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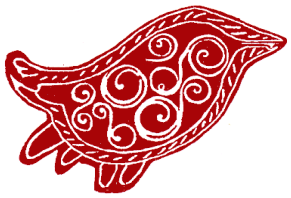

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Author: W. O'S.

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Reviews.

Dublin Historical Record. Vol. I., March, 1938. Published by the Old Dublin Society. 1/6.

The publishers of this excellent little volume and the contributors are to be congratulated on their initial production. The editorial comment states that of all districts in Ireland, Dublin City and County has not so far possessed any journal specifically devoted to local history. While this is true, one could also remark that Dublin, being the capital, has figured largely in most of the Irish journals devoted to the study of the general history and antiquities of Ireland. However, there is need for a publication of this nature which would confine itself to Dublin only and thus facilitate the student of local history by providing him in one work the outstanding events relating to Dublin's past.

This issue consists mainly of three articles. The first—The Beginnings of Municipal Government in Dublin, by Dr. Dudley Edwards, is interesting to Cork readers as it provides many analogies to Cork during the same period. The author gives all his sources, and the article itself is an excellent base from which a more detailed study of the municipal framework of Dublin city could be attempted.

The second is a brief but very well written article by Mr. T. K. Moylan on Poverty in Dublin during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and is an example of very well directed research which should be developed to a greater degree in historical journals nowadays. We have many and frequent contributions to Irish political happenings from all angles, but few writers attempt to give any account of how the " Pat Murphy's," who formed the vast majority of the population, eked out their existence. The author, who is not without a sense of humour, has given very vivid pen pictures and is very well versed in local topography.

The third article, by Mr. K. Murray, deals with the building of Dublin's first railway. It tells of the superhuman efforts on the part of the sponsors to attain their object and how they eventually succeeded. The story is well and lucidly told and we look forward with interest to the next instalment.

It concludes with a survey of local place-names and an historical account of the Assembly House where the Old Dublin Society holds its meetings. Apropos of place-names, the study of which bristles with pitfalls, even to the most experienced, it seems rather relying too much on " phonetic transformation " to state that Dolphin's Barn is derived from Donnchadh's Carn. Carn Donnchaidh would be the Irish rendering. Dolphin's Barn would rather seem to be another of those Victorian monstrosities which may be seen on the entrances of respectable suburbia all over Ireland. It would greatly enhance place-name study if authority was given as far as possible for different renderings. However, this is a small point, and it remains to congratulate the contributors and the publishers on this first number. It is tastefully turned out in a very attractive cover, and deserves a place in the family library of every Dublin citizen, whether he be from city or county.

W. O'S.

The Secret Languages of Ireland. By R. A. S. Macalister, Litt.D., LL.D. Cambridge: At the University Press. 1937. 16s. net.

The fact that itinerant tinkers possessed a secret jargon attracted the attention of various students over a number of years, but the vocabulary was most fully recorded by the late John Sampson, librarian of the University of Liverpool and a great authority on Romani and cant jargons. Through Sampson, Professor Kuno Meyer became interested in this " language " of the tinkers (known generally as " Shelta ") and showed that it was a secret language with a foundation of great antiquity, formed on a basis of Irish at an early stage of its development. Dr. Sampson's notes remained, in the main, unpublished after his death and it was the existence of these notes which led Dr. Macalister to write this book.

The book is not, however, confined to a discussion of modern secret jargons. There are chapters on Ogham, Hisperic and " Bog-Latin " (a Latin of degraded form in mediaeval times). The book usefully gives the vocabularies of Shelta and developed Bearlagair na Saer, though the fact that recently Mr. Patrick Green has, as Dr. Macalister points out, published valuable papers (in *Bealoideas* III. and IV.) on the tinkers and their language suggests that workers in this field may yet do much to augment Dr. Sampson's efforts.

N.F.

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