

The Irish Language Revival

We are in receipt of the 'Annual Report of the Gaelic League' for 1901-2, and its 116 pages make interesting reading to all who are interested in the revival of the old language in Ireland. The movement has 'caught on' not alone in the Old Land, but has firmly established itself in England, Scotland, and the United States, and is even represented in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. In New Zealand there are two branches of the League, one at Milton (secretary, Mr. P. Walsh), the other at Balclutha (secretary Mr. A. V. Dunne); and the Very Rev. Father O'Neill and the Very Rev. Monsignor O'Leary are ardent and practical friends of the movement.

One of the cheap, slap-dash order of London writers recently described the Irish language and literary revival as 'the maddest of all literary crazes,' and asserted that not more than five people have ever wasted their time in learning an obsolete language without a literature to repay the trouble. The real facts of the case are given in a recent issue of the New York 'Sun.' Up to the great famine in Ireland in 1847 the Irish language may be said, roughly speaking, to have been the language of the whole of Ireland, except the north-east corner, and it had been spoken there for 2000 years not only by the Milesians themselves, but also by the children of every invader who gained footing in Ireland—Normans, Danes, Elizabethans, and Cromwellians. Because of the enforced emigration the population of Ireland since the famine has diminished over one-half. During that time the Irish language, because of the efforts of the so-called 'national schools' which excluded Irish from their courses, and the poverty of the people which made them unable to provide Irish teachers of their own or to print and buy Irish books for themselves, was threatened with extinction. Consequently the Gaelic League was formed, not as 'a literary craze,' but with the noblest object of preserving to the Irish people the priceless heritage of their language, in which was enshrined their history, their traditions, their poetry, their great epics, and the very soul and genius of their race.

The Irish language has never died out. It has always been a living language, largely as the result of the propaganda of the Gaelic League during the last fifteen years. The official census of Ireland for 1901 shows that the number of persons returned as speaking only Irish was 38,192, and the number speaking both Irish and English was 610,963, making a total of Irish speakers in Ireland in the year 1901 of 679,155. Look at these statistics of those who spoke both Irish and English:—

Countries.	Irish only.	Irish and English.
Cork	2,273	117,447
Donegal	7,073	55,000
Galway	17,638	107,929
Kerry	4,481	69,929
Mayo	4,234	106,131
Wexford	1,321	36,158

Irish is also largely spoken in the Highlands of Scotland by nearly as many people who know no English as in Ireland itself, the number being estimated at about 40,000.

To-day the Gaelic League, under the presidency of Dr. Hyde, has over four hundred branches throughout Ireland, each branch with a membership of from fifty to four hundred members. Many thousands of Irish children are studying Irish in the schools. The Gaelic League has sold 50,000 of its Irish text-books in a single year. Fine plays are written and successfully performed in Irish.

So far from being the 'maddest of all literary crazes,' European scholars like Zeuss, Bopp, Grimm, Ebel, Zimner, Windisch, Zimmermann, D'Arbois, De Jubainville, Dr. Whitley Stokes, Dr. Standish Hayes O'Grady, Professor Kuno Meyer, and Dr. Douglas Hyde, to name only a few out of many, have devoted a large part of their lives to the study of Irish literature and the Irish language. The 22 volumes of the 'Revue Celtique' are devoted to the Celtic language and literature, and there are kindred German publications, the 'Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie' and the 'Irische Texte,' edited by Dr. Ernest Windisch, of the University of Leipzig.

Standish Hayes O'Grady's great catalogue of the Irish manuscripts in the British museum, of history, law, medicine, poetry, and folklore, occupies nearly 700 pages, and is one of the most fascinating Irish books ever published. It is estimated by a competent scholar that there is still in manuscript in Ireland enough of Irish written within the last two thousand years to fill a couple of hundred octavo volumes. The Royal Irish Academy has catalogued about one-half of the manuscripts in it, and the catalogue is contained in 13 volumes, with 3448 pages, and contains about 10,000 pieces, varying from perhaps a single verse of a song up to a long epic.

