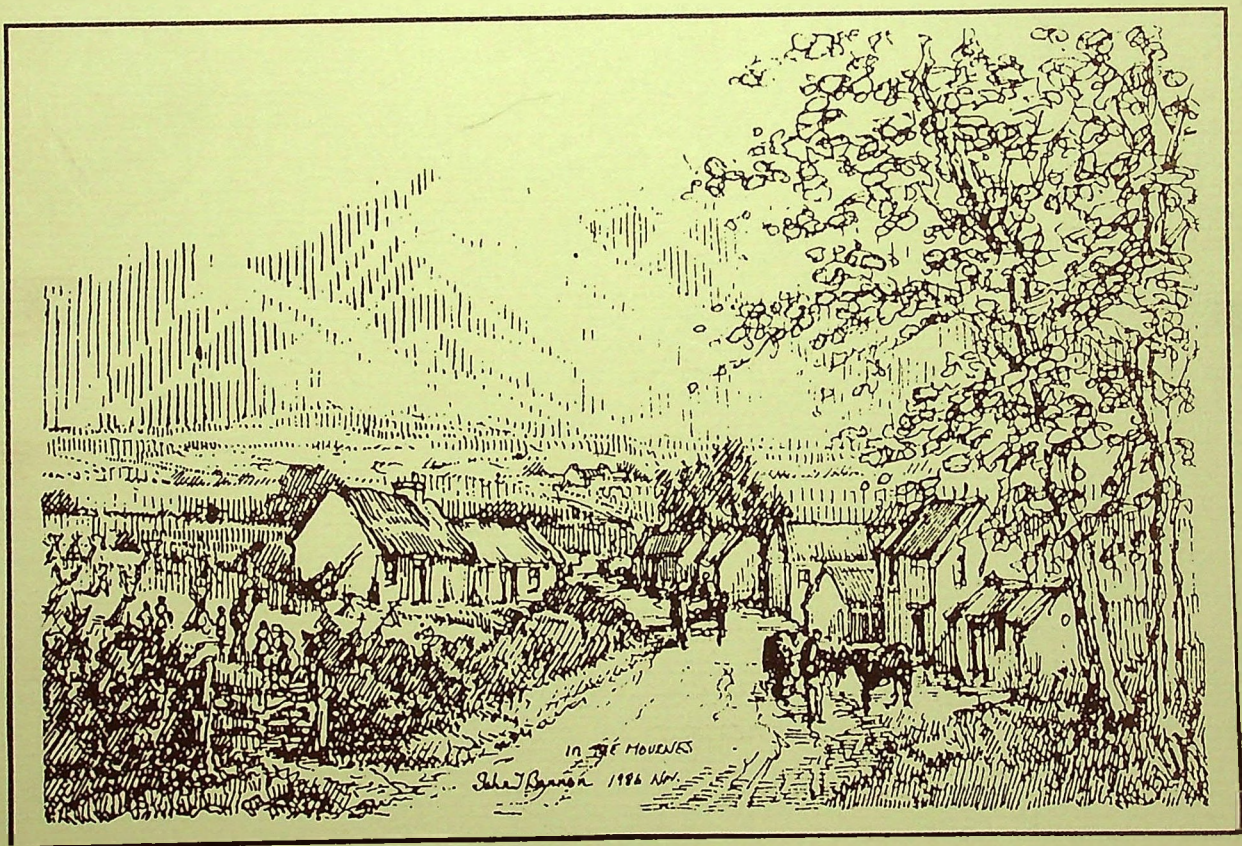


MOURNE RAMBLES

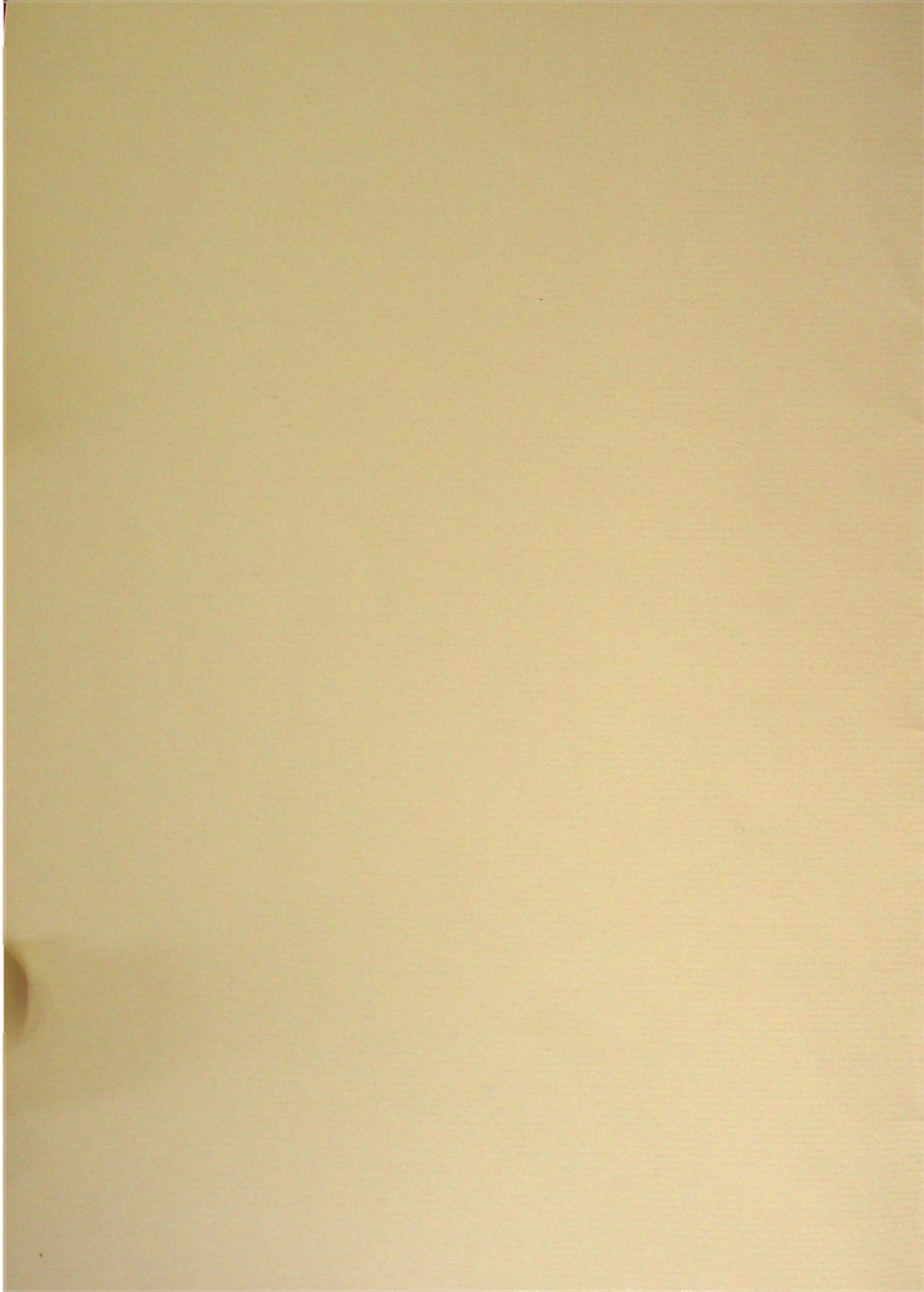
by

Seán Crawford



A Cuisle na nGael Supplement

Supported by a N.I.V.T. Community Arts Award 1994



Seán (Jack) Crawford



Tá Craobh Uí Fhiaich iontach sásta as an deis a bheith againn cuid de scríbhinní Jack Crawford a chur os comhair an phobail mar fhorlónadh lenár mbliainiris *Cuisle na nGael*. Tá muid buíoch do Madge Conway, iníon le Jack Crawford, as an cuireadh a thabhairt dúinn an leabhrán seo a fhoilsiú. Beidh ainm Jack Crawford ceangáilte go deo le Rinn Mhic Giolla Rua. Bhí mioneolas ag Jack ar stair agus ar seanchas an Phoinnte. Bhí sé i gcónaí mórtasach as a cheantar féin agus bhí bá ar leith aige le gnáthmhuintir an bhaile. Ba cheoltóir é, ba staraí é, ba dhrámadóir agus ba scríobhnóir é. Más ildánach an neach é ní raibh riamh aon ardnósachas ag baint leis. Tá na scéalta agus na hailt atá i gcló againn anseo pas beag maoithneach agus braitheann siad cuid mhaith ar an rómánsaíocht agus ar cuimhní cinn Jack féin. Mar sin féin, ba chóir go mbeadh sé soiléir dár leitheoirí go raibh tallann ar leith aige mar cholúnaí ar na nuachtáin logánta, agus go raibh sé macánta, cráifeach, tírghrách ina dhóigheanna agus ina dhearcadh. Ach 'sé an bua is luachmhaire dá raibh ag Jack Crawford ná go raibh sé cairdiúil mánla mar dhuine, i dtólamh réidh a chuid a roinnt le daoine eile, rud a thuig na páistí a mba ghnách leo sealanna a chaitheamh ina chomhluadar ar chiumhais na Cearnóige ar an Phoinnte, agus Jack an seanchaí ag insint scéalta dóibh.

Seán (Jack) Crawford, born 1888, died May 1983, is recognised as one of Warrenpoint's most celebrated citizens. Schoolteacher, linguist, dramatist, musician, historian, Jack Crawford's talents were many and varied. This selection of his articles have a mainly local flavour to them and have been culled from Jack's contributions to newspapers and magazines such as the "Newry Reporter", "Irish Press", "Irish News", "Ireland's Saturday Night", "Newry Telegraph", "Frontier Sentinel", "World Digest" and "Capuchin Annual". The selection is random and is neither arranged chronologically nor thematically. We hope that our readers will dip into this supplement from time to time and enjoy some of Jack's reminiscences, just as many of us read with pleasure his occasional contributions to the local and national press. The stories and articles fit into the largely sentimental and romantic type of feature-writing which was common, especially in the local press, throughout the first half of this century. Still, there's a sincerity that threads through the articles, a love of music and language and community. There are nuggets too of historical detail which shed light upon the social and economic history of the ordinary people of South Down. What should be apparent to all is Jack's strong sense of belonging to a particular geographic location. He loved the Mournes, the neighbouring town of Newry, the villages across the lough, but above all, he loved his native Warrenpoint.

THE LAST OF THE HORSE TRAMS

One stormy New Year's Day, twenty-two years ago, saw the "abdication" of the old tramway that ran from Warrenpoint to Rostrevor Quay. The raging sea, racing madly in from the Bar of Carlingford, scooped away the sea wall in its fury and undermined the track which hung perilously across a deep excavation made by the waves. So much for blind, yet irresistible force. The old tram was drawn by a horse whose hardest job was to keep running away from the vehicle when it raced down the gradients. The driver, seated on a wooden seat that pivoted about, used to jam on the brakes hard to prevent this catastrophe, for none of the horses, it may be said, were National winners.

Once the horse started the tram, the rest of the job was easy. There were two kinds of vehicles, open carriages called toast-racks, on account of the parallel row of seats, and closed trams with glass windows, known as "butter-coolers."

A Source of Joy

They were painted yellow and were a source of great joy to Belfast excursionists, who would gravely read this notice printed in white letters on an enamelled blue background: "Passengers are forbidden to mount or dismount from this vehicle whilst in motion. Penalty forty shillings and costs." They would then proceed to mount and dismount till their heart's content:-

**"For laws in great rebellions lose their end,
And all go free when multitudes offend."**

Sometimes when a Pierrot show was in progress round the promenade, the track would be crowded with part of the audience. A string of trams would approach, and the driver would keep blowing his whistle. A virtuoso, he manipulated the reins, the brake, the moving seat and the whistle all at once, a versatile performer who wore a round cap with a flat, glazed peak. Easter Monday was always a big day in Rostrevor, and the Rink was the chief attraction in these days. The country was scoured weeks beforehand for horses, and all the available drivers mobilised for "Der Tag."

Off The Line

Round the dock wall there was a curve, and sometimes youths with a rather perverted sense of humour would place a row of stones on the line. With a clatter that would startle the whole somnolent square the vehicle would become derailed. "The tram's off the line!" someone would shout, and the chorus would be taken up antiphonally till it reached the market house, where the "break-down" gang (aroused from their siesta) would shamle over to the scene of the accident, and place the "toast rack" on the line again. "Something attempted something done!"

One of the guards on this famous system would often in winter-time have a quiet snooze in the corner of the covered tram which was dimly lit by oil lamps.

Keep Doors Closed

About a mile out of Warrenpoint the tram would often be ambushed by irresponsible young men who would keep the door closed against the conductor, and were the cause many a time of passengers being carried far past their stopping place.

One cannot imagine such irreverent pranks being played today on a Northern Transport bus. The authorities would "transport" the individuals so disposed to the "Crumlin" more than likely.

As Quick Walking

Those were spacious days, however, I think I can yet see the Dublin "excursioner," wearing a hard hat and canary-coloured waistcoat, running along the footboard and shouting, "I give two to one bar none on Flying Fox." There are not such comedians nowadays apparently. The trams have "gone west." You may see an odd one, minus its wheels, used as a summerhouse and still bearing on its faded yellow paint work the words, "Warrenpoint and Rostrevor Tramway," or by chance come across another bought by a farmer to serve as a shed. The double-decker bus appeared here on a trial run this week. Possibly, in another twenty-five years, airships will relegate even it to some old-world garden or condemn it to become a pigeon loft in the haggard of an enterprising farmer. What will supplant the airship is what is puzzling me, however, I am afraid it will hardly be the old horse-tram. It will hardly stage a "come-back" in any event. Many a time we cursed it. Now that it is gone we are inclined to shed a few tears over it; but that is the way of the world. If we had it back we would likely curse it twice as hard after the first day or so. That opportunity will scarcely arise, and I am prepared to take a small bet on it if desired.

"Is the last tram away to Rostrevor yet?" said a belated Rip Van Winkle from South Armagh to a realistic railway porter. "It is, man - twenty years ago - but it's as quick walking, anyhow."



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THE SCHOOL EXCURSION

After the school had re-opened and Brother Dempsey had given his annual commentary on the results of the Intermediate exams, we were informed that there was to be a school excursion.

That brightened me up a bit, for Brother Dempsey had informed me (and my companions) that if I had worked a little harder I might have done much better. Many a lad has heard that crack in his day and only tumbles to it when he is married and has to work harder, whether he likes it or not. But "the days of our youth are the days of our glory," and as the head on my youthful shoulders was not an old one, I always took whatever fun came my way.

Consequently, the excursion proposition interested me mightily, more so, indeed, than Ptolemy's Theorem or who won - or lost, the Battle of Roundway Down near Devizes.

On arriving home, I told my mother that there was to be a school excursion and would she mind "forking out" a half a crown which was a very modest tariff, seeing that we were bound for Belfast. In the early days of this century, a trip to Belfast or Dublin was almost as big an adventure as a voyage to the moon, but the children nowadays think no more about going to the city than we did of visiting the nearest market town. The bus, the lorry and the taxi have opened up the country for everyone.

I took good care to inform my mother that the half-crown was for the train fare and also for what the scholars described as "the feed"; the latter repast being discussed in all details by veterans who had gone on previous excursions and admitted that nobody could have been "dacenter" than Brother Dempsey, even if he did "give you the weed" now and again, which meant pretty often.

"I suppose you'll be wanting something for your pocket forbye?" interpolated my father.

"Well, da, I wouldn't like to come out of Belfast without bringing home some wee keepsake for the family so that depends upon yourselves."

Making some sinister prediction about an excursion for all hands to Daisy Hill Workhouse in the very near future, my father finally said he would not see me stuck. I was then immediately sent to the barbers to get my hair cut and, after that, despatched to Christy the shoemaker to get my Sunday boots mended. Christy himself had made these same boots for me and bastinadoed the soles of my feet with his measure when taking my dimensions.

On the September Saturday of the excursion, dressed in my best Norfolk suit, my hair well lubricated, white Eton collar round my neck, I left on the nine train to join my schoolmates at the frontier town of Newry.

I was redolent with "scenty" soap, specially obtained for the occasion, and my best boots had an unusual lustre. When the lads saw me they gave me a rousing cheer and referred to me as a "mussel picker," that being supposed to be the metier of every other inhabitant of the town of Warrenpoint.

Brother Dempsey, of course, had on the silk hat, wore the long coat and carried the inevitable umbrella and brown Gladstone bag. The other Brothers sported soft hats, but every man Jack of them had his umbrella too. They were all in powerful form and everyone of them spoke with a pleasant musical brogue. "Now lads," said Brother Dempsey, "no straying away from the main party when we get into the city."

A Christian Brother addresses his pupils as "lads" just as a French colonel harangues his troops as "Mes enfants."

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Without breaking any delph, we emerged into the street and remembered that Belfast had been honourably associated with the United Irish movement. Then we boarded the paddle steamer *Slieve Bearnagh* and sailed down the lough to Bangor. Brother Dempsey pointed out Carrickfergus with its staunch grey castle.

Now, when we disembarked at Bangor, Brother Dempsey told us that we were free to go anywhere we liked, but to assemble at the railway station for the return journey to Belfast.

Then he said that on no account were any of us to go out boating. This immediately put the notion into our heads. We listened, with long, pious faces and then gave him the slip. One of the lads told me that we were not far from Scotland as he had measured it on a map in school. We met an old boatman and asked how much would it cost, per hour, to hire a rowing-boat.

"A tanner" replied the Ancient Mariner. We all "bunced" up and started off on our Caledonian expedition. Hardly had we left the Irish shore, than down the pier came Brother Dempsey at the double. He could run like a hare. Semaphoring with his umbrella and his silk hat, he shouted at us to come back to Erin without delay.

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Scoil na mBráithre

BRONAGH'S BELL

A writer in "Random Jottings" wishes to know something about Saint Bronagh. I will try and give as many facts as I can about Bronach, whose name is perpetuated in the word Kilbroney, a parish that contains the almost unbelievably beautiful village of Rostrevor and the townland of Kilbroney, which still hold the ruins of the ancient parish church. Rev. Bernard J. Mooney, in his scholarly work, "Place Names of Rostrevor," gives no less than twelve spellings of Kilbroney parish: _ Killbronyagh (Reg Sweetman, 1366); Kilbrony (Reg Prone, 1433); Cillbronald (lb 1422); Kyllbronca (lb 142); Kilbroney (Reg Cromer, 1526); Killbronaigh (Tex, 1546). These are some variants of the present day name "Kilbroney" which means "Bronach's Church". It is suggested by John Morgan that the spelling should be Cill Bronca, which, it is intriguing to note, corresponds with the form taken from the Register of Prene A.D. 1412. St. Bronach is the Patron Saint of Rostrevor Parish, and founded an early monastery there. She is mentioned "in the Martyrologies" at April 2nd (her feast day) as Bronagh Virgin of Glenn Se(i)chis.

The name Kilbroney was officially adopted in the fourteenth century, but obviously it was the name given to the parish by its inhabitants long before that date. It would appear that "Glenn Sechis" is a word that has challenged and defied Celtic philologists so far, and, therefore, I fear no definite meaning of the word is available. A later spelling of Kilbroney is Kilbroy (Census, 1659), and Kilbrony (Kennedy's Map, 1755).

In a note of the O.S. Field Book of Donaghmore Parish it is recorded that burial urns were found in Kilbroney. The word "Bronach" means "sorrowful" in Irish, and a priest from Co. Monaghan once drew my attention to the fact that this word meant the same as the Spanish Patronymic *Dolores*, a common enough form of Christian name for a lady. I know a few girls from Rostrevor district who are called Bronach, and I can't say that I ever noticed anything particularly sorrowful about any of them. (In fact, quite the reverse).

The Ancient Bell

One of the most romantic and dramatic stories I have ever heard is that told about Saint Bronach's Bell, which can be seen in the Sanctuary of the Catholic Church in Rostrevor. It is an ancient quadrilateral Celtic Bell, made of bronze, and is still used during Mass and Benediction. When it is struck it gives out a very distinctive sound, and the lonesome timbre of this bell could not possibly be mistaken. It seems to be echoing from out of the dimness of the vanished centuries. Bronach's Bell originally was hung in the fork of a young oak tree. When the mountain wind blew mightily down the fair green valley of Kilbroney, it set the bell ringing. "For a thousand years it was heard to chime in Kilbroney's ancient graveyard, and it is said that no one ever succeeded in locating its exact position." The lore of the unseen bell was as follows: When the bell rang in the morning it was for joy, rung by angel hands. Before a storm, when it sounded a wild alarm from the tocsin's throat - it was rung by Gaoith the God of the storms - a thunder sound that echoed far through the glen and warned people of coming danger. When it rang before a death it was the Banshee that mournfully tolled it, and then it thrilled the people to the marrow of their bones with a strange speechless fear of doom. Actually, the sound of this bell is sorrowful, and befits the name of the saint who once owned it.

