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The History of the Society.

BY THE HONORARY SECRETARY.

HUMAN nature in Cork city is much the same as any other place in this wide world. We are commonly accused of interesting ourselves in our neighbours' affairs, to a much greater extent than other people do; and it is further alleged that if we know nothing good about them, we are sure to know something good-for-nothing of them; but let it be remembered that it is "the other people" say these things. One thing is certain, whatever Corkonians know about affairs that do not interest them, there are many matters which intimately concern them, either unknown or almost entirely forgotten.

Meet your average Corkman far from the scenes of the city of his childhood, and distant from the sound of its old church chimes. Be he ever such a matter-of-fact individual—and he probably is as wide awake as any other human being—his home longings are deep and abiding, and no "sparrow on the house-top" is affected with loneliness like his. Any little thing savouring of the old places, or the old people, brings gladness and good tidings to his heart. The familiar accent of "Sweet South Gate," or the kindly tones of "the Groves of the Pool," have no unwelcome jar, but make music to his ears. But take him as you find him at home, and the traditions and history of places and things around about him agitate him less than the coming of the millennium, or the croaking of the frogs in Egypt. May be, some interested stranger questions him, to find he knows at best little of his native city—perhaps a smattering of its story, and, rarely, a few disconnected details about this old street or that old house. Only this and nothing more. As it exists in other places, historic memory is absolutely unknown in Cork. But now an effort is at length being made to change all this. Information connected with the city and county will be collected, preserved, and diffused. It is well that a sense of the worthiness of this work should awake in the minds of Cork's own people—those who pursue the even tenor

of their ways at home, as well as those whose avocations carry them, far and near, away from

"The spreading Lee, that, like an island fayre,
Encloseth Corke with his divided flood."

Thanks to the influence and energy of the future Lord Bishop of Waterford, the Cork Historical and Archæological Society exists. Let those who vainly endeavour to learn a little of all the good he has done by stealth, credit him with what he has prominently identified himself. A special meeting of the Council of the Literary and Scientific Society was held on the 11th of June, 1891, at which the matter was first mooted. The record of the meeting states—"It was unanimously resolved, on the motion of Canon Sheehan—

"1. That an effort be made, without delay, to collect all the information that can be obtained regarding the HISTORY OF OLD CORK, including the condition, physical and intellectual, of its inhabitants.

"2. That in order to effect this purpose, it is deemed desirable to hold a meeting at an early date of all who take a special interest in the past of our city."

Accordingly, a public meeting was held on the 26th of June, at which several prominent citizens attended, whose presence was a guarantee that the movement would go on and prosper. The short address of Mr. Denny Lane gave a thrill of enthusiasm to those who heard it. A sub-committee was formed, and a new Society started to carry out the objects the meeting had at heart. A circular promulgating the *raison d'être* of the Society was distributed, and brought back a larger response than was thus early anticipated. It was decided to bring the possibility of membership within the reach of all, and the annual subscription was placed at as low a figure as was considered adequate for working expenses.

Since the formation of the society, meetings have been held twice a month, at which papers were read. These meetings have been eminently successful, and the proceedings interesting. Mere mention of some of the transactions of the Society hitherto is not out of place. The

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 prosaic 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