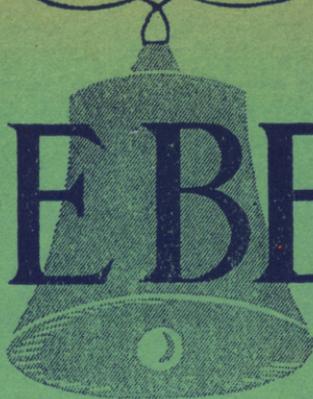


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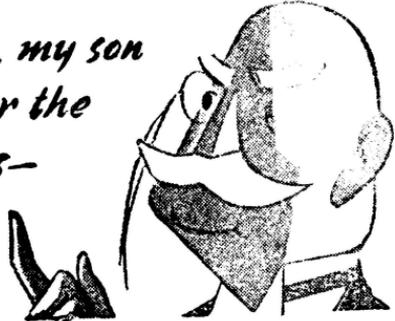
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1916-1941 : TRADITION AND CREATION

THE EDITOR

The times are assaulting Time. Even we, whose memories and traditions bind us so powerfully to the Past, must also feel the sickening indecision of the rocking-stone. The Past has misled so many countries—especially the Past sentimentalised and exploited and smugly accepted as the unalterable Law—that the world must contain many men to-day who are quite ready to say to all tradition : ‘ Good-bye to all that.’ And they would probably be ready to say it even while they know what a vain-glorious gesture it would be to try to jump off their own shadows. Here, we know better than most how much a man’s emotional blood-stream is made up of memories : we know even better how easily a man deceives himself into thinking that he is ‘ just himself,’ a modern, a man of 1941 : and how quickly he is undeceived. The sight of some old cabin on the jaw of a mountain, its thatch sagging, its lime peeled from the mud wall—and we feel a surge like to a vomit of ancient loves and hates from centuries that, five minutes before, we thought a bedtime story. And yet, even here, with all our piety, with all our reverence, with all our memories, can there be any man who becomes aware of the tyranny of tradition who does not constantly revolt against it in defence of his own individuality ? It is unmanning to live in indecision ; it is just as unmanning to feel a mere speck of emotion in a sludge of national evolution.

As time goes on, and our traditions retire into history, that revolt is certain to occur more and more frequently.

It is in the nature of things. A man must be free as well as a people : he owes it to himself, as well as to his people. From that struggle between the Traditional and the Individual, there must come a new thing. If it were otherwise we should remain, for ever, an embryo—as the old acid *Morning Post* once said of us, a country that will always have a great future.

This struggle between the inescapable Past and the insistent Present, between luxuriating into nostalgia and working out of ambition, has made itself felt strongly since 1916. If there is any distinct cleavage among us to-day it is between those who feel that tradition can explain everything, and those who think that it can explain nothing. And we need place no trust in those who say : ‘ Why cannot we use the best of both ? Why must we fly to extremes ? Why cannot we compromise ? ’ Because, although in practice, life is one long compromise between what we want and what we can get, everybody is weighted one way or the other by the balance of his fundamental desires, and will fight for them obstinately. And your so-called man of compromise will fight for them just as obstinately because he is coloured as clearly as everybody else. Besides, your man of compromise is really the man who wants to alter nothing at all. Scratch him and you find that he is the traditionalist *sans phrase*.

Our dilemma, to-day, is surely this—that we are living in a period of conflict between the definite principles of past achievement and the undefined principles of present ambition. We are living, that is to say, to a great extent experimentally, and must go on doing so. That experimentation is not, as yet, producing any clear result that we can analyse, except this drag in opposite directions—adventure going one way, traditionalism pulling the other. For contradiction is everywhere. The Revival of Gaelic and the Revival of Industry are not happy bed-mates. The Gaelic Leaguer watches uncomfortably even our development of tourism. We tried to establish a network

of decentralised factories, and for that we had an ideal picture of little industries in the small towns and villages. The Census returns replied in the name of Realism with the flow from the fields to the cities, the decay of the small villages, and even of some of the smaller towns. A natural urge to keep out the alien supported the Censorship. World Radio replies night after night. On the other hand a world-war has assaulted our isolation, and we have replied by armed neutrality.

There is this contradiction in big things and little. Even in this little microcosm of *THE BELL* there must be many contradictions. Every month Frank O'Connor defends the traditional in poetry, but he has to print what he can get. Just as one may see that the Abbey Theatre no longer produces verse-plays, and that all its successes are a brutal Naturalism. In fiction, as last month, we print opposites, and even in those little opposites there was the same opposition of the traditional and the experimental, of reverence and revolt. For the better part of a year we have been exploring assiduously, and nobody can say that we try to jump off our own shadows, but if the reader looks through our past issues he will see there no rigidly traditional outlook.

One may see this challenge to tradition clearly in the passing of our old symbolism. The Irish Literary Movement and the 1916 Rebellion killed between them the old wolf-dog and round-tower Ireland. It was to be expected. History has a way of abandoning its young : too intent on further creation to bother about the past. For history *is* creative, not a frigidaire. It is largely the inevitability of things ; like tradition it evolves and creates ; it is not just something that people make. History has gone on abandoning its young. One must go to old books and museums, now, for Granuaile, the Shan Van Vocht, Cathleen ni Houlihan, and the sword of Michael Collins, and nobody but a moron dares to ask ' Where were you in 1916 ? ' Of all our antique symbols there remain only

two—the officialised harp, and a design on the half-penny stamp which not one person out of a thousand understands. But what everybody does understand are the birds and animals on our coins—a sow and its litter, a hen with chickens, a rabbit, a racehorse. The old Irish Party would have swooned in horror from them. We find them lovely and significant. They are significant because they are true to life. And how did it happen? The Gaelic League, by study, made us familiar with the real, unsentimental Ireland. Our publicists, writers, students, journalists explored the actual life about them. Our commercial and scientific men revealed modern possibilities. The new symbols of a resurgent Ireland for them became the throbbing engines of the Shannon Scheme or the Beet Factories. This may be unpleasant; depressing; suggestive of a phase that other countries are sick of. There it is. We have to accept it. We also have to ‘see it through.’

I looked into the window of a bookshop to-day and I saw there three or four Irish books, and about six hundred non-Irish books. I thought of the Censorship which is harsh to our few Irish writers, and I thought how natural it is and how easy to forgive it. These times produced *Moore*, *Synge*, *Joyce*, *Yeats*, *O’Casey*, *MacNamara*, *Con O’Leary*, *Rearden Connor*, *Austin Clarke*, *F. R. Higgins*, *Paul Carroll*, *Francis Stuart*, *Liam O’Flaherty*, *Peadar O’Donnell*, *Frank O’Connor*, *Louis Lynch D’Alton*, *Elizabeth Connor*, *Kate O’Brien*, *Norah Hoult*, and several others—and every one of these writers has been attacked or banned outright. (Those in italics are banned.) *Yeats* for *The Countess Kathleen*, *Synge* for *The Playboy*, *MacNamara* for *The Valley of the Squinting Windows*, *O’Casey* for more than one play, and so on. *Higgins’* last book of verse was sabotaged by underground methods. *Carroll’s* finest play was sabotaged in *Birr*. It is obvious that all of these writers are not mentally diseased. They merely walked out of the myth of *Granuaile* and the *Shan Van Vocht* and depicted the salmon and the rabbit and the sow with its

litter and the snipe's crooked flight over the bog. The people took the coins—though not, be it remembered, without a good deal of persiflage and criticism—but the novels and plays and poems were a bit too much for them. There was nothing unusual about that. In England W. & H. Smith refused to stock *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In France they prosecuted Flaubert. Boston banned Mencken. All now honour Hardy, Flaubert, and Mencken. Cabinet Ministers attended the funerals of Æ, and Higgins. That simply means that the old pieties survive inside the new 'realism.'

We remember what Yeats said of Synge. 'When a country produces a man of genius he is never what it wants: he is always unlike its idea of itself. Scotland believed itself religious, moral, and gloomy, and its national poet came not to speak of these things but to speak of lust and drink and drunken gaiety. Ireland, since the Young Irelanders, has given itself up to apologetics. Every impression of life or impulse of imagination has been examined to see if it helped or hurt the glory of Ireland or the political claim of Ireland. A sincere impression of life became at last impossible, all was apologetics. There was no longer an impartial imagination, delighting in whatever is naturally exciting. Synge was the rushing up of the buried fire, an explosion of all that had been denied or refused, a furious impartiality, an indifferent, turbulent sorrow. Like Burns, his work was to say all that the people did not want to have said . . .'

People are always wanting things not to be said. They cleave to the old symbols all the time. When new men make new symbols in spite of them, the people then cleave to these new symbols and will have no more innovation. Our traditionalists attacked *The Playboy* just as our traditionalists attacked *The Plough and the Stars*, and the later ones probably scorn the former ones. How many people know this fine thing that was said about that:—

'Ireland in our day as in the past has excommunicated

some of those who have served her best, and has canonised some of those who have served her worst. We damn a man for an unpopular phrase ; we deify a man who does a mean thing gracefully. . . . When a man like Synge, a man in whose sad heart there glowed a true love of Ireland, one of the two or three men who have in our time made Ireland considerable in the eyes of the world, *uses strange symbols which we do not understand we cry out that he has blasphemed and we proceed to crucify him.* That was said of Synge—whom the traditionalists vilified—by Patrick Pearse, the natural revolutionary.

Writing is merely one kind of human activity : an important activity for this very reason that it is, at its best, up-to-date with evolving history, sometimes ahead of it. What the symbols of the new Irish writers are we cannot tell. Perhaps they are not so much symbols as typical characters, significant situations. Frenchmen began to say 'He is a Cyrano' after Rostand. Irishmen say 'He is a Joxer. He is a Stephen Daedalus'—after O'Casey and Joyce. It is like modern painting, with its hard, sharp edge, its cold light of mind, all so very different—both books and painting—to those vague and shadowy twilights of Æ, and the narcissistic moods of Yeats. All we can know is that in twenty years or so the people will be saying, angrily, of yet another set of writers : 'Why don't they write fine, national stories like Liam O'Flaherty?' Particular symbols die. The symbol never dies.

No—to think that one could cut tradition away is nonsense. But what one does do is to deflect it. Tradition is the ritual of life. The seasons will always follow on one another : old pieties will always be honoured, if for nothing else than their age ; people will always get strength from the solidity and recurrence of what has been there from the time of man. But traditions can die, nevertheless. They die, not for being interfered with but for *not* being interfered with. Tradition is like the soil that needs turning over, compost, change of crops. It has to be

manhandled, shaken up—and sometimes given a rest. It is not those who question ritual who kill it. They get to know it better, and add to it by that knowledge, and add to it even while they rebel against it. But those who examine nothing and question nothing, end by knowing nothing and creating nothing. They are creatures of lethargy and their conformity is a mere excremental whiteness, as Milton called unpractised virtue.

The Rebellion, prolonged into 1921, was followed by a Civil War, and that was the best thing that ever happened to Ireland. It woke us up from the mesmerism of the romantic dream. It set us asking questions—about political institutions, international relations, financial reform, economics, education, about the pre-sanctified dogmas of our history. We were blessed from 1914 onward by a series of writers and publicists who have had the courage to face experience and record it. That does not in the least mean that we have lost the inspiration of 1916, or failed to preserve what made it: it means, on the contrary, that we are manhandling that dream to make it come true. We know, now, that Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, that we are poor folk in from the heath, working with hard tools on a hard soil. It is at once the same world as 1916 in the same tradition, and a new world in a new tradition. The process of liberation is not ended. It will go on until we have got rid of that Old Man of the Sea—our Glorious Past; and that equally tyrannical Old Man of the Sea—our Great Future; and, free of these twin mesmerists, test ourselves by what we have achieved to date. Of all those men who died in 1916 most people would probably agree that the most human of them—in the widest and finest sense—was Jim Connolly. He was, at any rate, fairly typical. We might test our achievement by asking, 'If Jim Connolly could have been vouchsafed a complete picture of *this* Ireland, would he have been satisfied, a quarter of a century ago, that it was worth the game?' For, we may talk as much as we like

about tradition, but, in the end, it is surely what we have done with it that tests it and us ?

That was, I believe, what Pearse himself had in mind when he grew weary of the disputations of the Traditionalists and said : ' Our love of disputation sometimes makes us indecent as when we argue over a dead man's coffin as to whether he was a Nationalist or not ; and sometimes makes us ridiculous as when we prove by a mathematical formula that the poet who has most finely voiced Irish nationalism in our day is no Nationalist.' (Here he must be referring either to Synge or to Yeats.) ' As if a man's opinions were more important than his work ! I propose that we take *service* as our touchstone, and reject all other touchstones.'

Finally as to who can dare to try to say what is, or is not, ' *service* '—*there* will always come the tug-o'-war. It is inevitable and it is a fine inevitability. It is the stir of life in a people. It is where the test of leadership comes in. It is where men group together to sort out what is dead and withered in tradition from what is alive and full of seed. That is, perhaps, the whole point of the thing—that Life does not seem to be able to do without help, and demands intelligence. Have we not seen it happen ? Whenever something backward and exhausted gathers to itself an assortment of men to serve its reactionary purposes we may be sure that it will always reach back for the oldest and deadest traditions to make out of them a crusader's banner. And then, Flash!—as in 1916, and we may hope and believe, as in 1941, and as in every generation—genius will kindle somewhere and the Traditionalists will roar and wave the poor old battered flag, and the fight is on again. It is on, to-day.

BEAGLES

W. R. RODGERS

Over rock and wrinkled ground
Ran the lingering nose of hound
The little and elastic hare
Stretched herself nor stayed to stare.

Stretched herself, and far away
Darted through the chinks of day,
Behind her, shouting out her name,
The whole blind world galloping came.

Over hills a running line
Curled like a whip-lash, fast and fine,
Past me sailed the sudden pack
Along the taut and tingling track.

From the far flat scene each shout
Like jig-saw piece came tumbling out,
I took and put them all together,
And then they turned into a tether.

A tether that held me to the hare
Here, there, and everywhere.

ART McCOOEY

PATRICK KAVANAGH

I recover now the time when I drove
Cart-loads of dung to an outlying farm—
My foreign possessions in Shancoduff—
With the enthusiasm of a man who sees life simply.

The steam rising from the load is still
Warm enough to thaw my frosty fingers.
In Donnybrook in Dublin ten years later
I see that empire now and my empire-builder.

Sometimes meeting a neighbour
In country love-enchantment,
The old mare pulls over to the bank and leaves us
To net our salmon in the whirlpool dances.

We wove our disappointments and successes
To patterns of a town-bred logic :
'She might have been sick. . . . No never before.
A mystery, Pat, and they all appear so modest.'

We exchanged our fool advices back and forth :
'It easily could be their cow was calving,
And sure the rain was desperate that night.'
Somewhere in the mists a light was laughing.

We played with the frilly edges of reality
As we puffed our cigarettes ;
And sometimes Owney Martin's splitting yell
Would knife the dreamer that the land begets.

' I'll see you after second Mass on Sunday.'
' Righto, righto.' The mare moves on again,
The cart rides over a heap of gravel
And the mare goes scow-ways like a blinded hen.

Down the laneway of the poplar banshees
By Paddy Bradley's ; mud to the ankles ;
A hare is grazing in Mat Rooney's meadow ;
Maggie Byrne is prowling for dead branches.

Ten loads before tea-time. Was that the laughter
Of the evening-bursting school ?
The sun sinks large behind the hills of Cavan,
A stormy-looking sunset. ' Brave and cool.'

Wash out the cart with a bucket of water and a wangel
Of wheaten straw. Jupiter shines down
Unlearnedly and unreasonably Poetry is shaped,
Awkwardly, but alive in the unmeasured womb.

