

that vast and exciting topic, French agriculture under the *Ancien régime*, was in order. Professor Mingay seems to have taken too much to heart Young's comment on the Channel: "The streight that separates England, so fortunately for her, from all the rest of the world."³

Young is always fun to read, with his vigorous style, whether in praise or blame, and his aesthetic — even sensuous — pleasure in good farming land well improved. Comparative historians who read this book can note his complaints of Gallic lack of vivacity, and the deplorable French habit of not conversing with strangers. Victims of supermarket meat can ponder his balanced judgement between the new breeds of sheep (Southdowns and New Leicesters), which fatten rapidly and in the right places and keep well once slaughtered, and the older Norfolk breed, which lacks these virtues but simply tastes better.

This would be a very good book for classroom use, but for two flaws. One is the lack of a bibliography (beyond a list of Young's own writings). Professor Mingay's introductions would be far more valuable if supported by references and suggestions for further reading. This is particularly so on the question of the social results of agricultural improvement; Professor Mingay's relatively benign picture of this is not universally shared.

The other flaw, and one more likely to be fatal, is the price. A paperback edition at a reasonable price would be useful and enjoyable. But a book may be worthwhile without being worth twenty-six dollars and fifty cents.

Nicoll COOPER.
Carleton University.

* * *

James S. DONNELLY, Jr. — *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork: The rural economy and the land question*. Studies in Irish History, Second series, edited by T. W. MOODY and others. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

Dr Donnelly's book is a significant addition to a distinguished series and reflects the growing scholarly preoccupation with the economic and social history of Ireland. In view of the prominence accorded the Irish 'land question' during the later nineteenth century in both Ireland and at Westminster (not to mention in subsequent historiography), it is surprising that until recently the history of the Irish economy has very much taken a second place to political analysis and studies of 'great men.' But in the last few years the work of such scholars as L. M. Cullen, Barbara Solow and W. E. Vaughan has done much to redress the balance. *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork* is certainly the most thorough examination of the Irish agricultural economy yet to appear. Since economics, social movements and politics can rarely be considered to function independently of one another, Donnelly's integrated view of the land question, Irish society and nationalist politics is very welcome.

Donnelly's work, a revision of his Harvard doctoral dissertation, is a regional study of Ireland's largest and southernmost county. Cork was selected in order to facilitate a manageable and detailed study, and to emphasise the need for further specialised work on other parts of Ireland; because only when full regional studies have been undertaken can a coherent idea of the diversity of the once-supposed homogenous Irish social and economic structure be achieved. Although

³ Arthur YOUNG, *Travels during the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789* (1792), first entry, 15 May 1787.

this book focuses on the single county of Cork, Donnelly identifies conditions and trends that apply to many other parts of Ireland. In this introduction he points out that Cork's size, diverse geographical features, varying quality and utilisation of land, even the presence of one of Ireland's principal urban centres and a large *Gaeltacht*, give it "some claim to be regarded as a microcosm of the entire country" (p. 2). Though he fails to sustain this 'claim' clearly in the study, there can be little doubt that he affords us valuable insights into nineteenth-century Ireland as a whole.

The assiduous use of local sources, particularly estate papers (many of them newly-discovered) and the local press, recreates Irish rural life. The study begins with what is by far the best account of the pre-famine economy yet published. Besides detailing the post-1815 shifts in agriculture, Donnelly examines changes in estate management that led to restraining the ruinous subdivision of farms and the steady elimination of the increasingly uneconomic middlemen. He also provides a stimulating analysis of the class tensions existing between landless agricultural labourers and cottiers and the farmers, suggesting that the divergence of interests between labourers and farmers was more pronounced and explosive than that between the farmers and the landlords. The 'watershed' of the famine years of mid-century also receives considerable attention, and it is shown that while disease and emigration destroyed a large part of the numerous (and perhaps, to farmers, dangerous) labourer-cottier class, the larger graziers were actually able to consolidate their position. These two opening chapters are an excellent representation of the contrasts of Irish society before 1850.

