

**CO-OPERATION AND
NATIONALITY: A GUIDE FOR
RURAL REFORMERS FROM THIS
TO THE NEXT GENERATION**

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Co-Operation and Nationality: A Guide for Rural Reformers from This to the Next Generation
by George W. Russell

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GEORGE W. RUSSELL

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FROM THIS TO THE NEXT GENERATION
BY GEORGE W. RUSSELL (Æ)

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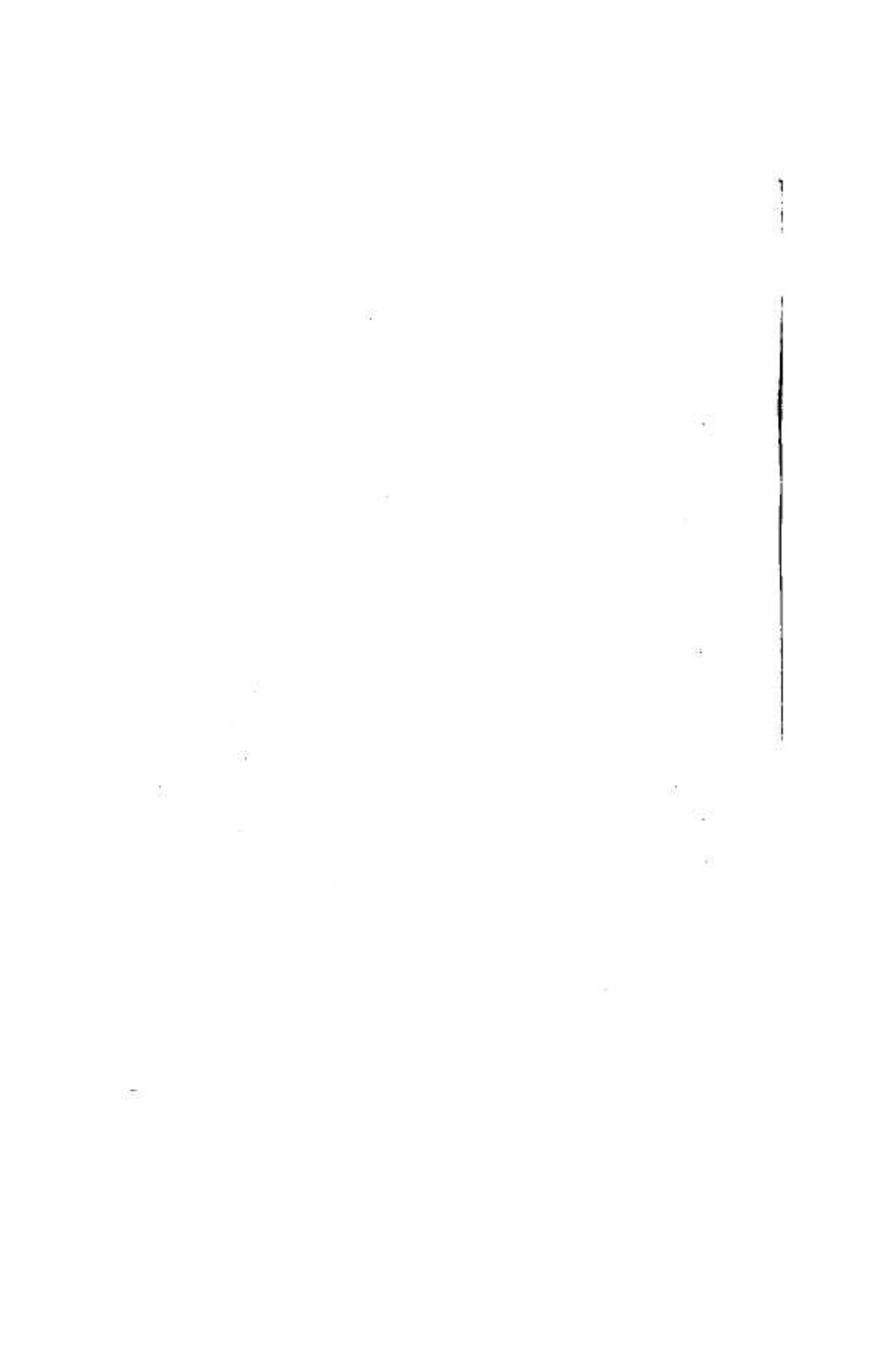
*To Sir Horace Plunkett, Father Thomas
Finlay and Robert A. Anderson, three
good comrades, I dedicate this meditation
over the outcome of their work in Ireland.*

Reclams 4-25-28 M.V.P.

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CO-OPERATION AND NATIONALITY

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF RURAL LIFE

I have heard people speak as if Ireland were a freak, as if our national problems were absolutely unique, and we could learn little or nothing from other countries. Agricultural co-operation, for example, might suit farmers in other lands, but it was either too high or too low for us. The creamery system was a disastrous departure from our ancient methods of butter-making. We would starve our children if milk and eggs could be sold at higher prices, for it would make these wholesome articles too costly a luxury for the home. All this and much more has been gravely urged. It was natural enough, when the majority of the people were trying to show how impossible government from Westminster was, that every cause, reasonable or unreasonable, should be urged to emphasize our unique character and the hopelessness of other people understanding us sufficiently to let us develop happily. Anything which would show our problems were not unique seemed to destroy an argument for self-government, and it looked as if we might at last shape ourselves into a national freak which would justify, not self-government, but control by the Commissioners for Lunacy. Luckily it is now being recognized that there are stronger arguments for and against self-government than the exhibition of our people as

freaks, and we can learn many things from other countries without injury to our Irish pride. We are gradually being won back to humanity, and men are learning that the problems of rural life in Ireland are not so very different in character from those which statesmen have to solve in Europe or America. We can see now that people migrate from rural Ireland for reasons nearly identical with those which make the Italian peasant emigrate, or make the American cultivator leave his farm and go to the cities. It is admitted that inefficient government is one of the causes here, but it would be as easy to prove there is inefficient government everywhere. Government is inefficient because statesmen have not yet agreed upon the remedy for rural depopulation. There is no general agreement even among those who personally are affected by the changes which are going on, and the truth about these or any other subjects must become almost a platitude before governments will accept it, or foster a new idea. The problem of how best to keep a rural population happily contented on the land has been too suddenly presented to the world for any complete answer yet to be made. It only assumed an urgent aspect within the last half century, and at first it was difficult to disentangle temporary causes from those which steadily and inevitably operate. In Ireland it began after the famine, and if the cause was transitory it was quite sufficient to explain the flight from Ireland for a considerable number of years. But it does not explain the continued flight from the land which goes on to-day in Ireland, as in England or Europe, and even in the United States, which has admitted many millions from Europe, but whose agricultural population has remained stagnant during the half century in which these people were swept from the land in Europe. The