BOOKSHOPS AND BOOKMEN

P. S. O'HEGARTY

I mean, of course, second-hand bookshops, or stalls, as the case may be. They have character, individuality, crabbedness sometimes, but the dust in them is the dust of the imaginations of centuries of humanity. A second-hand bookshop is a contemplative oasis in the crudity of this progressive age, with the added delight of a possibly unique discovery in any pile. The new bookshop is, on the other hand, indistinguishable in spirit from a grocer's shop and has about as much character.

Well, it was fifty agus years ago and I was a small boy of eight or nine. It was Christmas time and I had a whole sixpence in my pocket. What to do with it? I could buy six *Deadwood Dicks*, or three of the large *Twopenny Aldine Boys' Library*. I could reel you off the names even yet, *One Eye the Cannoneer*, or *Marshal Ney's Last Legacy*, *The Pilgrim Sharp* or *The Soldier's Sweetheart*, *Wild Riders of the Staked Plain*, or *Jack the Hero of Texas*—or I could buy a Sixpenny Marryat at Wilkie's in King Street. Before the Free Library started in Cork in 1892, Routledge's Sixpenny reprints of Marryat, Mayne Reid, Fielding and Lytton were a godsend. But I wanted to buy a book, and to be a real book it had to be bound, so off with me to Massey's in Winthrop Street where there was a Sixpenny Box at the door. I hunted that Box thro' and thro' and several times over. Twice the dark-eyed Miss Massey came out to look at me with amusement, but I was determined this time to buy a book. They were, even to a boy who could read anything, a very unattractive lot, and I

hesitated a long time, finally exchanging my precious sixpence for an odd volume by the Abbé Raynal—*East and West Indies*, in the hope that I would find something about pirates in it. It was a gross overcharge. One penny would have been ample, and even in the depreciated currency of to-day no more could be asked. But then, as now, the Masseys had no serious competition in the secondhand book trade in Cork. Anyway, I went home as proud as could be, with a real book, a bound book, that I could read any time and could always have. I still have it.

The Masseys had another shop—they still have it—in Patrick Street, and it was several years afterwards that I was made free of that. Sam Massey was then the presiding genius there, and old Nassau Massey was still alive and vigorous, not taking a regular, active place in the business, but stamping in now and again and overseeing Sam. He was the old patriarch, master of his house and of his business and of his sons. Sam Massey was easygoing. He had been a bit wild—as wildness went then—had been in America, and loved arguing and disputing. Equally he loved getting other people arguing. So that 84 Patrick Street, in the evenings, was a rendezvous for the disputatious and the eccentric after the outer door had been closed to and the shop was officially shut. Sam would sit right at the back, pipe at full blast, his chair tilted back against the shelves, with the gang about him, arguing, while I prowled round about the shop. There was lovely Johnny (Walsh, I think) and Connolly the Water Bailiff (father of 'Fox' Connolly, who went mad on Shakespeare, and became an actor) and Ulick Fitton, and many others whose names I hardly heard, and later on Jenkins the jeweller. Joe Woodward the Auctioneer, and Dick Sisk the Builder were added. But Fitton was a character impossible to forget. He had a job in the Cornmarket and he always wore a top hat, swallowtailed coat and striped trousers. He was henpecked and was very down on women. And

he was always, when he was not arguing with lovely Johnny, trying to goad Sam into obtaining for him the works of Rochester, Roscommon and others of the minor eighteenth century poets, which Sam never did. I remember a defence of his of the wearing of a top hat. 'This hat,' he said, 'costs me 25/-, and it does me in comfort and respectability for twelve years. Then I get it cleaned and done up for 8/- and it does me in comfort and respectability for another twelve years. Where will I get any other headgear as cheap?' While I remember one *mot* of his on the never failing subject of woman. 'Use women, Mr. Massey,' said he solemnly and slowly, 'but don't marry them.'

Since then I have been in secondhand bookshops all over the world, and fundamentally they are the same. Like publichouses, they are masculine. You will find that the customers, except for school and college texts, are practically all males. And, like pubs again, they are clubs, places where men meet and argue, persuasively driving home an argument by picking a book off a shelf and quoting from it. And wars and revolutions make little real difference. Thro' all vicissitudes the book-lover haunts the bookshop and good stuff is like the snow upon the desert's dusty face. Unless you happen to be there early you don't get a look in. There is still here a great intellectual eagerness, and a great intellectual curiosity and a great intellectual dispersal. Books of the most divergent nature and appeal are sold daily, and others asked for. The spread of public libraries and of twopenny fiction libraries does not decrease the number of people who are not satisfied merely to read books but also want to own them, or the people who carry thro' all their book-hunting lives the hope of some day turning up on the stands something rare and precious. It does happen, you know, and when it does the hunter feels exalted and grateful—Edward Dowden was lucky that way. He mentions in his letters the picking up of Shelley's *Address to the Irish People*, of *Epipsychidion*, of the

Refutation of Deism, and of Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*, for a few shillings, and goes on piously and properly, 'Providence has been very good to me!' Most book-hunters who keep at it steadily can say that, even if not in regard to quite such rarities. You never know when you are going to light on something.

Many years ago, for instance, I was hurrying down St. Martin's Lane, about 7.55, making for the Garrick Theatre. Passing Thorp's shop, I saw that he had one of his sales on. His shop went back 30 to 40 feet into one of the courts opening off the Lane, occupied by windows which slid up, and periodically these would be opened up, and the shelves packed with books at 1s. and 6d. each. I said to myself 'I must come down to-morrow at dinner time,' and then I decided to turn back and give it the once over. The crowd was three deep at the shelves and I walked along trying to see the titles. And I did see something, in one of the shilling sections, what looked to me as if it might be *The Wanderings of Oisin*, of 1889. I took my stand and waited while those in front thinned out. It would have been fatal to push in or display any special eagerness. When I got near enough to see, I saw I was right, and whenever I saw a hand hovering about that shelf I cursed. But finally I got within striking distance, and I grabbed the book. And quite recently, here in Dublin, I walked into a well-known shop and picked up a '98 pamphlet which is so rare that its existence at all has been doubted. So there is always hope.

Book-buyers, apart from students who buy books because they must, may be roughly divided into two classes. First, the collectors, poisonous people who, however, have their uses. These are the people who collect books as one would collect china, and put them in a glass-case, who hardly read them, whose interest is merely that they are rare and supposed to be valuable. They send up the prices of books sometimes, but they are the joy of the unscrupulous dealer—who sends up values artificially

in order to please them—and of the unscrupulous publisher, who prints 'limited' editions, 'privately printed for subscribers only,' at so many guineas, especially for their benefit. Sometimes, indeed, this benefits a struggling author but mostly it does not, it merely puts money into the pockets of publishers and of authors who have already arrived and do not need it. And then there are the people like you and me, readers, who just love books and like to have them. They are the mainstay of the bookshops. And for these a few rules of advice may, without offence, be laid down.

(1) Never buy a book, or at any rate never keep a book merely because it has a reputation. Buy the books you like whether they are collected items or not—Darrell Figgis used to come to my house and say 'P.S., you have hundreds of books here that I would not give shelf room to.' Which was quite true. He used to turn up his nose at my Weyman's, Merriman's, Silberrad's and Sabatini's, to mention some. The proper rule in this matter is to buy and read just what pleases you. If you like Nat Gould or Charles Garvice, then buy them. And you will find it as difficult to get sets of their books, or any representative selection of them, as of any of the best regarded novelists. Personally, I have always read for pleasure and entertainment, and hardly at all for instruction or uplift. The main function of the novel ought to be to tell a story, and not to propagate fads and complexes. H. G. Wells is a case in point. He began by telling stories, and they are among the best of their kind. His work, down to *Tono Bungay*, is of the first imaginative order. After that, with the exception of the *History of Mr. Polly* and *Mr. Britling sees it Through*, he has written nothing which is not more or less a boring and irritating tract, and the older he gets the worse he gets. Sometime ago he complained bitterly about the reception of *Mr. Bulpington of Bulp*. It is just as good, said he, as *Kipps*. But it is not. It is irrelevant, carelessly written, entirely useless tripe. A tract about useless and

rotten people. Lewisham, Hoopdriver, Kipps, Bert Smallways, are live people, flesh and blood : the Bulpingtons and the rest are just dumb, no breath of life flows through them.

(2) Never pass a bookshop if you have time to go in and look around. I know, you were in there yesterday, and there was nothing there. But one of the books you want may just come in at any odd moment. There is always the chance.

(3) Never leave a book if you really want it. In nine cases out of ten, if you come back the next day you will find it gone. That is really the golden rule. There are some books that, slipped up like that, never return. I still regret some things that, years and years ago, I put back on the shelves, saying to myself that I would think about it. I did next day ; but it was too late.

(4) Do not try to tell the bookseller about the real value of the book. He probably knows quite well what the value of it is—booksellers, of course, do not know everything about the books they sell, and it would be a bad thing if they did. But they know quite enough, and they dislike a customer who tries to persuade them that a book they have marked 6s. is not really worth more than 3s., or something like that. Even if they do their damndest, you will get bargains. They cannot look up every book in the 'Book Auction Records' and other Booksellers' Aids before putting a price on it. And, to give instances, I have bought here in Dublin in the past couple of years, George Moore's *Martin Luther* for 2s. and Sir Thomas More's *Christian Morals* for 6d.

(5) Never give a bookseller any information about a book. All's fair in love and war and in bookselling.

And so, brethren—good hunting. . . .

BALLADS OF 1916

DONAGH MACDONAGH

There is every kind of song about 1916 except the song of opposition—very occasionally the enemy is credited with a verse or two but each line contains its own antidote of sarcastic malice. For example :

In 1916 we got some hard blows
The dirty Sinn Feiners in Dublin they rose,
They shot down our soldiers just like you'd shoot crows
And it made me old blood boil within.

Chorus.

It's a rough road, a tough road,
A terrible journey we had to begin,
And but for the Huns and their dirty big guns
We'd be dining to-day in Berlin.

This has not the suave satire of Sean O'Casey's *Grand Ould Dame Britannia*, but it has qualities of force and vigour. Humour was not, however, one of the salient characteristics of the songs of that period ; most of them inclined to the Paudeen O'Keefe formula, 'Revenge, be so-and-so ! Revenge !' or to the more traditional song of praise and lamentation. Of the revenge ballads perhaps the most typical is one called *Vengeance* :

In Dublin town they murdered them, like dogs they shot
them down,
God's curse be on you England, God strike you London
town,
And cursed be every Irishman alive and yet to live
Who dare forget the death they died, who ever dare
forgive.

In Kilmainham Jail they murdered them, these men of
 Irish birth,
 Kindly and tender, brave and warm as their own Irish
 earth,
 Salt of the soil of Irish life, bone of her bone were they,
 Like carrion flung in quick-lime grave in Dublin town
 to-day.

Passion and emotion are here, strength and determination. Lines like these are frightening in their intensity.

But all the songs of 1916 were not as intense as this. Many were sentimental, many were sad, and many had that foolish quality which makes the most tragic events silly, humorous, or pathetic. A song which was sung all over Ireland was *The Irish Soldier Boy* :

At a cottage door one winter's night as the snow lay
 on the ground
 Stood a youthful Irish soldier boy, to the mountains
 he was bound,
 His mother stood beside him saying, 'You'll win my
 boy, don't fear.'
 And with loving arms around his waist she tied his
 bandolier.

When the fighting it was over and the flag of truce was
 raised
 The leader ordered fire to cease, all Ireland stood
 amazed,
 A comrade came to her cottage door with a note from
 her pride and joy,
 Containing the news and sad appeal of an Irish soldier
 boy.

Farewell, farewell, my mother dear, I am dying a death
 so grand,
 From wounds received in action trying to free our native
 land,

But I hope we'll meet in heaven above, in a land beyond
the sky,
Where you never will be parted from your Irish soldier
boy.

A long farewell to Donegal, Kilkenny and Mayo,
Tipperary, Derry and Tyrone where the green bushes
grow,
And when at night you kneel to pray it will be a source
of joy
To know that you're the mother proud of an Irish
soldier boy.

From internal evidence ('the flag of truce') that may be a
post Tan-War song, but it is difficult to date any Irish
ballad except in those cases where specific dates are men-
tioned. There can be no doubt, for example, of the date
of *Lonely Banna Strand*, one of the best songs of the
period. Here simple verse produces an accurate record :

'Twas on Good Friday morning all in the month of
May
A German ship was signalling beyond there in the Bay :
'We've 20,000 rifles here all ready for to land.'
But no answering signal came to them from Lonely
Banna Strand.

A motor-car was dashing through the early morning
gloom,
A sudden crash and in the stream they went to meet
their doom,
Two Irish lads lay dying there, just like their hopes so
grand,
They could not give the signal now from Lonely Banna
Strand.

'No signal answers from the shore,' Sir Roger sadly said,
'No comrades here to welcome me, alas, they must be
dead,
But I must do my duty and at once I mean to land,'
So in a boat he pulled ashore to Lonely Banna Strand.

The German ships were lying there with rifles in galore,
Up spoke a British Man-of-War, 'No Germans reach
the shore!
You are our Empire's enemy and now we bid you stand,
No German boot shall e'er pollute this Lonely Banna
Strand.'

'Now sail for Queenstown Harbour!' said the Germans
'We're not done,
A British ship for master! Not while we've gun for gun!
We've 20,000 rifles that never will see land,
We'll sink them all and bid farewell to Lonely Banna
Strand.'

They took Sir Roger prisoner and sailed for London
Town,
And in the Tower they laid him as a traitor to the Crown,
Said he, 'I am no traitor, but my trial I must stand,
For bringing German rifles to Lonely Banna Strand.'

'Twas in an English prison that they led him to his
death,
'I'm dying for my country,' he said with his last breath,
He's buried in a prison yard far from his native land,
The wild waves sing his Requiem on the Lonely Banna
Strand.

This ballad has the typically calm assurance that the listener will be well acquainted with all the facts with which it deals, the singer never bothering to explain who Sir Roger is, or why the rifles are needed.

One of the features of the Rising which most struck the ballad writers was, of course, the romantic prison-cell marriage of Joseph Plunkett and Grace Gifford ; here indeed was material for the songs of tradition. I remember hearing when I was very young an old man in Clare sing his own ballad. This is all I can recall :

I loved Joe Plunkett and he loved me ;
He risked his life to set Ireland free. . . .

But recently I received another song of the same kind. It is entitled, romantically, '*A Maiden as fair as the Lily lay dreaming*' :

A maiden as fair as the lily lay dreaming
And fondling the hopes of a future so bright,
As the gold rays of freedom that circled round Eireann
Illumined the gloom and the darkness of night.

Now cease thy day dreaming, Grace Gifford, I warn
thee
For the Lion's revenge knows not justice nor laws,
He will pose the world over as champion of Freedom
While Eireann lies mangled and crushed 'neath his
claws !

On the third day of May 1916, at even,
A dreamer no longer, Grace Gifford awoke
And found poor Joe Plunkett condemned as a rebel,
With sorrow for his sentence her heart well nigh broke.

She must see her darling and cheer his last moments,
She vowed that she loved him as dearly as life,
And the dawn of the morrow found Fate wed to Sorrow,
Grace Gifford a widow, a maid and a wife.

That has all the qualities of sentiment and gush which are our heritage from the nineteenth century, but it has also

a certain rich badness not to be achieved by any formula. Here is another from the same school :

The night was dark and the fight was over,
The moon shone down O'Connell Street,
I stood alone where brave men perished
For they had gone their God to meet.

The first I met was a gray-haired father
Searching for his only son,
I said : ' Old man, it is useless searching,
For up to heaven your son has gone.'

