Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society

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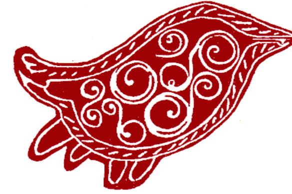

Title: Notes on the Literary History of Cork
Author: Sheehan, R.A.
Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, 1892, Vol. 1, No 1, page(s) 4-10
Published by the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society
Digital file created: June 6, 2013

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handsome lover of Pamela, attired in sober Quaker garb, has been pictured for us coming and going about the old house in Daunt's Square by the reverend President, in his account of "Lord Edward Fitzgerald in Cork." The facts connected with the siege of the city by Marlboro have been augmented from a family narrative by Mr. H. W. Gillman, B.L., M.R.S.A. Mr. C. G. Doran has brought to light the unpublished "Diary of a Market Juror," and given particulars of the city fathers and municipal life in Cork in the early decades of this century. Mr. John Fitzgerald —and who is better entitled to do so than the Bard of the Lee—brought back old times in his paper on "Street Ballads." Details of a religious controversy and wrangle with divines two hundred years ago have been supplied by Rev. W. Whitelegge, M.A., in his paper on "Dean Worth." Mr. Henry L. Tivy has portrayed "Old Cork Celebrities," many of whom were plagued by *gamins* who were grandfathers to the present generation. Of the heads spiked over the old County Gaol we have, at least, been able to identify three, which three, perhaps, looked down in ghastliness while two small boys—the brothers Sheares—looked up, and promised with their young lips "one day to take them all down."

For the coming year the Society has been promised many interesting papers, and it is intended to hold meetings in the evenings, to which members will have the privilege of introducing a friend. Due announcement of meetings will be given.

In this notice of the "History of the Society" it would be culpable if mention was not made of the fact that, in our efforts to publish the proceedings of the Society, we have been met "more than half way" by Messrs. Guy & Co., the publishers of the Journal of the Society. We take this opportunity, too, of thanking the local press for the assistance they have already rendered our objects. So far, the Society has been able to overcome the natural inertia and prevailing tendency to sneer at all new movements. The ultimate success of the undertaking depends almost entirely on the extent to which it is supported by the public. We have already a considerable number of members, and the voice of the new year is young and fresh in our ears, and brings promise of great possibilities to be attained.

Notes on the Literary History of Cork.

BY THE PRESIDENT.

[This paper was read at the inauguration of the Session 1891-2 of the Cork Literary and Scientific Society. It finds a permanent place, not unfittingly we think, in this first number of a Cork Historical Journal.]

IT was the custom of other times to call cities not by their geographical names but by titles, which had mostly reference to some important event or characteristic of their history: and so the Corkmen of a generation or two ago spoke of their birthplace, not by the prosiac name which came to it from the marshes, over which their fathers had reared its walls in the seventh century, but by the more classical and pleasant title of the "Modern Athens." Now, there are two cities of that name. There is the Athens of the past, the nursing mother of heroes and of all the arts, and there is the modern Athens, on whose unlovely streets all that is left of the Parthenon and the Erectheum and the sweetly-chaste shrine of Unwinged Victory looks down as if to remind the people there that the soul of beauty has fled the land for ever, "living Greece no more."

We must assume, I suppose, that the patriotic Corkmen, to whom I have referred, had in view some period in Cork history when this city of ours held a proud pre-eminence in Ireland for the cultivation of letters. But, after all, literary pre-eminence, like every other superiority, is only a relative term. The French proverb puts it pointedly, "Where all are blind, the one-eyed man is king," and at

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the best it can scarcely be claimed, I think, that Ireland has held, in modern times at least, a high position in the world of letters. Yet, if there be any truth at all in history, it was not always so. Time was when Irish schools had a place all their own in the very forefront of civilization, and Irish scholars were the light of the nation from Iona to Tarentum, from Biscay to the Baltic. Every small territory in Ireland had its own flourishing school. Every school had its hundreds, sometimes its thousands, of students. Clonard had 3,000; Armagh, 7,000. The whole country round Leighlin was called "the land of science and scholars." Most parts of Europe, too, Bishop Nicholson says, sent their children to be educated in Ireland. We have still a long list, dating from the eighth century, of eminent men who flourished and died in Ireland, and in it we may read the names of Germans and Gauls, of Romans and Egyptians, as well as of Britons, Picts, and Saxons. There was a hearty welcome and generous hospitality for all. King Alfred of Northumbria, himself one of these scholars, described his reception in a Celtic poem, beautifully translated by Clarence Mangan:—

> I found in each great church moreo'er,
> Whether in island or on shore,
> Piety, learning, fond affection,
> Holy welcome, and kind protection.

