

stable Joseph Sproule in amazement. "Isn't it just as I said?"—"open Sesame?"

"Go, turn 'em back," said Acting-Constable Finucane, faintly.

"That's an intelligent fellow," Murty Magrath remarked, when Joe Sproule had started off to drive the three lean pigs out of a ploughed field, the gate of which had yielded

to a push of the black one's nose. "He read *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*. The police are nearly all reading men now, and as a consequence are more wide-awake and up to everything, and capable of performing their duties. The police are a most useful and intelligent body of men."

(To be continued.)

IRISH READINGS

(Edited by A. M. SULLIVAN, M.P., and T. D. SULLIVAN, M.P.)

THE LANGUAGE AND SONGS OF IRELAND.

(By Thomas Sexton, M.P.)

The following speech was delivered by Mr. Sexton, M.P., at a complimentary concert of Irish music given in the Round Room of the Rotunda, Dublin, on February 9, 1884, in recognition of the efforts made by Mr. John O'Donnell, a well known Dublin musician, to popularise the national songs of Ireland:—

I am here this evening, not only to enjoy with you this feast of Irish music, but also, as a member of the council of the Gaelic Union, to give thanks to a distinguished Irish artist for the aid which he gave to our particular purposes by his recent concerts here. I have also to express my sense of the kindness of the chief magistrate in gracing this occasion with his presence, and I wish to thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for having assembled here to-night to give practical support and aid to one of the most excellent and deserving Irish artists of our day. We, members of the Gaelic Union, feel that in our efforts to foster and preserve the ancient tongue of Ireland we command the general sympathy of the public. It would, indeed, be strange, when such efforts are made to preserve those ruins of the past—the churches, the raths, the towers—which are mere mute and dead memorials, if we should neglect to foster that ancient tongue which is the most interesting, the most eloquent, the most precious relic that has been borne down to us along the heavily freighted stream of time. We should beware lest we incur the contempt that deservedly falls upon a race that is ignorant or careless of the past of its own fathers. And it is an observation verified by history and by human experience that when a race is thus careless and thus ignorant of its own past it has but a sorry prospect for the future. We look around us, and we find in Wales the ancient Gaelic cultivated and spoken by the most fastidious classes in society. We find in Scotland the olden tongue still the care of the learned and the wise. We find in England learned societies devoting themselves to preserve the records of the crude dialects of Chaucer's day, and even of earlier times. And shall it be said that while in every other country intelligent efforts are being devoted to preserve the remains of ancient tongues we in Ireland neglect a language which is the reliquary of the legends that come down to us from the dawn of civilised history, which is the living medium of those traditions which fill us with a sense of our

distinctive existence as a people, the language which holds those exquisite fragments of song that crystallise for us the aspects of our ancient life, and represent with a marvellous fidelity the lights and shades of our history and of the temperament of our people? It may be said that life is now so much a matter of hurry and of hard labor that when a language has passed out of the sphere of active literature, and passed in a great degree from the daily uses of life, people have no time to study and to acquire the knowledge of that which could not be turned to practical account. The force of the argument will depend upon the disposition of the mind to which it is applied. But, whatever may be its force, it cannot be said that any of the difficulties which stand in the way of the study of the Irish language impede the study of our native music. It is as easy to learn to sing an Irish melody as it is to indulge in the imbecilities of Italian opera or the inanities of English song. If the ancient tongue is the voice of our race, the native music is its spirit. Our music is the picture of the nature of our people. In its mixture of gloom and gaiety, in its martial tone and sweet note of sorrow, it is a picture unsurpassed, perhaps unequalled, in fidelity, of the nature of a people formed for a full and hearty enjoyment of life, but saddened by misfortune and by wrong—a people who, in spite of all the evils of their lot, have preserved to the present day that fascinating cheerfulness and that tender feeling which attract the regard of even the most unsympathetic stranger. Had we been a prosperous and powerful race our national music might be as tame and uninspiring as that of other nations which I could name, but our national music has thriven and flourished in misfortune, and it is more dear to us because it is the child of persecution. The noblest and most inspiring airs which thrill the Irish heart come down to us, not from the distant days of an independent Ireland, but from that penal era when the Irish minstrel was hunted like a beast of prey. I think, moreover, I may say there is not in the world a more exquisite union of thrilling thought and of fascinating sound than in the Melodies of Moore. And Moore made as keen a remark as it is possible to make on the subject of music, and showed his deep sense of the fact that music is a language more universal than words, that music touches depths of feeling which language cannot reach, that it is, indeed, a language which needs no interpretation or comment, when he said of his own Melodies that one of their claims to favor and to fame was that his poetry sympathised with the music. I have no fear, no doubt, as to the future of Irish music because I feel from what my own heart tells me that there is no one in this hall over whom some particular Irish melody has not a special and almost a magical power through its connection in his mind with some bygone time or with some deep emotion. You heard a few moments since that charming melody, "Oft in the Stilly Night." It carries me back a good many years, and I remember a certain day when, with a body of the best loved friends of my life, I went on an excursion to the demesne of Woodstock, in the Co. Kilkenny—a region doubly charming because it is as lovely a spot as can be found even in our lovely Ireland, and because it was the home of Mrs. Tighe, a lady who shed the light of genius upon that romantic scene. I remember that the day was a lovely Summer's day. The scene, as I have said, was beautiful. Youth and friendship and high spirits completed the enjoyment of the occasion, and I remember that as the evening closed and the soft light of the moon fell on the broad stream along which our boats were moving, someone sang "Oft in the Stilly Night." Later incidents of my life have faded from my memory, but whenever I hear the song I think of the friends who surrounded me that day. Some have passed out of the world, and as to others, though they are all still alive, their ways of life and mine are sundered. And when I hear these words:

When I remember all the friends long linked together,
then,
Fond memory brings the light of other days around me—
and I think of the exquisite taste with which Moore wedded the charming words of "Oft in the Stilly Night" to the thrilling air which is in itself the very soul of pathetic and tender recollection. I conclude by saying that Irish music will always live and flourish in Ireland by the force of its own inherent charm, and I can imagine no better hope for it than that it may always command the services of interpreters as gifted as those who have charmed us here to-night.

FAREWELL.

(By A. M. SULLIVAN.)

Sail bravely on, thou gallant barque,
Across the Western sea;
And safely guard the precious freight
Thou bear'st away from me.
Sail on, nor heed the frowning skies,
Nor angry wave nor wind;
Nor reckon the grief of aching hearts
Thou leavest here behind.

Keep well thy watch, O seaman bold,
Out o'er the rushing prow;
Nor glimpse of land, nor guiding light,
Can aid thy vision now.

A. E. Borley HAIRDRESSER & TOBACCONIST. Best Brands of Pipes, Tobaccos, and Cigars always in stock. Razor Setting a Specialty. O'GILL'S CORNER, SOUTH DUNEDIN.