

**THE IRISH LABOUR
MOVEMENT,
FROM THE 'TWENTIES TO
OUR OWN DAY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649111107

The Irish labour movement, from the 'twenties to our own day by W. P. Ryan

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

W. P. RYAN

**THE IRISH LABOUR
MOVEMENT,
FROM THE 'TWENTIES TO
OUR OWN DAY**

MODERN IRELAND IN THE MAKING

THE IRISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

FROM THE 'TWENTIES
TO OUR OWN DAY

By W. P. RYAN

AUTHOR OF "THE POPE'S GREEN ISLAND," ETC.



DUBLIN
THE TALBOT PRESS
(LIMITED)
89 TALBOT STREET

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
(LIMITED)
1 ADELPHI TERRACE

1919



Printed at
the Talbot press
80 Talbot Street
Dublin

RÉAMHÁD.



MBAILLE ÁTA CLIAÍ, ran mbliain 1918, tar eis
teacht ar ais dom ó Coláiste Bhríche i nOmeít,
coir loé Cárlinne na háille, i n-áice le críe
na tÁna, 'readó rghíodar an leabhar go. Da
mínic mé as rmaoineadó, i míe an trairíaró, ar laochra na
Craoibe Rua; agus naé móir an uirríocht atá iuirí móir-
rghéal a n-imeadta rúo agus an rghéal a bí orim do rghíodaró
ra b'fóghair coir éuain áta cliaí? Déantarúe ran agus
béantarúe a málarit, mar veirtear i nOmeít. Ad ve b'í
go b'fuil baint as an rghéal go le rionntán ó leatlobair,
le míeál macDáidro, le Séamur Ó Conzáile, agus le pátraic
macríarair, cé véaradó naé b'fuil ríor-áodar laochair ann?
Tá baint aige, leir, le himeadta luét oibre na héireann
le b'fir agus céau bliain anuar; le n-a nvearparar, le
n-a nveadóar trío; le raóear, le rghíor, agus le hair-
eirge na n'gacúeal; le brón agus le bríonglóro, le b'ireadó
craoibe agus le neairt áru-anmann. Muna b'fuil a rian
air, agus laochar a'r uairleacht le n-áruú ann, ir orim-ra
atá an loét. Ir rí-rghéal an rghéal réin.

Liam p. Ó Riain.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. LABOUR AND THE GAEL	1
II. LAND WORKERS' ORDEALS AND DEEDS	13
III. WILLIAM THOMPSON, ROBERT OWEN, AND RALAHINE	32
IV. OUR EARLY TRADE UNIONISM	46
V. THE GUILDS AND THE UNIONS	70
VI. ILLUSIVE EMANCIPATION	74
VII. O'CONNELL AND TRAGI-COMEDY	89
VIII. WEAVERS AND "LOCK-UPS"	106
IX. LALOR AND LEAN YEARS	115
X. IN DAVITT'S DAYS	134
XI. CONNOLLY IN THE SCHOOLS OF LABOUR	145
XII. CONNOLLY'S TEACHING, INDUSTRIAL, UNIONISM	162
XIII. LARKIN'S YOUTH IN THE DEPTHS	170
XIV. THE RISE OF "LARKINISM"	180
XV. UP FROM SLAVERY IN ULSTER	202
XVI. THE STRUGGLE OF 1913	214
XVII. THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE	238
XVIII. TOWARDS THE COMMONWEALTH	253
AUTHORITIES AND SOURCES	266

THE IRISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

CHAPTER I.

LABOUR AND THE GAEL.

James Connolly declared in his *Labour in Irish History* that "the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were indeed the Via Dolorosa of the Irish race. In them the Irish Gael sank out of sight, and in his place the middle-class politicians, capitalists, and ecclesiastics laboured to produce a hybrid Irishman, assimilating a foreign social system, a foreign speech, and a foreign character." Possibly the phrase "laboured to produce" is too strong; at any rate it suggests design and deliberation; and I think that the politicians, capitalists, and ecclesiastics were often unconscious of the havoc they wrought; they erred through ignorance, want of insight, failure to grasp or sympathise with the elements and growth of nationality. Sometimes it would seem that they simply drifted, having ceased to think or live in the true sense. But whatever their actual attitude there is no question as to the dire results. Connolly's picture is unhappily true; the alien

social system and speech were assimilated to a great degree; but, as Connolly proceeded to note, it was difficult to press the character into the foreign mould—"and the recoil of that character from the deadly embrace of capitalist English conventionalism, as it has already led to a re-valuation of the speech of the Gael, will in all probability also lead to a re-study and appreciation of the social system under which the Gael reached the highest point of civilisation and culture in Europe." Connolly's instinct in apprehending and striking this Gaelic note was sound and wise. He saw the truth at almost the beginning of his active career; he was always faithful to the Gaelic vision; it furnished one of the guiding gleams of poetry in his toilsome and often harassed career; to ignore the Gael in his individuality is to miss an essential inspiration.

In sooth to ignore the Gaelic element in the survey generally is to leave the story of Irish Labour in the last hundred years less than a half-told tale. On a broad view we might well regard that story, till the later stages at all events, as a painful and often a lamentable record. Connolly has spoken of a *Via Dolorosa* extending through three centuries. For the Irish toilers the last of the three might seem in some respects the drabdest of all—drab in general, with, at several stages, the terrible excitement of tragedy. That view is to a large extent true, but it is not all the truth. The Gaelic workers, who were numerous in all the provinces in the first half of the nineteenth

century, had a vivid interior life of their own, and unless we realise and understand that life we have only a superficial knowledge of their real position and history. Granted that for generations, through the absence of regular education and of the merest elements of fair play in other regards, the minds of the Gaelic toilers had ceased to grow or to be really creative, the fact remains that they retained an enlivening share of the traditional lore and culture; of romance and poetry, of song and racy wisdom. The story is the same from Iveragh to Oriel, from Ring to Donegal. All these quarters just mentioned, long into the nineteenth century—and in a measure to our own time—were centres of Irish poetical and other mental cultivation; the poet and the story-teller in homely pride of place and honour. Their history, like that of many kindred quarters, has both charm and pathos; and if it were widely known, if it had seized the popular imagination, as some day it surely will, we would all have a deeper, a more human conception of hosts of Irish workers who have gone before us. There would be not a little of "glorious pride and sorrow" in our minds as we looked back to their days and destinies.

Again and again in the unfolding of the fortunes of Labour through the century we are cognisant of the vitality of the Gael; we are also sensible of a store of power in the Gaelic order which has been left undeveloped, or but slightly developed, much to the detriment both of the Gael and of Labour. There is, for example, a world of meaning in the