Irish literature possesses an almost perfect system of prosody, self-evolved, self-invented in Irish, that no other European country possesses. As early even as the year 750, Irish poets were making most perfect rhymes, a thing not known for at least two centuries later in any other modern vernacular; and the great scholar Zeuss, who put Celtic studies on a sure foundation, and Constantine Nigra have strongly urged the fact that it is to the Celts that Europe owes the reinvention of rhyme, and the modern poets of Ireland have carried rhyme to a perfection that people who have not actually read their poems cannot even dream of. Dr. Hyde's monumental 'Literary History of Ireland' will reveal to any person

interested in the subject conclusive evidence that the Irish language is one of the richest and its older literature among the greatest of the older literatures of the world. Dr. Sigerson's 'Bards of the Gael and Gaul,' an anthology of nearly 150 poems metrically translated from the Irish and covering the ground from the earliest unrhymed chant down to the peasant days of the 18th century, puts it into the power of any English reader to judge of some of the qualities of Irish poetry for themselves. The Irish translation of the New Testament is older than the English version or than the Douay edition of the Old Testament.

The Final Rendezvous

In 1859 or 1860, according to a reliable journal, Gaillard, the famous French engraver, became acquainted with a young artist, who, like himself, was studying the works of Perugino. They grew to be friends, found themselves in Rome together, and from the beginning of their acquaintance were very fond of discussing religious subjects.

At that time M. Gaillard was an unbeliever, and took a certain pride in combating matters of faith. His young companion defended the points to the best of his ability, with firm conviction, yet displaying a great sweetness, which, while it did not convince, never failed to win the admiration of his adversary.

The last time they met was at the Villa Medicis. Gaillard again resumed the discussion, vainly endeavoring to impress his own ideas on the mind of his friend. Finally he left him with these words:

'You are still very young; I will meet you again in Paris 10 years from now, and we shall see. You will have entirely changed your views. Your faith is beautiful, but it is absurd. You will become convinced of this and alter your opinions.'

'No,' replied his opponent, simply. 'I do not count on seeing you again in Paris; and it is possible I may never see you again. But I promise to meet you at the Last Judgment, and you will see then who is right.'

An ordinary man, a frivolous one, would have laughed; but Gaillard's serious mind was struck by the firm faith which had made this audacity possible. He looked at the young man for an instant, stupefied, touched to the heart by the sincerity of his belief.

'Adieu, then!' he murmured. 'I will remember that.'

The two adversaries never met again: they are awaiting the Judgment Day. What became of the youthful artist is not recorded; but the seed sown in the heart of Gaillard took root and bore fruit—he died a Franciscan friar.

At the final meeting of the St. Patrick's Day Celebration committee in Sydney the hon. secretaries reported as follows:—The balance-sheet shows that our total receipts amount to £1009 10s; expenditure, £389 12s 6d; leaving a net balance of £619 17s 6d for disbursement amongst our different Catholic orphanages. We may state that the largest sum previously distributed was £560. In regard to the distribution of the proceeds of the celebration, the sum of £75 will be handed over to each of the following institutions, leaving a balance of £19 17s 6d to be carried forward to next year: Waitara Foundling Home, Westmead Home for Boys, St. Joseph's Orphanage, Kincumber; St. Joseph's Orphanage, Lane Cove road; St. Anne's Orphanage, Liverpool; St. Brigid's Orphanage, Ryde; Industrial Orphan Reformatory, Manly; and the Sisters of Mercy's Orphanage, Baulkham Hills.

On the Feast of St. Joseph the solemn ceremony of reception and profession was held at St. Joseph's Convent, North Sydney. The Right Rev. Monsignor Carroll, V.G., presided, and he was assisted by the Rev. Fathers McGrath, S.J., T. Carroll, S.J., and F. J. Adamson (Adelaide). The candidates who took the veil were:—Sisters M. Edna (Mary Purcell, Vic.); M. Dara (Florence M. Bankes, Bourke); M. Adela (Catherine Anne Woods, Queensland); M. Lasteran (Mary Ellen Boland, Bulli). The names of the young ladies who were received were:—Sisters M. Hubert (Harriet Crindland, N.S. Wales); M. Crescencia (Florrie Gilmour, Melbourne); M. Favre (Ellen Lonergan, Vic.); M. Clement (Kathleen Murphy, Vic.); M. Ethelreda (Suie Smith, Vic.); Francis Clare (Emily Reilly, Sydney); Francis De Chantal (Bridget Connolly, Temuka, New Zealand); M. Yoo (Catherine Leahy, Toowoomba, Queensland); M. Geraldine (Margaret Coffy, Queensland); M. Cortona (Ellen Meagher, New Zealand); M. Benezet (Helena McLoughlin, Bathurst); M. Padua (Sara Callinan, Melbourne). At the conclusion of the ceremonies the Rev. Father D. McKillop, S.J., delivered a short address to the Sisters. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given by the Right Rev. Monsignor Carroll, V.G., assisted by the Rev. Fathers McGrath and F. Adamson.

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