The next I met was a fair young maiden
Kneeling by her lover's side,
Praying to God her Heavenly Father
That He alone her steps might guide.

The last I met was a dying rebel,
Kneeling down I heard him sigh :
' God bless my home in sweet Tipperary,
God bless the cause for which I die.'

What quality in that song appeals so strongly to the people of Ireland ? Is it the simplicity of the language, the easy emotion, the clarity of the story ? It is difficult to say, but like *All Around my Hat* and *The Foggy Dew* it has acquired a certain immortality. And these are two curious songs. *All Around my Hat* is based on an old song, probably of English origin, which went like this :

All round my hat I will wear the green willow :
All round my hat for a twelvemonth and a day ;
And if anyone should ask me the reason that I wear it,
I'll tell them that my true love is gone far away.

Some Nationalist of the 1916 period took this and made a rather charming and touching little song out of it :

I had a true love if ever a girl had one,
 I had a true love, a brave lad was he,
 One fine Easter morning with his gallant comrades
 He started away for to make old Ireland free.

Chorus.

All around my hat I wear a tricoloured ribbon—O,
 All around my hat until death comes to me,
 And if anybody asks why I wear that green ribbon—O
 I'll say it's for my true love that I never more shall see.

His bandolier round him his bright bayonet shining,
 His short service rifle a beauty to see,
 There was joy in his heart though he left me repining
 When he started away to make old Ireland free.

That song is mixed up in my mind with childhood, and *Óró 'sé do bheatha abhaile*, and *Kelly the Boy from Killan*, and preparations for the struggle that was to turn into the Tan War. And it is mixed up too with that other strange song *The Foggy Dew*, which is also based on an English folk-song, a slightly bawdy one :

Oh, I am a bachelor, I live with my son,
 We work at the weaver's trade,
 And every single time I look into his eyes
 He reminds me of that fair young maid.
 He reminds me of the winter-time
 And of the summer too,
 And the many, many times I held her in my arms
 Just to keep her from the foggy, foggy dew.

But though based on that it bears no resemblance in the world to it, except in form and tune. It is, perhaps, the best song produced by 1916, the most poetic and the strongest :

As down the glen one Easter Morn to a city fair
 rode I
 There armed lines of marching men in squadrons
 passed me by,
 No pipe did hum, no battle drum did sound its dread
 tattoo,
 But the Angelus Bell o'er the Liffey swell rang out
 in the Foggy Dew.

Right proudly high over Dublin Town they hung
 out the flag of war,
 For it's better to die 'neath an Irish sky than in France
 or in Sud-el-Bar,
 And from the plains of Royal Meath strong men
 came hurrying through
 While Britannia's sons with their great big guns
 sailed in with the Foggy Dew.

'Twas England bid our Wild Geese go that small
 nations might be free,
 But their lonely graves are by Suvla's waves or the
 shores of the wild North Sea,
 Oh, had they died by Pearse's side, or fought with
 Cathal Brugha
 Their graves we would keep where the Fenians sleep
 'neath the hills of the Foggy Dew.

Bachelor's Walk commemorates the savage attack made
 by the 'cowardly Scottish Borderers' on a number of
 bystanders on the evening of the Howth Gun Running :

God rest the souls of those who rest apart from earthly
 sin,
 Including Mrs. Duffy, James Brennan and Patrick
 Quinn,
 But we will yet avenge them, and the time will surely
 come

That we'll make the Scottish Borderers pay for the cowardly deeds they've done.

And *White, Orange and Green* is a spirited account of an encounter between a 'Bold British Sergeant' and a 'maid of sixteen' who was sporting her colours, White, Orange and Green :

'You'll not get my banner,' the Maiden replied,
'Till your blood or my blood its colours has dyed,'
She drew forth a pistol, saying, 'That's nothing mean,
I'll fight for my colours, White, Orange and Green.'

And there is a ballad half-serious, half-comic about a sergeant's son who happened to be born on the day of the Rising : 'Oh, 'twas Ireland first and Ireland last when Donovan's kid was born.' The mixture is typical—humorous, tragic, savage, sentimental. In their simple way all these ballads of the people run the same gamut of popular feeling from Sixteen on.

The Civil War ballads sometimes add invective and scurrility—sobering reading to-day. More literary ballads also exist such as Yeats' for Roger Casement, and during the Civil War Daniel Corkery published a small book of ballads called *Rebel Songs*. Madame Markievicz too wrote many ballads. But these efforts by sophisticated people to capture the simplicity of the untutored singer hardly ever come off, and are sometimes frankly embarrassing. A few ballads came out of the Spanish Civil War and the Blue Shirt campaign, and the last political ballads written in Ireland were probably those for Barnes and McCormick in 1938. But the L.S.F. of to-day is fast producing its own crop of popular songs, and indeed ballads will probably never cease to be written (and sung) in Ireland.

A HUNDRED YEARS OF IRISH FISHERIES

J. P. DIGBY

Just over a hundred years ago it was customary in Limerick, and probably in other fishery districts as well, for Apprentices to have a clause inserted in their Indentures to the effect that salmon should not be served them more than three times a week. Domestic servants had similar agreements. The salmon was, in fact, the common food of the people. It can be accepted that at this period the rivers of Ireland were producing to capacity. The methods of capture—composed mainly of drift nets, and brush head weirs—while giving lucrative employment to a large number of fishermen offered no impassable obstacle to the ascent of spawning stock. The head weirs, particularly on the north and north-western coasts, were held by Patent or Charter, the netting being done by the public as a public right. Most of the southern fisheries were fished by the public as a right without charge.

Around the year 1825 there arrived in this country two Scotsmen named Halliday and Hector with a new and much more efficient engine of capture—the bag net. Beginning their operations on the coast of Achill the effects of their capture were soon felt in the small fisheries such as Borris-hool, Newport and Ballycroy rivers and it was quickly found not worth while to operate the head weirs of these fisheries due to the many thousands of fish caught by the bag nets. That the erection of these bag nets was a clear violation of the public right at Common Law did not deter these gentlemen from extending their activities to other parts of the coast. Soon the estuaries were invaded.

Stake nets—called Scotch nets—had been introduced about the same time as the bag nets and fished the estuaries. Their activities, however, were confined to fishing above low-water mark leaving the major portion of the estuaries free for the ascent of fish. The bag net being anchored on the bed of the estuary required no stakes, and soon the stake net owners were operating bag nets in conjunction with stake nets and finding it most profitable. The erection of these fixed engines made drift netting, which was the method of capture operated by the working fishermen, impossible in many places and so ineffective were they now for catching purposes on account of the obstruction of the stake and bag nets that drifting was soon found to be uneconomic.

About the year 1836 the number of these nets had so increased in the Waterford estuary that the cot fishermen on the Barrow, Nore and Suir—at this time to the number of 2,000—had been reduced to beggary. Raids were made by the fishermen on these illegal engines which to the admitted knowledge of the Fishery Commissioners of the time were depriving them of their sole means of livelihood. Many of the stake nets were levelled, the military were called out and lives were lost, while the guns of Duncannon Fort were turned on the raiders.

The Authorities had now become alarmed at the breaches of the peace in the estuaries all over the country and while an enquiry was being held into the English salmon fisheries in London in the year 1837, representations were made by the stake and bag net owners to the Commissioners emphasising the large increase in salmon production since the erection of stake and bag nets, and the excellent state of the salmon reaching the English markets. It was postulated that the fish caught in the bag and stake nets in the estuaries did not ascend the rivers but proceeded out to sea after their visit to the estuary. Under the very mistaken impression that salmon supplies were inexhaustible and that the stake and bag nets were productive agents,

this Commission recommended the legalising of such nets and in 1842 an Act was passed for this purpose. The Act confined the erection of stake nets to land owners and occupiers in fee simple, and owners and occupiers on leases of property abutting the proposed site of the net, which lease had not less than fourteen years to run. The consent of the landlord was essential for leases with less than a hundred years to run.

The provision requiring landed occupancy was completely ignored and the landlord proceeded to rent sites to the highest bidder ; so completely was this part of the Act ignored that a salmon salesman in London giving evidence before the Commission of 1862, admitted ownership of nets in the Shannon, although he had never set foot in Ireland. The Irish Fishery Board which was similar in composition to the still-existing Scottish Fishery Board, had been superseded in Ireland by the appointment of three Commissioners, who had again been absorbed into the Drainage Board who were at this time responsible for Fishery administration. Between the passing of the Act and the year 1850 many judgments had been given in the Courts declaring stake and bag nets illegal. The Fishery Commissioners, unwilling to take action themselves to enforce the decisions of the Courts, contended that the Lords of the Admiralty should do so on the grounds of the obstruction to navigation since both bag and stake nets required leaders stretching out two hundred feet into the estuary to guide the salmon into their nets. The attitude of the Commissioners can be gauged by the evidence of a Fishery Inspector given before a Commission in which he stated—'except under very particular circumstances the Commissioners do not feel it their duty to become police officers and to put the law into force.' Referring to the stake nets he described the Limerick estuary as a forest of poles from the river to the sea.

The activities of these new engines of capture had produced such ill effects on the Fisheries generally that the

original patentees or owners under Charter were no longer catching fish in their weirs. The owners of angling rights in the upper reaches rarely saw a fish. So scarce had salmon become that the price had risen from three pence a pound in 1820 to one shilling and four pence a pound in 1845.

About this time the Drainage Board, which as before stated had absorbed the Fishery Commissioners, were concerned about flooding on the Corrib. Action had been taken against the then owner to compel him to provide a gap in his weir to release the flood water. The gap was subsequently made, the owner taking action against the Board of Works in the Courts to recover compensation for loss sustained in the escape of fish through the gap. The action was defeated in the Courts.

Some few years later, Mr. Ashworth, the then owner of the Fishery, admitted that he had caught 2,000 fish in one week and that the gap erected by the Board of Works was the best job ever done for his Fishery. Thus by accident it was confirmed that the dearth of fish since 1842 had been occasioned by the high percentage of fish commercially caught and the consequent small number of fish reaching the spawning beds. By an Act of 1848 Boards of Conservators had been appointed and licence duties for the different engines had been formulated. In the light of the experience of the Galway Fishery, agitations for the promotion of gaps in weirs were frequent, mainly sponsored by the proprietors of the angling rights. In 1862 a Bill was passed compelling a gap in all weirs, and this, to some extent, caused a revival in the Fisheries. It must be understood, however, that the rape of our Fisheries took place between the years 1825 and 1842 and that statistics showing rises or falls in the value of our Fisheries were since based on the productivity at their lowest ebb in the year 1842.

Since 1862 several Commissions have enquired into the continued lack of productivity of our waters. It is an interesting fact that on none of these Commissions did there

sit any representative of the public right of fishing although many representatives of the vested interests occupied positions of influence on such Commissions.

For the first time, in 1934, a purely Irish Commission was called together by an Irish Government to consider steps for the improvement of the Fisheries. In its deliberations this Commission was neither influenced by considerations of vested interest or public right. Its one and only consideration was the production of fishery wealth, regardless of its distribution.

It soon became evident to the Commission that, contrary to ordinary business principles, no distinction was being made between capital and income in the operation of the Fisheries. No common bond, whatever, existed between the commercial interests, the underlying principle being 'catch all you can or the other fellow will.' In these circumstances even in the most favourable years for the ascent of fish to the spawning beds, the existence of a reasonable head of spawning stock was entirely fortuitous. In dry years when fish move up with each tide to find insufficient fresh water for ascent to the river and return again to the mouth of the estuary, the spawning stock must be decimated since the catching power of the methods of capture must be multiplied by the number of days of the dry spell.

It will be obvious to any farmer that, irrespective of the extent of his farm, his business cannot pay if his pastures are not stocked to a reasonable extent. Stock breeding and stock farming are little different to fish farming except that the farmer must rear and fatten his stock for market while salmon are but reared to the calf stage on the farm, go down to the sea to be fattened and return ready for market. The only consideration, therefore, that should limit fish production apart from the number of spawning beds is the availability of food for the fry, since salmon themselves do not feed in the fresh water.

The amount of fish food depends to the greatest extent

on an equitable climate. It could not be contended that the Scottish climate is more equitable than ours yet the River Tay produced six fish per superficial acre of catchment area to every one produced by our main river, the Shannon, prior to its partial destruction by the activities of the Electricity Supply Board. It must be remembered, however, that Scottish Fisheries have been under the control of a Fishery Board for the past hundred years while ours have been administered in turn by Commissioners, Drainage Boards, Conservators, Departments of Lands, Departments of Agriculture and, I believe for a time, by the Department of Technical Education.

Again, there is no country in Europe where such strides in Fishery development have been made in the past twenty years than in Norway. Due to the paucity of fish food in their rivers on account of the long severe winters, fish fry must remain in some Norwegian rivers for five years before reaching the size to admit of migration to the sea. In this country, a percentage of our fry go to the sea after one year, the vast percentage after two years and the balance after the third year. It reasonably follows that the rearing capacity of our rivers is at least twice that of the Norwegian. There is nothing in the nature of a miracle in the increased value of the Norwegian Fisheries. It has been attained purely by restrictions of netting and the consequent increase of fish on the spawning beds.

The evidence of productive capacity of the Scottish rivers as against ours led the Commission to the conclusion, and I may say in common with every other Commission that ever sat, that the decline of our Fisheries was due to one cause—and one cause only—the dearth of spawning fish.

In stating that the Commission was not influenced by considerations of vested interests or public right I am afraid that, in contradistinction to this, British Commissions on Irish Fisheries in the past could not be so absolved since the whole trend of legislation whether by Act of Parliament

or Bye Law was to make the working fisherman less efficient in his catching capacity ; sometimes by defining mouths of rivers further seaward, at others by limiting the size of his nets ; the aim of these restrictions being to increase the spawning head of fish without causing loss to the vested interests concerned. Since the catch of the working fisherman does not exceed twenty-five per cent. of the total, such attempts were of little avail in populating the spawning beds.

The Commission came to the conclusion that if our Fisheries were to be developed to their fullest capacity it was essential that the commercial catching of fish in any estuary should be under a unified control. It was of opinion that so debilitated had the Fisheries become that even a complete stoppage of netting for four years might not populate our rivers to the extent of their capabilities. At any rate such a proposal would be open to criticism in that the method would be haphazard and since it would entail a subsidy to commercial owners it was discarded.

It was recognised that it was essential to operate the Fisheries inside their own economy and not to call for subsidies for an industry that, at one time, provided an income many times that of to-day. To propagate fish inside the economy of the Fisheries themselves left no option but to cut down the overhead charges of catching fish, and so populate the spawning beds on the savings effected. For this purpose a very simple plan was proposed. It is simple when the reason for the salmon's entry to our rivers is considered. Salmon ascend our rivers for one purpose only—to reproduce their kind. The spawning takes place on the upper reaches of the rivers. To get there it must pass the narrowest part of the tidal portion of our waters. It will be patent that the most economic place to catch fish is in this narrow portion of the estuary. It was therefore proposed by the Commission that the Fisheries be operated by the placing of a trap across the river ; such trap to be divided into compartments. It was envisaged

that such a trap should be worked on the principle of the hydraulic lift and that each separate compartment could be raised at a slow speed. In this way sections of the trap could be devoted to the retention, for counting purposes only, of spawning fish and would be raised only to a sufficient height to allow of counting, when the upper portion of the trap could be lifted to allow of their passage up the river, the balance of the fish being raised high and dry for marketing purposes.

When consideration is given to the vast number of men, boats and nets required to take the present commercial catch of fish, the economy and hence the ability to propagate fish inside the economy of the trap will be evident. Furthermore, due to our present methods of catching which often entail a delay of several days before placing our fish on the market, Scotch fish command threepence a pound more than ours. It was envisaged by the Commission that the traps would be raised in just sufficient time to allow of the fish being packed for transport and in this way command the same price as Scotch fish.