For centuries it called the living, mourned the dead, and broke the lightning that like a silver sword slashed the dark night clouds that lowered over the slumbering glen of Kilbroney. The years passed by, and still the invisible and mysterious Bell of Bronach would ring when the wind listed. Nobody seemed to be able to locate it, and it was held in deep awe by the simple country folk of the countryside. "Better not interfere with such holy things," they said.

One thing is indisputable, however, and it is this. If anyone really knew where the bell was to be found, that party kept it a dead secret. Then, with dramatic suddenness, the bell ceased to ring altogether, and that was another mystery for the glensfolk. "They listened in calm and storm for the sound of the bell, but in vain."

A new generation were told about the bell by those who had often heard it ringing, but as this new generation (wiser than the children of the Light) did not hear it themselves, they dismissed the whole story as an old wives' tale, and even said that it was a trick of the imagination. People do sometimes fancy that they can hear things, and would even swear to it. A few simple souls always did devoutly maintain, however, that there was such a bell, and, of course, were asked by the sceptics to prove its existence. "In the year eighteen hundred and eighty-five, a large oak tree which stood near the old church in Kilbroney cemetery, was blown down during a dreadful storm. It was a noble old monarch of the woods that had braved the storm for centuries in the Sean Reilig, the old graveyard in the valley. Some workmen were sent to saw it up. They stripped it of the clinging parasites and sawed off the two great branches which forked at the top, and then they came on a recess in the trunk. The mystery of the centuries was solved at last! The fabled ghostly bell was finally discovered." What had happened is now easy to explain. The ring holding the tongue of the bell had worn away with the centuries' ringing, and the tongue had fallen down to the bottom of the recess, which accident accounted for the long silence of the bell.

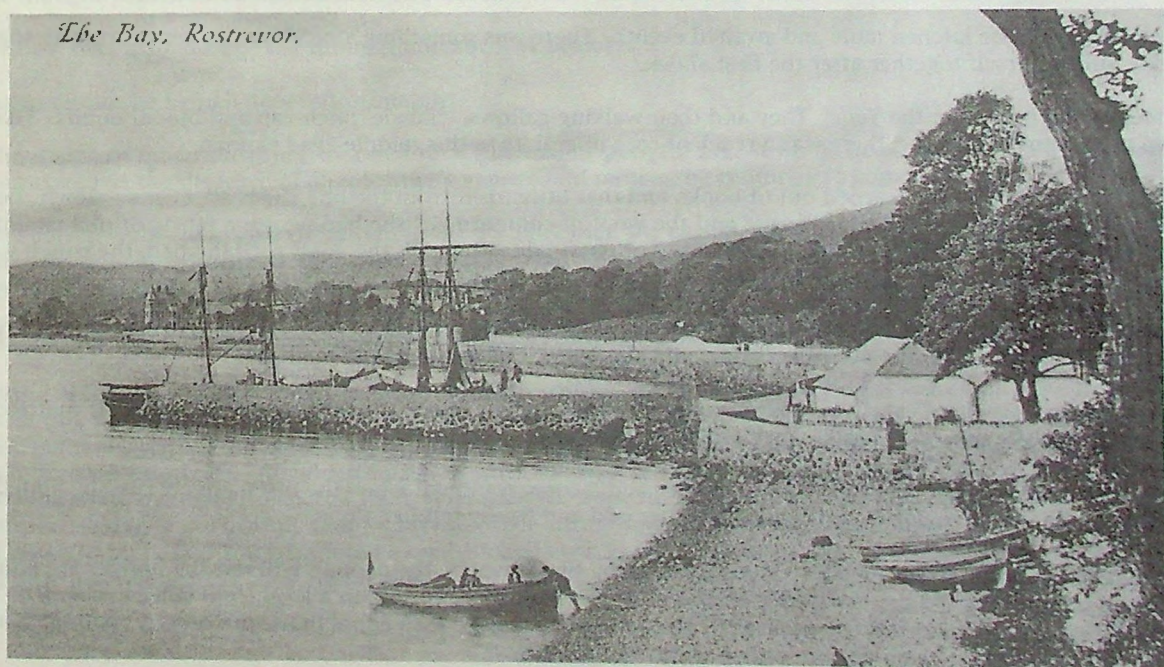
Broney's Well

That discovery also silenced the unbelievers and gave adequate "revanche" to those who had always clung to their faith in the bronze bell of Bronach.

This beautiful relic of early Celtic ecclesiastical art was mounted in a miniature belfry made of wood and tastefully illuminated with a brief story of its presence there. Many a child has walked miles to say a prayer at the altar rails of the superbly situated church that contains this ancient Irish bell. Some of them reverently give it a stroke, believing that whatever they wish for shall be granted unto them. Perhaps it is just to have it to say they rang St. Bronach's Bell that they perform this simple rite. A beautiful shrine has been erected to the saint at St. Bronach's Well, near the old cemetery. Two wells in Killowen are traditionally associated with St. Bronach, but there is no reason to believe that either of them was associated with a church. It is told that St. Bronach was looking for a site for the church and monastery that she "had a mind" to found.

She visited a well in Ballincurry, but found the place unsuitable. She then came to another spring near the Point of Killowen, which is still called "Broney's Well." She might, indeed, have settled down here but it occurred that this spot (idyllic as it was) was not quiet enough for conventual seclusion. The cries of the sea birds were such a distraction to herself and to her holy companions that they decided to journey inland. Accordingly, they made their way over the mountain crest, and then descended into the valley called Glen Sechis.

There was peace there and remoteness, and there they founded their home. In such spots as Glendalough and Kilbroney still dwells the silent spirit of contemplation. They are haunted or blest, perhaps, by the presence of that mystic spirit which outlasts all ages.



THE LONE WOMAN

It is seldom, even in the County of Down, that one gathers any tradition about 1798 except that which has already been documented in books or newspapers.

Still, I once heard a very old man speak about an incident of that period when the "Yeos" were rounding up fugitives and terrorising the country folk who were too spirited to deny shelter to the outlaw or betray his presence to the authorities.

Everyone detests an informer. Even his employers despise him.

One warm summer day in the year of the Rising when many a thatched cottage was ablaze and a price was on the head of the patriot, a band of red-coated Yeomen trotted up to the farmhouse of Una Ní Chearbhaill.

The woman, as luck would have it, was on her "lee lone" in the house, a beautiful long, white, one-storeyed building with red and cream roses growing around the green painted door and the tiny square-paned windows.

Outside on the stone-paved street dozed a sheep dog, his damp pink tongue lolling from his mouth by dint of the heat. A hen rubbed its feathers in the brown dust. Through the apple garden one could hear the drowsy bourdon of honey-laden bees. The leaves wilted in the drought. Inside the house, however, it was cool enough. A thatch, though warm in winter, served to keep out the noontide heat.

Brassy-bright it was over the meadows but inside, even at midday, there was the quality of twilight, especially noticeable to those leaving the glare. The half-door was open, for, in the words of the woman, "there wasn't an air". She had heard the clitter-clatter of the horses' shoes on the powdery white road and it filled her with gloom and fear.

From the red earthenware crock, glazed black at the top, she took a deep slug of spring water so icy cold that it chattered the few teeth in her head.

She was a strong woman, brave and tall, neither comely nor ugly. She was capable at any rate, and capability - on a farm at least - is more needed than mere loveliness.

She could spin, weave, dig, weed, harrow, reap, cook, sew and look after cattle. What was there, indeed, that she could not do, this simple, quiet peasant woman whose natural dignity lost nothing by the simplicity of her dress or the meagreness of her chattels? She owned the bare necessities of life. Nothing more. Nothing less. A three-legged soot encrusted pot, a dusty looking kettle, maid bristle or broken stick for tongs, lay on the hearth. A few delph mugs, bowls, plates and a horn tumbler were on the well-scoured dresser.

She had a tra-hook for making grass ropes, a sickle for cutting corn and a narrow bladed spade. A potato basket made from sally-rods held a few chocolate brown mountainy turf. A creepie-chair and a three-legged stool, with well-polished seat of oak wood, stood on the earthen floor. On the wall hung an iron sconce for a candle or rush-light. In a room off the kitchen was a feather-bed. A wooden chair stood near it.

She stood beside the kitchen table and awaited events. There was something stoical now in her bearing as she had quickly pulled herself together after the first shock.

No need to tell her about the Yeos! They and their walking-gallows, triangle, pitch-cap and bloodhounds. Like her native mountains of Mourne, there was a resident core of granite in this middle-aged woman.

Very little wisdom had she learned out of books and that little itself from the one she read, ever so slowly, be it told, at Mass. Still, from the warp of suffering and the woof of contentment she had woven a fabric of philosophy durable enough for her purposes. It is all the rest of us can do. She took the good with the bad, the rough with the smooth and left the rest to God.

Very little incident ever coloured her life. Most things she dated from her First Communion Day, the biggest event in her whole placid life. She was not married, nor did she seem at all interested in menfolk.

"What call have I for men?" she would always rejoin to those who averred that she would be better off married than living alone and trying to do a man's work as well as her own.

"I have a free foot and a fellow for it," was her dry and laconic comment when the insensitively curious hinted at such things. That was conclusive. They deemed her odd and finally left her alone.

The redcoats dismounted at the door. Accompanied by two privates, the captain entered the house. Without even the graciousness of a greeting, the leader looked at the woman steadily and, in a level, cold voice exclaimed, "Is there anyone else about this place except yourself?" She returned his gaze with equal fixity and quietly replied, "No." "You are quite sure there is no one concealed about the premises?"

"Quite sure!"

"If there is, I warn you the consequences shall be very serious for you, so again I ask you, is there anyone hidden in the house or have you seen any stranger recently about the neighbourhood?"

"I have seen no living soul barring the neighbours, and that was in thon meadow beyond you. Ere yesterday it was."

"Search the house!" he curtly ordered, and, turning to the woman, crossly added, "you wouldn't tell itself if you knew."

"Knew what?" she asked dispassionately. "What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. We are after a damned Croppy who'll swing in Downpatrick. Do you know of any such person?"

"I know nothing," she replied wearily, "nothing in the wide, earthly world."

Every bit of the house was searched but nothing was discovered.

Neither did the outhouses nor haggard yield them their prey.

"That will do," said the officer morosely, "let us be wasting no more time. Come on!"

Without revealing her feelings of relief and joy at these words, the woman watched them make for the door.

Her face had been inscrutable throughout the whole inquisition but that was just a mask. The tension was extreme and, in her heart, there was a tumult of fear and anxiety such as she had never felt before.

"Thank God and His Blessed Mother, they were going at last," she thought, but her lips gave no utterance to her inner feelings. She was too canny for that.

Just as the officer was crossing the threshold, he suddenly turned and, as if by chance, looked down at the hearthstone.

"Strange," he thought. "No fire on the hearth. That's odd. I didn't notice it." Suddenly his sombre eyes flashed with horrible enlightenment and, hurriedly stepping toward the open fireplace, he drew from its holster his heavy horse-pistol. Aiming up the chimney, he fired. Within that narrow space the shattering report had all the violence of a sudden burst of mid-summer thunder.

It still reverberated when, down upon the turf blackened granite flag, fell the body of a man, a youngish man.

Terror-stricken, the woman gazed at it with grisly fascination.

Neither she nor the others spoke.

"What put it into my head to turn and look there?" thought the officer. God only knows. Another second or so and they would have been down the loaning. Fate, however, is capricious they say.

"You knew all about this," said the captain in a voice of doom. "You tried to hide him. Speak! Speak, woman!" But she did not speak.

If the sheer agony of dread froze her very heart, she would not speak, could not have spoken. Better death than the stigma of being an informer.

That thought somehow sustained her. The sun lit up the emerald silk green of the brae-face.

"Life was sweet, so sweet," she thought and she was not old.

That could not be helped now unfortunately.

Without sigh or moan she grimly realised what fate had in store for her. It would be all the same in a hundred years, she mused, but the disgrace of an informer's name could outlive the centuries to come.

White cotton-wool clouds barely drifted in the summer blue sky casting shadows as black as they themselves were white. Brightly beautiful looked the hay fields, in strange contrast to the gloomy interior of the house. Only the chirruping of a cricket broke the oppressive silence. The woman sensed the imminence of something horrible.

A notch in the far-off, grape blue mountains revealed the tiniest wedge of silver sea.

Looking at it with troubled eyes, her heart sick with sorrow, she now felt how closely woven into the fabric of her life was all this fair pattern of her native land. From childhood she had known it by heart. Never had she spent one single night away from the place and that thought, suddenly, entered her mind, filled her with profound emotion. She was lonesome unto tears. A sudden excess of grief shook her. How easily could she have saved all this great trouble by telling what she had known, but then, she reflected, none of her breed, seed or generation had ever been an informer. Better to die bravely than to betray either a tradition or fellow creature. Neither joy nor sorrow did she feel now. "It be to be," she whispered as she looked ever so wistfully across the sweet-scented fields and beheld that little notch in the far, mysterious hills.

MIDNIGHT MASS IN A CASTLE

One Christmas shortly before the close of the last World War, a number of American troops were cantoned in Narrow Water Castle. The castle was built in 1826 and owned by the Hall family.

The Union Jack always flew from one of the crenellated turrets of the castle when the Halls were at home but on this particular Christmas Day, the Stars and Stripes had taken its place and all who were beneath the roof of Mount Hall were (I was informed) under United States military law.

At one time the castle was a stronghold of the notorious landlord and ascendancy class. I remember once seeing there an iron sharp-toothed mantrap, which was formerly used in the demesne to seize poachers. The demesne had its own deer park and at one time it abounded in pheasants and badgers.

That I should ever attend Midnight Mass in Narrow Water Castle never once entered into my mind. Bret Harte's words, perhaps, can best express my feelings as I entered the Elizabethan-styled castle of native granite:

**"Do I sleep? Do I dream!
Do I wonder and doubt?
Are things what they seem
Or are visions about?"**

Of course, the castle is supposed to have its ghost, just like its square Norman counterpart not far away from Mount Hall itself. The old Squire, Roger Hall, is reputed to have ridden around the countryside in his "dead coach" until his restless spirit was finally exorcised. Strange stories have been related from the unhappy past about "Orange Hall."

Yet the silver candlesticks that once stood upon the wine-dark mahogany of the squire's table were now reverently placed upon an altar within the castle walls and many whose fathers had paid their rack-rents and had taken the precaution to remove their hats before doing so, now knelt devoutly in the long corridor to assist at Midnight Mass. Before the service began the American troops sang "Good King Wenceslas", "Noel" and other carols to the accompaniment of a piano-accordeon.

A choir of five male voices then sang the Gregorian "Missa de Angelis" during the service. Father Ford, the Franciscan chaplain of the regiment, celebrated the Mass in Latin.

The choir came from Warrenpoint to Narrow Water Castle and travelled in an army truck. It was a beautiful mild night for "the dead of winter" and I remember that not a breeze ruffled the waters of the lough.

I often think of what strange roads that hooded truck must have traversed after that mystic night when it brought those choristers to sing "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men." How many poor young fellows it must have borne "up the line" to have "a rendezvous with death."

That mysterious Christmas Eve, hundreds of soldiers walked along the road to the castle. It was fascinating to see the flashing of their torches on the dark smooth tarmacadamed road. The lights flitting along the highway recalled so many "Will o' the Wisps." A little portable organ, so compact that it could be carried about like a suitcase, supported the voices. It was made by Estey of Vermont. It had a beautiful refined tone with ample volume. The American Army certainly had marvellous equipment.

The Gregorian Chant itself was old even when Columbus crossed the Atlantic in 1492 and discovered a fair New World. The sweet strains of a violin played by a young girl were next heard in Novello's immortal setting of the "Adeste Fidelis," which hymn was sung in harmony by the choir.

I still recall the almost absolute silence preceding and during the Elevation. All those worshippers seemed to be held in a mystic trance and all one could hear was the gentle suspiration of the night wind through trees. The tremulous golden flames of the altar candles gleamed like the petals of luminous daffodils. It was, alas, the last real peace many were ever to know.

Hundreds received Holy Communion. Father Ford preached a short little sermon about the Christ Child, and also spoke to the soldiers about their country and of the symbolism of their flag. I remember also that he said that he would write to the families of those who had received the Blessed Sacrament and that he would send them a Christmas card. He was a really splendid and energetic padre.

Schubert's tender little "Cradle Song" was then played on the violin, and finally "Silent Night, Holy Night" was sung in harmony. When Mass was ended we passed through the holly-decked oak-panelled hall. All around were hung

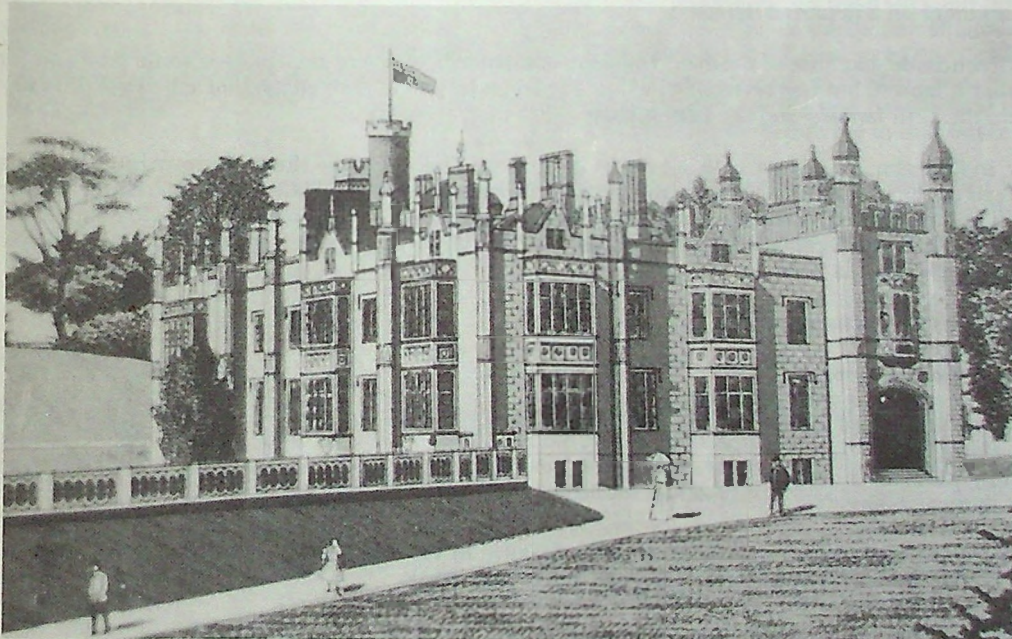
faded battle flags, swords and drums, the ironical panoply of those former wars undertaken by an Empire that seemed to be doomed during my own lifetime.

In a remarkably large grate, about a dozen yule logs blazed filling the room with a delightful yuletide fragrance. The soldiers seemed however, to be rather sad and silent, probably feeling homesick as they thought of other happy Christmas days. We then got into the Army truck and returned to our homes.

On the Northern side of the Border not a light was to be seen but across the water one could glimpse beams in the windows of many distant mountain-homes. Some of these gleams must surely have come from the Christmas candles lit to welcome the little Prince of Peace. But there was not peace on earth that faraway Christmas.

If ever this article happens to be printed, I hope some of those American soldiers who have survived may read and recall the wondrous night when they heard Mass in a castle. Surely such an experience cannot easily be forgotten.

How often, at Christmas long ago, must that long room in Mount Hall have resounded to the Bacchanalian song of revellers. I often muse on the strange turn of events that privileged me to witness a Franciscan saying Mass where even in my own lifetime no Catholic priest was ever "persona grata." "Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges." The glory has departed forever and splendour falls no longer.



THE FAIR OF GREENCASTLE

The Greencastle to which I refer is not far from Cranfield Point, the most southerly extremity of Down. Just before the War you could get to Greencastle by long-car or Highland coach from Kilkeel and, from a well-built wooden pier, the little paddle-steamer *Greenore* would convey you to Greenore just opposite.

This flat-bottomed packet belonged to the old London North-Western Railway, and had a vertical funnel painted yellow, with a black top. She had a helm at both ends and, but for the disposition of the wheel-house, it was impossible to judge which was fore or aft. Kilkeel folk, who used to travel to Dundalk or Dublin via Greenore, will remember the *Greenore*, with "William" at the wheel, "brass-bound" like an officer of the Fleet.

Earlier ferry-boats were the *Mersey*, *Severn*, and, I believe, the *Dodder*. They have all sailed past Hellyhunter long since, across the Irish Sea, never to return, for that chapter in navigation has ended, like many other things, since the last War. We regret those leisurely days and the grace of living that has gone with their passing.