But the Irish were not content with teaching at home all those who came to them. They put out fearlessly in their small ships, and crossed the seas to Germany and Gaul and Spain, and when they reached the shore they pushed on as fearlessly into the interior. They found the people in barbarism, for the Hun and the Goth had quenched every light of learning there. They flung themselves into the work of civilizing with all that Celtic dash that in our own day has marked the work of their descendants in another continent. They established schools wherever they went, in the forest of Burgundy, on the plains of Lombardy, by the banks of Swiss lakes, amid the snows of the Alps, beneath the slopes of the Appenines. It is not too much to say that, outside of Turkey and Russia, every nation in Europe to-day owes, and in a large measure too, the beginnings of its civilization to these Irish teachers. Nor, it must be said, have the nations been ungrateful. There is scarce a civilized tongue in the world in which the names of these brave men are not gratefully spoken and their praises sung.

No part of Ireland boasted of more schools than historic Desmond. For then, as now, the people of these southern counties of ours were remarkable beyond others for their love of learning, their quickness of understanding, and their devotion especially to classical studies. But of all the Desmond schools the most celebrated was the school of Cork. So says Bishop Healy, whose recent work on *Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars* promises to become classical. The school of Cork was founded in the first quarter of the 7th century, as every Corkman knows, by St. Finbarr. Every Corkman knows, too, that Finbarr was a Connaught man by birth, a Munster man by education, that he passed his manhood close by the source of the Lee, in beautiful "lone Gougane Barra," and that in the sunset of his life, led, as we may be pardoned for thinking, by that mystical lore which is said for some to illuminate the future, before the past has faded altogether into darkness, he turned his steps towards the east, and, wandering down the banks of the river, he, as we know so well, made his last resting-place, and built his church and his school on its southern banks, close by the spot where it loses itself in the ocean, through the lovely Cork Harbour.

Even now, after the lapse of 1,350 years, it is not by any means difficult to describe, with tolerable accuracy, the general outline of the scene that met Finbarr's view when he looked down for the first time from that southern slope upon the place with which his name was destined to be identified to all future generations. At his feet lay one arm of the river, whose course he had followed on his journey from Gougane Barra, and farther on to the north he could trace the windings of another, just where it moves to-day. The space that lay between, now embracing what Corkmen so well know by the name of the flat of the city, was composed of five distinct marshes, broken up, the chroniclers say, into 365 islands, and enclosed by the waters of the river, as they parted from the main stream, and flowed where now stands two of the principal thoroughfares of the city, and many minor ones. Farther on in front, and stretching away to the right for miles, lay the wooded slopes of a hilly range, broken only in one place by a pass that led out to the

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north-east, though the day was yet far distant ere the solitudes of the place were to be broken, and an extended suburb and a long line of villa residences would mark a city's extended trade, and the wealth of its merchant princes.

Finbarr and his followers set to work: a church, a monastery, and a school were built. Crowds of students quickly came from many parts, and the city of Cork arose out of the solitude. The city, no need to say it, was not the city we know to-day. There were no broad streets—I am not sure there were even any narrow lanes. The cathedral was of stone, and so were the library and other principal buildings. Petrie says, so, too, probably were the cells of the monks. But the huts of the students, as well as of the workmen, were of wood. Two centuries later the change came. "The Danes," says Dr. Healy, "afterwards "seems to have established a permanent colony "in Cork as they did in Dublin, and raised "buildings of a more enduring and imposing "character." But the monastic city was there before them, and was the real nucleus of the present beautiful city by the "pleasant waters of the river Lee."

