.”

—*Confiscation or Contract*, pages 29-35.

G.

“That Landlordism in some form will continue to exist in Ireland is certain. Even an Irish agitation must break itself into empty foam when it beats

against the possibilities of things. The question is not whether Landlordism is to continue in Ireland, but who henceforward are to be the landlords. . . . The dispossession of the present proprietors and the substitution of the actual tenants would be a reproduction in another shape of the present evil of a class monopoly in the ownership of land. It would appropriate a class of proprietors which is unpopular because it favours and supports the English connexion, and it would create a class of proprietors animated with a hatred of the name of England. This is the admitted aim of Mr. Parnell. This is the menace which the English people has to face.”—*Confiscation or Contract*, page 34.

The reader who may desire accurate and reliable information on the Irish Land Question, is recommended to obtain publications issued by the Irish Land Committee. Price sixpence each. Publishers—London: William Ridgway, 169, Piccadilly.—Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 104, Grafton Street.

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