Pristine Glory

Greencastle was in early days a tumultuous enough spot; its castle, whose grey ruined walls still recalled pristine glory, was a famous Norman Keep built by De Courcey. From its crumbling battlements you see the Mountains of Mourne, for Greencastle was at one time the capital of the ancient Kingdom, whose area is about equal to that of the bijou republic of Andorra. Despite civil and international wars, Andorra survives, but what of the Kingdom of Mourne?

In the old castle were celebrated two weddings in 1312, that of Maurice FitzThomas and Catherine, daughter of the Red Earl of Ulster, and the other of Thomas FitzJohn, second Earl of Kildare, to Lady Joan, another daughter of the Red Earl. The stray goat that devours the hedge, "unprofitably gay," in the once hallowed vicinity of Greencastle Keep today, is apparently little concerned about the former sanctity of her forage ground. Where lords and ladies once tripped the sprightly measures of glorious France, she, too, frisks with gay abandon; ironic, irreverent comment on a departed dynasty!

The fair of Greencastle, like that of Carmen, Tailteann and Usnagh, was very ancient. For some time and for some reason or other it lapsed, but was revived by Arthur Bagnal under patent granted by James the First in 1613, when it was held on the 12th January and the 12th August.

At Puck Fair, in Kilorglin, on August 11th, a he-goat is enthroned far above the cheering crowd, but Greencastle Fair was known as the "Ram Fair". Dancing was a favourite pastime on the Fair Green long ago. One favourite dance was jig poltog, danced to the music of Uilleann pipes or fiddles. A stick was twirled by the dancer in this jig, and the technique was highly developed for both hand and foot. Ballad-singers trolled forth the fine old songs, one of which went as follow:-

"Our ship now lies at Warrenpoint,
For Boston we set sail.
I wish her safely o'er the foam
With a sweet and pleasant gale.
Had I a hundred pounds in gold,
Or had I ten times more,
I'd leave it all with Mary Bawn,
The Maid of Mourne Shore."

To the lovely air of this ballad is also set the words of "Down by the Sally Gardens," by W.B. Yeats, and the melody may be found in O'Neill's magnificent collection of Irish Music.

The Fair of Greencastle was a market, a feis, an aeridheacht, a sports meeting and a regatta all in one. Its recreative content was equivalent to its commercial potentiality. Now the very animals are whirled to fairs in motor-lorries. No getting up before the "screak o' day" to walk or ride on a jaunting car to Rathfriland-on-the-Hill these days. Children no longer receive "fairings" of gilt gingerbread or pictured handkerchiefs, sold on standings, for this is a hard, material age.

THE HEADLINE IN GAELIC

The windows of the classroom look right across "the border", framing the tender outlines of the violet-blue mountains in Louth. Today I can hear the faint barking of a dog across the jade-green lough, so tranquil is the air. Diminutive figures can be seen moving about the stony beach. I often watch these "over-the-water" ones and long for the day when "the lost province" will again be restored to the Motherland. Through a rent in the snowy cloud fabric, pencils of light are slanting. Fields look as luminous as a mosaic of sunlit stained glass, except where they are bathed in deep shadow. The tiny white cottages seem transfigured with light. Over the river, a wood pigeon flies, seeking sanctuary on the lime-green coppice by the railway. My heart goes with it, for it will fly over the homes of the simple, kindly folk where the aromatic breath of the wood-fires scents the air and Celtic speech

**Like music lives, nor may that music die,
The Speech that wakes the soul in withered faces,
And wakes remembrance of great things gone by.**

Great things gone by! The Tain, Maeve, Cuchulainn and Fionn. This amphitheatre of stately hills, riven by a frontier, is a Pantheon of the Celtic gods. In dreamy pageant, I see them march along the hazy slopes of old Slieve Foy, Mount Olympus of the Gael, marching to that hallowed corner of Down, where lie sleeping those whose purpose was as inflexible as the granite of the hills.

The school-bell roused me from my reverie, and soon the scholars were assembled for their day's routine. I heard their brittle, splintered Northern speech as they came jostling through the porch, and discovered a new pupil in their midst, a little Dubliner. His voice was soft and leisurely and the others listened to it smilingly. He was only eight, gentle-eyed and innocent-looking - a child. Did he find the Black North alien, I wondered. The policemen with revolvers in their holsters? The slogans of defiance: "No surrender," "What we have, we hold." Did he exclaim, "Oh, Janey Mack!" when he beheld a red pillar box? What were his reactions to a hard-hatted drumming-party with "slashers," strapped up to their chins? What did he think of orange sashes and the shrill fifing of lugubrious hymn-tunes? You have crossed both the Boyne and the Rubicon, my little man. After arithmetic, (in which I dealt with fabulous sums of money), we proceeded to handwriting: *A stitch in time saves nine*. Going through the desks to blue-pencil the errors and wondering what it is that makes some boys stick out their tongues when writing, I came to my little scholar from Dublin. When I looked at his copy, all the hidden laughter left my heart. His book lay wide open and on the left-hand page was written in beautiful Gaelic script the headline: *Chomh fada an oidhche tig an lá Though long the night, the day cometh*. I felt my eyes grow dim, scanning the words, and an anguish of soul came over me, reading that last lesson in Irish. On the new page he had written a few lines in English and then had stopped. How formal, rigid and alien they looked to me in that bitter moment!

Side by side stood two languages. A new culture had begun and I was its preceptor. Sadly did I turn back the leaves and note each day's task neatly dated and initialled. All that day I was oppressed and filled with a sense of frustration and shame. Sorrow at my own neglect of the language; grief for the future. When the day was done, I took him aside and spoke to him.

"Have you an Irish reader in your bag?"
"I have, sir,"
"Read me a little, please, till I hear you."

He read quite fluently a lesson of the open air, of children playing in the sun-lit meadows, of simple, homely folk, labouring in the bogs and hayfields beneath the shadow of purple mountains, under a candid blue sky, of little boys called Peadar and Seán, and of little girls called Síle and Nora, who went out in a boat to an island. It made me think wistfully of a long-ago summer's day when I, too, went out in a boat to a lake island in the West country and dreamed there all the drowsy afternoon.

"That will do son," I said, for the reading had made me lonesome and the friendly, sweet Irish brought back too many memories of happier, freer days. "That will do now, and promise me that you will read a little of that book every day as you would say your prayers."

We were both gazing through the window at a blue boat with snowy-white sails, that was crossing the lough to where I fain would be. We watched the boatman lower the sail and saw the boat ground on the beach. Soon the mountain folk who had crossed the lough would be climbing the winding, brown tape of road that loses itself in the misty hills. Perhaps, for all we knew, they would enter some little snowy shieling with a russet-golden roof and hear the sweet cadence of the old tongue; listen, maybe, to an old Gaelic song.

With some emotion, I said to him: "Seán, you promise me you will never give up Irish." Quietly he answered: "My old teacher told me that, when I was far away, to read a page every day and that I would never forget it." I could not speak for a moment so deeply overcome was I with feeling, but, mastering myself, I put my arm round the little boy's shoulder and looking up at the dim blue hills across the water, I whispered: "We will both read a page every day, Seán - we will never forget it."

THE MEN OF THE BOATS

Carlingford Lough shares with Lough Foyle the distinction (if it can be called a distinction) of being a border lough. So many folk have crossed from Warrenpoint to Omeath throughout the years, a brief sketch of the route may be of interest.

It is but an English mile from jetty to jetty and, on all sides, there is an amphitheatrical splendour of mountains, graceful woods and green uplands.

In "Our Local Gazette," a periodical dealing with Carlingford Lough district, is the following news item for July 1882:

"Steam Launch *Play Fair*" - "This launch has been carefully surveyed by an official of the Board of Trade. The launch is provided with life-buoys and is a thoroughly sea-worthy and fast-going boat. When the '*Play Fair*' was stationed at Fleetwood, it frequently carried 36 passengers, regardless of the late of the tide. The owner intends running it at stated times between Warrenpoint, Rostrevor, Carlingford, etc. Special trips will also be made to suit the convenience of excursion parties, etc."

The owner of the "*Play Fair*" was the late Mr. Pat O'Neill, who was the pioneer of steam ferrying from Warrenpoint to Omeath, 69 years ago. The fare was three pence return. Up to that time, rowing-boats, punts and lug-sailed skiffs carried passengers across from Omeath to the Point. Many a time I heard the folk from the Louth Gaeltacht talking Irish in the streets of the Point.

Here are the names of the steam craft that I can recall: "*Play Fair*," "*Mayflower*," "*Waif*," "*Omeath*," "*Lady Betty Balfour*," "*May Queen*," "*Ross-na-righ*," "*Roe*," "*Pilot*," and "*Pioneer*." The L.N.W.R. owned the paddle-steamers: "*Severn*," "*Mersey*" and "*Greenore*," which were stationed at Greenore, whose fate as a cross-Channel port is now on the knees of the gods. They ran from Warrenpoint to Greenore and Greencastle, whose pier is no longer used by British Railways, which now incorporates the L.M.S., which had itself assimilated the L.N.W.R.

The "*Mayflower*" came from Oban. She had a straight funnel, and her exhaust could be heard "chug-chugging" a long distance away. She used to make the inland voyage via the Newry Canal and the Upper Bann to Lough Neagh, where she was employed as a fishery patrol boat in the winter months. On board there were R.I.C. men to prevent "poaching." T. M. Healy, I think, wrote a book called "Stolen Waters," and he certainly did not consider that the hard-working fishermen on Lough Neagh were "poachers".

Anyhow, the engineer on the old wooden "*Mayflower*" told me that on dark or foggy nights, he often blew off steam from the boiler to give the men fishing nearby warning that the "*Mayflower*" was in the vicinity and that the Pilgrim Fathers were not on board.

A Marine Curiosity

The "*Pioneer*" was a marine curiosity, resembling a lighter in appearance. She was painted grey, had a long black narrow funnel and was driven by twin-propellers, known as the "**Barcroft Patent**." The propeller blades were like large shovels. There was a maximum of splash with a minimum of speed for the propellers were only partly submerged.

"S.S. Pilot" Runs Aground

The "*S.S. Pilot*" was a very graceful packet, with a raking red black-topped funnel and mast. She, too, had the Barcroft Patent and was very slow. One August 10th, the Feast of St. Lorcán, and 'Pattern Day' in Omeath, the "*Pilot*", a fairly light craft, attempted to land her passengers "across the water." She ran aground on the Lough shore and that ended her navigation in that quarter. She lay there all that long Autumn day till the evening tide refloated her.

Needless to say, there were not many tears shed by the local boatmen at this contretemps. One day, in the early summer, 1906, she finally left Warrenpoint for Germany and, though well ballasted aft, did not put up a world-record for speed.

WHEN THE SILVER HERRING



Canal Transport

At one time a person could have sailed from Warrenpoint to near the pottery town of Belleek by means of canals, rivers and that lake which is now the vast reservoir for the famous Erne Scheme. Things have greatly changed since those days. Canals and railways lead a precarious existence today. The latest potential victim is the Dundalk to Greenore line, opened on 1st May, 1873. It is 13 miles long. The line from Greenore also passes through the old-world city of Carlingford and thence through Omeath to Newry, a run of 14 miles.

From Greenore to Holyhead is 80 miles. In view of the congestion at Dun Laoghaire, it would be desirable to utilise this formerly busy port of Greenore to deal with increased passenger and goods traffic.

Warrenpoint, too, was once a busy port. Passengers and goods sailed regularly from there to England and Scotland, also to American ports. One would certainly like to see the cross-channel service revived, but since centralisation seems all the rage in modern times, it looks a remote chance.

Motor boats have today superseded the steamdriven craft from Warrenpoint and many of them bear religious nomenclature, after the Breton, Spanish, Flemish, Norman and Italian tradition. The men of the boats are extremely good-natured and have long and honourable associations with the locality. The writer would like, in this article to thank them publicly for a kindness shown him in a very beautiful way for many years. They will understand.

Despite all the vicissitudes of the years, and of all the miraculous developments in marine engineering, one may still respond to the call - "This way for Omeath," and make the delightful trip in a rowing boat.



WHEN THE SILVER HERRING COME TO KILKEEL

The kindly mountains of Mourne look down on men who gaze with wistful eyes across the Border

It was in with the sails and away to the shore,
With the rise and swing, with the rise and swing
Of two stout lads at each smoking oar,
After herring our King - herring our King.
Sin thugamar féin an samhradh linn,
Tis we have brought the summer in.

The Kingdom of Mourne is worth a visit in the autumn and the friendliest wee town in the County Down is Kilkeel.

Down the stone quay you will hear the sound of music and maybe they will be dancing if the herring fishing is good. "It was brave the year, I deem" said an old fisherman to me as he leaned over his half-door and watched the Irish sea gleaming like a sheet of wrinkled silver paper in the sun.

Away to the back of us stretched the Mountains of Mourne, Beanna Boirche with Sliabh Slainge or Donard their highest peak; though he does not look so grand or dominant as Bingian - Big Bingian; and there's wee Bingian, too, purple-clad like a cardinal and surpliced today in white clouds. These are great people surely.

Around the Kipper Station

The men wear blue jerseys of thick wool and some of them carry on their heads blue caps with a glazed patent-leather peak. You will oftener than not see a kindly pair of blue eyes beneath this peak, eyes as blue as the ocean, and what fine upstanding fellows they are, these Mourne fishermen. Pierre Loti describes such types in his books on Brittany. A man is playing a nut-brown fiddle on the stone-stepped streets of the town. Lorries loaded with fish are rushing everywhere. The scene around the kippering station is a busy one and it is inspiring to read on wooden boxes the branded letters informing us that the fish are kippered in Kilkeel. That is one local industry anyhow. Up in the hills is another. There you will see red-cheeked young giants hammering away at the grey granite. A little hut with a portable bellows is occupied by a smith who sharpens and tempers the chisels. The bog cotton dances in the wind and the strange sad sound of a distant sheep is heard afar, that and the chant of the chisel.

No wonder these hard-working young men like a day on the "Fifteenth" at Warrenpoint and a run over to the Free State to say a prayer at the beautiful Calvary. "You never know; but it'll come all right some day, I deem," says one of them, pointing towards historic Cooley when we discussed the situation, and the warmth of his voice was a revelation, for these people are generally reticent and guarded in their dealings with strangers.

Their humour is irresistible though. Take Joe, an old jarvey, who once had a load of buxom English women on his side car. Joe is about to leave the square in Kilkeel for Rostrevor when he is hailed by Arter, a brother whip. "Ah say, Joe, cud ye take one of these weemen on your car for I'm afeered my belly band will bust afore we reach the Causeway water?" "And is it butterflies you think I'm carrying myself?" answers Joe, who once told a clergyman that he never saw him looking better - "God knows, your reverence, this place be to agree wi' you. You have a neck on you like a tin-can since you kem intill it." Later that day I sat drinking cider and eating home-made oaten cake in a little shop by the wayside. On the wall by which I sat, was an old cartoon out of the *Freeman*. Donkey's years it must have been, and it depicted the late Arthur Balfour with a complexion on him like an arrowroot biscuit. A china dog on a shelf behind the counter gazed impersonally at this work of art and a modern American clock ticked away the minutes nervously. The sea, that is weary never more, beat against the stony beach. Away beyond Ballagan Point lay Cooley, where the brown bull loved to roam. I gazed wistfully enough across the grey sea for the light was fading fast.

Well, it will come all right some day, I deem, and faithful hearts in kindly Mourne will not be awanting to rejoice thereat.

Some glad morning, when the little red lamps of the fuchsia are gleaming and trembling in the rosy sunrise, and the filigree threads of the cobwebs are glistening like platinum on the dark green whins, out of the resplendent East will sail the boats laden with the real harvest and men at last will sing upon the grey stone quay:-

"Thugamar féin an samhradh linn,
'Tis we have brought the summer in."

A TRIP ON A COASTER

**"The estuaries of rivers appeal strongly to an adventurous imagination."
- Joseph Conrad.**

The coaster sails from Dundalk for Newry and it is my good fortune to make the "round trip," accompanied by a few friends.

The sail down Dundalk Bay is interesting, especially on the port side. There is, first of all, an inn called "The Blue Anchor," with the emblem of hope and security painted on its front and easily discernible with Zeiss glasses. You can also see the tall chimney of the new alcohol factory at Riverstown with the tricolour flag floating over the building. It will not be necessary to throw the surplus potato crop into the sea any longer. Louth, though the smallest Irish county, is also one of the best for growing wheat. Here in the Cooley district, once called Cualgne, roamed the Brown Bull, which also rambled as far as Connacht, where he met Aillill's Bull, the White-horned. "And he fought the White-horned and tore him limb from limb and carried off pieces of him on his horns, dropping the loins at Athlone and the liver at Trim. Then he went back to Cualgne and turned mad, killing all who crossed his path, until his heart burst with bellowing, and he fell dead."

This was the end of the great war call "Táin Bó Chuailgne" (the "Driving of the Cattle of Cooley"). Here also in Dundalk Bay was fought a great sea fight nearly a thousand years ago in which the Danes were totally defeated by the Monomians and their fleet annihilated. Fionnall seized Sitricus in his arms and jumped with him into the sea, where they both perished. This example was followed by Conall and Seagda, who destroyed Torand Magnus in a similar manner.

During the European War of 1914-18 *S.S. Dundalk* was submarined at sea by the Germans, who, on a previous occasion, had chased her unsuccessfully into Dundalk Bay.

A Strange Name

Rounding the Imogen Buoy we make for the entrance of Carlingford Lough.

There is another buoy called Hellyhunter on a shoal outside this lough and mentioned in "Ship Alley," by C. Fox Smith,

"And whence came 'The Kish' and 'Helly Hunter' over on the Irish shore?"

I cannot explain how the name "Hellyhunter" originated, but this is Joyce's explanation of the word "Kish" (the name of a lightship outside Dublin Bay) - *Cis means wickerwork coracle and the light must have been originally floated on a wicker framework.*

Haulbowline light rises like Aphrodite gracefully and whitely from the foam. The "Bens of Boirche" are scarcely visible in the haze of rain. There is no sunlight on the amethystine sea, and soon the hour of sunset arrives

**"And as the evening darkens lo! how bright,
Through the deep purple of the twilight air,
Beams forth the sudden radiance of its light
With strange unearthly splendour in its glare."**

"Echo, the Rock's airy daughter" resounds through the hills where:

**"Narrow-water's castle stood
And o'er the waves hung
Fatham's wood -
From shore to topmost summit proud.
Her pines lay dark as thundercloud."**

These last lines are from a poem of Henry Hamilton Blackham, kinsman of Aodh de Blacam, who himself lives behind that mountain, Speilgeach Ban, now vanishing in the darkness. The ferryman acknowledges our hail. He will be waiting for us. "Up for'ad," the deck hands are getting the hawser into the bitts and making ready to throw over the fender which is made of stout rope-bound twigs.

Their sou'-westers and oilskins gleam in the rain for it is coming down "like stair rods." They wear rubber topboots and yet can jump about nimbly. They have what the French term "le pied marin" (the sailor feet).

Through the Narrows

We can trace the curve of the ship's wake as it comes through the Narrows. The starboard light gleams like an emerald. Like a garnet burning bright is the lantern on the port. Our mast headlight is brilliant gold in the gloom. Now we are in the lock chamber. The iron gates close behind us. The vessel rises to the level of the canal. We sing out good-bye to our friendly ship's company who must proceed to Newry, and then jump ashore ourselves.

It is raining pitilessly, yet, under the spell of our little voyage, we sing songs of the sea, spin yarns and tell wonderful tales of adventure. We cross the Border into Louth and astonish the Customs officer, who apparently thinks we are visitors from Tir-na-nOg. Awaiting the ferryman in an old house beside the quay, we exchange statistics about the degrees of our wetness, yet still burst into cheerful song. Cigarettes have become sodden in the deluge. Raindrops sizzle in pipe bowls but seated at last in the ferryman's boat we again valiantly cross the Border and hit the home trail.

We shall often refer with joy to that sail into Carlingford Bay and remember with laughter even the drenching we got.

In any event it did not wash away the memory of an afternoon spent in absolute peace of mind, sailing along the most beautiful and historic littoral imaginable.



THE FATE OF THOMAS DUNN

This June afternoon, the air was so limpid that on the violet-blue slopes of Slieve Foy one could see the silvery shining rivulets cascading into the bright waters of the now tranquil lough. As one climbed up the hill leading to the village of Rostrevor and then ventured onwards towards the enchanted valley of Kilbroney, one was fully comforted there and sheltered from the chilling East wind. The hawthorne bushes were seething in an almond-scented efflorescence whose heady fragrance was more cloying than the subtle rose-breath that would soon come later on to tell us that mid-summer was definitely here and that we had now reached the turn of the year.