But what was the manner of education imparted in these Irish schools, of which this of Cork was so fair a specimen? Many, doubtless, who have never had occasion to study the subject, are content to answer that it was of a very inferior character, and, doubtless, too, the student of our times, with all our wealth of Primary, Intermediate and University education, would regard with feelings akin to contempt the curriculum of these ancient times. But it is as certain as anything can be that this curriculum embraced the entire sphere of secular knowledge that existed at the period, and it is equally certain, I think, that the Cork student of the seventh century was as learned for his time as the Cork student of the nineteenth century is for his. There were two great classes of schools in this country then as now—the lay schools or Gaelic schools, as they are commonly called, and the ecclesiastical or monastic schools. The lay schools were national in the best sense of the word. They taught a boy his native tongue, and the history, the laws and literature of his native land. The more important schools had their three faculties of poetry, law, and history. The course of poetry was one of twelve years' hard work. It embraced the knowledge of all kinds of Gaelic verse, as well as detailed instruction in the composition of poetry. The student in this school was expected to know from memory the great poems of his country, and to be able to recite them for his chief in the banquet hall or during the march to battle. The celebrated code of Brehon laws formed the course of study in the second faculty, and in the third the student learned all that could be known of the history of Ireland and the genealogies of its great families, together with the topography of its various sub-divisions.

This system of secular instruction was finally arranged at a great meeting of the kings and nobles held at Drum Ceata, in the present county of Derry, towards the close of the sixth century, and continued in existence for nearly a thousand years. It was recognized by the Irish kings as part of the institutions of the country, and in the great Irish code of laws, already referred to, instructions are given for its administration. It is interesting, and certainly not uninstructive, to observe that these old Irish laws, of an age too often assumed to be barbarous, regarded the relations of teacher and pupil, not in the mere mercantile light which they present, I fear, in this enlightened age. The one was then "a literary foster-father;" the other, "the foster-pupil," and the foster-pupil was expressly bound to assist his foster-father in poverty, and to support him in his old age. And another of these Brehon educational laws offers pleasing encouragement for the gratuitous instruction of strangers, for while it holds the master responsible for the crimes of his pupils who are natives, whether they pay him or not, and for the crimes of strangers if he instructs them for pay, it declares that "he is free even "though it be a stranger he instructs, feeds, "and clothes, provided it is not for pay, but "for God, he does it."

The education given in schools such as that of Cork was of a still more extensive character, and, beyond all doubt, the best of its kind in any part of the civilized world. This is high praise. One fact abundantly justifies it. Men came from all nations in hundreds to seek its education; and in those days of slow and difficult travelling by land and by sea, men were not likely to journey long distances to seek what they might have found near their own homes. The course of studies embraced the Irish language and

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literature, the Greek and Roman classics, foreign languages, the physical sciences, and, for ecclesiastics, theology, and Sacred Scripture. We have the highest authority for the statement that there is scarcely an eminent Irish ecclesiastic from the fifth century who was not distinguished for his knowledge of the Gaelic language and history. Most of the books which have come down to us from that period show that these Irish writers possessed a large and accurate knowledge of the Latin, and still more, perhaps, of the Greek language; and recent investigations have brought to light in Italy and Germany manuscripts of Horace and Ovid, as well as of the Old and New Testaments, whose delicate tracery prove an Irish hand. In a celebrated controversy of the seventh century Irish writers gained brilliant distinction for their knowledge of astronomy, whilst the large number of references to foreign works, ancient and modern, proved the wealth of Irish libraries as well as their owners' intimate acquaintance with them.

It is of importance to cite the testimony of the greatest of Irish hagiographers, Colgan, concerning the Monastery and School of Cork. "It was the abode of wisdom," he says, "and the sanctuary of all Christian "virtues. To it disciples flocked in crowds "from all quarters in such great numbers that "it changed the desert, as it were, into a "large city." He gives a long list of men remarkable for their holiness of life and "praise of learning," who came "from that very celebrated school."

One literary work, and one only, of that school of Cork has come down to our times. It is the *Liber Hymnorum*, or Book of Hymns, written, as the preface tells us, by "Colman, professor in the school of Cork, in "the year 664." This book O'Curry describes in the following terms in the second volume of his *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish:* "The Liber Hymnorum, "a manuscript written in a magnificent Irish "hand, and splendidly illuminated, is now "eleven or twelve hundred years old, and with "its arguments or prefaces to each of the "hymns contained in it, and the scholia with "which it is thickly enriched, is certainly one "of the most valuable ecclesiastical docu-"ments in Europe." "The author," says the writer of *Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars*, "was evidently familiar as well with "the Latin as with his native Gaelic, both of "which he manipulates with considerable dex-"terity." The poem is an invocation to be delivered from pestilence. The preface describes the circumstances under which it is written. The population of the country at this time was so large that each man had only twenty-seven ridges of ground—nine of bog, nine of wood, and nine of arable land. Famine and pestilence were the result, and "only one out of every three persons was left alive in Erin." It came to be supposed, however, that the pestilence could not extend more than nine waves from the land. Colman and his followers accordingly set out for the shore to place themselves beyond the infected area, and on their way the *Liber Hymnorum* was composed.