Doubts were voiced at the time at this method of establishing a spawning stock, the argument advanced being that one could not foresee the biological effect on spawning fish ascending the river through this method. Since the proposals entailed a change, an unknown factor, even the most energetic and progressive head of a department must naturally view them with caution. When it is considered, however, that many of the fish which ascend our rivers at present for spawning purposes have escaped minus portions of their gills from drift nets, and that many others have escaped from draught nets after having been hauled along the bottom of the estuary, against the comparative lack of interference by the new method, the change should not cause concern. Furthermore, in view of the scientific advance that has been made in recent years the necessity for retaining the fish for counting purposes should no longer be necessary since the photo-electrical cell, or what is

commonly called the electric eye, could perform the operation of counting and so remove any possible biological objection to this method of propagation, the spawning fish proceeding naturally up the river without any interference whatever.

The economy of catching would allow of a gradual increase of spawning stock year by year without interference with the financial provisions necessary for the compensation to Fishery owners. When the time arrived that the spawning beds were completely stocked with fish it would only be necessary to let that number up annually and the enormously increased balance caught for marketing purposes.

In this way our rivers would produce to their maximum capacity and our salmon Fisheries become a tremendous asset to the State. It is unnecessary to argue that a measured propagation of our Fisheries in this way must produce results considerably better than the hit and miss methods which Scottish Fisheries, by the employment of nets and under the same disabilities of weather as we are, at present produce. If, however, it but reached the Scottish production it would increase by one million pounds a year the export value of our Fisheries, disregarding altogether the increased revenue that would accrue through enhanced angling values.

That the Fisheries of this country required thorough reorganisation will be conceded by those familiar with their history. Palliatives, tried for a century, had left them prostrated. That the method prescribed for their reconstruction is without precedent is no argument against it since the proportionate value of our Fisheries to our total wealth not only entitles but compels us to be in the van of Fishery development.

Furthermore, the comparative ratios of water to land in these islands :—Ireland 1-35, Scotland 1-147 ; England 1-171 gives us such potentialities of development as to command for us a comparative monopoly, especially since many of the British and European waters are so

affected by industrial pollution as to render them incapable of reconstruction.

Whether fresh, tinned or on a rod and line, salmon is a commodity commanding both a high price and a world market. There can be little doubt that if we are to avert many of the consequences of the aftermath of the present conflict it is essential that the latent natural wealth of this State should be developed to its utmost capacity.

When this is recognised our Fisheries will take their rightful place in the nation's economy. In the meantime, it might not be an unreasonable criticism of our Fishery development to conclude this article with its title—'ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF IRISH FISHERIES—and to add—NO CHANGE.'

Editorial note :

If you are as impressed by this article as we are ask your T.D. why these conclusions of the 1936 Commission are not being implemented. We have given you the facts. We can do no more.



BOX THE BELL

Instead of binding we propose the more elegant method of boxing. Each box will hold six issues.

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Send cheque or P.O. to the Manager, THE BELL, 43 Parkgate Street, Dublin. Back Nos. (except No. 1) are available at One Shilling each.

THE LINO CUT

ANNA SHEEHY

The lino cut has a similar technique to the woodcut ; a block is made from a drawing and from this block quite a large number of copies can be printed. It is very much easier than the woodcut because of the softness of the material ; but more limited because this softness does not permit of the same wealth of detail. On the other hand this limitation has its advantages in so far as it compels the beginner to pay the maximum attention to form : line and balance of masses.

I shall now try to outline the whole process : The tools required are few and simple. Formerly one could buy a variety of gouges ; but since the war these are no longer available. However a short piece of umbrella-rib, ground down on a grindstone and sharpened on carborundum until it has a V-cutting edge will do all the work for which the gouges are needed. This can be mounted for use in the handle of an awl. The rest of the cutting can be done with the fine blade of a good steel penknife. I have seen excellent results from the use of the penknife alone. Good-quality, heavy lino is needed ; enough for several can be bought at any furniture dealers for a few pence. In addition a slate, or sheet of glass of about one foot square, a tube of ink, and a roller are needed. Printers' ink, or that used in duplicating machines, may be used if the special lino-ink is not available.

The drawing must be made with the end in view ; that is, must be conceived in terms of masses of black and white and the detail must be broad enough to allow of its being reproduced in the 'cut.' This is advisable for a start anyway ; as knowledge of the technique progresses the student will learn what is suitable for cutting and what

is not. Later, if desired, hatching and cross hatching can be employed to achieve different tones of grey.

Next the drawing is traced, using carbon paper, on to the surface of the lino. The drawing as it appears on the lino must be inverted so that its print will correspond with the original drawing. A good idea at this stage is to fill in, using pen and indian ink, all the parts of your drawing which will appear black in the print.

Next, using the most appropriate tool, cut away all the lino from the uninked parts. In cutting, a slope should be left to support the printing edge ; otherwise the lino will ' give ' in printing and blur the outlines.

Spread the ink with the roller on the sheet of glass and work until the roller is covered thinly and evenly. Lay the block on a firm, flat surface and ink by passing the roller over it several times. Take a sheet of thin paper, which must be somewhat absorbent, and lay it carefully on the block ; press down with the fingers and then, using the back of a spoon, work over the whole printing surface carefully. Remove the paper and the print is made. About fifty such prints can be made before the block deteriorates. A much larger number can be made if the block is mounted, type-high (*i.e.* exactly the diameter of an English shilling) on wood and printed either in a hand-press or by a printer. But as I have outlined it the whole process can be done at the kitchen table. Moreover the mechanical print has not the same quality as the hand-made. Different tones are sometimes deliberately achieved by varying the pressure on the spoon.

I have dealt with the very simplest use of the lino-cut. Colour-prints can also be made using a medium of oil-paint and vaseline. Designs in one or more colours can be printed on fabrics. These processes are complicated ; but anyone interested can get all the necessary information from : *Lino Cutting and Printing*, by Claude Flight. (Batsford, London. 1934.)



Sisters of Charity.

Anna Sheehy.

MISE EIRE

A Book-token, value 7s. 6d., is offered each month for the best quotation in this feature. The original cutting must be sent. The prize goes this month, for the first entry, to Alice H. Carroll, Newtown Lodge, Tramore.

THE SURGEON'S KNIFE

The condition of the survivor is rather serious, as he has been severely burned, and also had a fracture of the limbs. He is being removed to Cork under military guard for further medical treatment. An inquest is to be held later.

—*Irish Times*, 6/2/'41

THE WILD WEST?

The home team defeated Manor "A" in the District Darts League by three games to nil, after an interesting contest. The funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. N. O'Neill, Sallypark.

—*Munster Express*, 15/2/'41.

BOYLE-ROCHE'S DEBT TO POSTERITY.

Mr. Davin:—It's the first time I ever heard the Minister silent.

—*Irish Press*, 21/2/'41.

THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW

. . . The best house for quick 'uns after hours.

—Advt. in Limerick Programme, 2/3/'41.

ANONYMOUS AUTHOR'S OUTRAGE

Mention of Spain recalls the stirring account of a Franciscan Tertiary who was brutally put to death there during the recent civil war by an anonymous writer.

—*Drogheda Independent*, 1/2/'41.

A KNAPSACK TRIFLE

Reduced to about one-fifth of its compass and relieved of its unnecessary excursions into the sordid, *Ulysses* could be a very pleasant piece of reading—a good holiday book, in the booksellers' phrase.

—*Dublin Evening Mail*, Leader.

APRIL THE FIFTH

AN AUDITOR

In along with rolls of ceremonial red carpet, old cannons from Sevastopol, Police Gazettes from 1816, and various other odds and ends, like Lions and Unicorns, that the British did not trouble to take away with them when they started us off on the exciting business of 'determining ourselves,' they left us also the Inspector of Taxes and his Income Tax Acts. True that in our twenty years *ab urbe condita* we have false-moustached him into a Cigire Cánach, and elevated his works and pomps into Achtai um Cána. But 'Render to Cæsar' is, it seems, good idiom in all languages and what was bred in the bone will come out in the Exchequer Returns. So, where once his Imperial predecessor ground our faces with the pious assurance that he was, Sir, our Obedient Servant, there now doth the native product continue to get his pound of flesh with the still more Pecksniffian crack that he is 'meself with great respect.' You must have noticed him on your hall table (unopened) these last few weeks or so.

For an instructive if melancholy experiment try working out where the sweat of your brow goes these days. You will find that you work about six months of the year to keep body and soul together. After that, a month to the Insurance man and the Instalment man. Next, a month or so on a string with the City Fathers—to polish the mayoral chain (long or short, foreign or native), to provide new pants for the Gardai, holidays with pay for the engineers, shinier caps for the Sanitary Inspectors, ponies-and-traps for the midwives, and bigger, brighter, and better drains for some boob you never heard of out Drumcondra way, Wilton way, Salthill way, the Ennis road, or where ever it may be that you live. Then come another

breathless thirty days for the usual miscellany of minor but persistent wolves who have accumulated meantime outside your castle gates—the dentist, or the chemist, or the doctor, or the nuns or the brothers with school-fees (*and Extras*). Finally, just about June, when you ought to be thinking of your holidays, you couple on to the chain-gang of ‘meself with great respect,’ who will keep you busy for anything up to another three calendar months out of the twelve. That last assignment ought to be sufficient excuse for permitting the Cigire into a magazine that sets out to review Irish life. Be sure he will edge himself in anyway if it should ever make a nickel of profit.

If you, a chara, between April and June—the two waking hours of the year—ever feel like writing the confessions of another opium eater, you probably feel that what the Cigire Cánach should feel like writing simultaneously is the confessions of a man-eating tiger. But they would be humorous confessions! There has to be some fun in the game on some side. All State Departments are the same—they suffer from what the public would probably consider a distorted sense of humour. For example, think of that sly notice that greets you as you stagger off the cross-channel steamer—‘Passengers must go through the Customs’ For a mighty rummaging for anything from Foot and Mouth Disease to a copy of *Ulysses* soon makes it clear that it is not the passengers who are going through the Customs but the Customs who are going through the passengers. Hesitate therefore, this April the Fifth, to take the description Inspector of Taxes literally. Do not imagine that he spends his days inspecting the sixtys, seventys, and eightys that he has already safely in the kitty. Like some ardent Casanova it is not what he has wooed and won but what there still is to woo that excites his sense of fun. If, then, you happen to have something in the stocking that you do not propose to tell him about, one of those super-secret stockings that is going to weigh on your conscience as well as on your under-mattress,

know that he will do his boy-scout best to take a little of the weight off both ; that he will be very nice and paternal about it all ; just like a Father Confessor—except that he is likely to be a whole lot stiffer on the absolution part. And if you cannot see the joke in that . . .

Really the Cigire Cánach is not so much a man-eater as a work-eater. Think of his task. The Minister for Finance's budget estimate of what the Inspector's labours will bring into the nation's coffers in the year just ending is the nice round sum of seven million johnny-o'-goblins. After that budget address be under no delusions as to what it means to our little father the Inspector, It means that he will spend the ensuing twelve months solidly doing the nation a great deal of good by a great deal of stealth. For, punch-drunk as we may be by now, where the national millions are concerned, it is nevertheless a breath-holding thought that all those dingy, unimpressive, harmless-looking Tax offices swallow up the equivalent of one live millionaire every seven weeks or so. Not, mark you, merely his rent-roll, or his bank-balance, but every last secretary, acre, yacht, tie-pin, and cigarette-butt of him. He is rubbed out with a nicety and a finality that no mere gunman or snatch-man could ever hope to emulate. It is a deceptive quietness that of the Tax Office. It is the smooth cold-bloodedness of the operation that is so impressive. No flags on the Tax Offices ; no Income Tax week ; no triumphal march-past of the Inspectors ; no bowings, banquetings, or bouquets ; no pretty nurse with sleeves rolled up to draw the first name on the victims' list. The Minister has but to say seven—or seventy, and the machine gears itself up to the new tempo. What men of might these are who so modestly remain, ' meself with great respect.' Before them even the social scientists who make it their business to study the income and expenditure of the State and its effect on the body politic desert their post and lull you, lull us all into a sense of happy security by disguising the racket as political *economy*.

Note how this wave of Economy has spread since first it touched our shores and your pockets. Mr. Gladstone, more successful at this kind of legislation, it seems, than any other, extended the income tax to this island in 1853 as a modest seven pence in the pound. By 1872 it had dropped to 4d., and by 1873 to 3d. In 1874 it became a mere 2d., and its sponsors began to fear they would never rear it. Old timers tell us that in those days and after people deliberately returned incomes they did not earn—just to swank about that buff envelope on the hall table ; it was cheap at tuppence in a few quid. But 1900 and the twentieth century saw it a shilling in the pound, and by 1916 it had stretched out to five. 1920 gave us a *deusprobiscum* of six full shillings. This year it is 6s. 6d. Next year ? Well, it will, no doubt, bring us one year nearer to the time when our financial Poynings will have to legislate twenty-one shillings into every quid to enable the Income Tax to rise to twenty-one and a tanner. And then we shall, no doubt, still have to buy our own Bread, and the nearest thing to Circuses will be a new canned-meat factory in Copullmoruv. If all this should hurt your feelings, dear reader, know that it hurts the Cigire just as much. Even Cigiri pay Income Tax.

That is the task, then, to which the Inspector deep-chestedly braces himself every solemn sixth day of April. Garnering in the golden harvest that poets write about. In this harvesting the power descends from the Legislature, through the Revenue Commissioners, a Body of Three who act as directors or controllers, to the inspector, their public representative, and inquisitor in chief. He assesses, and hands over to the Collectors with power ' forthwith to levy and *execute.*' Under this scheme the country is divided into Districts. This brings the operative machinery on to the site where the Inspector can be readily accessible to all who may desire to consult Authority. It is, one must presume, a mere coincidence that it also enables the Inspector—in the intervals when he is not giving advice to

anxious tax-payers—to take a look at the goings-on of the un-anxious and carefree ones to see if he cannot put them, too, into a position to avail themselves of the facilities which a benevolent Board of Commissioners has brought to their doorsteps. Round about this time of the year, therefore, our Inspector surveys anew the members of the National Dotheboys. It is appropriately Spring, and the seed-calendar is that four-page manifesto, hereby-take-notice, Return of Total Income, secs and subsecs, pars and subpars, Perils, Pains and Penalties, carry-forward, bring-forward, wife's name, children's names, Peter and Andrew and James and John secula seculorum, with which we are all so familiar.

People talk about the regimentation of Fascist States. With much peering and poring, checking and cross-checking, vouching and verifying, there is not a soul in this island with enough money to stand a pal a pint who is not departmentally inchtaped, and his taxation fitted against his capacity to take it. Though there is, between taping and taking, a brief, benevolent interlude in which sons and heirs, and daughters and heiresses, are equated out at sixty pounds a head ; wives tot up to a level hundred pounds a piece, with no bonus for a capacity to cook or discount for bad book-keepers (a wife is a wife to the Cigire Cánach, and you can keep your domestic troubles to yourself) ; and mothers-in-law, fairly enough, are eased down to a mere £25 in a junk line that includes asthmatic great-uncles and all our poor relations—who thereby, perhaps for the only time in the year, become something besides a liability.