What a pretty name is Cherry Hill! One would naturally associate romance with such an eminence. But therein lies deeply one more tragic instance of Life's cruel ironies. Thomas Dunn was a young peasant-patriot of Rostrevor, County Down, who, rather than betray his comrade United Irishmen of Kilbroney Parish in 1798, allowed himself to be sacrificed on Cherry Hill. His idealism and fortitude are still spoken of in his native glen. Unfortunately, there are far too many lacunae in the tapestry of Irish history and too many things have happened that have never been systematically documented. Oblivion has, in the main, conquered and what one does sparingly gather is so sketchy and lacking in detail, that imagination has to supply the lack of data that is so essential in the making-up of a vivid and complete mosaic of our island's long and unhappy story.

A notorious corps of yeomen in the Warrenpoint district was formerly raised and commanded by the local squire. He knew very little about, and cared much less, for the "Hidden Ireland" whose Celtic traditions and lovely language were unknown to him, an affluent alien, detached and despotical behind the grim-grey walls of his beautiful demesne. The real Irish and the Squire were mutually exclusive. They had not even the identity of religion. In his absence the "Yeos" were commanded by a major who, to put it mildly, was an ignorant bigot. His technique was the usual one. The gallows, the pitch-cap, the torch and the triangle were fully employed. One day a spy brought this minion information which seemed to connect a certain Thomas Dunn with the society of the United Irishmen in the parish of Kilbroney. Though a wild storm was raging at that time, the military marched all the way to the house where Dunn dwelt.

Cottage Broken Open

It was in the centre of a row of three cottages, a little beyond the village of Rostrevor and not very far from the ancient graveyard of Kilbroney. The soldiers burst open the cottage door with the butts of their muskets and the scene is naively described in the following verse of rustic poetry:-

**"In the cot of Thomas Dunn
Pleasant burned the turf-fire bright,
While the housewife sat and spun
Thomas read by the dim rush-light.
Sudden, through the storm without,
Rushing feet came to the door,
And the surging yeomen roar
As it crashes to the floor."**

Dunn's wife and children screamed with terror at this outrageous invasion of their humble home, but Dunn himself, though unarmed, did not flinch. The officer in charge of the party informed him that he had learnt of his connection with an illegal society but, that if he gave him a list of its members and disclosed its secrets, he would be liberally rewarded and set free. Dunn, an idealist and a man of extremely high principles, indignantly refused to play the role of informer. At a sign from the officer, the yeomen seized him and, though he resisted vigorously, he was finally dragged from the cottage and marched to the military headquarters at Cherry Hill, Rostrevor. Next day, he was tried by a court of officers. The spy's evidence was heard but no documentary evidence was produced nor could any trustworthy witness be obtained to swear against Dunn. Despite all this, the prisoner was found guilty of sedition and given no opportunity of defence. He was again offered a free pardon and a grant of money if he would reveal the names of the "United Men" in the Kilbroney district and give evidence against them in the event of their apprehension and trial. If he refused, the alternative he was told was that he would be flung into prison for an indefinite period, flogged, racked and then finally hanged. Dunn answered promptly and clearly that he would suffer any fate, even death itself, rather than be branded with the name of traitor and informer. "What," he said to his accusers, "would it avail me to live a few more short years on the money obtained by selling the lives of innocent men who have always trusted me? I would rather go down to the grave than have my name disgraced and my memory execrated for all time."

It would be too harrowing and morbid to describe the torture inflicted on this humble yet immortally heroic young patriot. He was flogged to death on Cherry Hill and buried in the graveyard of Kilbroney. It is related that the officer in charge of the "Yeos" was afterwards piked to death in an encounter with the rebels, and that the arm

of one of the ruffians who scourged Dunn to death "withered away," to use the arresting phraseology of the country-folk who have handed down the story from one generation to another.

Thomas Dunn was married to a Miss Valentine, of County Tyrone, and he left seven sons and one daughter to mourn him.

Another Incident

Another strange incident in 1798 has its locale in the superb setting of the Kilbroney region. The young wife of Eoghan Mac Eoghain was alone in her home, which stood upon the grassy flat summit of Leacan Beag mountain, which can be seen from the road that joins Rostrevor and Hilltown. Her husband was at a fair. A party of Yeomen - the Welsh Horse - came riding up to the cottage looking for Eoghan. On seeing them approach her home, the bean-a-toighe became so terror-stricken that she rushed out to the "street" or yard and, in anguish of mind, looked around for some place wherein to hide. The story is that she must have deemed flight impossible and that the outhouses might also be closely searched. In any case, her gaze happened to fall upon a large churn which she had, only a short time earlier, scalded and scoured. In a trice, she got inside the churn and, crouching down, pulled the lid over her head. The soldiers were exasperated at discovering the house empty and smashing everything they came across, they prepared to burn it to the ground. One of the troopers, on passing the churn, happened to strike it with his heavy boot. The sound that this caused was dull and heavy, unlike that which would be given by an empty churn. Curious and suspicious, he looked through the opening in the lid and saw the figure huddled therein. He then, without removing the lid, stepped back and kicked over the churn, which now spun rapidly towards the brink of the high cliff. Giving it one vicious parting kick, he sent it right out over the rock. It bounced from rock to rock, from bush to bush. One piercing, heart-rending cry was heard as the churn, with great violence, smashed itself on the rocky terrain below. The poor, innocent and beautiful creature was killed instantaneously.

A Like Death

It was also related that the Yeoman who was responsible for her death, himself fell over the same steep cliff whilst riding along in single file with his marauding comrades. Gleann na Neanntóg or "the Nettle Glen" is nearby Alt-a-chuinneoige, "the Precipice of the Churn," which overlooks the Trooper's Bed. Here was buried the "Ancient Briton" who so callously murdered the comely young wife of Eoghan Mac Eoghain.

It was but poetically just that he should meet with such retribution :

**"The Fates are just; they give us but our own;
Nemesis ripens what our hands have sown."**



Jack Crawford and Denis Ireland

NARROW-WATER FERRY

Years before the town of Warrenpoint sprang into prominence, Narrow-water was a place of some consideration and contained several good houses, including a pretty water-mill and a ferryhouse. The mill has long since been demolished, but the ferry-house remains. On a large white printed board you may still read:-

Narrow-water Ferry

Passenger	0 2
Jaunting Car	2 0
Horse and car	1 6
Bicycle	0 2
Horse	0 6
Ass	0 4
Cow	0 6
Pig	0 2
Sheep (per head)	0 1
Minimum toll for large boat	1 6

The Inevitable Ghost

This ferry, placed amid the most romantic and entrancing scenery, is close beside the little railway station, exactly one Irish mile from Warrenpoint. A re-painted boat takes you from Down into Louth. Crossing over the narrow but swiftly flowing stream, you get a recessional effect of Slieve Foy, whilst close at hand is the ivy-covered ruin of an old castle about which is told the following legend. An Irish lord, through jealousy, imprisoned in this rough fortress his young and beautiful wife whom he had brought from Spain. The whole night long she would sit on the battlement singing and playing the harp, contrasting her miserable fate with the joyous days of her youth spent on the Guadalquivir. A noble Iberian whose love she had not requited vainly followed her "across the ocean green" and sought to free her from her tyrant. In the end, the poor lady died, more through the unkindness of her suspicious husband than by the hardships endured in her wave-washed prison.

The inevitable ghost appears, and is apparently a musical one, according to the following verse:-

"Placid and pale, the moonbeams play
And every breeze is mute,
Upon the lonely boatman's ear,
Steals a strange pleasure mixed with fear.
While from the cliffs he seems to hear
The murmur of a lute,
And sounds as of a captive lone
That mourns her woe in tongue unknown."

A friend of my own swears that he heard her recently, but my own belief is that it was a portable set broadcasting a "crooner."

Border Killed The Trade

Very few opportunities arise nowadays for calling out the big flat-bottomed ferry boat which used to be loaded with mountain sheep and pigs on the last Friday of the month - "the Point fair-day."

The Border killed that trade. On Newry market day you would also see "the over-the-water ones" coming across with baskets of fowl and eggs. They loved bright colours and wore attractive crimson handkerchiefs on their heads. Occasionally you would see a white kerchief but it would be vivid with large red spots.

Troubled Times

They were quite a distinct type of people from the County Down folk. They spoke Irish fluently and had an accent quite unlike our clipped Northern speech. A motor-bus service from Omeath to Newry has done away largely with the market-day traffic across the ferry. Despite all, the boat still goes

across every day, and never to my knowledge, has it once ceased to function, even when wintry gales have swept up the fiord.

It has seen troubled times from the time that De Lacey made good his escape into County Down, till 1922, when the little wooden railway station was riddled with bullets. King John once actually threw a bridge of boats across the lough at Narrow-water to impede De Lacey but did not succeed.

A Short Cut

On the road leading from the County Louth side of the ferry up to the Free State Customs post is a little wood whose affirmative beauty can scarcely be disputed. Near it is the "Looby," a small curved creek, where, in former days, the Mourne fishermen were wont to "lay by" their fishing smacks for the winter.

The word "looby" is, I fancy, derived from the Irish noun *lúb*, a loop or curve. The ferry is still much favoured by those who wish to see the superb view of Carlingford Lough from the Flagstaff. It also is a short-cut if you wish to go from Warrenpoint to Dundlak on foot or bicycle. What tales could not that old inn near the Ferry relate, for many a varied type of guest has sat by its cheerful fire. Saxon and Celt both have made those rafters ring with merriment. What droll, exciting and unexpected incidents must have occurred about this frontier-post.

Brooding Peace

At night, the emphatic yet sombre beauty of the trees around the ferry gives it a brooding peace. It becomes eerie and tenebrous then. Beacon lights are reflected in the polished ebony surface of the water which glides swiftly past the old Norman keep. "Ferry ahoy!" cries out the belated and anxious wayfarer on the Louth shore. Faintly but mockingly the woods seem to answer him across the stream, "Ferry ahoy! Ferry ahoy!"

Lucht déanta na mbád Rinn Mhic Giolla Rua



FUN IN THE MAIN STREET

Someone has written, somewhere, that "one sees more in the city than in a small town; but what one hears in the latter makes up for the deficiency." That is but a half-truth; perhaps, indeed, only a quarter truth.

Warrenpoint has a good broad thoroughfare called Church Street, and in it there lived, when I was a lad, a watchmaker called John Lewis, but most folk irreverently referred to him as "Bunker" Lewis, for that was a way they had with them in those days. His shop (next to the church) was a wonderful attraction for all the children of the town. The old jeweller, with white, flowing side-whiskers, used to sit working in the window of his shop. I think I see him yet, with his watchmaker's eye-glass screwed resolutely in his eye, examining the miniature mechanism of a silver lever watch - not one of the modern keyless kind. We children would pass remarks, one to the other, about what John was doing with the chronometer but John, absorbed in his craft, never noticed us, and as far as he was concerned we might never have existed. One story is told about him, and it is in connection with a conflagration that took place in his premises. John, it appears, was in bed and so excited did he become that when he had hastily scrambled into his raiment, he discovered that he had put on his coat (a tail one with two buttons at the back) before he had fastened on his braces! The acrobatic antics of John in trying to secure his nether garments by pulling his suspenders over his coat convulsed the many spectators in attendance, and men who saw Grock the clown, later on in London, swore that Bunker Lewis could have given him streets as he almost tumbled head over heels in his frantic endeavours to make everything secure. Then the local fire brigade arrived (with a wheelbarrow and a hydrant, and did more harm than any fire, even admitting that more water spurted out of the side of the antediluvian hose than came through the nozzle).

"Bowsie" Keown, town sergeant and sanitary sub-officer, kept a minx-like eye on "the cool cascade" and regulated the traffic, being at one time in the old R.I.C. and a real Dogberry of a cop into the bargain.

The Fire Brigade Success

Eventually the fire brigade succeeded in keeping the flames from reaching Omeath, and Bunker, Phoenix-like, arose from his ashes (I don't think they were many) to announce to the general public that business was as usual and that time still marched on in the pleasant little town of Warrenpoint. And what a multifarious genius he must have been: "Lewis John", watchmaker and licensed jeweller, tuner and repairer of all kinds of musical instruments, hardware and toy warehouse, plumber and gasfitter, whitesmith, etc. The etcetera opens up interesting conjectures as to whether there was anything left that John really couldn't do in the field of craftsmanship. Still, he nearly strangled himself trying to put his "galluses" on, an operation quite simple in itself and performed daily by millions of all ages, religions and sizes, the wide world over.

Let us wander down the street a little further and stand before the old town hall. Perhaps one of the greatest municipal comedies of all time took place within its Upper Chamber, a place where the choral class used to practise the oratorios of Handel and Mendelssohn in the early years of the century and where the petty sessions are held today. The local urban council once came to a deadlock about the election of a chairman. What adds piquancy to this divertissement is that it was not one of the usual sectarian squabbles, but a kind of free-for-all mix-up. Each side in the quarrel had representatives of the various different religious bodies in the town.

I remember that it was very cold weather, early in the year, and I got inside the hall on the excuse that I was bringing an overcoat for my brother, who was clerk of the council. The councillors, who swore they would sit "en permanence" if necessary, were all animated by the one ideal, and that was to stick it out till the other side caved in, thus giving them the majority to elect the chairman. One side watched the other closely. All such things as mere jobs, home comforts and rest were just details in their lives.

Well Looked After

All through the night they stayed, and if they didn't get much sleep - barring an odd doze - neither did the townsfolk, who couldn't slumber too serenely thinking of the city fathers holding out in the old town hall. Vigilance eternal is the price of liberty. "Forty winks" might easily have upset the apple-cart. The clerk had to stay along with his council because the rules at that time gave him no other alternative. Not being inspired with the zeal of the councillors, nor sustained by their fanatical love of the cause, he did not, for one, relish the situation. There was, I recall, a piano, belonging to the Warrenpoint and Rostrevor Choral Union, in the council chamber, but no one played the Cradle Songs of Brahms, Gounod, or Schubert, nor ever, a Nocturne of Chopin. No one sang "Oft in the Stilly Night" or "The Vacant Chair." Chess, however, was played, and the game is still commemorated in newspaper photographs.

The Press, both in this country and across the water, gave the siege full coverage. Betting, it is said, took place as to how long the "sit-down" strike would last. Children, going to school by bus, cheered the city fathers as they passed the old town hall, and every man, woman and child in the place had "a dekko" at their inflexible representatives and quoted other parallels in history such as Derry, Limerick, Troy, Lucknow, Sevastopol, and Mafeking. They also spoke of the time when Jimmy Gill, the steeplejack, flew a flag of defiance from his high chimney in Sugar Island, Newry, and dropped bricks on the R.I.C., who attempted to arrest him and lodge him in Dundalk Jail for a spell. Jimmy actually fired off rockets, and his escapade inspired a cartoon in "The Westminster Gazette" or some other "posh" English magazine.

Further Down

Jack - fear an cheoil



AS I WALKED THROUGH CARLINGFORD

Legend, ever fanciful, has informed us that, beneath the waters of Cuan Snamh Aighneach, the Swimming Ford of the Horses, there lies (like "La Cathedrale Engloutie" of Debussy) the ancient city of the pool, Cathair Linne or Carlingford. Climbing up the ribbed gang plank of the "Fairy Queen," I set out from the sloping, stony shore at Warrenpoint for the little town that lies at the feet of Slieve Foy. Some of my fellow-passengers were out for fresh air and scenery. Others were archaeologically minded, whilst most of us combined all these commendable aspirations with a frank and unashamed questing for butter, bacon, sweets, and ice-cream. Some historians say that if Don Juan del Aquila, Lord John of the Eagle, had landed with Spanish warriors at Carlingford, the disaster of Kinsale might never have happened, and Ireland would have won to a fairer destiny. That at any rate, is the old city where O'Neill expected him, but Fate decreed otherwise.

St. Patrick, it is claimed, set sail from Carlingford for the Isle of Man and preached to the Manx people about the Triune God.

King John and his barons, the pioneers of Big Business in these islands, came to Ireland to punish De Lacey, and enjoyed a few days in Carlingford. Tournaments were held, and there were joustings and games. Carpenters, ditchers and miners were paid to repair the damage done by the vexatious De Lacey, who escaped across what is now called the Border, into County Down. King John had thrown a bridge of boats across the river at Narrow Water to cut off the retreat of the wily Norman, but did not succeed. If John and De Lacey were to visit the same spot today they might find a National Registration Identity Card essential to further progress. They would also be cross-examined about such commodities as butter, white bread, tea, sugar, and much else for we have made great progress since 1210, when King John's Castle was built to face Killowen and all the beauty of the mountains and the sea.

Its walls are 11 ft. thick in places. Carlingford always seems to be in reverie, reflecting, one would imagine, on its pristine glories, for the mystery of the centuries broods over it. Its streets may, at one time, have been built in alignment, but Finn the giant must have reached down his hand from Slieve Foy and shaken them into picturesque disarray. Nowhere on earth, not even in Bruges, the dead city of Flanders, have I ever walked through such a quiet town.

Near the end of the 13th century Richard de Burgh, the Red Earl of Ulster, founded a monastery for Dominicans there. Henry VIII, arch confiscator and matrimonial "ace," scattered the Friars and leased their home to a Dundalk merchant named Scryne. This monastery, founded in 1305, has now only its aisle and belfry. The pointed windows are built up, but there remains part of a Gothic arch, originally the frame of the large eastern window.

Carlingford had its own mint once upon a time. In the diocesan registers of the parochial church we find that the last rector before the Reformation was Simon Betagh. In 1532 Primate Cramer demised, among other tithes and rents, "7 barrels of well-saved herrings with 1,000 oysters every St. Patrick's Day - or 3s 4d." (The records do not say what this represents in coupons).

The Tholsel is a small, unpretentious building arched over a narrow street. It once gave laws to the three counties of Louth, Armagh and Down and accommodated a sovereign and twelve burgesses.

Weird-looking carvings of serpents, animals, human heads, scrolls and ribbons adorn the freestone walls of a square tower here and, nearby, is a larger quadrangular tower whose floors and landing places were in days gone by perforated with murder holds. A few men armed with muskets could have from this vantage point barred the passage of thousands whilst one mailclad man-at-arms with a Vickers machine gun, might well have proved invincible.

Lord Thomas of Lancaster, son of Henry IV used to sit on the highest battlement of the old castle, and look over to the purple and green mosaic of the far-away hills of Down. From "the King's Seat" he could also see beneath him the shimmering waters of the lough, a trembling tissue of crystal and gold.

Two hundred years ago Carlingford contained thirty-two castellated edifices and churches. Today of the first description, but three remain. The old Abbey is the sole ecclesiastical survival.

Here, Thurot passed the year 1750 learning English, and here, too, was born Thomas D'Arcy MacGee, one of the "Forty-eight" poets.

The *genius loci* of the ancients is scarcely a myth. Some places do retain for ages something of the lives that have been lived in them. Quiet, restful places like Carlingford seem to have souls, and the soul of a place is, indeed, its "geniu loci," its familiar spirit, its peculiar essence, as real a thing as the creamy almond scent of the gorse or the bitter salt tang of the sea.

Here are narrow, tortuous streets, where still dwells the silent spirit of contemplation; perhaps, too the phantoms of ancient pomp and circumstance sigh out their days beneath that rugged mountainside. Old castles, deserted villages, uninhabited homes, all have their wraiths, silent indeed to many, but more eloquent to others than ever human speech can be.

MY WEEK IN ARMAGH

In the year 1908 Easter Monday was on April 20th, and the next day I had to be in the Primatial City of Armagh in order to sit for the King's Scholarship Examination. As the exam started early in the morning of Easter Tuesday, it meant my leaving home on Easter Monday by train. Now, traditionally, that day is celebrated in many pleasant ways in our little town. Children go on picnics to Fiddlers' Green, a lovely glade of smooth grass between a wood and the Big Stone called Cloughmore. The green sward lies on the slope of the mountain itself. Many a child has played there on an Easter Monday, rolling brightly coloured eggs, drinking tea or lemonade, and eating buns. The horse-trams of the "toast-rack" variety and of Victorian vintage carried loads of Belfast excursioners.

"Strings" of jaunting cars sped along the shore road to Rostrevor, and one knew that, at long and at last, the hard Winter was over. Spring had come. A couple of gaily uniformed flute bands livened up the Square in my home town, and rowing boats were bobbing up and down as they headed for Omeath. I watched a football match that afternoon, trying to forget the next day's ordeal. It was an irony to leave all this gaiety for an exam, held shabbily enough, during the Easter holidays. However, I managed, with manifest reluctance, to leave home on the "seven" train for Armagh, and just missed the conclusion of a good fist fight between two Belfast fellows in the station yard.