Of the subsequent history of the School of Cork we know only this: It continued to teach and, as we may well believe, to flourish for at least 500 years. A contemporary writer describes it, in the year 810, as still filled with monks and scholars; and it had for its ruler in 1172 the famous Gilla Aedh, whom the Four Masters describe as "the tower of the virginity and wisdom of his time." Then a long, sad day began for Ireland. The sounds of bitter strife rolled along the land. The country was laid waste from end to end, and one after another all traces of civilization and learning disappeared in the tramp of armies and the crash of battle, as the Lombard field under the tread of Attila's horse. The stranger came no longer to learn but to conquer. The ancient schools were closed and then battered down. The Irish student left his books and the study-hall to put on the soldier's armour, and bleed and die on the battle-field. The treasures of learning and of art that had been gathered in many a day and night of ceaseless toil and by many a hand, on the banks of the Shannon, the Bann and the Lee, at Armagh and Clonmacnoise and Cork were scattered to the winds. A few were buried to be dug up centuries after, and show to a wondering world what Irish minds had cunningly planned, what Irish hands had cunningly wrought in the ages long gone,

> "Ere the Emerald gem of the Western world
> Was set in the crown of a stranger."

Thus closed in tears and blood the first chapter in our little literary history. The second commenced with the introduction of

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printing into Cork, 500 years after the death of Gilla Aedh. What happened in the interval we do not know—possibly we *shall*, if only our young men will study the history of their ancestry, as did those of old St. Finbarr's. Ireland was amongst the last countries in Europe to set up a printing press. Coster published books in Haarlem and Guttenberg in Mayence before 1450. We have no Irish book bearing an earlier date than 1551. The earliest Cork book known is that mentioned by Ware in his *Irish Writers* as "a Sermon preached at the Funeral "of Richard Boyle, Archbishop of Tuam, by "Edward Worth ;" Cork, 1644, 4to. Worth became Dean of Cork in 1645, and Bishop of Killaloe sixteen years later; he was the founder of the Cork Bluecoat Hospital. Boyle was Bishop of Cork before he removed to Tuam. It was in his time that the first organ was erected in St. Finbarr's Cathedral, as appears from the following entry in the old Chapter-book under the date of 1633—"An "order to pay eighteen pounds towards the "erecting a musical instrument called an "organ, as the custom is to have in "cathedrals."

We have no Cork book bearing the date of 1645, 1646, or 1647, but there are four of 1648, all referring to the closing scenes of that terrible seven years' war that began in Ireland in 1641.

Ormond, the Lord Lieutenant, landed at Cork from Havre on the 29th of September. He found the country in wild confusion. A hostile army occupied the field, under the command of a brave and skilful general, and a hostile parliament sat in council and made laws which were implicitly obeyed by a large portion of the population. The English party was, moreover, divided into two factions. One declared for the king; the other against the king, for the English Parliament. Inchiquin, the President of Munster, threw in his lot with the former, and the Parliament retorted by voting him a rebel and a traitor. Ormond, six days after landing, declared his own policy in the second book published in Cork. The third and fourth quickly followed. They contained the articles of the treaty made at Kilkenny with the Supreme Council of Ireland, and the address of "the Lord Lieu-"tenant-General of the Kingdom of Ireland" on the occasion. These two books are inscribed, "Printed at Cork, and are to be sold "at Roche's Buildings, outside South Gate." It is impossible now to determine, with any degree of accuracy, the number of books printed in Cork in former days. A friend has provided me with a list, commencing with 1731. It contains the names of fifty-two books published here between that date and 1831. But this list is manifestly incomplete Many books written by native authors are absent from it, and it does not include the name of a single reprint of an English book. Most of those books of Cork authors are of a religious character, or essays, or poems possessing no interest, beyond that which is attached to their origin. There is strong evidence that the number of English reprints was very great. "The practice of pirating in "Ireland," says Dr. Madden, speaking of this period, "of works printed and published in "England of notable merit or success was "diligently carried into effect in the case "of Addison, Steele, Johnson, Goldsmith, "Osborne, &c." It is rare, indeed, to find a list of books published in Cork before the Union that does not contain the name of some work of a well-known English contemporary writer.