At this period people are always looking for tips for Artful Dodgers. There are none. Or none worth the sleepless nights they produce. But there are these endless parings-off and lettings-out, snippings and clippings, easings and smoothings, calculated to produce the finest Made-to-measure, smooth-across-the-back, Fit-you-like-a-glove-sir, rather than one of those mass-produced Henry

Ford finishes that you get in a real Fascist State ; ' any colour you like (for your shirt) so long as it's black.' All you have to do is to think up reasonable infirmities, and your Cigire will clip a bit off to suit you. But you must be reasonable. I shall never forget the bloke who hoped to claim relief on the strength (or should it be the weakness) of his housekeeper—as he euphemistically called the lady. A facetious junior pointed out that what *he* was paying was Entertainment Tax. Which was all very well until the lady heard about it. And then the office heard about it ! This is a semi-literary magazine so it is in order to mention authors. These people are a complete nuisance to the trade because their incomes are unpredictable, and their imaginations unbounded. Not only will they claim relief for such things as keeping a tame typewriter—to which, of course, they are entitled ; but I have met one who claimed relief on the valuable loss of time incurred by writing stories he couldn't sell. The Authors' Society has brought the thing to a fine art : reliefs for books purchased, journeys undertaken, *e.g.* to museums, private study, office items (they have the neck to list ' *Safe, Carpet, Telephone, Refreshments, etc.*'), Agents' Commissions, Library Subscriptions, Postage, Stationery, and a great deal more which is a tribute to modern literary ingenuity ; and their folder prints a footnote which is also a tribute to psychological insight:—' Some of these items are doubtful and must depend on the methods *and experience* of The Income Tax Inspector with whom the Member is dealing.' Where writers lose out is on their American sales : 16½ per cent. American tax, 10 per cent. to agent, and then Irish tax as well : nearly 60 per cent. over all ; before the rate-collector gets at the remnants.

But beyond these legitimate evasions the record is Horror. Given time, and four quick ones, any Cigire could make your toes shiver with the sequels to optimistic clients' Tales of Mystery and Imagination. How often does not the Cigire hear some client whose profits have

for years been around £250, but who runs an inexplicable Daimler, has a bungalow in Tramore, a son in Trinity, and two daughters dazzling Grafton Street, tell effusively all about the friendly second-cousin in America who has made him a present of four or five thousand greenbacks! What end can there be to such a prologue but the haggard eye, the trembling hand, and the sickly smile? The general public possibly does not even know that there are such loyal servants of the State as informers? A famous English law-suit publicised the sad man who sacrificed a good contract with a big firm to reveal its defalcations—counting on a large informer's fee to recoup himself. All went merry as a marriage-bell until he claimed the fee. Then he was told that only the Chancellor of the Exchequer has the right to guarantee a reward for such services. He lost his contracts; the firm got fined enormously; only the Exchequer won out—as it always does. From large to little. There was the Sherlock Holmes Collector who said to his Inspector: 'So-and-so is returning an income of a mere £500 p.a. Do you know he hasn't had any washing on his line for a year? No man can afford to send *all* his linen to the laundry on £500 p.a. !'

Be advised, therefore, O shivering reader. 'Fess up and be happy. Conceal and thy days (and quids) are numbered. When the Cigire plays twenty-five with you he holds the Five, Knave, and three aces, and he makes his own rules. He is at this moment ensconcing himself within what the military strategists call the Inside Lines whilst you, out on the perimeter, feel the chill breeze behind you if you face him, and not a lot more secure if you do not. For he may be a mutt in a ball alley, he may even (God between us and all harm) be a teetotal, non-smoking vegetarian, but by the time you have translated his brass plate into English, quoted your 'ref.', seen your mysterious dossier carried in in advance, heard Great Gabriel's ting-a-ling—followed a supercilious wench down

corridors that suggest the last walk in Mountjoy, taken the strategically placed chair, and gazed across half-an-acre of desk at what seems by now the whole bench of Revenue Commissioners opposite—by that time the sap who does not rise before you begins to look very much like the Head Lad indeed !

There it is. Seven million pounds ! It is got by a lot of well-organised routine, the mixture-as-before of perspiration and inspiration, and an occasional bit of gunning up and down the back-trails of Commerce. Profit-making is a matter of exchange—and it is well for the wicked to remember that the party of the first part may not always give the same version as the party of the second-part. Commerce, these days, is almost distressingly a matter of Record. And the Inspector's net is wide. It is, moreover, one thing to suppress profits and another to keep them hidden, even if all defaulters may not be so thoughtless as the one reputed to have disclosed three banking accounts and then handed over a cheque for his Taxes drawn on a fourth. On the whole if you must have excitement it will, therefore, probably come less expensive in the end if you stick to barratry, cycling without lights, or playing solo with strange men on a Race Special. So the Inspector asks a lot of questions, and checks all the answers. But he is fair. (Well—fairly fair !) He will be the first to admit that he only gets the millions because the community is willing. (Well—fairly willing !) If he happens to be in an expansive mood and can articulate with his tongue in his cheek he may even add the old slogan about 'soliciting the favour of a continuance of your esteemed patronage.' *But*, my brothers . . . there is one slogan which, much as we may plead it, he will always shy at. He will explain impartially, expound learnedly, listen patiently, but he will never *fully* line up to the adulatory 'miah' of the nineteen-eleven-and-three's that the customer is *always* right.

NEW WRITERS

On the next page comes a story, *Three Talented Children*, for which I feel a good deal of respect. I respect it because, though the author shows up his characters, he does so without a cheap wink. The decencies and the justice of art are, in the long run, the same as human justice and decencies—one must not expose a character to humiliation or one must not exhibit a character *in* humiliation, unless he has courted this by a course of action designed to humiliate someone else. In the case of the *Three Talented Children*, the family's aspiration was innocent: modest, but given to self-expression through dancing and singing, the family are led by a friend to believe their accomplishments worth money. They hope to relieve their own extreme poverty—and if, beyond this, they figure out for themselves a brilliant worldly career, who is to blame them? Dreams are innocent things. The explosion of the dream by a hard fact—as when a child's balloon hits the spike of a gas-bracket—is sad, but it leaves the family honour intact. Also, this story has a wideness about it—it is a very well generalised picture of our people abroad: talented children all of us, unsure of our market value, at once defenceless and haughty, living in our own dream.

The technique of this story seems to me sure and sound. Domhnall O'Conaill seems certain, from the beginning, of the angle from which he wished to photograph. The story is told with no error of moral taste, and without undue exposure of painful feeling, *because* it is told by the youngest child. The little boy, passive throughout, emits, and remembers, no emotion, though he sees the signs of emotion in other people—his second sister's dropped eyelids of quick shame. I found the story's opening over-slow, and thought this a bit of a risk. But the writer's *intention*—the vital guide to all stories—appeared on the scene just in time, and got back my confidence.

E.B.

get us on the stage. After all, an Irish family living in England had some experience : my mother knocked out patriotic tunes on the piano and we *had* to sing and dance for the company. Mrs. Shea had seen us doing our stuff, and she assured my mother that we were very talented and gifted. My mother had always thought so and the rest of us grew in enthusiasm as we listened to Mrs. Shea. I tried to do 'the splits' and my mother boxed my ears saying, 'I'd ruin myself.'

Mrs. Shea went on talking : we would travel to France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Norway and Sweden. Mrs. Shea did not know any more countries. My sisters would have their hair dyed to match their dresses. The eldest sister was nine, the next seven ; and the eldest was delighted, the youngest bewildered. I saw them both with green hair and royal blue hair.

It was then that we decided about the advertisement. Mrs. Shea stayed for a cup of tea, wrote it out, and rushed off to The War Office with the last of my mother's rings to pay for the advertisement. The following night we all looked in the paper and there for the whole world to see was our advertisement. I could not read at the time but it was shown to me. It looked so small that I asked whether anyone would be bothered looking at it. The rest of the family looked at me with dilated nostrils—particularly my eldest sister. But somebody else apart from us must have read the advertisement for a few days later a reply came. We were to go for an audition, to-morrow ; down Oxford Road the place was. My mother being a stranger in Manchester had no idea of North, South, East or West and consulted Mrs. Shea who gave us full instructions and assured us that we were 'made.' Norway and royal blue hair were in my thoughts for hours.

That night we were all scrubbed and polished. My hair was tooth combed, and clean clothes were handed us as we came downstairs in wet towels from the cold gaslight of the bathroom. We had cocoa and chips for supper :

the smell of the frying chips was lovely. Then we went straight off to bed. Saying good-night to us, mother, ever sentimental, shed a few tears when she thought of 'your scoundrel of a father' and how her three young children were going to support her.

The following morning (was it late Autumn or early Winter?) we all got up early and found that we had no tram fare. Mrs. Shea came in as we sat eating fried bread and drinking tea, and mother told her we had no fare, and Mrs. Shea gave her ninepence. Our spirits rose—we would get the tram into the city, then walk to Oxford Road. My mother (whose height, ever since I can remember, has been four feet seven and either a quarter or three-quarters) put on a big hat with ospreys stretched over the crown: the hat made us all feel very confident. I demanded to be allowed to wear my Corned Beef Hat—a woollen cap, white with red squares around the edge which reminded me of corned beef, and on the top of the hat a big red bob of wool. My jacket was not sufficiently warm, so my mother tied a big woollen scarf around my neck, crossed over my chest and the two ends were tied together in a knot at my back. I slipped my hands waistcoat-wise under the front of the scarf, and off we went.

On the tram, I sat on my mother's knee. When the conductor came for the fares she explained that I was nearly four and so she did not have to pay for me. I was silent, having been drilled into believing I was nearly four ever since I had been five. Our walking began as soon as we reached the city. We came to the city theatres: Prince's; The Gaiety (close by); The Hippodrome; the Palace; and passing these we recognised our future homes. Outside the Hippodrome we stopped to examine the photographs of the Stars, and my mother remarked that lots of them had common faces. A long road now stretched ahead of us, and we all kept looking out for 'our' street. Quite suddenly we came on it. The houses were big and badly kept; in the gardens was hard black

clay ; no kids played around the place ; the houses reminded me of kids with sore eyes—perhaps it was because their windows were so dirty. After we had knocked on the door, my mother turned to examine us, and we all took a breath. My stomach felt like the inside of a volcano. (I had heard of volcanoes from Mrs. Shea.) For a long time no one answered the door, but we heard women's voices screeching out to each other—someone having a row. A black cat came by—we all knew that he meant good luck. Then the door had opened, and my mother explained to a droopy-mouthed girl. The girl could not understand my mother's accent, but as soon as the letter we had received was handed to her she brought us into the house. There was not even oilcloth on the hall floor, nothing but boards—perhaps this was why Mrs. Shea talked of ' the Boards ' ?—and from there we were led into a room that had once been a parlour.

This room contained two big easy chair—nothing else, unless you count the black marble mantelpiece which was very big. My mother sat in the chair. I sat on her knee, and my eldest sister sat on one arm of the chair and my youngest sister on the other. Mother was the clock and my sisters were the ornaments—a separate mantelpiece in ourselves. We waited, too shy to speak to each other. The women continued screeching and running up and down the stairs. My mother smiled because she felt nervous. In came an oily man. He was a tall man. His black hair was so smooth and so well greased that it contained reflections of the room. I would be like him one day. He smiled, showing a gold tooth. My mother rose and put me to the ground and my two sisters jumped off the arms of the chair. He told us to sit down. Immediately my mother began to tell the story of her life while we all sat and listened, ready to prompt her occasionally. It was all about my father leaving her with four children to support and she a stranger in England. The man pretended to be interested.

'Now !' he said, in an accent that, as I noticed later when the talkies came out, was adopted American. 'Do your stuff.'

Straight away my eldest sister and I rose. My scarf was untied at the back, my sister held firmly on to the ends. These were my reins—for I had become a little horse. Our dance and song began. I galloped around the room and holding on to my reins my sister followed. When we had gone around a few times my sister broke into the song :

'Gee up Neddy to the Fair !
What will you buy me
When you get there ?'

Here we stopped, raising one arm stiffly like a tin soldier ; then lowering it and raising the opposite arm I replied :

'A ha'penny stool
And a penny chair.'

Then together my sister and I roared :

'So gee up Neddy to the Fair.'

We galloped around again and again and sang the song. I shook my head from side to side, as a real horse does. We were very good and felt it until we saw my youngest sister's face. She was looking on the ground sadly—she was ashamed of something. What could it be ? Years later she told us that it was us. When the dance was finished we sat down.

'What else ?' asked the man wearily.

My eldest sister bounced up like a rubber ball. She looked knowingly at my mother who became the orchestra :

'Diddle diddle de
Diddle de diddle de
Diddle de.'

On and on went my mother's thin tune. My sister began to dance a hornpipe. She was wonderful and could move her legs backward but still stay in the same place. Ten minutes later she was still at the same dance. Mother, exhausted, gasped out spasmodically an odd Diddle de

diddle, but no more. Still she danced. The oily man lit another cigarette. Finally she stopped dancing. She bowed, then beaming, sat on the arm of the chair.

By this time the youngest sister was practically weeping. The oily man spotted her. 'What can *she* do?' My mother answered, 'Ah! she could join in.' He strode to the door. 'Lily!' he called, and returning to the room leaned against the mantelpiece and waited. Lily arrived. She looked about as old as my mother. Her hair was yellow and full of those rags that make straight hair go curly. You could scrape the powder off her face. A cigarette hung flaccidly from her lips. She wore no stockings but her legs were coloured a pale chocolate. 'Put your leg on the wall!' commanded the man. Casually Lily put the cigarette out of her mouth on to the mantelpiece. Standing with her back to the wall she brought her leg straight up and touched the wall above her head with her toe.

'Jesus, Mary and Joseph,' exclaimed my mother and nearly fell out of the chair.

Again the man's voice sounded. 'Throw yourself down!' Like lightning Lily jumped in the air and landed on the ground with her legs pointing in opposite directions at right angles to her trunk. This they called the splits. The man looked at us with a significant stare. 'All right, Lily.' She walked to the mantelpiece and took her cigarette, and went out.

Immediately she had gone the man said to us, 'She's only fifteen.' ('A lie,' our souls murmured.) 'When,' he paused, 'when you can do *something* like that you *might* have a chance.' He added, 'I said *might*.' He held the door of the room open for us. My mother tied my scarf at my back, and we went. Passing the theatres on our way home we all let on not to notice them. At last, the city crossed we got on a tramcar. Silently we travelled home.

'He'll be four in a month.'

FAIRYHOUSE

STANISLAUS LYNCH

Unless the petrol situation improves, this year's race meeting at Fairyhouse may go down in history as The Bicycle Grand National. Even last year the bicycles were piled on top of one another in all the farmyards convenient to the racecourse ; tier upon tier of gleaming chromium and rusty metal. This year they will probably overflow into the adjoining fields and some city punster may enquire from the local farmer ; ' Hey, Mac! where did you buy the bicycle seed ? ' I imagine every conceivable vehicle will be put into service that day : side-cars, tub-traps, ralli-cars, Liverpool gigs, trotting buggies, landaus, waggonettes, governess cars, dog-carts, broughams, and any other vehicles that possess moderately dependable shafts and wheels.

For, though Fairyhouse is the venue of the Irish Grand National, the spirit of the meeting is more like that of a local Point-to-Point. It is a homely affair. A very big number of the horses entered have been hunted over the surrounding countryside during the season. This applies particularly to the Ward Union Hunt Cup and the Joseph O'Reilly Memorial Cup.

At other big race meetings, only a privileged few have ever witnessed the runners at work in their training quarters. Most racing folk indeed would only recognise the horses by the colour of the rider's silk. This is not so at Fairyhouse. The locals have the horses' characteristics on their fingertips and one may hear a young farm-hand saying, ' I'll back Jemmy's chestnut if it was me last penny ! He's a born lepper ! Glory be to God, I seen him fighting for his head at the big drain behind Dunshaughlin Workhouse one day with the Wards before Christmas. Clane mad to

get at it he was. Be the hokey farmer, he took one lep an' damn near landed in the next parish ! ' It is an important point. And all the more so if the horse is entered in races other than the Irish Grand National : that is to say, races that are held over the old course ; for the fences on the National course were standardised a few years ago. The old fences were removed or avoided, and built-up brush-through fences substituted.