I sat glumly in my compartment and missed "all the value." I arrived by nightfall in the historic old town with its two Cathedrals, its lovely Mall, and its quaint hilly, old-world streets. I asked one of the old R.I.C. if he could tell me where I could get lodgings, for I knew no one in the place, Armagh being remote enough in those busless days. I told him I was "going on" for a teacher. "Then the Lord pity you in that job!" he commented. That was heartening for a start. Finally he got me fixed up in a very homely house with civil decent people, who fed me well, asked no questions, and gave me a latch key. They were Protestants and I was a Catholic, but kindlier and more hard-working people I have never met. Next day I arrived at the school in Banbrook Hill. Being a senior grade student, I had not - thank God - to do any papers covered by my intermediate Certificate. This gave me many free hours to ramble about the venerable and easy-going city, which has all the dignified qualities of an ecclesiastical capital about it.

I remember its hospitality with gratitude, for once I got tea, bread and butter, likewise pastry go leor in a restaurant for fourpence! You wouldn't get much for fourpence these days in a restaurant, or anywhere else for that matter.

All that I remember of the exam itself is the music paper and one of the questions in General Information about cross-Channel routes from Ireland to Great Britain. That was a "gift" for me, as I had been on four of them myself. Sadly enough, three of the four passenger services have been long since discontinued. Still, "it's all progress," as the woman said who bade good-bye to her daughter at Shannon Airport. The daughter was in America long before the mother got back by train and car to her home in "The Sweet County Down."

Weird Noises

I was taken into a little room for my examination in vocal music. Mr. Worsley, a brisk little man wearing spectacles, handed each candidate a sight test tonic solfa or staff. I took the latter, as I am not an expert on "doh-me-soh" notation. Whilst the other "victims" were carolling forth like larks at morn, I adroitly got in the vicinity of a weather-beaten harmonium and played over my solo. It sounded like a motif out of "The Rite of Spring," by Igor Stravinsky, when I come to think of it, and that asthmatic harmonium must have accompanied Noah when he danced before the Ark. "You can't do that!" shouted Mr. Worsley. "But I can," I replied light-heartedly, having already done it. As luck would have it, he had only one staff-test handy, and my brief harmonium recital gave me enough knowledge to allow me to vocalise it. I then made some weird noises and Mr. Worsley wrote down something in a notebook. Whatever he wrote, he didn't write a letter to the Carl Rosa Opera Company. I have never heard from them, nor from any other Opera Company. Outside the school, the other fellows congratulated me on my virtuosity, and invited me up to their "digs," saying that it contained a piano. I went that same evening. The parlour was full of embryonic school-masters, plus the daughters of the house, who in modern parlance could be described as "smashers." They were bonny, good-natured, and full of fun.

So jolly were they that all present forgot the existence of such worthies as Hall and Knight, nor "bitterly thought of the morrow." Everyone sang - more or less - and about twelve of the night we broke up, not, indeed, to burn any other midnight oil. It surely was a bright week for me, and I was very lonesome leaving those friendly young scholars, those smiling damsels, and the kindly Armagh people with whom I had stayed. A couple of years later, when I was teaching in Lurgan, Mr. Worsley came in for our "annual" - my first of many. I doubt if he recognised me as the maestro of the incident, nor, indeed, did he ask me for my syllabus in music. And, believe me, there was very little that they didn't ask for in those days. Some of them were even authorities on Irish Stew, the split infinitive and needlework. We shall never see their like again. (Well let's hope so.)

CHRISTMAS AT CALVARY

In the year 1915 I motored from Warrenpoint to St. Michael's in Ballyoonan, one of the ten townlands of Omeath. Everyone in these parts calls the lovely little spot Calvary and lying between Slieve Foy and historic Carlingford it is in all truth, an idyllic milieu.

You can gaze from the college windows at the great massif of Finn or turning round glimpse across the lettuce-green fiord at the indigo Bens of Boirche where Mourne - that bijou tiny kingdom - sweeps literally into the foam. It is a marvellous region.

We travelled up to Newry that Christmas Eve fifty-seven years ago and crossing the river and canal bridges, sped in cold darkness along the Fathom Line. There was no Border then so there was no Customs examination.

Omeath was dimly lit that night by oil lamps but, in many a window shone the long red Christmas candle.

I visited the pretty little village one Sunday before Christmas a few years ago and found a change. The place was virtually illuminated with brightly coloured neon signs and the latest methods of electric lighting. It looked as busy as any city around yule-time. Crowds of shoppers milled about and the air was mild and spring-like.

That Sunday was one of the halcyon days. A score or more of motorcars stretched along the Newry-Carlingford road and Santa Claus - no less, arrived on a motorbike and rode from the cross-roads towards the jetty. He had just thrown sweets to a crowd of shrilly cheering children before the violet dark had veiled the lough and then the tenebrous night set in. It was now "the dead of winter".

But let me go back to Christmas 1915. Father Woodcock O.C. was the rector of St. Michael's which consisted of one solid building then. The Dundalk, Newry and Greenore line ran close to the lough but no longer does so today.

There was a very small community in St. Michael's at the time. I played the little reed-organ at the Mass and, so packed was the little chapel, I was jammed right up against the window.

At St. Michael's in those faraway days there was a Brother called Patrick and I was very fond of him. He was very skilful and artistic and, with his own hands had embroidered the coloured letters of the altar-cloths in silk. They were Gothic in character and gleamed in the soft golden candle-light.

Brother Patrick could sing very sweetly and was also a real "cordon bleu".

Crowds of worshippers had assembled outside the window of the chapel and knelt on the gravelled-space to assist at the Mass. Snow began to fall, but not too heavily.

I glimpsed the mountain folk when I turned round momentarily from the organ. The people did not seem to mind the cold on that Holy and Silent Night.

There was something mystic and magical about mid-night that still haunts my memory. I did feel the rapture I always felt when I was a child and I often wonder can I ever feel so rapt again in my eighty-fourth year. I would certainly regard it as something in the nature of a miracle.

Brother Colton was in St. Michael's that wondrous midnight. He is still remembered in Omeath and in Warrenpoint too. He was English and died when he was ninety. (He learned to ride a bicycle when he was seventy!).

He was a keen herbalist and the folk for miles around had implicit faith in his nostrums. They believed that Brother Colton could cure anything.

I recall going with Cathal O'Byrne on a jaunting car from Omeath to St. Michael's. There was a brother among the community named Balfe, a fine singer. I often wonder if he was some distant relation of Michael Balfe (1808-1870), the Dublin born composer of "The Bohemian Girl." We had an impromptu "sing-song."

Cathal sang "The Blue Hills of Antrim" and "The Morning Dew". Brother Colton did his "party-piece", namely "A Frog he would a wooing go". He ended up this old nursery-rhyme by giving a very diverting imitation of a duck gobbling up the amorous frog.

Today St. Michael's College has greatly increased in size. The Calvary itself is a most beautiful one, ideally situated between the mountains and the sea. I have always gone there on Good Friday since 1910, missing only a few visits.

Father Gentili is buried near to the Calvary; one of the most distinguished members of the Rosminian Order.

When I visited St. Michael's I used to love to hear Italian and Gaelic spoken, but one beloved figure, Brother Macken, died this year. (R.I.P.). He must have been known to hundreds who came to make the Stations of the Cross. He was a splendid type, friendly and deeply religious. It was always good to meet one so kind and sincere.

Milton, in his "Paradise Lost," writes of the great Archangel Michael thus: "Go, Michael of celestial armies, Prince; and thou, in military prowess next Gabriel, lead forth to battle these my sons invincible: lead forth my armed saints by thousands and millions ranged for fight."

His feast day ("St. Michael and all the Angels") occurs on 29th September. In art, St. Michael is depicted as a beautiful young man with a severe countenance, winged and clad either in white or in armour, bearing a lance and shield with which he combats a dragon.

In the final judgment, he is represented with scales in which he weighs the souls of the risen dead. The crib in the entrance hall of St. Michael's was a very artistic representation of the Nativity and it was a large one in Italian design.

I can still visualise the altar lit with snow-white candles, each flame a tremulous petal of gold. Bro. Patrick sang the Latin "Benedictory" after the supreme moment of consecration. The mountain wind souged through the leafless tress and tiny flakes of snow fell upon the worshippers kneeling on the cold, hard ground outside.

Christmas Eve, 1915: had one but known all the sorrow and tragedy that was to follow, one could hardly have withstood the agony of it all. But God - infinitely wise - knows best and He will come again at Christmas to Calvary.



DALLAN OF CLONALLAN

"A leafy grove surrounds me quite;
For my delight the blackbirds flute;
While o'er my little book's lined word,
Sweet warbling birds their Scribe salute."
(From the early Irish)

Warrepoint is in the parish of Clonallon (Cluain Dhallan), the meadow of Dallan, a saint of royal descent. His father was Colla, son of Ere, a direct lineal descendant of Colla the Noble, the 121st King of Ireland, who reigned from 323 to 326, when he was expelled, along with his two brothers to Scotland by his cousin, Muireadhach Tireach, who then became monarch of Erin. St. Dallan's mother was Forchella, and consequently her saintly and erudite son is generally spoken of as Dallan Forgaill.

St. Dallan, it is believed, was born at Tullyhaw (Teallach Eathach), the modern barony of Tullyhaw in Cavan, in the early part of the sixth century, and was christened Euchaidh. Having, through intense study, lost his eyesight, he was called Dallan-the-blind, and by this cognomen he is commonly referred to in the Annals. He was so eminent in theology, rhetoric, philosophy, history and poetry that he quickly became the literary chief, the arbiter of elegance, the poet laureate of Erin, and that in the most glorious period of our history, the Golden Age of our ancient culture and civilisation, Dallan, it is thought, was a disciple of St. Colmcille; at any rate, a sincere and beautiful friendship linked the pair.

The Famous Convention

Dallan's name is perpetuated, not merely in Clonallon, but also in Killadallon (Cill Dhallain), the church of Dallan, in his native diocese of Kilmore. Desert Dhallain (Dallan's Desert) and Tullach Dhallain (Dallan's Hillock) are in Raphoe, where he spent the last years of his life and in which diocese he was martyred. As chief of the poets, he appeared at the famous Convention of Drumceat.

This meeting of the priests, princes and nobles of Ireland was convened by King Aedh, and its three-fold object is well epitomised in an old Gaelic poem;

"The Irish Monarch summoned by his writ
The Parliament of Druim-ceat; the subjects in debate
Were the expulsion of the poets, the annual tribute
Of the Dairiads, and the just deposing
Of Scanlan, King of Ossory."

St. Dallan, as well as St. Colmcille, attended, and the former wrote a poem, some of whose lines run thus:

St. Colmcille arrived at Druimceat
Followed by a retinue of his clergy,
By twenty prelates of superior order,
By forty presbyters and fifty deacons
And thirty students in divinity
Not yet ordained."

The Death of Columba

For thirteen months this unique convention sat and, through the moderate counsels of St. Colmcille, the bardic college was not suppressed but reformed, and only men of real ability were henceforth to enjoy the patronage and encouragement of the King and chieftains. The monarch and each provincial king was to retain an Ollamh or Doctor of Literature in his service, and the same privilege was accorded each lord of a tricha or cantred to record the genealogy of his family.

In addition, Dallan, the chief Ollamh, became responsible for the inauguration and direction of new literary schools and colleges, quite distinct from the great ecclesiastical schools which were studded all over the country and were thronged with noble scholars from all over Europe, Ireland at that glowing period being the most civilised and advanced nation of the continent.

Dallan was so overjoyed at the verdict which gave a new lease of life to the poets (of whom he was head), that he extemporised a poem in eulogy of Colmcille who had so successfully interceded on behalf of the writers. A legend is told of St. Baithene, a follower of St. Colmcille, who saw demons crowding round his master's head

tempting him to vanity. On being informed of this, Colmcille forbade Dallan to complete the paean. However, he gave him permission to publish the finished version as a panegyric, saying that it was not right to praise a man during his lifetime. He told Dallan that he would be informed of his death and that the words conveying this information should form the first lines of his elegy.

One evening in June, 597, Dallan was travelling near Loch Owel, close to Mullingar, when a strange horseman rode up to him and spoke these fateful words: "Ní disceoil d'uibh Neill" ("It is not good news for the descendants of Niall"), announcing the death of Columba. In obedience to the wish of his friend, Dallan at once began his elegy as indicated.

The prayer of St. Dallan to share the same grave with St. Conall, the Abbot of Iniskeel, was granted.

At Iniskeel

During one of his visits to the island monastery of St. Conall, he was martyred by a band of Northern pirates. The saint's head was severed from his body by one swift stroke of the sword and cast into the ocean. In a few moments St. Conall arrived in the guest room, and, to his grief and horror, discovered the headless body of Dallan. With tears and prayers he appealed to God to reveal to him where the head of his friend was cast. All at once he beheld it rising and falling on the surging sea and coming towards the shore. With joy and emotion he eagerly lifted it and placed it on the body of the saint, to which, miraculously, it became joined as if it had never been severed from it.

The remains of the saintly and scholarly Dallan lie under the walls of the little church of Iniskeel. He died, as far as can be ascertained, in 598, and in the Martyrologies of Tallaght and Donegal his feast is given as January 29th.

At the request of the bards of Ireland, Seanchan Torpeist of Connacht (elected with one voice), as his successor, wrote the funeral hymn of Dallan. One verse touchingly and strikingly pays tribute to his qualities as a poet:

**"Thrice fifty bands of passing skill attended to his train.
But the fleetest hand that swept the harp would pause amid the strain,
And slumber on the silent chord beneath the awakening spell
Of Dallan's harp a thousand more had owned the potent spell."**

A Place Of Refuge

Druim-ceat is now Daisy Hill, near Limavady, on the River Roe. We are told that Ulster was always a place of refuge for the Irish bards when they got into difficulties elsewhere in Erin. This very abridged account of Dallan of Clonallon is adapted from a most scholarly script of the late Right Rev. Monsignor O'Reilly, M.R.I.A., formerly parish priest of Kilbroney. The work is entitled "St. Conall and St. Dallan, or the Church of Clonallon," and was written in the year 1890. An authority on Irish hagiology and literature, Monsignor O'Reilly was universally beloved for his gentleness and benignancy. His learning was only matched by his modesty. One could write no better epitaph of him than the old Gaelic proverb, which so truly says:

"The heaviest sheaf of corn is the one that bows its head the lowliest."



MITCHEL'S HOMECOMING

*"I am a true born Irishman,
John Mitchel is my name,
When first to join my country boys,
From Newry Town I came;
I struggled hard both day and night,
To free my native land,
For which I was transported
As you may understand."*

A Street Ballad of John Mitchel

A few weeks ago I followed the remains of a fine old patriot who remembered quite clearly the return of John Mitchel to Newry. I had written down in a notebook his description of that scene but fear it cannot stir the reader as did the voice of John O'Hanlon when he began thus: "I remember John Mitchel. At that time there was no railway to Greenore. Mitchel's uncle owned Dromalane Mill. On the night of Mitchel's return I was only a boy of ten years. I was in the drive of Dromalane House. John Mitchel was standing on the broad steps of the house. He had no coat on but I remember that he wore a white shirt, and on his head was a broad-brimmed black felt hat. Two lines of men filed past Mitchel and each of them was treated to a drink, for these were the days when there was some nature and kindness in the people. I was walking behind a very tall man, and when it came my turn, Mitchel smiled, and looking at me, exclaimed: 'What brought you here?' I saluted him and offered him my hand. He put his hand in his pocket and gave me a shilling. I thanked him and, with a laugh, he said to one of the men: 'Take care of him.' I ran home with my shilling and kept it for years but somehow or other, it got lost. I would not have lost it for worlds," he added, with a sigh of regret. He was a spirited lad of ten to have kept that shilling instead of spending it. A shilling was a boy's fortune in 1874. He made me laugh and laughed himself as he described the raft from which a firework display took place on that memorable night: "We took the timber from Carville's yard to make the raft for the canal. It wouldn't have looked well taking it from Redmond's, Carville was one of our own." We both laughed at this ethical subtlety.

The Newry Reporter dated 30th July, 1874, says: "At half past five o'clock on Thursday evening, John Mitchel arrived in his native town after an exile of twenty-five years. He started from Cork on Tuesday morning, accompanied by his daughter and Dr. Carroll of Philadelphia, and, in order to avoid public display, he was met at Inchicore by Mr. Cantwell, proprietor of the Star and Garter Hotel, D'Olier Street, Dublin, who had a carriage in waiting, in which the party drove to Amiens Street Station. They left the metropolis by the two o'clock train, reaching this town at the hour above mentioned.

The arrival of Mr. Mitchel did not seem to be altogether unexpected, for a large crowd had assembled to welcome the popular "'48 man" and the moment he alighted from the carriage the cheering was tremendous.

Mr. Mitchel acknowledged the compliment, but excused himself from making a speech owing to the delicate state of his health. He was met at the station by his brother-in-law, Mr. Hill Irvine, J.P., and proceeded to that gentleman's residence, followed by a huge number of persons cheering enthusiastically. Placards having been posted through the town announcing that a torch-light procession would take place in the evening, some thousands of persons assembled on the Fathom Line at nine o'clock, and torch-bearers, about one hundred in number, having formed in order, marched through the principal streets of the town. The effect of the procession was picturesque in the extreme, and was considerably heightened by a magnificent discharge of rockets from the steamer, "*Amphion*," then lying in the Albert Basin."

The deck guns of the "*Amphion*" were also fired at intervals during the evening. The rejoicings concluded about eleven o'clock. There is a venial mistake in the account given above, which states that Newry was the native town of Mitchel, but Newry was his spiritual as well as his actual home, and what an inexpressible moment it must have been for him as he glimpsed it down in the sun-drenched valley while his train sped along the main line towards Goraghwood. He had dreamt of it in moonlight too! "After all, the winter moon of these southern oceans is no other than the very harvest moon of Ireland shining calmly into the room where my children are sleeping this blessed night. For we are not far from the meridian of Newry, though six thousand miles to the south, and I know that the white disk struggling here through Antarctic storm-clouds is the very globe of silver that hangs tonight between the branches of Dromalane."

Newry, once the fourth town in Ireland, and a centre where spades, scythes, shovels and nails in large quantities were manufactured, possesses many solid granite mansions and warehouses that once belonged to the eighteenth century merchants of the "City of the Yews."

The hills that cincture it so nobly were ablaze with bonfires on the night of John Mitchel's homecoming and, to the summer stars, ascended the sound of merry laughter and bright, defiant music. The old town, with its grey, glinting houses, its fan-lighted doorways, lived and rejoiced.

The Christmas of 1874 was the last that Mitchel spent on this earth. At an election meeting in Tipperary, the following spring, he made use of these words: "We have come to the very end." A few days later, he was dead.

Thomas Carlyle had said: "Irish Mitchel, poor fellow . . . I told him he would most likely be hanged, but I told him, too, that they could not hang the immortal part of him."

On a mellow Autumn day I was walking in the direction of Dromalane. When I caught sight of Bridge Street, I immediately visualised the funeral procession of Mitchel slowly wending its way to the old graveyard on the hillside. Crossing the bridge, I instinctively turned to gaze at the mountain that looks down upon my home.

Beside the wharf was lying a steamer over whose taffrail floated the green, white and orange of the Tricolour. He, whose free soul no prison could confine, no fate could daunt, would, I imagine, have trembled with joy to have witnessed that symbol. To me, standing on the grey, inflexible granite pavement of the old town of Newry, it seemed something in the nature of a vindication.

Laochra eile an Dúin



THE NEWRY CARAVAN

On a bitterly cold morning a few days before Christmas early in the last century, the "Lark" coach stood outside "The Sign of the Elk" in Winetavern Street, Dublin, ready to start on its journey of 50 Irish miles to the valley town of Newry.

The booking-clerk called out the names of the passengers and each one took a welcome shelter in the carriage that was to convey them to the North. With a plunge the horses were off and the red-coated guard played that lively tune known as "The Devil in Dublin Streets" upon his brass-keyed bugle, a gay prelude to a tedious journey.

On this occasion, the passengers formed a motley group and included a Quaker, a pair of runaway lovers and a old gentleman who, from his appearance, appeared to be of the wealthy class of society. At any rate, he wore a gold ring and now and again he consulted a watch of the same precious metal. By the time that the coach got clear of the mist-veiled city, the ice of reserve melted and the travellers commenced to chat quite genially to each other, thus pleasantly passing away the time as the "four-in-hand" sped along.

The floor of the coach was strewn with straw to keep the passengers' feet from being frozen. Strange to say, the conversation had been started by the Quaker who, in spite of his grave and sober appearance, proved to be a very merry individual indeed, and he kept his companions in a constant roar of laughter all the time. This demure looking man of God cunningly contrived to find out all he could about his fellow-travellers and their business in the metropolis and did it in such an artless and charming manner that he obtained quite a lot of personal information.