We know with certainty that the demand for books here was very great. Everyone who has studied the literature of Cork at the period to which I am now referring has heard of Flynn's *Modern Monitor*, published, as the title-page tells us, "by William Flynn, at the Sign of the Shakespear, 1771." This book contains whole pages written after the manner of the great English essayists, and not unworthy of them. Its editor and principal contributor was Henry Sheares, a Cork banker, member of Parliament for Clonakilty, and the father of John and Henry Sheares. Of him the historian of Irish periodical literature says, that "he was a man of consider-"able learning and abilities, and, whether "as a political writer or a literary essayist, "his talent appears to be of the highest "order." The first essay in the *Monitor* was written by Sheares, and he states there (speaking of Cork) that all books of eminence meet with a ready demand. The company of men of learning and genius is sought after, he tells us, and a polite attention is paid to them, very different from that ignorant roughness and illiberal reserve by which other trading places are distinguished, and he adds, "Indeed, it would not be easy to find in any

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"town of equal size so many persons engaged in "commerce who have had a liberal education."

A period of great literary activity followed the date of the publication of the *Monitor*. Indeed, the closing years of the last, and the opening years of the present century witnessed the beginning of a literary movement that produced remarkable results, and it may well be doubted if the Cork of to-day, with all its advantages, present an equal zeal for culture or an equal success in its promotion. Many causes contributed to this movement. The trade of Cork increased enormously, particularly during the wars with France, and, with increased wealth, the citizens came to feel an increased desire for a better and more liberal education for their children, and there was a large and constantly increasing body, too, who, though many of its members had known themselves the best influence of foreign travel and foreign training, yet hailed the liberty of educating their children at home, now granted to them for the first time, with a joy all the greater that the schools of France, where alone for centuries a large proportion of Irish youth could be trained, were closed against them by the political disturbances of the time. The first result of all this was the establishment of large and most excellent schools. The recollection of those schools still survives in our midst, for they lasted far into the present century, and our older citizens may well be envied the pride they feel as they remember them, and the happy and eminently useful days they passed within their walls. A second result was the establishment of learned societies, the earliest of which was, I believe, the Cork Society of Arts and Sciences, founded in 1782. Ten years later the Library Society came into existence.

In 1803 the first course of public lectures ever delivered by a resident was given here. The subject was Natural and Experimental Philosophy. A large and costly apparatus for the illustration of these lectures was provided by subscription, and afterwards vested by the subscribers in trustees, and thus was laid the foundation of the Cork Institution, The Institution flourished for many years, and obtained the sympathy and support of the best men in the city. There were grumblers in those days—there are, I suppose, some even now—who, though they knew nothing, and cared less, about the Institution, still spent no inconsiderable share of their time in decrying it. But yet, looking back upon its history to-day, I doubt much if there ever has been in Cork—in modern Cork, at least—and other body which has done so much useful work in the diffusion of knowledge.

It was the fruitful parent of many societies. The first was the Cork Literary and Philosophical Society, which had for its principal object, as its rules state, "to repeat interesting experiments in natural philosophy, to "examine the minerals found in this and "adjoining counties, and to collect the most "accurate information respecting the natural "history and antiquities of the county of "Cork." It had for its secretary the Rev. Thomas Dix Hincks, a well-known Cork clergyman, whom old men remember as a scholar in many branches, and young men as the author of a Greek dictionary, which is linked, for them, with the bitterest memories of their school days. This society had a short, and, apparently, not very happy existence. It was succeeded by the Scientific Society, which deserves mention, if only for the novel principle upon which it was worked. At each meeting *all* its members were bound by rule to produce some work of nature or of art, and a written description, containing, according to the account I have seen, "such "particulars as the writer could collect, and "any remarks he thought proper." One-half the visitors—and the visitors often outnumbered the members, we are told—was expected to furnish each another work and another description. The Scientific Society lasted only three or four years—the wonder is, I think, that it lasted so long. Then came the Philosophical and Literary Society, founded in 1813. During its short career of six years, this society counted amongst its members probably a larger number of literary men than any other in the kingdom outside the very large centres.