Admittedly, this innovation was a blessing to trainers, riders and horses. The similarity of the fences reduces the training curriculum to a minimum variety of obstacles. It reduces the possibility of accidents and increases the speed of the race considerably. Those are weighty points in favour of the alteration ; but, somehow, I have a hankering for the old course. It did not flavour so much of mass production. The variety of open-ditches, drop-ditches, up-banks, regulations, bush-fences and the yawning Fairy-house River called for the acme of artistry and versatility in both mount and man. With the exception of the river, all these fences are still negotiated by competitors in races other than the Grand National. As an obstacle, the Fairy-house River to-day is little more than a memory. Drain pipes have reduced it to an insignificant stream that is no longer visible to the riders and the yawning chasm that was its bed has been filled-in with earth. Though the fences have been standardised, nevertheless, the Grand National is still a gruelling test of stamina. It is a fast-run steeplechase over three-and-a-half miles of stiff country.

The horses start out in the country to the left of the Stands and run almost parallel to them, negotiating four bush fences . . . each with a ditch behind. Then they swing right-handed, jump three fences, reach The Straight and thunder past the Winning Post on their first circuit. At the end of The Straight and in full view of the Stands there is a bush-fence with a wide, deep ditch and a nasty drop on the landing side. Swinging right-handed, they then race away into the open country. This is the most

gruelling part of the race : a long up-hill pull with big, high fences all the way to the very horizon. And when the mounts and riders are mere silhouettes against the skyline they swing right-handed, negotiate a towering obstacle and begin their journey homewards. The going here is downhill, but there is a big hedge-and-drop that has a decided flavour of Aintree about it. Three more fences bring them to a long low-lying stretch of the course.

In wet weather this can be very holding ; and if stamina is not a horse's strong point this may be his undoing : for there is a real Aintree rasper rushing to meet him. It is five feet high, three feet thick and the nearest thing to hedge solidarity one could imagine. Not at all the type of fence with which a tiring horse should argue. Two more fences bring those of the field that are still on their legs to the entrance to The Straight.

If horses are capable of putting two and two together they must realise then that their cross-country journey has not been mere routine exercise. Human beings on either side of them are cheering frenziedly. If the horses can recognise their names, those names are being cheered home by thousands of excited voices. By the time the last obstacle is cleared the entire countryside seems to have taken leave of its senses. The furore reaches crescendo as the animals thunder past the Stands. There is a white post with a red circle on top. One horse reaches it, strides past, earns £1,000 for his owner and the Irish Grand National is over.

Such an enticing sum was not available in days past. Going back to the era of waggonettes and broughams, the prize-money was £200. I gain my information from the library of a friend who is fortunate enough to own the complete set of volumes of *The Irish Racing Calendar* since the first slim edition was published one hundred and fifty-two years ago ! Choosing the edition of a quarter of a century ago, I find that ' All Sorts ' won at five-to-one by twelve lengths from ' Punch,' with ' Ruddygore ' a further

half-length away, third. Being then in my velveteens, with a large white sailor collar and a white lanyard that held a whistle in my breast pocket, I regret that I am unable to recapture the atmosphere of that race. But those names may revive happy memories to those of an earlier generation. One name that I have reason to remember is that of a five-year-old horse who carried twelve stone and only ran fourth in the one hundred sovereigns Fairyhouse Plate. Later that name was to re-echo over the world and become emblazoned on the pages of Aintree's history : gallant old 'Shaun Spadah.'

Things that are emblazoned on the pages of Ireland's history are brought to mind by that *Racing Calendar* of twenty-five years ago. Fairyhouse races are always held on Easter Monday. But no more memorable Easter Monday ever dawned in Ireland than that on which 'All Sorts' won the Irish Grand National ; for, that year, while the crowds at Fairyhouse were cheering home their favourites, Dublin city was making 1916 as unforgettable as 1798.

Looking over last year's entries I find that 194 horses were entered at the meeting. Considering that English racing has been drastically curtailed during the war and that so many English horses are at present racing in Ireland, this should be a red-letter year at Fairyhouse.



To Contributors :

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Verse should be addressed to The Poetry Editor, THE BELL, at the same address.

In every case a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed.

THE TAILOR

ON NEW AND OLD

ERIC CROSS

For the time being, we here propose to take leave of The Tailor. But if the public would like more—they have only to ask. The latest news from West Cork reports that The Tailor is hale and hearty and has enjoyed seeing himself in print.

Ag seo chuige gach uile deagh-ghuidhe uainn go léir.

The Tailor is never nonplussed. He is equal to every occasion be it man or event or notion. If the Pope walked in he would offer him a 'heat of the tea' and, most probably, some advice, and he would forget him as soon as he walked out unless he appealed to him as a man. If an aeroplane landed on the road outside and the pilot offered him a trip he would go, as much to oblige the pilot, to be friendly, as for the experience.

Thus, one day someone brought in a portable wireless set and asked the Tailor if he would like to hear the news from London.

'I don't mind whether it is from London or China or Algery. It is all the same as long as it is news and it will be good to hear how the folks are doing there.'

The set was switched on. For fifteen minutes the Tailor listened to the suave announcer from the B.B.C. His eyes popped a little at first. He held the set in his hands and there was a moment when he was either a little awed or afraid. But when the news was finished he gave his opinion. 'That fellow knows his geography pretty well. He should get full marks. But I wonder if he could find his way on a misty night from Berlin to Lacka-

bawn. Ask him, will you, if he has any news of the people in Tir Na nOg or if he knows what is going to happen to-morrow ?'

That was the limit of his interest in it. He turned from it to some local matter of much more intimate importance.

The first time that he saw a typewriter he was impressed and when its function was explained to him he wanted straightaway to write a letter. With the impression that great force writes the letter he started. In the middle of the work 'Tighe Bydam' walked in to redden his pipe. 'Tighe Bydam' works on the maintenance of the road which runs past the Tailor's cottage, and comes in many times during the day to redden his pipe or to hand on a bit of news. All his conversation starts with 'Bydam,' and so the Tailor has christened him 'Tighe Bydam.'

'Bydam Tailor, what's that ?'

'That's a typewriter, Tighe. It's a patent for writing. It will write English and French and Irish and German and big letters and small letters and spell every word correctly and it will do sums as well.'

'Bydam,' said Tighe, taking off his hat and scratching his head, 'I've never seen the likes of that before.'

'Faith, there are many wonders in this world that you have not seen yet, Tighe.'

'Bydam, that's true for you Tailor.' The hat came off again and Tighe scratched again. 'The man who made that must have been a mighty clever fellow,' he decided.

'Yerra ! what's clever ? To make an old machine ? You're a cleverer fellow than he was yourself.'

'Bydam, how could that be ?' puzzled Tighe, scratching harder.

'Thamwirrashimfaina ! do you know that the man who made this machine was married ten years and he could not make one small lad and you have made ten of them yourself !'

'Bydam ! that's true enough,' said Tighe, replacing his hat with a beam of self-satisfaction, and the two of them

turned away from the typewriter to discuss the more proximate matter of Johnny Con's new bull.

It was at the Stella Cinema in Bantry that the Tailor first saw the 'talkies,' though on the way down in the car, he did say, when the subject of the cinema was mentioned that he had seen them over forty years ago in Cork.

'But you did not see the talking pictures, surely?'

'Wisha! of course I did. Didn't I pay my money and see the whole bloody caboodle?'

'And the people in the pictures talked!'

'Why wouldn't they talk? I tell you that there was nothing that they would not do for you. They would sing, run, dance. They would even have small lads for you.'

It was a command performance. Four of us sat in the gallery. The Manager was very obliging and went in his car to bring the operator back from a fishing trip, for the afternoon was too fine and the audience, until we arrived, did not exist at all.

'Th'anam ó'n diabhal!' exclaimed the Tailor when he heard the hum of the dynamo, 'now the praties are boiling and we won't be long.'

We had a news reel which included a horse race. This started in a rush, while the Tailor was in the act of lighting his pipe and his attention was divided.

'The devil break your legs! What is all the hurry about? Haven't we the rest of the day to ourselves? Can't you hould while I light my pipe?'

But the pipe was forgotten in the excitement of the race and the Tailor called out advice and abuse to the jockeys. After the news reel we had slides of local advertisements. The Tailor read each one and commented upon them all.

'*Drink O'Leary's Lemonade.*'

'Who the hell wants to drink that stuff when he can get decent porter? That's one of the things that is ruining this country. It is thinning the people's blood till it is only like water and making their teeth fall out before their time.'

A slide advertising a permanent wave baffled him. 'You'll look your best in a Burke's Beauty Wave.' He read that through twice and was still puzzling over it when it was shot away and gave place to—'Try O'Driscoll's for Drugs.'

'A decent, tidy slip of a man,' approved the Tailor. 'I knew his father well. He was near related to me. He got married to a girl, by the name of Barry from the Dunmanway side. She had a farm of land of her own. But after they were married he was not long before he drank it out. Many's the piece of a night we spent together and many's the half gallon of porter we drank together in the old days. It was the drink that killed him in the latter-end, God rest his soul. Though some say it was the pneumony, but I know damn well that it was the drink.'

The Tailor's reminiscences of the O'Driscolls was cut short by a reminder that 'You can be sure of Sullivan's Shirts.'

'Sullivan's Shirts! Pshaw! Do you know that that fellow is the biggest rogue that ever walked on two legs? Years ago I bought a calico shirt from him and I paid dear for it and it didn't last me more than a couple of months. The divil hise it! He ought to be in gaol. But his brother is the same. They are all a bad lot. Sullivan's Shirts! Sullivan's Shirts!'

The advertisements finished. They and their vaunted power had passed the Tailor by completely. He had ripped right through them to the man and the thing. The words were not hypnotics but stimulants to him in an entirely personal way. We were not completely free from advertisement, however, for next we had a trailer for the coming week.

'Coming next week! Yerra, you'd think it was in church that we were—bothering our heads about next week or next year. That's a queer way to be enjoying yourself. To hell with next week.'

The big film started. It was a matrimonial tangle on a pleasure cruise. The Tailor enjoyed every moment of it and explained every detail of it and gave advice to every actor in it. Very soon the hero and the heroine were engaged in a shy love scene.

'Hould her! Hould her! You'd think by the shaping of her that she did not like it, but I tell you that they are all that way in the beginning. It is a way they have of letting on that they don't like it when all the time they like it as a donkey likes strawberries.'

The hero disappointed the Tailor. He was altogether shy and diffident and the Tailor lost patience with him.

'Th'anam ó'n diabhal, man, if I was twenty years younger I'd come up there and give you lessons.'

The heroine was altogether too young and skittish for him. He transferred his affections to her mother. 'A nice class of a woman and I'll bet a wager that she has a bit of money. A man could do much worse than to marry the likes of her. He could knock a winter out of her comfortably.' The Hollywood beauties were a little too slim for him. 'They are a merry lot of jolly cuppers but they are half starved. They should throw some food at them and fatten them up and make them comfortable. They need a basinful of stirabout and thick milk a few times a day and then they would be all right.' Even the fat lady was not exactly to his taste. 'A devil of a great pounder of a woman. She'd make a handy door for a car house. People think that fat women are warm. I tell you that they are not. They make a damn great tunnel in the bed and a man may as well be sleeping in a gully.'

It ended at last. The lights went up. 'All over now, like the fair of Athy,' was the Tailor's comment. Like all good dramatic critics we retired to the pub across the road and the Tailor gave us his considered opinion about the whole performance. He admitted there was a considerable improvement since his former visit to the cinema, forty years ago. 'The speech is plainer and the women

are better looking—except that they are a bit on the thin side ; but how the hell did that fellow of the shirts, Sullivan, stick his nose in there ? I'd like to go back to have a few words with him. Sullivan's shirts! Sullivan's shirts !'

Yet, that night, the talk was not on these modern wonders, but on things ancient and far more wonderful : the Prophecies.

These are the prophecies of St. Malachi, St. Odranus, St. Columcille and MacAuliffe. Their origin is very doubtful, but though doubtful are not less accurate than the belauded experts, who kept Europe informed before the event. They are, too, a little more succinct and poetic than the dictums of the readers of the stars in the daily papers. They are usually quoted as ' what the old people said,' or ' what the old man said long ago ' or ' it is in the book that.' They are current in Irish but the Tailor interprets them and translates them into English.

' Ireland will be seven years a widow, without either king or head.'

The Tailor interprets that as the period, 1914-1922, from the shelving of the Home Rule Bill until the founding of the Irish Free State.

' A time will come when you will not care to live in Cork, Bandon or Kinsale.'

That time is the period of the Black and Tans in Ireland and refers to the severity of their rule in these three towns.

' A Spaniard will free Ireland.' That is obviously Eamon De Valera.

A later period in the history of Ireland is contained in : ' There will come a time when you will carry your stuff to the market and the bag will be worth more than the contents.'

The ingenious interpretation of this, according to the Tailor, who, if not the prophet or the guardian of the prophecies, is the interpreter of them, is that this was a reference to the time of the Economic War with England

when a calf was only valuable for its skin and the flesh was valueless. There is a general prognostication of the times in : 'The trout will grow small in the streams. The young men will get grey before their time. The women will lose their shame.'

The prophecies and the sayings of 'the old man' are not restricted to Ireland. They apply generally to Europe. Before the war the Tailor often said that it would come from the East. It would come in the year when the Palm and the Shamrock were worn together on the same day. Palm Sunday and St. Patrick's Day fell on the same day in 1940.

'It is East the long dance will start and England will pay the piper.'

'The French will make a false peace that will take the head off England.'

'The old man would be turned three times in his bed' (To see if he was fit to fight.)

'A time will come when there will be snowy nights and bloody blankets.'

'That London will be burnt to the ground.'

'That a woman would stand on London Bridge with her young daughter and her daughter would point and say : 'Mother, look at the man.' (A man would be so rare.)

'That such a law would come in this country that the Irishman would cry on the Englishman's grave.' (The law would be so harsh compared with the English law.)

The capitulation of France gave these prophecies great authority and put them beyond the range of question. They are the end of all arguments and the foundation of all news.

'I tell you that there is more in them than you think,' asserts the Tailor in support. 'The old people had knowledge and wisdom and they did know the way the world was going. The tokens are there as plain as the nose before your face if you only have the sense to read. The tokens are there and the tokens are terrible.'

He said it so impressively that even my scepticism was impressed. But my mind had turned to the war, and my friends in the war, and I did not heed what else followed until I rose to go, and he said to me, as if I had been partaking in the argument, as he bade me good night.

'It was written down in Irish, Eric, but I will put the English on it for you. For it is a fine way of measuring Time :—

A hound outlives three rails.

A horse outlives three hounds.

A jock outlives three horses.

A deer outlives three jocks.

An eagle outlives three deer.

A yew tree outlives three eagles.

An old ridge in the ground outlives three yews.

Three times the time that the sign of a ridge will be seen in the ground will be as long as from the beginning to the end of the world.'

At which, he bade me good night, and I went out to where the stars stood over the mountains and the great rains were roaring in the waterfalls down the invisible blackness of Coom Rua.

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DUBLIN STREET RHYMES

LESLIE DAIKEN

*How many miles to Dublin town ?
Three score and ten, sir :
Can I get there by candle-light ?
Yes, and back again, sir.*

(Old Nursery Song.)