The coach passed through Drogheda, crossed the River Boyne and reached Dundalk without anything of note to mar the routine journey. The half-famished passengers got out of the coach and entered an inn where they partook of a much-needed dinner. When the guard of the coach blew his bugle to announce that the journey was to be resumed, they very reluctantly got up from the table and left the room in which "torching" fire was blazing.

In those days, a mail-coach had precedence over every other kind of vehicle. Drawn by four splendid horses, it maintained a remarkably high rate of speed and, on long journeys there were cheerful inns where fresh steeds were waiting to pull the vehicle on each new stage of the route. Nothing was allowed to hold up a mail coach.

When the guard blew his post-horn all other traffic moved out of the way and turnpike-keepers flung open their gates for the coach which, unlike ordinary carts and carriages, did not have to pay toll-money for the upkeep of the roads. But the highwaymen often hindered the progress of the mail and many shots were exchanged between the armed coachmen and those masked banditti intent on gaining possession of the post bags.

Before money orders were introduced in 1792, people were advised to guard against the loss of bank-notes by cutting them in half and sending each half separately. The "Lark" coach crossed the Castletown River and headed for the "Pass of Invermullane", a mountainous defile, significantly known as "The Gap of the North." It was densely wooded at the time and was a favourite hiding-place or "cache" for highwaymen who frequently held up the Royal Mail coaches bound for Newry, Belfast, Dungannon and "all points North."

As the shades of night were falling down, a flurry of snow flakes began to whirl and spin in the icy air. Soon this slight fall of snow developed into a storm. It then became a regular blizzard. The wind howling demoniacally piled the snow into drifts and fears were entertained by the travellers that they would never reach Newry. It was indeed a dismal outlook as there were no more cosy inns on the route except the "Wellington" in which they might find shelter from the storm.

On lumbered the heavy coach and numbly the occupants felt that they would be held up on that bleak and inhospitable mountain side. The conversation among the passengers now timorously turned upon the subject of highwaymen and the name of Collier the Robber was mentioned. He was dreaded chief of a band of foot-pads who frequently waylaid travellers in the lonesome "Gap of the North".

The Quaker remarked that Collier had held up a couple of mail-coaches a short time before and that the district through which they were proceeding was one of his favourite haunts. The wealthy-looking gentleman here observed that it was a wonder that the authorities did not send military patrols through the locality, but the Quaker dwelt on the difficulty of hunting highwaymen in a "mountainy" district, where they could quickly vanish into fastness of woods and caves and, in any case, there was little chance of their being taken by surprise so many and adequate were their sources of information.

People told Collier a lot of things about the movements of the Crown forces, but they never told the authorities anything about Collier. There was no co-operation in that direction for a start.

The Quaker next inquired all round if any of the occupants of the coach had pistols and was informed that, with the exception of one passenger, all were quite unarmed. The Quaker then gave a long diatribe against the use of firearms, saying that he would sooner deliver up all his money and belongings than take the life of any single man of sin upon the road.

When the coach had reached a part of the road where it ran through a boggy tract of land, the cry of a wild cat was heard through the night. The Quaker got up from his seat and opened the coach window to look out and then dropped his handkerchief, as if by accident.

A cold blast of air blew in from without and the travellers were glad when they sat down again. He, however, offered no explanation whatsoever about his strange behaviour in opening the window. The passengers benumbed with cold and not unreasonably apprehensive, sat stoically in their seats and asked no questions.

Then they were suddenly roused from their lethargy by another cry in the night. Quite distinctly they heard a loud harsh voice crying out "stand and deliver" and, as the driver did not pull up his horses, a bullet whizzed by his ear and in terror he tumbled to the ground, unable to stir through fear. Another shot brought a leading horse to the ground and the heavy coach came to a standstill.

Out of the darkness of the roadside sprang a man who pointed his pistol at the occupants of the coach. Then a most remarkable and unexpected incident took place. To the horror and amazement of the terrified passengers, what did the demure and innocent looking Quaker do but produce a pistol, not indeed to fire at the assailant on the road but to cover the gentleman who had admitted quite artlessly to the Quaker that he carried a gun.

The "man of God" was in fact an astute accomplice of Collier who himself now dramatically opened the coach-door commanding all within to get their money and valuables ready and cause no delay. He then proceeded to collect the booty from each unfortunate traveller. The Quaker still covered the victims with his pistol.

One man endeavoured to conceal his money in his stocking but Collier observed the action and cried out, "None of that! Hand over that money, you can't fool Collier." When he came to search the runaway couple, the robber was informed by the Quaker that the pair were lovers, so Collier forbore to take their money but politely raised his hat and wished them the best of luck. The highwaymen next rummaged the baggage and searched the strong box for valuables. They went through the mail-bags for money, letters and packages, taking all they could lift. Then ironically wishing the hapless passengers a "Merry Christmas", they decamped into their wooded and hilly fastness.

The coach then moved on but it was heavy going through the many drifts of snow. Disconsolate and shivering with cold, the passengers sat silently wondering if ever they would reach their destination. However, at long last they did manage to arrive at the Wellington Inn near Jonesboro' and sought shelter for the night.

The landlord of the hostelry proved to be a real good Samaritan to the poor travellers and supplied them with much needed food and stimulants. He also lodged them comfortably for the night and graciously informed them that it was "on the house" (What money had the unfortunate visitors to give him any case?).

Next morning they set off for Newry and all of them had something to tell around their Christmas firesides about Collier and the sanctimonious Quaker who certainly was the bigger scoundrel of a rascally pair.

Córas taistil rud beag níos compórdaí ná an NEWRY CARAVAN



THE FIRST DAY THAT THE TRAIN RAN

My father often related to me the story of the first day the train ran between Newry and Warrenpoint. He was one of the first passengers himself - but a very tiny one - and it appears no charge was made upon this occasion - the 28th May, 1849. Third class passengers travelled in open coaches and were seated upon hard wooden planks, so that a guide book of the period advises would-be passengers to wear gauze spectacles.

No smoking was allowed either in the stations or the railway carriages, but apparently the engine disregarded this bye-law, judging from the appearance of the unfortunate third class passengers. They were like sweeps when they arrived at "Journey's End." Dargan was the contractor, a well known figure in the railway world of those days.

No Rail Connection

Brass uniform buttons of the "Newry, Warrenpoint and Rostrevor Railway" are in this house even today, but, up to the time of writing, no tram has passed my window on its way to the pretty village of Rostrevor. To be candid, there is no real connection with this dream village, perhaps one of the loveliest places on God's fair earth.

There was one man certainly, who must have cursed the advent of the railway, and that was the owner of "Half-way House" at Greenisland, a favourite resort for those who, up to the opening of the railway, had journeyed from Newry to Warrenpoint chiefly on jaunting cars.

Neither do we suspect that the jarveys of the period were unduly benevolent in their regard for the "iron horse," which, in any case, has its own troubles these days, like the rest of us.

A Twins' Paradise

Greenisland was a rare spot surely. Shipbuilding was once carried on there at the natural slip, and it had even a small dock and wharf for steamers bringing their merchandise to Newry. Two cottages, about a furlong apart and very like each other, were situated near Greenisland. They were occupied by two brothers (twins), who, like the Two Dromios in the "Comedy of Errors," bore so strong a resemblance to each other that their neighbours frequently mistook the one for the other when meeting them apart. They were married to two sisters who were also twins and who also bore a striking similarity of feature and figure.

There was also a servant man in each house, brothers, who were also twins, and a servant maid in each, sisters who were twins! Thus the houses looked like twins, the masters of the houses were twins, and their wives were twins. Their men servants were twins, and their maid servants were twins. We must not forget the train, however.

The crowd cheered so loudly on its first arrival at Warrenpoint, "that they drowned the noise of the engine as well as the music of the 9th Regiment, present by the kindness of their gallant Colonel." The journey of six miles took ten minutes. All ships in the harbour had their flags flying, and the *Revenue* cutter as well as the *Hercules* steamer fired guns throughout the day in honour of the occasion.

There were nine trains each way on week days and eight on Sundays. "First class fare 6d. Second class 4d. Children under 12 years of age charged half-price, and children in arms unable to walk pass Free."

Poor Diet

Times were not so bright then either. The rate-collector of Forkhill reports people living on "boiled nettles," and others in Jonesborough district, tried to subsist "on a species of nuts called pig-nuts, hoked from the ground, preferring doing this to surrendering their independence and coming into the workhouse."

A strike of navvies occurred at the Newry Canal. Wages 9 shillings a week. The coach fare from Dundalk to Newry was one shilling, and from Warrenpoint to Kilkeel one shilling and eight pence.

Many sailing vessels sailed from Warrenpoint to America in those days. There were also three sailings weekly to Liverpool.

An Old Woman's Grief

The trans-Atlantic voyage was often very long, so the emigrants had to bring a fair supply of food. Indeed, for weeks beforehand, these poor exiles were busy baking oaten bread to pack in their wooden travelling chests. My father used tell of an old woman who once came to Warrenpoint Quay.

She had a large box saddled with brass nails and furnished, if you please, with four legs. The ship's carpenter, without sentiment, sawed off the legs, so that the chest could be stowed in the hold, but the poor old creature cried bitterly at the vandalism that ordered the mutilation of one of her most precious household goods.

Rough times! A man got seven years at Armagh Assizes for stealing a few apples, and there were 88 prisoners awaiting transportation in the gaol of that town also.

A Happier Side

A happier side of life is observed when we read that a travelling musician gave "a number of Irish, Scotch and Welsh airs on the Irish harp," the concert taking place in the Assembly Rooms.

A few months ago I was going up the beautiful valley that leads from Warrenpoint to Newry. Overhead an aeroplane was flying. A diesel train was running on the Great Northern line, and across in the Irish Free State a steam train was journeying to Greenore. Motors were rushing past by the dozen, but I, seated in the "sensible" comfort and security of a country car, kept on smoking and thinking.

John Mitchel

In the year 1849, the first year that a railway train ran from Warrenpoint to Newry, John Mitchel set sail from "the still vexed Bermoothes" on his long voyage to imprisonment in the Land of the Southern Cross.

In his day people, for the most part, journeyed to the old town of Newry as I did - in a good, sound, honest-to-God "stiff cart."

Are we any better off today, I wonder. Who can tell? In any event, many leaves have grown upon the laurels at Dromalane since 1849, though many hopes have faded. Still, in the hearts of men persists the vision, for that alone doth never perish.

Foireann peile as Rinn Mhic Giolla Rua



THE LAST DAY AT SCHOOL

The day for which I had longed so ardently and so constantly, arrived at last. It was in June, 1906, that I spent my last day as a pupil in the old red-brick school and I stood at the border-post of a new life. I first went to that secondary school in 1899. The chief world events of that epoch were the Boer War and the Newry and Tynan Railway. One stopped and the other never began. We had no separate classrooms, dual-desks, central-heating, electric lighting, air-conditioning or graduate-teachers. Our desks were long rickety benches, well initialled with pen-knives. Our playground was the street. We paid the Brothers from twopence to sixpence weekly. This meagre sum, supplemented by results-fees, the proceeds of an annual sermon and a high-class concert was, as far as I know, all the Brothers had to depend on for their existence - "and heaven be their resource who have no other but the charity of the world."

For practically nothing, we were taught Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Tennyson, Macaulay, R. L. Stevenson, Defoe, Goldsmith, Addison, Steele, Bacon and Dickens. We even attended a matinee performance of "The Merchant of Venice" given by the Payne-Sedden Company in The Town Hall. We were not so far behind in those days, after all.

We learned French, German, Italian and, of course, Irish. I remember, in Senior Grade, seeing a paper in the latter language with the name of Kuno Meyer printed upon it. In our splendid science-hall, there was a beautiful solid copper still for distillation. Often I thought that that laboratory would have been an ideal place for making "a sup of the cratur" during the summer vacation. The R.I.C. would scarcely have suspected the schoolboys of making poitin! However, boys, as a rule, do not break into schools during holiday time.

Brother Dempsey used to perform an experiment that appealed to us mightily. Near Christmas time, he would send one of us across the street for two bottles of stout. He would pour the "Lotion" into a glass retort which was heated by a Bunsen Burner. The vapour was converted into liquid in a Liebig Condenser and, drop by drop, clear alcohol passed into a Florence flask. This, at the time seemed a miracle to me. What seems a miracle to me now is that there was twopence change out of sixpence for two bottles of stout.

How often was I enthralled with the beautiful green flame that comes from heating copper, the pale purple fire of potassium.

Some irresponsible pupils once threw the contents of a bottle of sodium into the canal. The lotus-eaters at McCrink's corner were so fascinated by the resultant blaze that they actually adjourned to the Metal Bridge and attributed the whole performance to diabolical influence. School life was really hard. From Easter to June, we had additional evening-school commencing at half-past five. It was often half-past eight when I reached home and as "summertime" was not introduced till 1916 (as far as I can recall), it was dusk when I got my dinner. Once, Ludwig, the great Wagerian singer, came into school and sang for us. In 1904 Frere Vannier, expelled from France by the anti-clerical Government, found shelter in this country and I picked up a good deal of French from him. Donn Byrne, the eminent author, used to cycle in from Camlough and he was the life of the school with his brilliant impersonations. It is hard to think that he had "a rendezvous" with death in such tragic fashion.

Brother Dempsey, dark-haired, debonair, with flashing white teeth, would rush up the stairs three at a time. He frequently wore a silk hat and carried the Christian Brother's faithful "vade-mecum" - an umbrella - constantly. He could button up his soutane with the fluent digital technique of a Cortot running up the keyboard in a presto movement of Frederic Chopin. He put the fear of God into me. One dank, drear, chilly November morn I was creeping in dread to school when, just outside the Custom House, I saw the corpse of a man being taken out of the canal by means of a boat-hook. That macabre sight haunted me all that sombre day. I could see that pale face superimposed on the Fifth Proposition of Euclid. It grinned at me ironically. I floundered at the blackboard and got slapped. A great alibi for arriving late at school was to say that the Canal Bridge was open to allow the lighters to pass up the Newry Canal. That meant that traffic from the Ballybot side was held up. When the bridge was being turned back into position, we children got a free ride.

I still remember the lofty schoolroom with its Gothic windows; its May, flower-decked altar; the Hail Mary said at the striking of the old school clock.

I was constantly dreaming of the day that I would be free, so that the "weariness, the fever and the fret," the dread of examinations would some day end and that I would be at liberty. I was completely obsessed with the "get-away" notion and plagued my people intolerably to take me from school. They could not see my point of view and said that the world was a harder school than the one I was attending. I had to go and go regularly. It seemed an irksome Eternity and then finally, the June day dawned - the last day I was to climb those dreaded stairs. I was "seventeen past" and that evening the western sunlight was filtering, as if through saffron cellophane

into the room. A handful of us stood around the science bench reading a German text for the last time. Brother Dempsey sat on one of the laboratory benches with his biretta thrust down on his forehead, the sign that he was in a benignant mood. I knew the other angle. The old glen-embraced town of Newry was quietening down into vesper stillness, the peace of a summer's evening filled the quietened streets. Shadows lengthened grotesquely. The little knot of us wrestled with the strange tortuous constructions of the author, sometimes having to turn a page ahead to get the past participle. A drowsy, sultry evening it was, and we were all a bit tired. Coming up to the hour of eight, I raised my hand and said "Please Brother, can I go now and catch my train?" "You may," he said. I stopped, wondering, what was next. "You are leaving us now. You have been here many years and I would like to thank you for your excellent attendance all those years." I looked at him surprised. If my attendance HAD been excellent, it was my parents who had seen to that. It was no virtue on my part, but the fact that he, so economical of praise, had said something kindly to me touched me deeply.

"Thank you, Brother!" I said brokenly and left the room. I had ended my career as a schoolboy. That moment, so elusively ecstatic, had really arrived - or had it? I don't really know. I felt something was missing, after all. It had not quite come up to my expectations. I had cut myself clear from something I knew I could never regain - if ever I were so disposed to recapture it. My boyhood really ended as I crossed the granite threshold of the school and entered the newer world without. I was strangely quiet, a little regretful, a bit puzzled at it all. There were so many things missing that I could hardly strike a balance or analyse my feelings. Still, I was free. "Free," did I say? That would be hard to state. That very same year I became a teacher, and I am still in the classroom even to this very day. My last day at school? It has not yet come. In a sense I have never left "Tir na n-Og," "The Land of the Young," though I myself am old.

Scoil na mBráithre



Deireadh ré

THE OLD WINDMILL

"Its hurtling sails a mighty sweep
Cut thro' the air with rushing sound.
Each strikes in fury down the steep,
Rattles and whirls in chase around."
("The Windmill" - Robert Bridges.)

A faded old photograph in my possession shows the town of Warrenpoint with a windmill overlooking the Square.

In the "Hand-book to Carlingford Bay," published in 1846, this mill is mentioned: "There is a pretty and valuable windmill built by Mr. Robert Turner. The machinery is of cast metal and constructed on the most approved plan." Nothing of this mill remains today but the truncated stump which (flat-roofed), is now used as a store. Many of the townspeople are unaware of its existence, but I often have spoken to old folk who actually saw the mill in working order, a pretty sight, symbolic enough of those spacious days. Today you get your loaf wrapped up in dust-proof paper. More than likely it has been baked in another town, and from foreign flour at that. How different "away back in '46'."

The golden wheat and corn that grew on the high hills surrounding the town were brought in creaking waggons and carts to the old windmill, which looked down benevolently on the busy Square, and seemed to say in Longfellow's words:

"Behold! a giant am I.
Aloft here in my tower
With my granite jaws I devour
The maize, and the wheat, and the rye,
And grind them into flour."

The busy little town was more or less a self-contained entity in those days, not an appendage of the distant city. It had individuality, at least, and was no mere standardised suburb of Belfast or Dublin.

A Picturesque Feature

Leaving out the utilitarian side of the question, a windmill is a picturesque feature of the landscape. There is even a society in England for the preservation of windmills, but if you want to see windmills in plenty and perfection you must go to Holland or Flanders. Sometimes you can see a row of them against the skyline, with their sails revolving, for that flat country, in parts, needs draining, and the mills are used for pumping out the surplus water.

The level terrain also ensures a steady current of wind for the sails. Indeed, a windmill seems to be the leit-motif of the Dutch paysage.

Literary men have not ignored such mills. Alphonse Daudet wrote "Letters From My Mill," whilst our school-books tell us of one Whang the Miller who was naturally avaricious. Whang was a great name to give this celebrity. Whoever could forget such a name?

Then Cervantes, who, according to Byron, "smiled Spain's chivalry away," brings us to the plain of Montiel, on which were thirty or forty windmills.

Don Quixote

Don Quixote, mistaking them for giants, attacks them: "And recommending himself devoutly to the lady Dulcinea, beseeching her to succour him in the present danger, being well covered with his buckler, and setting his lance in the rest, he rushed on as fast as Rosinante could gallop, and attacked the first mill before him, and running his lance into the sail, the wind whirled it about with so much violence that it broke the lance to shivers, dragging horse and rider after it and tumbling them over and over on the plain in very evil plight. Sancho Panza hastened to his assistance as fast as his ass could carry him, and when he came up to him he found him not able to stir, so violent was the blow he and Rosinante had received in falling. 'God save me,' quoth Sancho, 'did not I warn you to have a care of what you did, for that they were nothing but windmills; and nobody could mistake them, but one that had the like in his head.'"

In "King Henry IV," Part 1, Shakespeare refers to a windmill:

"O, he's as tedious
As a tired horse, a railing wife;
Worse than a smoky house - I had rather live
With cheese and garlic in a windmill."

Disappearing

There is an old windmill stump on a hill near the town of Newry, and if you search carefully on some of the older Ordnance sheets you will often come across the sites of such mills. The only working windmills I can recall seeing in this country were of modern pattern, used for pumping or working dynamos.

There used to be one of American style in Omeath. The windmill of conventional design seems, however, to have quite disappeared from our countryside. To my mind that is a pity, for it seemed to express "full and plenty," and was not without its artistic appeal, either. It certainly beat the gasometer in that latter respect.



PATTERN DAY

Happiness seems almost a legend in these days of malaise and apprehension, so much so, indeed, that the experiences of one's youth hardly seem to have been actual but hold instead a quality that is elusive and dreamlike.

Before the last war, "Pattern Day" was held every August 10 at Omeath in honour of Saint Lorcan, the patron of Cille Cam, the Crooked Church. Even the very name conveys no meaning to the young people of the present generation, for, like many another rustic and mystic celebrations, "Pattern Day" has passed away.