Post-famine agriculture, estate management and living standards form the core chapters of Donnelly's work. The standard misconceptions about Irish life in the second half of the nineteenth century, already exposed as erroneous and uninformed by the work of Solow and Vaughan, are definitively laid to rest. Though poor land, relative overpopulation and resistance to profitable adaptation to market trends left conspicuous areas of poverty along Ireland's west coast, Irish farmers experienced an unprecedented rise in prosperity during 1851-76, interrupted only by a sharp recession in the early 1860s. Though significant profits from agricultural produce accrued to farmers, landlords seemed to be content with peaceful estates and promptly-paid rather than inflated rents. So after the famine clearances, the rackrenting, evicting landlords were noticeable only because of their small number and rents rose only moderately and at long intervals, leaving the profits from the land mainly with the occupiers. During these years prosperity made eviction a rare occurrence, and many landlords found conditions favourable for encouraging their tenants to improve their farms and reinvesting their own profits in their tenants' holdings. A consequence of prosperity was a steady enhancement of general living conditions, which was perhaps most apparent among agricultural labourers, whose relative scarcity after the culling of the famine years acted to raise their wages.

The peculiar combination of severe weather, low yield and falling prices (induced by American competition) in 1879 provides the background for Donnelly's detailed analysis of the two phases of the land war in Cork during the 1880s. Though his coverage of the agitation and the government's and landlords' responses to it is well-researched and presented, it is his explanation of the causes of the land war which is the only part of this book that seems inadequate. A quarter century of prosperity followed by a severe economic downturn in 1879 is seen to touch off a classic "revolution of rising expectations," where Irish farmers take decisive action to preserve their gains in living standards (pp 6, 250-2). Though this is certainly part of the story, it seems rather simplistic as an explanation of

the dynamism of the social and political movement that appeared during the 1880s. Mobilization on a national scale, such as took place during the land war, necessarily implies that the society had developed in such a way as to make it possible. The framework of Irish society in the 1880s, undoubtedly a consequence of post-famine prosperity, with roots in O'Connell's mass movements of the pre-famine years, lent itself to national action. Despite Donnelly's in-depth probing of the roots of the Irish social and economic structure, there is no allusion to what these social components of a "revolution of rising expectations" in Ireland were. As Dr Clark observes in a recent article,¹ discontent does not fully explain upheaval. The modernizing of Irish society through a rising standard of living, a better informed population and the strengthening of local institutions able to be readily drawn into a national structure deserves closer attention.

Donnelly concludes with a lucid description of the demise of Irish landlordism during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The land question evolves into not how much and on what terms tenants will pay rent, but whether they will pay rent at all. The ownership of the land was in question. The government-sponsored co-ownership of the land acts weakened the landlords' position to such an extent that they were generally glad to extricate themselves from Irish land through the provisions of the Wyndam Act in 1903.

This is a readable, well-researched and documented book that is indispensable for anyone desiring an accurate picture of Ireland during the last century. It should prove of particular interest to Canadian readers, since a significant proportion of nineteenth-century emigrants to Canada came from the southern half of Ireland. It sets a standard of scholarship for Irish economic and social historians, as well as pointing up the need for more regional studies of its kind.

W.J. LOWE,
Lake Erie College.

* * *

CHARLES O. HUCKER. — *China's Imperial Past*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975.

This volume is an introductory text to the multiple aspects of Chinese civilization. As a textbook, the originality of this work is to be found in the organization of its material. The author avoids the standard, chronological approach to Chinese history moving methodically from dynasty to dynasty. Instead he presents Chinese civilization thematically. The volume has three equal sections: The Formative Age to 206 BC, the Early Empire, 206 BC-960 AD, and The Later Empire, 960-1850. Each section is divided into chapters covering General History, Government, Society and the Economy, Thought, and Literature and Art. Each chapter is further subdivided. For example, chapters on Literature and Art contain individual subsections on Historiography, Fiction, Poetry, Ceramics, Sculpture, and Painting. Thus the book can be read in two ways, cover, or by individual themes. The thematic approach is recommended.

In his chapters on general history Professor Hucker adopts the usual historiographic approach to China's past, tracing the rise and fall of dynasties from the legendary Hsia (2205?-1766?BC) to the Manchu or Ch'ing dynasty which came to an unregretted end in the 1912 Revolution. However, the author chose not to carry his history into the Double Ten Revolution, but stopped with the outbreak

¹ Samuel CLARK, "The political mobilisation of Irish farmers", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, XII, No. 4 Part 2 (1975): 483-499.