A distinguished Dublin poet, whose poems are understood (and liked) by children under the age of thirteen, said to me when discussing some Children's Street Games which I had broadcast, with a group of Dublin kids : ' It is almost possible to tell what month it is by watching those children at play. You don't need a calendar. They seem to have a different sort of play-idea for all the seasons ' . . . It is perfectly true. Hopscotch, swings, hoops, tops, ball-games, skipping, swings, tig, tug-o-war, relivi-o, or just singing jingles, all have their special allocation in time—and in place. Take ball-beds for example. Now that March winds blow again it is in the pussy-willow and the hazel catkins that your country people read the signs of another Spring. In the city there is a different zodiac. Out come the wooden whipping tops, new and unworn at the beginning of the fine weather, to be lashed into a wild ballet movement on many a stone path. Out come the lengths of rope to be looped high around old lamp-posts—which are the slum child's maypoles. And the skipping teams, tired of droning *Down Mexico Way*, and *Oh Johnny*, in the vaulted tenement hallways, come out into the ambiguous light of a back court or alleyway to enact a

ritual as old as Methuselah, in some romantic castle—walled by thick iron railings and an area-gate !

*All in together—girls
This fine weather—girls
I saw a lark
Shining in the dark.*

For ' quick skipping ' they have an anthology of esoteric pieces :—

*Salt mustard ginger
Pie or pepper. . . .*

or,

*Sally go round the sun
Sally go round the moon
Sally go round the chimley-pots
On a Saturdeh afternoon.*

In the Patrick Street district, a friend of mine, still in her twenties, remembers one of those skipping rhymes indigenous to that particular street.

*North south east west
Father Creagan is the best
He gives excursions every year
North south east west.*

The bits of coloured chalk ! Blue, pink, yellow : chalk to scrawl spidery lines on the dusty grey flagstones, numbered squares to hop a rubber ball in, or to kick a ' piggy ' in—an empty polish tin, or a nice flat stone.

For ' Ball in the Beds ' they sing :—

*Bum, bum, baily-o
Two to one the barbel-o
Barbel-o, barbel-o,
Bum, bum, baily-o.*

Or here is a variation on the Theme :—

*Here we go hoobee hobee
Here we go hoobee hight
Here we go hoobee hobee
Every Saturdeh night.
Put your left hand in*

*Put your right hand out
Shake it a little, shake it a little and
Turn yourself about.*

For 'Ball against the Wall' :—

*Claimy clappy roley poley
Right hand, left hand,
And a basket——
O-X-O spells Oxo!*

For 'Ball in the Beds' :—

*One two three, O'Leary,
I spy Miss O'Leary
Sitting on her bum, O'Leary,
Eating chocolate soldiers,
(I like toffee
And I like tea
I like the boys and
They like me!)*

In the suburban school where my sisters played the same game, the rhyme has assumed a respectability that was discreetly local :—

*One two three O'Leary
I spied my Auntie Seary
Going to the Lucan Dairy
Early in the morning.*

The ritualistic games of Bridal and Burial, of Love and Death, games about Plants and Animals, did not seem to vary much, regionally. Such themes seem to be homogeneous to the folk-rhymes of all the continental nations. For instance : Poor Jenny is A-weeping, or Nuts in May ; Paddy Whack ; Green Gravel ; In and Out the Windows.

Not so the Derisive Rhymes. In their reflection of ridicule—a basic quality in primitive games—I should say that they were every bit as personal in the Dublin backstreets as in the streets of Cork or Belfast, or possibly in the native-speaking playgrounds of Tory Island's Gaeltacht. Here's derision for you :—

*Auld Granny Gray,
 She let me out to play
 I wont go near the wa-ter,
 To hunt the ducks away.
 Over the garden wall
 She let the baby fall,
 Me muther came ow-it
 And gev her a clow-it
 And knocked me o-ver a bottle of stou-it !*

Or this, a merciless satire on some proverbial ruffian's unforgivable miserliness :—

*Auld Daddy Aiken
 He stole a lump of bacon
 He stuck it up the chimney hole
 For fear it would be ta-ken.*

Occasionally they use the tune of some time-old singsong for local jibing : For example, this, to the tune of ' Here We Go Gathering Nuts in May ' :—

*O lazy Mary, willya get up,
 Willya get up, willya get up
 O lazy Mary willya get up—
 And make yer muther's breakfast ?*

or this :—

*Rosie Apple went to Chapel
 Riding on a pony.
 Get two sticks and knock her down
 And make her stand alone-y.*

Singsong is not a constant factor among Dublin children. They are very keen on melody. And sometimes these melodies, the origin of which at times puzzles school-teachers, are remarkable for their sweetness ; as in this Singing Game, played more in North County Dublin districts than elsewhere :—

*In and out among the bluebells (Sung thrice)
 Aon, dó, trí.
 Clap a little gerl upon the shoulder (Sung thrice)
 Aon dó trí.*

It is when they play at Marriage and Burial that all the evocative moods of fun and sadness, pity and fear are blended into a dramatic whole : the only form of present-day drama enacted to the accompaniment of the human voice alone. In play, the child is seeking the real; not among the railings and the rope and the rhyming, but in the ideals of these Street Dramas. Here is *his* truth, the only part of childhood's poetic birth-right that will survive eternity. So, in this game :—

Here's the king arriving, arriving, arriving.

Here's the king 'riving—Y-O-U!

What are you 'riving here for,

Here for, here for

What are you 'riving here for, Y-O-U.

I'm 'riving here to marry, to marry, to marry,

I'm 'riving here to marry Y-O-U!

Marry one of us, Sir, us Sir, us Sir,

Marry one of us, Sir—Y-O-U!

You're all too black and dirty, dirty, dirty,

You're all too black and dirty, Y-O-U!

I'm not as clean as you, Sir, you Sir, you Sir,

I'm not as clean as you, Sir, Y-O-U!

You're all as stiff as a poker, po-ker, po-ker,

You're all as stiff as a po-ker, Y-O-U-!

All 'round the banister, banister, banister,

All 'round the bannister : Y—O—U!

You can hear them any day now outside your windows,
welcoming the Spring.

PLAYS FOR THE COUNTRY THEATRE

MICHAEL FARRELL

The response to the first list of plays given in the December number has been interesting and unsettling. The titles were : T. C. Murray's *Maurice Harte*, Padraic Colum's *Thomas Muskerry*, J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, G. B. Shaw's *Fanny's First Play*, George Shiels' *The Passing Day*, and Lady Gregory's *Hyacinth Halvey*.

Now, hot-foot upon one country-town assertion (a lady's) that *Fanny's First Play* is 'ridiculously out-of-date for the people,' there came three requests for more information about this play. One country group wishes to do *An Enemy of the People* ; and the rest is not silence. ' *Maurice Harte* is too depressing ' ; ' Synge's plays are not real ' ; ' *Thomas Muskerry* is rather a suspicious (*sic*) libel on the Irish people ' ; ' a most unsuitable list for country people.'

Other responses reveal something of what both country and city Societies *do* want. First and foremost, they ask for Comedy, which, from inner evidence, seems to mean Farce ; next, they want Melodramas or Thrillers ; next they want ' good modern plays *not* about Ireland ' and they want ' plays with a good many girls' parts.' Finally, the more experienced groups want ' suggestions from dramatists like Wilde, the eighteenth-century writers, etc. and, especially, good romantic costume plays of any period.' And nearly all of these things were confirmed both by Lord Longford and by Mr. J. I. Fanning, the Producer of the Birr Theatre, in a recent broadcast.

Placing then this information beside the general principles set forth in the December number, I stood hamstrung upon a peak in Darien. Darien is half-way between the aforesaid principles and Circulation. And how placate the said Circulation? For in the list which has finally emerged, there is, for example, no melodrama. One thriller—but no melodrama. And only one farce. The fact is that the Irish country actors have done all the good melodramas until they and everyone else are weary of them and although I have plunged through many of those not overdone, I have not yet found one which is not either technically beyond the means of the Country Theatre, or unbearably ineffective. And among good modern melodramas there is scarcely one which would not lead an Irish country group into trouble of a sort only too ready to show itself. This difficulty arises again with good (theatrically) modern farces. And it is again true of 'modern plays *not* about Ireland,' not to mention some of the best of the plays which *are* about Ireland. However, 'We're not bet yet' is a country saying, and here is a second list of plays.

IN THE TRAIN by FRANK O'CONNOR and HUGH HUNT

(Adapted from the story in Frank O'Connor's second volume of short stories, 'Bones of Contention.' Macmillan: 7s. 6d.)

O fons Bandusiae—a gush upward, with a billowing undersurge of passion, laughter and tears. A fine theatre rendering of one of this generation's gifts to immortality.

One act. They are going back to Farrandore from the city—the young woman acquitted that day of murdering the husband that her family and the way of things had given to her; the Civic Guards; the villagers whose evidence had made sure that one of their own place and humanity would not be named guilty of murder. She is alone in one compartment; Guards and people in other

compartments. Later they come and go, and talk to her, for life will go on in Farrandore ; she bought a bright blouse in Clery's just after the trial ; the tipsy man who has seen his friend off on a huge journey wanders after his own aching beauty of friendship, up and down, up and down this train whose wheels beat out the same rhythm as the speech of the people, same as the rhythm to which they, the train and the audience are going—to the surge and thunder of the world's seas in Farrandore. But one can no more tell the play than one can tell of Chekov, *Asmodée*, *Riders to the Sea*, Bernard's 'silent' plays. Lest all this should alarm some people, let it be said that the *outer* beauties of a theatre's night reign here as well as these greater beauties, and that many people have paid money twice to see this play without ever hearing the world's seas surging through Farrandore.

One setting—a train compartment with corridor beyond, and lonely stations, flickeringly-lit, pass by. Six men, five women.

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE by W. B. YEATS

One-act verse play. Included in some editions of the poems (but not in the *Collected Poems*, Macmillan, 1933 and 1934). Obtainable separately for 2s. 6d. '*The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart's Desire* . . . in their new shape, are, I think, easier to play than my later plays, depending less upon the players and more upon the producer, both having been imagined more for variety of stage-picture than variety of mood in the players.'

The mere story will interest any Irish country audience ; and the poetry is easy to understand. Let all be simple, unfussy, remote. Try to dress and stage it in some timeless, unspecified period—plan your own designs and ask advice. If that is too much, then just wear some graceful clothes that are long gone out of fashion. If any 'stage-effect' or part of the setting seems to muddle your local stage,

then do not have it at all. But have the door and window, and if you cannot make the world beyond look remote, then just tell the audience to imagine all that.

Story : Mary, Shawn's young wife, is reading. Shawn's mother scolds her and fears the book and fairies. Shawn's father knows that the book

*Has lain up in the thatch these fifty years
My father told me my grandfather wrote it
And killed a heifer for the binding of it
. . . it filled his house with rambling fiddlers
And rambling ballad-makers and the like.*

He and Father Hart gently coax the girl to put down the book. She hangs up 'the branch of blessed quicken wood'; a strange girl-child, 'perhaps in faery green,' comes out of the wood and takes it away. Other things like that happen to Mary. Her young husband with his 'kind tongue too full of drowsy love' speaks lovingly to her and she lovingly to him. There is singing outside; the faery child enters, persuades Father Hart to put the crucifix in another room. They are all taken by this lovely, queer lady-child. She beckons and calls Mary. Father Hart cries against his sin in putting away the crucifix. Mary is nearly going. The child woos her, '*Come with me, little bird,*' All beg her to stay—taut, quick words here. She will go, she is going, she dies.

One interior. Three men; 1 young woman, 1 older, the faery child. Shades. Fee (for amateurs) 2 guineas. Play, licence information, etc., easily obtainable through S. French, Ltd. (Irish agent—Fred Hanna, 29 Nassau Street, Dublin.)

THE SPANISH SOLDIER by LOUIS LYNCH D'ALTON

Likely to interest an Irish country audience very much indeed. A play of exasperatingly unclarified possibilities. Dublin performance much under-produced and unilluminatingly reviewed.

Three potentialities are lying about for producers. Kevin McMorna, returning crippled from General Franco's war, is in a state of religious ecstasy. His wife is wooed by his unbelieving brother, Hugh. Flowers are moved mysteriously in Kevin's room by night and he, believing it a miracle, is brought to health, to new hope—and to resolve to enter religion if his wife will cancel their covenant of human love. All await her answer—the priest, her husband, his wooing, unbelieving brother. The focus is therefore in the wife and her answer is that she, not God, had moved the flowers. This answer destroys Kevin's new happiness and health. So, a moral crisis now?

To restore his happiness, she then says that she had lied, that she had not moved the flowers. So it is a naturalistic drama of 'character' now? Any purge of the genuine emotion created in the last act must be sought in the character of the woman, more home-loving than love-loving, more pitiful than passionate. Hugh cannot win her from the weak and woolly Kevin.

An interesting (and financially successful?) production lies here. The provincial types have unusual animation and still more unusual ideas; the locale is well-observed. Five men, 3 women.

BRIDGEHEAD by RUTHERFORD MAYNE

A good evening's Theatre. In a country-town office of the Land Commission, ageing Mr. Moore slices through old homes and hearts and directs the greedy thrust of submerged roots seeking land. The Commission's too far-seeing service seems to shrivel its workers into a devoted and celibate Ministry. The feckless Anglo-Irish landowner, his daughter and her faint side-tracked romance with Moore's junior, the worthy and unworthy land-seekers, the hotel porter, the comic young asininity of the new clerk from Dublin with his hope of golf and 'hops' in the wilds of Connaught, are all—after some

opening clumsiness—well stitched around Moore and the central theme. There are also some moments of sudden pain. Much superior to most of the new Irish plays. Rutherford Mayne was one of the big forces in the Ulster Players. Three acts. Price 2/6 from any bookseller. Permits from I.P.A. Ten men, 2 women. One easy indoor setting.

THE RIVALS by RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

One of the best of the Dorset Street man's eighteenth-century comedies. Captain Absolute posing as an Ensign Beverley to win Miss Lydia Languish away from her 'old tough aunt' Mrs. Malaprop; Faulkland's romantic outpourings; Bob Acres' integrity that shines through our laughter at him; Miss Julia, Fag, David Thomas, Lucy—a country audience will like them all, will respond to the clear plot, the witty talk, the funny situations. Do not be afraid to change accessory words which have lost their meanings. Try to keep the settings light and airy; have at least two windows and, if possible, a vista of light; remember it all takes place in a stylised city (Bath) on a summer's day. It would be pleasant, also, to get away from the brocade convention; why not try materials more flowing yet within the tone of the period—*e.g.* velveteen (which is not dear) for both sexes, or corduroy for men, *moiré* or taffeta for women? Eight men, 4 women, any number of maids, boys, etc. No fee. Price of play 1/- Runs 3 hours. Four interiors, 3 exteriors.

YOUTH AT THE HELM by HUBERT GRIFFITH

A farcical comedy. One of the best of the modern ones. Adapted from the Viennese play by Paul Vulpius. Was a success in Birr. Neat in design and gay in heart. In London penniless Randolph just invents a job, invents a banking transaction with an invented Kubinsky, gets his

commandeered employers to accept his presence, to believe in Kubinsky, and he has the manager's daughter adorning his absurd pinnacle. It is all kept in tune. And *Big Business* ends by revering him as a genius known to Finance for years. The satire is a bubbly balloon. Three acts. Two interiors. Amateur fee 5 guineas. Price of play 2/6. Eleven men, 2 women. Runs about 2 hours.

I KILLED THE COUNT by FREDERICK LONSDALE

Quite an effective thriller-detective. Disgusting Count is dead in his flat. Many characters, amusing, humorous, flippant, are under suspicion. Three confess, giving motives. Crime re-enacted 3 times, each time differently. Finally another confession. British humour and characterisation of the quiet kind. Probably the next best thing to a good melodrama. Three acts. One interior throughout. Fee 5 guineas (for amateurs). Play 2/6. Ten males, 3 women. Modern.