Over the lough in rowing boats and swift sailing skiffs we would sail and I well remember the "S.S. Pilot" going ashore on the stony beach with about 300 passengers who, however, were safely landed, though the steamer (with her strange Barcroft-patent shovel-shaped twin propellers) lay aground all that day and allowed the delighted boatmen to gather in the harvest of fares. An old Gaelic poem, "Ag an Phatrún," ("At the Pattern") speaks of the "ten townlands of Omeath and the eight townlands of Killeavy" being represented at the festival. Many years back, after the religious exercises had been performed, the day was given to dancing and other pastimes. A cake was placed on the flat end of a churn-dash which was stuck in the green-sod. The dancing couples who held out the longest, or performed the greatest variety of intricate steps "took the cake," a phrase that has, apparently, survived its origin.

There were "standings" or stalls of gingerbread, cakes and nuts, russet and rosy apples, broad glass jars of "yellow-man" and conversation lozenges as well as purple tinted dúlaman or dilsk, the edible sea-weed that one still sees for sale in Bundoran. To the music of the uilean-pipes or fiddle, the "Rinnce Fada" was always danced on the green sward. On this bright day it was customary for all who were engaged to be married, to walk up the winding mountain road of Slieve Foy (Sliabh Fathaigh, The Giant's Mountain) to the "Cairn of Caitlin," now better known as the "Long Woman's Grave." Here in a lonesome canyon, the tall lady from Spain lies buried - so tradition says. Her lover had beguiled her across the sea, promising her that she would possess all the land as far as she could see from his dwelling-place. If you stand by that grave high up in the mountains, the view is completely shut from each side by barren rock. Brokenhearted by the treachery of her spouse, poor Caitlin died and was buried just off the roadside. On "Pattern Day" the betrothed couples of the district would cast a stone upon the cairn and silently pray for the soul of the tall stranger. The spot is known to Irish speakers as "Folach Eirne," the hiding place of Ireland, but is called on the Ordnance sheet "The Windy Gap." In a Gaelic text-book is written this description of the "Pattern" which I translate fairly literally:- "There was reputation and fame on the 'Pattern of Omeath' in the olden times and the people gathered in from Killeavy, Cooley, Lordship and Faughart to keep the 'Pattern.' The girls of Cornamucklagh and the girls of Drumlagh would be competing as to who would be the 'Doll of the Pattern' (Babóg a' Phatrúin) to bear away the branch. Every farmer-poet and versifier would be praising his own people and scolding other people and often there would be stick-fights to the dark bending of the sun. Felim McCann's ale-house was in Cornamucklagh and Captain O'Hagan's ale-house was beside the strand in Knocknagorian. The latter was burnt half a century ago but the old ruins still are there to this very day."

Both these inns are mentioned in the poem, and it is interesting to note that "Paddy McCann's" is still in existence not far from the Ferry at Narrow-Water.

Today the dark clouds hood the mountain of Slieve Foy though, even as my pen moves, the sunlight fitfully lances through them like spears of golden light. They gild the little stone-ditched sprawling fields. A patchwork of yellow cornfield, emerald meadow, shimmering like silk moiré, slopes down to the crinkled silver of the sea, whose scroll of white foam unrolls itself on the grey stony beach. The brooding silence of autumnal noon hovers over that scene where, in boyhood's time, was held the "Pattern Day." The old customs are being revived in many parts of Ireland today. Perhaps when peace once more descends upon this mad world we shall again recapture the ecstasy of our youth at the "Pattern of Omeath," but those blissful days seem centuries back, belonging, indeed, it would seem, to a different existence. Will humanity ever again find rapture in simple, peaceful things, one wonders?

A BOUT WITH DONN BYRNE

Donn Byrne, known to us schoolboys as Barney Byrne, was a schoolmate of mine in the Christian Brothers' Schools, Newry, almost half a century ago. He used to cycle in from Camlough, and was truly one of the most entertaining characters I have ever known.

Those who have read his novels will, I feel, endorse that judgement. He had lovely brown eyes and a very high complexion. Donn was a brilliant Gaelic scholar, and "whipped," all the prizes at local Feiseanna. The 'Carstands' school was "a tough joint." Some students thought the Foreign Legion was a Kindergarden in comparison. One day Byrne arrived at eleven, almost two hours behind schedule. He stood about as much chance as a snowball in Hades of getting "out of the jam." We looked on with fearsome expectancy. "What kept you sir?" asked Brother Dempsey. "The _____s stopped me on the road and wouldn't let me pass unless I cursed the Pope". Further details were elicited, and not merely was Byrne honourably acquitted, but he was also held up as an example of courage, fortitude etc. It was one of the first miracles I had ever seen. Byrne was a wonderful mimic. Once he was a witness in a law case in Belfast. Returning to school next day, he gave a one-man show, in which he impersonated in marvellous fashion, the judge, counsel witnesses and court officials. The more we laughed, the more dazzling did he become, reaching heights of pure artistry in his amazing impersonations.

Blood Must Flow

He was Quixotic too. One day, with the "bulldogmatism" of a schoolboy, I said something slighting about Dan O'Connell. Byrne immediately, and to my amazement, shouted out: "That's an insult that must be wiped out in blood." I don't even yet believe he cared two straws about Dan O'Connell, but that made no difference to Byrne. I didn't want to fight over such a trifle for one reason. The other - the real one - was, that I couldn't fight my way out of a paper bag anyway. Byrne was insistent though. All day long he kept reminding me of the assignation, and accused me of cowardice. To satisfy his lust for pugilism, I finally agreed. After school, we crossed the stone bridge over the river, and the metal bridge over the canal. The latter was always a good alibi for Ballybot latecomers. ("The bridges were open and the railway gates were shut" they said). Up Monaghan Street we walked, without exchanging a word. Turning to our right, near Edward Street, we crossed the G.N.R. line and entered the premises of the now defunct Bessbrook Electric Tramway Company. An old woman was once told that she could rid herself of rheumatism if she touched the middle rail with a lump of bull wire. She nearly got rid of herself. There was no one in the station yard, and that comforted me - if it did not hearten me. The fight (if it could be called a fight) began. We were the world's worst. Any blows that did land, wouldn't have killed a flea. By some miraculous fluke, I got a punch on his nose, it started to bleed, and he drew back saying, "I'm satisfied if you are." Well maybe not! The insult - if any - to Dan O'Connell had been wiped out in blood, and I didn't want any more blood spilt, no matter whose it might be. I was in heaven, not because I had bled his nose, but because I had escaped a hammering. I did not exult or make any further remark. He walked away, got on his bike, and rode home to Camlough. There were no hard feelings next day, and that summer he called at our place and left his bike, while we went for a sail on the lough.

His Metier

The last time I remember seeing him, was in Grafton Street, somewhere around 1908-10. He was at the National, and I was in Drumcondra. He shook hands, but, as always, his mind seemed far away. Hard to place him always. He made a great name in the States, and was a bestseller. That was his metier - the telling of a story. He knew what would please. I read a biography of him since, and I discovered that he was interested in boxing. I don't think Donn was very musical, though his language has a lilt, and very often is colourful. Many a morning I stood by the station bookstall waiting for the "nine train." It used to carry me to Newry where Byrne and I were at school. In later years I saw one of his books in a window of that bookstall. He was an amazing character. You had to like him, and recognise his quality. He was no bore at any rate. Even my best friends are polite, when I mention the fight. They, of course, say they believe me, but I think they do not.

Complex Character

It would take a man as articulate as Donn Byrne himself to give even a revealing flashlight picture of his own astonishing, puzzling and complex character, so full of life, jest and inconsequence. He never seemed to worry much at school. Indeed, he had little cause to worry. He took everything in those days with a gay quip, a bright laugh. Wasn't he right? He met a tragic end, as the result of a motor accident in the South of Ireland. I am sorry I never saw him when he returned to Ireland from the States. Yet I hear he lived not too far from me, in the Ballymacscanton district. Someone also told me, that over his grave there is a Celtic Cross, made of granite, and bearing in Gaelic, words which mean in English - "I am asleep, do not waken." I know not if that is so, for I have never seen the place where he lies buried, the gifted young schoolfellow who was once so full of life, and made our own lives gay and lightsome by his flashing wit and his splendid gift of dramatic narration. I, for one, was not surprised, that he became a novelist of eminence. He not merely had a fine command of both Irish and English, but his perception of what goes to make a saleable novel was keen, beyond the ordinary.

THE RED BARN

One morning in 1797 the Ancient Britons, accompanied by Becker's Yeomanry, rode out from the valley town of Newry through the hilly country of Corragh, in South Down, until they reached a "loanin" which led over a hill on the farm of a widow named Ryan. She had two sons, both little boys. Seeing the soldiers halt at the foot of the bothrin, she told one of her sons, whose name was Edward, to run down and open the gate for the troopers. "If they find you in the house they will kill you," she said to the bigger of the boys. The latter, instead of Edward, ran quickly down the lane and opened the gate, standing aside to let the soldiers pass, which they did, riding in single file. Just as the last horseman was passing, he turned round and, in true Cromwellian fashion, shot the poor boy right through the heart as he made to close the gate after the troop. The miscreants then entered the farmhouse and, callously indifferent to the unfortunate mother who lay upon the floor, turned the house upside down, ripping the beds with their sabres and smashing the humble furniture wantonly in their search. They found nothing "seditious," however, and departed, cursing at the futility of their raid. Riding down the "loanin," they brutally trampled over the body of young Ryan and then proceeded towards a farmstead which was then known as "Mettleton's Meadow." In the centre of the field, next to the steep "Jack's Hill," there stood a red barn. Its colour was ominous. When the "Yeos" and the Welsh Horse came upon the scene, fourteen men and boys from the nearby farms were playing football in the meadow. They quickly stopped their game and took shelter in the second storey or loft of the Red Barn. They naturally feared that they would be shot, and trusted that their presence would not become known to the approaching military. Becker halted the party and glanced suspiciously at the Red Barn. Then, motioning to the leader of the Ancient Britons, all the cavalcade rode down the lane and surrounded the barn. The troopers then dismounted and swarmed up the ladders with their swords drawn. Becker angrily declared that the occupants were holding an illegal meeting. The men vehemently denied this charge, but it availed them naught. The infamous Becker ordered them to be massacred in cold blood. The defenceless victims were instantly hacked to pieces in the barn, whose inside now was red with their innocent blood. When the slaughter was completed, one of the troopers stooped down and, dipping his finger in the gore, wrote high upon the wall:- "By United work we lost our lives." It is related that these words remained legible for many years afterwards, when the sinister Red Barn itself had become a ruin with only one forlorn gable left standing.

Dark and Evil Day

The troopers next rode back into the townland of Grinan and visited the house of a man called MacGovern, whose son was a clerical student. The boy was questioned closely about a prayer book discovered in the house. It was printed in Latin, but the ignorant raiders swore that the text was French, and for any loyal man to possess such a book it was deemed a sheer impossibility. They immediately concluded that the young clerical student was an agent of the French Government, so they "pitch-capped" the unfortunate youth, "leaving him with a wild and haggard face and a bare, ghastly skull which was more horrible to behold than the skull of any skeleton."

This barbarous incident did not, however, end the terrorism of that dark and evil day. The "Yeos" next burned two more farmhouses to the ground and took back eight prisoners with them to Newry. These captives were "tried" by a military court. Five were kept back and three were condemned to be hanged on Gallows Hill, which stands high behind the Bank of Ireland, Newry.

To strike terror

On his way to execution, one of the doomed men, named John Morgan, managed to get his hands free from his bonds and made a desperate attempt to escape in the open street. He knocked down two of the soldiers who guarded him and was struggling with a third when another trooper behind him ran his sword through his body. The unfortunate young man fell upon the street and died in indescribable agony. Patrick McEvoy and Edward MacGovern were then led to Gallows Hill and "hanged, drawn and quartered." This cruel spectacle was purposely designed to strike terror in the hearts of the onlookers, and files of Yeomen and soldiers were drawn round the scaffold to menace the crowd and drive them back at the bayonet's point should they evince any sympathy with their ill-fated countrymen.

The bodies of the two victims were decapitated and the heads were spiked on the outside of the old News Room as a warning to others. (Perhaps, as Voltaire cynically has written, "to encourage others.")

Captain Giffard, in a confidential letter to the Government, thus described the historic and unprovoked massacre of Ballyhollan: "I was directed (to the Ancient Britons)," said he, "by the smoke and flames of burning houses, and to the dead bodies of boys and men slain by the Britons, though no opposition whatever had been given to them, and I shall answer to Almighty God. I believe not a single gun was fired but by the Britons, or the Yeomanry. I declare there was nothing to fire at, old men, women and children excepted. From ten to twenty were killed outright, many wounded and eight houses burned." Captain Giffard went on to record:- "Sixteen

prisoners were taken. The next day they were all proved perfectly innocent. . . But the worst of the story still remains. Two of the Britons, desiring to enter a gentleman's house, the yard gate was opened to them by a lad who, for his civility, they shot and cut in pieces." Plowden, the historian, records:- "Among the murdered were a woman and an old man of seventy. A woman was fired at and two boys shot, one of ten years old, the other of six." The murder of the latter is thus described in Plowden's "Ireland from its Union" : "Near the gate stood a boy about six years of age, whom they ordered to open it. The child said he would, if they would not hurt him. Before he could open it, one of them struck at the child with his sabre over the gate and broke his arm. They still insisted upon his opening it, which the child did with his other hand, and they rode through and cut up the boy with their sabres, and one of them made his horse (though with much difficulty), trample upon him."

Catholic and Protestant Suffered

An account of the Ballyhollan massacre is also given by "Observer," quoted in Madden's "United Irishmen" (Third Series, Vol. 2. Appendix 6. P.336).

Plowden opines thus:- "This atrocious massacre has always been considered to have certainly contributed to the rebellion which took place the next year."

He adds that the Britons afterwards "never came in contact with the rebels without being remembered of Ballyhollan, and they were generally refused quarter. . . They exceeded one thousand effective men and it is generally computed that not nearly one-tenth of the privates who first came over survived the contest."

The Protestant statesman, Grattan, referred to the "barbarities committed on the habitations, property and persons of the people." Lord Moira, an Ulster Protestant landlord, told a similar tale of capricious house-burning, torture and wanton destruction of property in one of the "most peaceable portions of this province before the insurrection."

The Ancient Britons and their fellow troopers the "Yeos," were not mainly concerned with a person's religion. Both Catholic and Protestant suffered at their hands, as the pages of history all but too clearly reveal to our gaze and dismay.

Pictiúr a tógadh i gceantar Bhaile Hill



MUSICAL MEMORIES

Twenty-eight years ago I travelled with a party of singers over twenty miles in an open brake to a country concert. It was in the month of January, and I still recall with a shudder - how the snow fell upon us as we made our homeward journey, about four o'clock in the morning, through "Rathfriland on the Hill". The icy wind from the Mountains of Mourne made me think of Hardy's perfect description of winter wind - "atmospheric cutlery."

"Myself, when young," often went to such entertainments on jaunting cars and in "mourning coaches" also. The pianos I encountered on these musical pilgrimages were of many vintages. Some were minus the complete octaves essential to playing, whilst others must have dated from the era of Bach's "well-tempered clavier." They usually made one bad-tempered though. Looking at one venerable instrument, which resembled the spinet on which the child Handel used to practice in his cold and dark attic, I remarked to a comic-singer that it had seen better days. He replied: "I wouldn't misdoubt ye. It has buck teeth instead of notes anyhow." The keyboard certainly was yellow with age, and many of the keys "were worn to the stump."

Treasured Memories

Something to increase one's worries, vocalists attended without music - this being the age before Woolworth's - and blandly requested one to vamp for them. They whistled a bit of it, and, like an aristocrat approaching the guillotine I stepped towards the instrument. Thick clouds of tobacco smoke veiled the yellow light of oil-lamps at many of these recitals, to which the local fife and drum band sometimes contributed; once with such vigour that my nose commenced to bleed. Action-songs by well-drilled schoolchildren were scarcely ever omitted on these occasions, for there was hardly a man and woman in the country that could be kept in the house if "one of the children" was on the stage. Good box-office business this. Playing "Phil the Fluter's Ball" on a harmonium (in the last stages of chronic asthma) is another of my most treasured remembrances. It sounded damnable. Sometimes, during magic lantern shows, one would hear wonderfully authentic imitations of a cock-crowing, upon which the whole audience would go into convulsions, adding the requisite amount of irreverence to the proceedings. An occasional giggle or squeal from some agitated - and delighted (apparently) - female would form part of the "noises off," and on one famous evening we had "electric snuff," which almost created a riot.

"Haw-puffers" were not unknown either, reminding me that, at the first performance in Dublin of Handel's "Messiah," the gentlemen were requested to leave their swords at home. The "haw-puffers," however, "packed a gun." It is somewhat disconcerting to be hit on the butt of the ear by a haw during an adagio movement; it cramps one's style.

From rustic scenes I come in the summer of 1926, to the old town of Newry.

St. Joseph's Brass and Reed Band, champions of Great Britain and Ireland, were broadcasting a programme under the auspices of the Dublin station. The vocalist was Mr Frank Gallagher, a fine baritone and possessor of many medals.

The "broadcasting station" was a large garage whose plate-glass windows almost reached the ground. All day long the sun had been shining on these windows so that the heat within was tropical. I shall never forget the scene on that sultry evening. The band members sat in their shirt sleeves round their gifted conductor, Mr Terence Ruddy, and in the space between him and them was a big new tin can full of water with a cup beside it! Handel's "Water Music" would surely have been appropriate. The band and singer were excellent at that concert. Another memory is of the Newry Symphony Orchestra which used sometimes to rehearse in the upper room of a cafe in Hill Street. One evening, after the overture to "The Merry Wives of Windsor" had been played, a belated violinist arrived and informed us there was a crowd outside "like what you would see at an election meeting."

The Newry people love to parade up and down the middle of Hill Street at night - it is an old Irish custom, dating from the introduction of footpaths. This night, however, they had gathered to admire the movements of our conductor, who could be seen silhouetted on the large window blind facing the street.

The Frail Tones

The crowd had vast and free entertainment at this "shadow play," for the music of the comedy overture is lively and the conductor was quite unconscious of his audience. That same conductor wielded the baton when, in 1922, the orchestra won the first prize from a Dublin orchestra at the Feis Ceoil, the test being the first movement of Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" in B minor. One more beautiful memory is of Midnight Mass at Calvary beneath the shadow of Slieve Foy. The frail tones of the little organ accompanied the snowy-surpliced choristers as they sang before the altar on which gleamed countless golden tapers. There was only a small chapel in those days, barely large enough to contain the community. Glancing behind me, I could see through a window the men and women from the mountains and lough-side kneeling on the cold, hard ground. The snow was falling upon them as they gazed towards the light. "Music, when soft voices die, surely does vibrate in the memory, recalling rapturous images such as this, bringing back to mind the kind friends of other days and filling one's sad heart with glad and consoling reflections." Music is an anodyne for many sorrows, an escape from the more sordid and agonising cares of life.

Co. DOWN COMPOSER

"War-battered dogs are we;
Fighters in every clime;
Fillers of trench and grave,
Mockers bemocked by time,
War-dogs hungry and grey
Fighters in every clime,
Every cause but their own."

These terse and tense lines of Emily Lawless refer particularly to the young men of Clare who were departing for the Continental wars.

Hamilton Harty based his tone-poem "With the Wild Geese" on the lines of the poem quoted above. Harty's work, inspired by his compatriot's verse, was produced at Cardiff Musical Festival in 1910 and is still often broadcast or played in concert halls. It is an excellent example of descriptive composition of this particular genre.

Hamilton Harty was born in Hillsborough, Co. Down, on December 11th 1879. From his father he learned both the piano and the viola, as well as counterpoint. At the age of eight he was able to deputise at the organ for his father.

He was only twelve when he took an organist's post at Magheracoll Church in County Armagh. Later on he held similar posts successively, and successfully, in Belfast and Dublin, in which city he was to meet Michael Esposito, chief professor of the piano in the Royal Irish Academy of Music. Esposito was born in Naples in 1855 and came to Dublin in 1882. He helped young Harty in every possible way. Harty went to London in 1900, aged 21, and soon became one of the brilliant accompanists in a city that possessed countless pianists of high professional ability.

In 1901 he won a prize at the Dublin Feis Ceoil, which competition, by the way, was instituted in 1897. His piano quintet won the Lewis Hill prize of fifty guineas in 1904, a worthwhile guerdon in those years.

Hamilton Harty married Agnes Nicholls on July 15, 1904. She was born in Cheltenham and was a soprano of high rank, perhaps, indeed, the most distinguished of all the vocalists with whom Harty worked as an accompanist. His real genius, perhaps, expressed itself at its best in the art of conducting.

His most important role was that of directing the world-famed Halle Orchestra and it is generally acknowledged that he was supreme as Chef d'Orchestre. He retired after 15 years' magnificent service with the Halle.

Harty once played the amazingly difficult part for piano in Constant Lambert's "Rio Grande." He had no music of ultra-revolutionary composers, and though his programmes were selected both to educate and give pleasure, he was percipient enough to keep his own predilections to himself, with perhaps one remarkable exception.