We are all familiar, though three-quarters of a century have since passed, with the names of Dr. Porter, Abraham Abell, and Richard Dowden (Richard), and there were besides two others who afterwards made for themselves a national reputation—Dr. Maginn, the witty, gifted Sir Morgan O'Doherty, of *Blackwood*, and the genial, versatile Samuel Carter Hall. For all that, the lot of the society appears to have been cast, even from the beginning, in troubled waters. Weekly meetings were soon abandoned, for lack of papers, and

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fortnightly meetings substituted; and when, in a moment of temporary success, the society returned to the more frequent assemblage, the number of papers again decreased. The number of members decreased, too. Dissensions sprung up amongst those who remained. Mr. Hall, the poet of one party, satirized Dr. Maginn, the leader of the other, in a humorous squib which he presented to the Cork Library shortly before his death. Grave charges were made in the public press against the tone of the society's discussions, and, finally, after it had made for itself, with great labour, a new code of laws in October, 1820, in the following month the President, Dr. Milner Barry, declared it dissolved by a vote of 47 members against 18 led by Dr. Maginn.

On its ruins rose our own Literary and Scientific Society, or rather, Scientific and Literary Society—for such was the name by which it was known in its earlier days. The records of the first three years have perished; but we have those of 1823, '24, '25, and '26, and interesting reading they are on many points. The work of the society appears to have been done from its earliest days with great energy, and, for the most part, equal success. There is no entry that the weekly meeting was ever once without its paper and its discussion. The subjects were of a very varied character—mostly historical and scientific. In History the essayists and debaters appear to have covered the entire ground between the Lacedemonians with their laws and Clarke, the ossified man. In Science and Art I find such titles as "The Want of "Perspective in Ancient Painting," "The "English Ecclesiastical Architecture of the "Middle Ages, commonly denominated "Gothic," "The Irish Leghorn Straw Plait "Manufactory." "Mechanics' Institutes" was the title of another paper, and the society subsequently received the thanks of the citizens assembled in public meeting for the aid which it had given to the earliest of these institutions established in Cork. For subscription, adult members paid annually 15s., while minors, with great and scrupulous consideration were admitted for 11s. 4½d., and in a balance sheet attached to one of the annual reports, I find "a lad," who was, I suppose, within a small fraction of half a minor, credited with 5s. 8d. under this heading.

The society had, of course, its own little difficulties. Sometimes the committee were irregular in their attendance, and I find a minute empowering the secretary to transact the business when he found himself alone. Sometimes the members were tardy in arriving at the time fixed for meeting, and the committee deemed it right to place on record that not only did they not prohibit a small number from commencing work, but that they were anxious where only two were present one should take the chair and the other proceed to read a paper. Sometimes it was not an easy matter to obtain a paper, and fines were decreed against defaulters, but these fines, like those imposed on jurors in our own days, were more frequently remitted than levied. The proceedings of the society were occasionally enlivened after a rather peculiar fashion. One gentleman is said to have forwarded a communication in mental calculation, and with it a living subject in the shape "of a lad named Fleming." Another read a paper on "The Bear," and produced a living specimen, and the week after, the committee directed the treasurer to pay to this gentleman a sum of 4s. 2d. "on account," as they say, "of certain expenses incurred by "him on the production of a living bear at "the society's last public meeting." But these things are all by the way. The society did solid work, and perseveringly in the old days, and every Corkman may feel proud of it.

There are few societies of the same kind in the Kingdom that have endured so long, and very few, in communities like ours, that have so fair a record. For the space of two generations and more the Literary and Scientific Society has afforded to men of literary tastes in Cork a strong incentive to study. It has imparted to thousands an immense amount of varied information, which they might not otherwise have obtained. It has trained the youth of Cork to speak clearly and forcibly, and some eloquently, on most subjects of general interest and importance; and it has brought together, too, men of every class and creed, and given to them a platform where, without any sacrifice of principle, they may meet and pleasantly engage in an interchange of views, where they may learn to know each other better and cultivate more friendly relations, and then go out, and when opportunity offers, unite together without estrangement or distrust in promoting the interests of this old city and its people, so dear to us all.

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