MARIGOLD by L. ALLEN HARKER and F. R. PRYOR

Romantic, nay, sentimental, costume comedy. Charming figure of Marigold running off to Edinburgh in 1842; her separated parents; her pompous suitor; her bold but bashful subaltern; her lovable guardian. It is always uncommonly successful, this play, and there is no reason why it should not be. Plenty of humour (pawky perhaps but all right). Fee 3 guineas; play 2/6. This graceful play has an air and has 6 female parts—bless it. Eight men. Lovely dresses, etc., and needs only 2 settings, bless it. Runs a full course of 4 acts, bless it! Could anyone do better for you than this?

I ought to say that I was about to omit one of these plays on the advice of the 'very reasonable men,' when news came that two different groups, now rehearsing the play, are 'filled with astonishment and delight.' Can you guess which play I mean? (It is the second on the list.)

THE BELFRY

FROM A DARKENED WORLD

Was it not the Duchess of Weimar who said to Goethe 'There are two laws ; one for men, the other for women and poets' ? Quite clearly I had made up my mind that these pages were for Irish writers only, yet I open a manuscript and all my principles must go by the board. I do not know Cynric Mytton-Davies (hereinafter referred to as The Author as I cannot make up my mind about the said author's sex). One poem by the author has appeared in *The Daily Sketch* which I do not read. One poem the author sent me is in algebraic symbols which I cannot read. It is followed by an interpretation which I will not read. But I feel in my bones that the author is a poet, a splendid poet, and like the little princess in Hans Andersen when the poet asked for a kiss I can only say 'Art must be encouraged—look the other way, ladies.'

I wish I could print in full '*Salutation from a Darkened World*' ; a far finer defence of Irish neutrality than any our propagandists have imagined—

*Amaranthine queen, too often wounded by unthinking
kings,
Your imprisoned stepchildren would give the stars
For the denied consolation of your voice,
The touch of your scarred hand, your unbitter smile :
For one hour, nepenthean on your welcoming bosom ;
Nepenthean on your welcoming green bosom, jewelled
with silver.*

The repetition marks the passionate rhetoric which is characteristic of the other poems we print. It has something of the emotion and mysticism of Welsh oratory ; the *hwyl* as the Welsh call it, when the speaker gets lost in a cloud

of his own eloquence. I like that earnestness, that unself-consciousness, and I wish that our young poets could throw as much into their own work and could as effortlessly throw off a line like 'A million Peters for a million Christs,' or 'Acheron's train bore on their cherished shades.'

FRANK O'CONNOR.



There is nothing like being able to agree to differ. The Poetry Editor must have his way. *Mise*—I swear that Cynric Mytton-Davies is a reincarnation of Stephen Phillips, and think of Yeats' lines about bringing the balloon down into its narrow shed, and of that other poet who said, 'Take eloquence and wring its neck.' But Frank O'Connor is a poet and he is probably right. Anyway I devoutly hope so for we are breaking a fundamental rule in admitting a (none-the-less welcome) guest.

THE EDITOR.

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TWO POEMS

CYNRIC MYTTON-DAVIES

LEAVE TRAINS—VICTORIA STATION

The Great Hall of Gehenna was filled with spirits :
Moving shadows, amorphous, patternless,
Passing hither and thither and vanishing
Into dynamic lines of long perspective
Streaming away into the night.
Pools of topaz light hung, nimbus like,
High up in the cube of swimming dusk,
Casting a glow like phosphorescence on the night sea.

They stood, shadows, wrapped in shadow : unexpectedly :
A legion of unspeaking, unmoving women,
Faintly discernible : still as death ; heavy with joy :
A congregation of the damned awaiting the doomed.
Somewhere out in the night, dark lanthorned, Hadean,
Acheron's train bore on their cherished shades.

London : 29/4/40.

MIDNIGHT CHANTICLEER

Clear cut as silver trumpets on the air
The thrice repeated call at midst of night :
Then silence. Was there only I to hear
The accusation : the reproach indict
A million Peters for a million Christs ?
Where was the shamed remorse : the bitter weeping ?
There were proud standards fluttering in the lists,
And silence where once cherished dust lies sleeping.

They would not heed, although a host of cocks
Should crow the world deaf at so great offence,
While the swift glibness of denial mocks
The protestations of their innocence.
And the sad bird cries on, and none will heed,
But only count their glory by their dead.



PLAYS OF THE QUARTER

MacLiammóir's new play '*Dancing Shadow*' at the Gaiety came in for a good deal of adverse criticism in the Press, and although I would be the last to venture to return a raspberry to so solid a phalanx of critics, I do think that a fair ration of nonsense was written on the subject. Of course we all may be wrong, but it seemed to me that so far from being a plotless, superficial play beautifully performed, the real trouble was that it had the makings of a good play in it and was not particularly well done. It had a good tight ghost story at the back of it—the best story that Micheal has given us yet? And had it not at least three or four quite recognisable characters drawn sympathetically in the round, and of how many plays can the same be said? True, the best of the story was compressed into a single speech by Liam Gaffney, the bulk of which was usually drowned by the bronchitis of the audience. True also that it is hard to accept as one undivided heroine the very bogey-bogey little girl presented to us by Miss Peggy Cummins and the pleasant-spoken if not very smart young party she grew into. True, alas, that what ought to have been the high spots of the action were too often a little out of focus, and our spirits would have been more harrowed by the spookiness if it had not been laid on quite so lavishly throughout. The fact remains that there is better writing in this play than MacLiammoir has given us yet, and if he thinks it worth his while to do a bit of reconstruction, he may well confound the boys with the result. It is lamentably true that nearly-excellent work so often makes a flop when something for which much less effort is required (and which in consequence is often considerably slicker) makes a big hit.

Many of us will still remember the thrill we got about sixteen years ago when '*The Shadow of a Gunman*' first took the stage. Here was the first play of a new post-war mentality—the first break away from a false set of values that had been slowly poisoning us—the first time we heard expressed on the stage emotions that we were as yet hardly conscious of feeling ourselves. What we experienced then was nothing to what we are going to feel when once detached and sane intelligences get to work on the present world crisis. And in '*Thunder Rock*' we can catch the first faint stirrings of such a process. This has been in some ways an ill-fated play in that it really comes too early—too early in its birthplace, the United States, where its interventionist conclusions were not what was wanted by the Public of the autumn of 1939. Because of this it was a flop. It was also too early in London where it was killed—temporarily at least—by the blitz. But most of all, too early in its composition, since the author, after creating a perfect situation in his first and second acts, has nothing better to tell us in his third than that we are to go out and 'build a better world'—a thing that we seem to have heard before somewhere. But after all, what can we expect, seeing that the second act of the very situation he has been dramatising has only just got under way? But in spite of this it is an adult and highly refreshing play, optimistic in its purport, and as far as it goes, a blessed relief from the muddle-headed belligerent pacifism with which the vast majority of the British intellectuals are still reacting to the situation. It was beautifully set and produced and was notable in particular for brilliant performances by Meriel Moore and Roy Irving.

Longford Productions have immensely improved under Gerald Pringle and have also made a find in their scene designer, Carl Bonn, although to my untutored eye his sets are very much better than his costumes. The Company were at their best in '*The Seagull*'—a play that can very easily degenerate in repertory hands into a sort of tiresome

parody of everything that we regard as Stage-Russian. That it did not do so here is largely due to the production and to the fine performances of Jean Aird and Vivienne Dillon. Ronald Ibbs appeared to me to be as unconvincing as the Author, Trigorin, as he was excellent as Benedict in '*Much Ado About Nothing*.'

Christine Longford's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* seemed to me just about as good as a stage adaptation of such a book could be, and infinitely better than that performed by a most expensive all-star cast in London a few years ago. Yet—though it must be said it played to a packed house the night I went—neither producer nor cast ever really got down to it. Vivienne Dillon, actress though she be, is not overburdened with that tart sense of humour that one expects in Miss Elizabeth Bennett and seemed to be only vaguely acquainted with her lines. Little more can be said in favour of the other Miss Bennetts whose difficulties in obtaining husbands were more probably due to their appalling clothes and their quaint habit of forming groups like a photograph of a football team. Cathleen Delany as Lydia was the best of them, and there stood out amongst the men John Izon and Hamlyn Benson as Mr. Bennett and that ever-to-be-enjoyed Mr. Collins.

The Abbey's semi-permanent feature, *The Rugged Path*, always struck me as being a play that really became interesting just as the final curtain fell, and this may be why the sequel *The Summit*, unlike most sequels, is so much better a play than the original. But it does not explain why it only ran one-sixth of the time. It was excellently performed by that superb Abbey team—a team that on its home ground really needs no production and can do very well with little in the way of design. They were at their best again in Louis D'Alton's new play *Money Doesn't Matter*—an amusing piece of foolery which, without professing great profundity, proved an excellent vehicle for the Company and gave an opportunity for one or two rather scandalous but very funny characters. Further-

more it brought back Liam Redmond who has been absent from the Abbey stage far too long. It is a melancholy fact that a successful appearance elsewhere—a thing that managements ought to encourage—so often results in a long period of neglect, as though contact with the outside world required a period of quarantine before an actor can be considered fit to tread the Abbey boards again. There has been far too much of this laying-off of first-rate Irish actors and actresses lately for reasons that have no connection whatever with their professional ability, and it is to be hoped that the return of Liam Redmond is only the first step in the reverse direction. To mention other names of Abbey artists who seem to have suffered the same eclipse would probably not assist in their return so I shall not do so. But it must be a truism to say that the future of the Irish theatre requires the continuous employment of the best Irish talent that is available, and that Theatres ought to be able to get their own way in anything that matters without having to go the length of pushing competent artists off the stage.

Lastly, may I congratulate the Dublin University Players on attempting *Heartbreak House*. Were the late lamented D.U.D.S. still in action we would be just about due for *French Without Tears* which would have been great fun for all concerned but not so much for anybody else. Also the University College Society for their courageous production—possibly the first in Europe—of one of the most famous of modern American plays, '*Winterset*' by Maxwell Anderson. I have not actually seen it at the time of writing as it is advertised for 'Students and friends' only, and I am not at all certain that I can be properly listed in either category. Nevertheless both our Universities seem to be proceeding in an encouraging direction and will no doubt in due course discover that the drama does not usually get its heartiest cheers from chests that are encumbered with starched shirts.

DENIS JOHNSTON.

BOOKS

THE LAND OF SPICES : By KATE O'BRIEN.

(Heinemann, 8s. 6d.)

In her later novels Miss Kate O'Brien has developed a cool, delicate skill which, at its best, is delightful to watch. Her patience has been its own reward and she can now deal with those peculiar complications of our mentality which put less experienced writers into a rage. *Pray for the Wanderer*, despite the early nostalgic associations which the very title calls up, was an attempt, and not a very successful one, to escape from Ireland past and present. But in this new novel Miss O'Brien has returned to her real themes. *The Ante Room*, or to give it its original title, *Triduum*, was a concentrated study in religious tension and was the first of its kind to be written here. Her new book explores more fully the organised religious mind of this country and, serenely, in its own way, it solves all the problems of touchiness, irritation and suspicion which surround that guarded theme. In religious subjects we have been dominated for years by the English convert mentality and have developed a self-conscious feeling of inferiority. But, as writers, we have one considerable

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advantage over the converts. We have not to despise or disparage our earliest impressions in childhood.

It is obvious that in this book Miss O'Brien is drawing on her earliest emotions and recollecting them in tranquillity. Her book will stir and excite the memories of Irish readers. Reading this book, I realised, with astonishment, that my own earliest impressions were not of ugly classrooms but of this exotic wonderland of spices with which she deals. The rustle of eastern robes, the inevitable beeswax and flowers in the corridors, the indefinable sense of a mysterious drama. Then there were the gifts brought home, the leaflet, the medal, the Agnus Dei. The tiny satchets of silk and satin were awing, for the wax in them was so holy that the nuns themselves could only pick it up with the point of a needle. We called them "Agnes' stays," an immodest mispronunciation which thrilled us with guilt. There was the excitement of visiting convents on Holy Thursday, the sense of intrusion, the crowded staircase, the green baize door. Inside the hushed oratory, the strange death-like perfume of the lilies in rigid rows, the acrid odour of a candle which had burned awry ; the two veiled figures kneeling on prie-dieux : the quietness of those figures, the restlessness and the glitter of the candles. In her study of Anna Murphy, a child of six, who is sent to a convent school to escape the influences of an unfortunate home, Miss O'Brien gives us the tiny but immense idiom of childhood and its first painfully sweet intimations of immortality.

The central theme of the novel is both daring and original, the theme of religious tact. The Reverend Mother of this Irish convent, a branch of a French teaching order founded in the eighteenth century, is an Englishwoman, and the contrast both between Irish and English temperaments and between Irish and English Catholicism is shown within the small community. A further complication is the fact that the Order is a foreign one and that Reverend Mother spent most of her life abroad on the Continent.

The school's conventional nick-names for Reverend Mother were 'cold fish,' and 'dark horse,' and 'queer one' and "Sassenach." But no violent drama is precipitated, and one is always confident in Miss O'Brien's own quiet and humorous tact. *La pudeur et la politesse*, French and deportment. These were the main subjects in the curriculum of *La Compagnie de la Sainte Famille* in the leisurely days of 1904 and thereabouts. The subtle adjustments necessary to keep a balance between true spirituality and middle-class snobbery may make angels weep, but mortals must smile.

There seems to me one artistic flaw in this book, the nature of the shock which drove Helen Archer, the beautiful, intelligent, young English girl into a Continental Order in a mood of agonised revulsion. It is an outward shock, purely pathological, and mentioned in a single euphemistic sentence. A more personal experience would have given more scope for analysis and brought us nearer the girlhood of Helen Archer. As it is, there is a curious aloofness as if the novelist were watching that semi-veiled figure with early eyes. 'Anna noticed, for instance, the singular, mezzo-soprano beauty of her voice, as it rang alone, very clear and holy, at Vespers on Sunday afternoon, or in the grave Lenten prayers of the Stations of the Cross—"Christ was made obedient unto death." Even as a little girl, Anna used to wait enraptured for the lift of the light, sad voice, before the confused response of the whole dark chapel broke on it.'

AUSTIN CLARKE.



SOME MEMORIES OF W. B. YEATS.

JOHN MASEFIELD. (*Cuala Press. 12s. 6d.*)

The modern poet is fortunate in this : that future interpretations of his life, personality and writing will be based not only upon his writings but upon the memories of his contemporaries and intimates, set down with fullness before time has thinned or dimmed them. To obtain these advantages, you must not only write well, but also convince your time that you do so.

Yeats did both and, as much as any poet, is securing these advantages. The latest sheaf of memories to appear is this *Cuala Press* book by the English Poet Laureate, who first met Yeats in 1900, when Yeats was living in London. The first evening is described in some detail, as is the room in which it was spent ('because it was the most interesting room in London'); and these accounts contain most of the interesting facts and impressions which the book contains.

Masefield passes from prose to verse and back to prose again, without warning. One is not disturbed ; for the verse is cool and relaxed ; though occasionally bald and prosy.

Perhaps the most successful piece of work is a poem called 'Finn and the Chess-men' in which a very Yeatsian Finn and Fiana brood upon a board in the attempt to charge the chess-men with mental energy so that they will rise and move and do their bidding. The story of the partial success of the experiment, and of their diversion from it by wars in Connacht, is a long allegory, explained at the end thus :

*Was not this one such an one as Finn
Living at a Tara of the spirit,
Pondering the problems of the chess-play,
Till the tidings came of devils landed
Bringing ruin to the mind of Eire.*

R. O'F.

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