He had an undisguised passion for the music of Hector Berlioz, whose autobiography, incidentally, is recognised as a classic and is a masterpiece of ironical humour and keen perception of human nature.

Harty conducted the wonderful "Requiem" of Berlioz in both London and Manchester. This extremely dramatic "tour de force" for chorus, orchestra, and no less than four brass bands, was first performed in Paris in 1837. Harty had no difficulty in obtaining four brass bands from the north of England well enough accomplished to tackle the music.

Like his fellow-countryman Stanford, Harty was generally conventional in composition. His music is largely romantic, yet well able to withstand the present age. In 1934 he was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's gold medal and in that same year he toured Australia, that island continent that has produced so many splendid instrumentalists, singers and composers.

Harty's songs are in many instances arrangements of Irish folk-tunes, or settings of Irish poems. As might be expected, the piano accompaniments are worthy of one who had few equals and no superior as an accompanist.

His "Comedy Overture" (1907) and "The Mystic Trumpeter" (1913) are occasionally heard, but, preoccupied with so much orchestral conducting, he could not, unfortunately, devote much time to creative effort. But it is safe to state that his orchestration of Handel's "Water Music" will figure for long in the repertoire of all first class orchestras. They are subtly modern and the treatment of Handel's original score is tactful.

Harty produced in 1924 a completely re-written version of his early "Irish Symphony." The composer once spent a holiday in Rostrevor. He died at Hove on 19th February, 1941, aged sixty-two.

JOURNEY DOWN A CANAL

The motor-boat had lain up in Newry since last October, so, on a bright day last month, we sailed her back to the sea.

Down by the "Fathom Line" we went. Feadan in Irish place-names means a stream. Possibly that is the origin of Fathom. Long years ago the Clanrye River filled the whole valley from Warrenpoint to Newry, but in order to narrow the stream and confine it to a channel about a hundred feet wide, a rampart was constructed about 1.75 miles from the latter town. The walk up to Newry along the riverside is called the "Green Bank."

Horse races were formerly held in what are now called the Marshes and the course was considered one of the best selected in Ireland, as the steep hills on either side used to afford thousands an excellent view of the "sport of kings."

Departed Glory

Agricultural shows have been held here in my own time, and today there are football fields and a course for dog-racing.

Newry once possessed a famous rowing club and you can still see the boathouse. The sport itself seems to have languished, however.

Down in Fathom there once stood a fortress erected by Shane O'Neill:- "At this time (the reign of Edward VI) Sir Nicholas Bagnal, Knight Marshall of Ireland upon coming into these parts, found the lordships of Newry and Mourne altogether waste and Shane O'Neill dwelling within a mile of Newry at a castle called Fedom, suffering none to travel northward."

There were locks here formerly, but subsequently the canal was lengthened about two miles seaward. Here, too, the mountains begin to ascend abruptly from the road and the young firs and spruces give the landscape a Norse quality. Before the war all these slopes were wooded. Entirely denuded of timber to provide (amongst other things) pit props and trench supports, they are now replanted and look fresh and green in the spring.

Puzzled Lloyd George

The trip down was uneventful. A train passed along its way to Greenore. Drawn by an old saddle-tank engine made in Crewe works as far back as 1873, it still hauled the white-panelled carriages bearing the letters D.N.G.R., initials which once puzzled Lloyd George when he was travelling through the Midlands in a first-class carriage of the present London Midland and Scottish. He noticed a white cushion cover on the carriage wall opposite, but neither he nor his companions could decipher the letters D.N.G.R. on it. A car attendant explained that they meant Dundalk, Newry and Greenore Railway, a branch of the old London and North Western system now incorporated in the L.M.S. The G.N.R. runs that line today.

A herring man was next overtaken and soon in either Omeath or Carlingford he would likely enough be singing out "Hearn alive! Hearn alive!" raising his voice at least a major third on the last syllable. "A yard long and a pound weight! Hurry up, I'm laving the town. There's two more again and two more again makes six more again and wan for the child."

Tinkers for the Border

A crowd of tinkers were heading for the Border. They looked as if none of them ever had to answer an examination paper or fill an income-tax form in their lives, but did not appear unduly downcast at being deprived of these inestimable privileges of our alleged civilisation - as a matter of fact they were singing, which is more than I feel like doing this minute.

The canal gates were soon opened and, sailing through the wooded Narrows, we caught a glimpse of Narrow Water Keep. Here the exotic looking rhododendron or "Rosy Dandrum," as it is more affectionately called, grows in great profusion. There was an island in the Narrows once called Nun's Island but it has been blasted away to deepen and widen the fairway.

On the Louth side is a most beautiful wood of every imaginable shade of green and known as "Reilig Chnoc a Phuirt." It stands just over the stone quay of the ferry and in it were formerly buried unbaptised children and suicides - "the conjecturally damned," as Thomas Hardy hath it. It looks too fair and magic for such sinister associations.

Carlingford Lough

Now we reached the green waters of Carlingford Lough. Somewhere in those wonderful hills above Omeath is a valley called in Gaelic *Friothamh*, which means return refraction or slanting rays. Art McCooley, an Armagh poet of the 18th century, has written lines, which, translated, read, "O summer-house of the wine whose rear catches the evening sunlight."

The valley in Omeath, bearing this name, has the sun playing on it morning and evening only, for its golden light is intercepted by the mountains at mid-day. The "*Fairy Queen*" now lay in Warrenpoint by the old quayside which is ribbed with wooden land-ties. Grass-grown it is today, that old pier head, but in the days gone by many broken-hearted ones knelt there with arms outstretched, their eyes wet with bitter tears, praying for the poor exiles on their way to the New World.

"Partir c'est mourir un peu" (to part is to die a little). It really meant death to those heart-sick, agonised children of our race this awful parting. A quayside or a railway station is the stage for many a supreme tragedy.

Like that sun-lost valley in Omeath, the lives of many receive but a fleeting benignance in childhood and through years of dull sorrow and anxious care end with an ephemeral radiance before the night that is eternal.

Mourne sheep farmers



THE RAILWAY THAT NEVER WAS

Before me lie the plans and projections of the Newry, Warrenpoint and Rostrevor Railway drawn by John Godwin, engineer, in 1845, and lithographed by MacBrair, of Belfast. "The Irish Railway Gazette" of the period hints that the line will never extend from Warrenpoint to Rostrevor owing to the cost of construction, and also opines that the link-up with the lovely little village would not pay. It was quite right in its forecast. The branch from Warrenpoint to Newry opened on May 28th, 1849, and my father (then aged five) got a free ride to the City of the Yews on that memorable day. The line was built by the famous contractor Dargan. By the way, it is of some interest to note the archaic form of spelling in the words *Warrenspoint* and *Rosstrevor*. It is naturally difficult to describe in words that which a good map so graphically presents at a glance, but a few salient features of the project may be worth recording in this imperfect manner, and may broadly indicate the direction the line was to take from Warrenpoint to Rostrevor. The Newry and Enniskillen Railway was to be joined up at Lisdrumliska in the Parish of Newry. Lisdrumliska adjoins Dromalane, whose name will eternally be associated with that of the great Irish patriot, John Mitchel. The junction was to be made some distance short of the old distillery. The line was then to cross the canal and the Newry River (Clanrye), reaching the site of the present Abattoir. From this point it was to continue in the same direction as it does now. Opposite the Golf Pavilion (that now stands in the Links at Warrenpoint) was to be the point where the line was to branch off to Rostrevor.

Incidentally, the loop on the Shore Road opposite the Big Wall of Narrow-Water Demesne is twice intersected by the railway, as the road had to be diverted inshore from its old littoral route. The former highway can still be traced in the little wood near the oyster beds. At Narrow Water, near the ferry, there was originally a bathing slip with a house attached. There was also a school house and, nearer Warrenpoint, a mill, whose demolition I can clearly recall.

A short branch is shown on the map carrying the line to Warrenpoint Quay; this branch crosses the old patent slip.

The Rostrevor extension was to traverse the public road from Newry by a bridge (30 ft. span, 13 ft. headway) and then was to cut the corner of the Meeting-House Field. The street to the Meeting-House from the Newry Road was also to be crossed by another bridge (30 ft. span, 18 ft. headway), and Charlotte Street spanned by still another bridge (30 ft. span and 18 ft. headway).

Duke Street was to be raised 7 feet and crossed on the level. The line was then to continue between the ancient fort of Rathturret and Glebe House (now occupied by the Alexian Brothers), crossing the road between the Back Avenue of the Glebe House and the old Gravel Pit. A bridge, 120 ft. span, 18 ft. headway) was to bring the line from the Parish of Clonallon to the Parish of Kilbroney, fording the Moygannon River. Arno's Vale House was to the south. Drumsesk Road was to be traversed and the line brought across the Ghann River. The railway station in Rostrevor was to face the Warrenpoint-Rostrevor Road, and was to be built in the field beside the Ghann River. The terminus apparently was to come right up to the county road. The line is shown as meeting this highway at practically right angles. Thus the proposed station for Rostrevor was to stand at the foot of the hill. An Old Hall is marked practically opposite the proposed terminus, but situated on the other side of the main road. A coast pole and a corn-mill are also indicated on the map.

The line from Warrenpoint to Rostrevor would indeed have presented many financial problems to the promoters, as its engineering difficulties were much greater than those obtaining in the Newry-Warrenpoint sections.

From 1845 to 1850, there was a "railway mania" in these islands. George Hudson, the "Railway King," M.P. for Sunderland, was heard all over the country as the man to whom speculators of all classes from dukes to footmen, appealed and craved that they might obtain shares in some of the enormous enterprises which had apparently yielded him a colossal fortune.

That, however, is another story; but, though Rathfriland can never boast of a harbour master, Rostrevor, with a bit more financial backing, might easily have had its stationmaster. John Ruskin would, we know, rather see that fair countryside of green woodlands, flashing streams, distant grey-blue hills and softly-tinted emerald fields unspoiled by any such scheme as that chosen by John Godwin in the year 1845.

The echoes of Kilbroney have yet to be awakened by the whistle of the railway engine. That, however, is no great tragedy.

NAILERS OF WARRENPOINT

Around the year 1819 the making of iron nails was a foremost cottage industry in Warrenpoint, County Down. There were many rows of cabins inhabited by nailers in those days; but all of these dwellings have been demolished 'this many a day'. They were situated from the Gas Road along Back Seaview Road, and again at the rear of the present terrace that faces Carlingford Lough close to the Well Road. The well of crystal clear water had an iron gate and many a time I drank from the spring when I was young. It, too, has disappeared. The nailers also wrought near the old Meeting House Cemetery, and they had some cottages down the Lower Dromore Road.

They were very industrious. Fathers, mothers and even children made nails from early morning until late at night. It was often 'in the wee small hours' when, dead-tired, they went to bed. Even yet, I often hear the phrase, 'He was as busy as a nailer'. The craftsman, in sooth, could never relax. He could not afford to let the red-hot iron grow cold. The ears of the townsfolk were so innured to the constant din of the hammers that those who left home and went to reside in a quieter environment felt lonely when they no longer heard the merry, mellow clang of hammer on anvil and the roaring of the bellows.

Outside many of the nailers' cottages hung wickerwork or wire cages, containing larks or thrushes. Many of the nailers had little flower or vegetable gardens behind their dwellings. On Sundays they went hunting for hares or rabbits. Some specialised in the now illegal past-times of cock-fighting and bird-catching. The bird lime they used was made from holly bark. On Sundays they could also have a drink as the public houses were allowed to keep open a certain number of hours on the Sabbath.

The price the nailers received for their finished nails was only sixpence per thousand. After a hard and long day's work even an expert might not succeed in turning out eight thousand nails, for which the master-nailer paid four shillings. This gave a weekly wage of one pound and four shillings, but out of this the nailers had to buy the iron rods and the coal for the forges. Of course, they could have made more profit by selling direct to their customers but this would have meant loss of time and required transport, for nails, even in small bulk, are a heavy commodity. This is where the rapacious middleman cashed in. He marketed the product and pocketed a goodly share of what, in justice, was due to the assiduous nailer. Moreover, by cutting down the price paid to the nailers, first by one penny and then by another until the beggarly price of sixpence a thousand nails was reached, he was at length reaping practically all the profits. The unfortunate nailers could do nothing about it and worse was to come.

Factory-made nails, which sold more cheaply than the hand-wrought ones, soon began to flood the country. Some people considered that the cottage-made nail was superior to the factory product, but nevertheless the public bought the latter on account of the low price. The Warrenpoint nail-dealers held a meeting to consider what should be done to counter competition from the factories. It was agreed to pay only five pence per thousand to the nailmakers. Of course this meant ruin to the latter and, when they heard the result of the dealer's meeting, they at once, but reluctantly, resolved to stop working and give up the trade altogether. They had no alternative as the pay they had been receiving for some time past was barely sufficient to provide them with even the necessities for living. Some nailers, in despair, proposed the institution of a Co-operative Association of Nail-Makers, hoping that by so doing they would be able to dispense with the expensive services of the middlemen and thereby turn out the nails more profitably. However, when the subject was mooted, the overpowering influence of the traders in factory-made nails was quickly brought to bear on prospective subscribers, and the project was dropped.

The nailers' occupation was now gone. For a time, those who had plied the trade lounged about the spacious Square, haunted by the grim spectre of the poor-house. Some emigrated to the United States, working their passage in many instances. If they fared better there, they sent for their families to follow them. One of the families who had earned their living as nailmakers went to Belfast, it is said, and settled there. Some of its members founded lucrative employment in the ship-building yard. One son, though, was apprenticed to the printing business. His name was Baird. Afterwards he became a newspaper proprietor, starting the Belfast Evening Telegraph during the Franco-Prussian War.

THE GAELTACHT AT MY DOOR

The old roll book of St Brigid's Irish College, Omeath, lies at my right hand. The last time that I saw it was 36 years ago and now it awakens many conflicting emotions within me. Even the cold, formal registers that contain my name when, first as a child, I went to school, always lose their prosaic quality when I read them today, for even the very precise and prim numerals themselves seem to contain for me some subtle quality of magic. "Born December 19th, 1888." Even that laconic, matter of fact entry makes me sigh, and thought, ever so evanescent, goes back to the day when someone, now dead, made that recording concerning me. But this old college roll-book, in itself, is full of very human quality and contains not our names alone but also many excellent pen-pictures as well. Kindly and witty commentations, along with some photographs (which need not fear any comparison with modern examples of the art) abound. The college was literally enshrined in trees in 1912. Today, those lovely woods have vanished. A snap, taken in 1914, shows the woodmen standing by neatly-stacked piles of wooden soles. (The shoe, literally and figuratively, began to pinch about this time. Austerity was round the corner). Look over my shoulder as I turn over the beautifully-written pages of the wonder-book. I can hardly believe that I once lived in such a world of glamour and sheer felicity.

There in trim, Gaelic script, is the name of Eoin MacNeill. In a group taken with a sylvan background you can see him, a red-bearded, scholarly figure. He is wearing glasses. We were a tiny group in 1912, but we were very merry and care-free, not at all "up-stage" or high-brow. That little lassie with the big ribbon-bow in her lint-coloured hair was one of Eoin's daughters. Another snap shows Michael MacArdghail, Seanchaidhe. "When once we were young" is the best English I can put on the pencilled Gaelic note that is written over the picture of the old story-teller, with his soft hat on his head, his "mountainy" stick in his gnarled hand. Outside the half-door of her white-washed cottage, sits "Caiti Sheáin." She wears a white-frilled "granny's cap" and is seated at her spinning wheel :

"Hundreds of songs and hymns she had and the choicest poetry of the poets of Oriel."

There is the College Choir, singing (most probably), "Drom Lach na nGaedhal," our own rousing school-song. Well do I remember Eoin MacNeill handing the verses he had written to Peadar O Dubhda who wrote out the parts for us in tonic-solfa. We sang the chorus in four-part harmony and I can recall the smile of rapture on our teacher's face, revealing the keen joy he felt on hearing that lifting air.

The lady singers are wearing enormous hats and they all have skirts that almost touch the ground. The modern girl laughs at them. Let her laugh! She never knows who'll be laughing at her own likeness this day forty years.

A group consisting of Eoin MacNeill, Hugh Graham, Donal O'Boyle and _ Waldron, shows a blackboard inscribed: "31st August, 1912. This is Saint Brigid's College, Omeath." It is written in Gaelic. With some sadness, no doubt, a few bars of MacCrimmon's Lament are jotted down beside the picture. "Cha till - Cha till - cha till MacCrimmon!" "Never more shall MacCrimmon return. Nevermore!" A shawled figure with snowy white apron is standing beside a little black ass that is carrying creels. "I was down at the strand gathering the harvest of the sea."

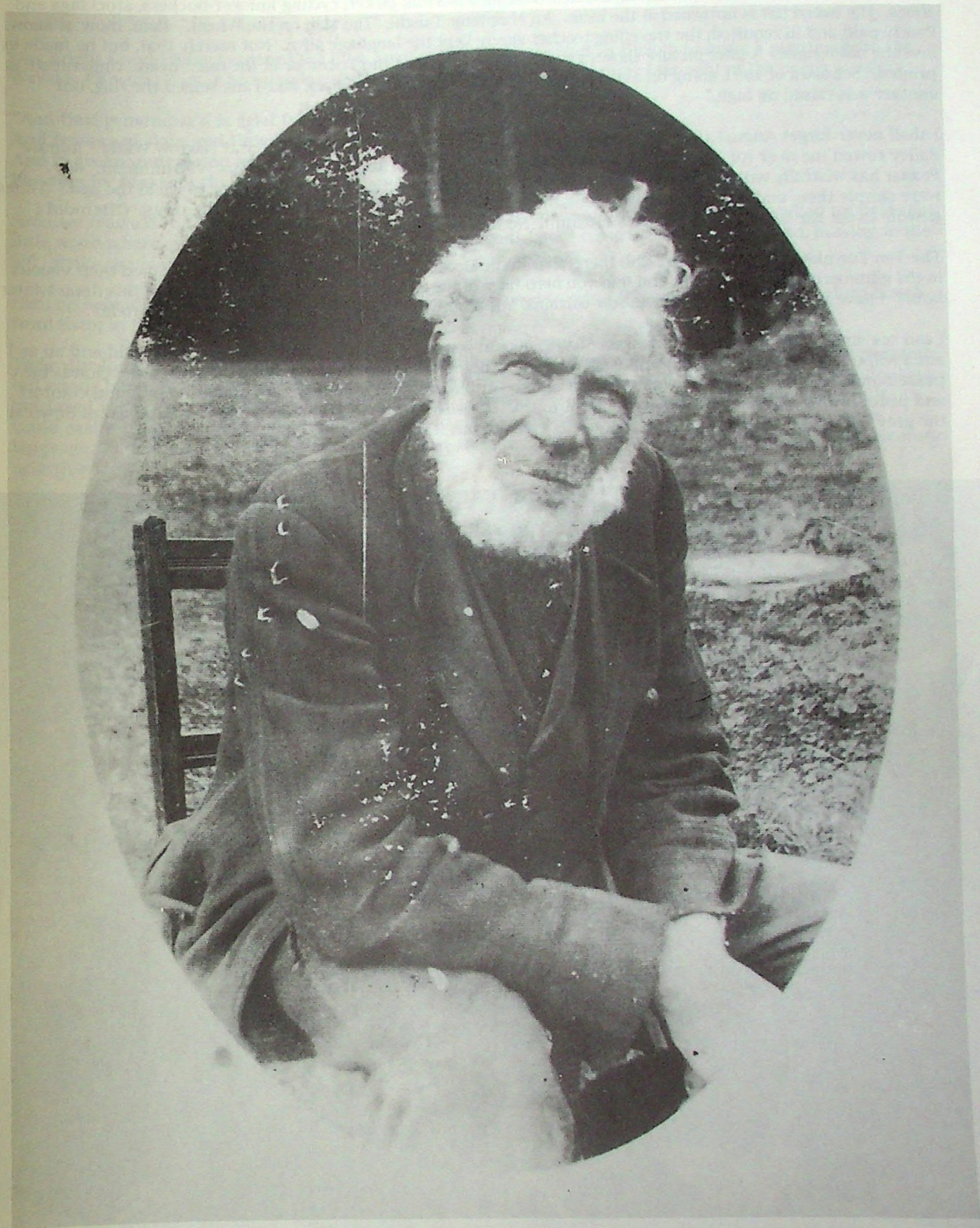
We look at a splendid, firm, yet kindly woman's face. How often has she recited that epic poem of the football match in the meadow of Bavin.

Wearing a black felt hat of Spanish pattern, a warm white "báinín" on him sits Michael MacArdle; his friendly face with its salient cheekbones has a dignity and repose indicating the character of the old man. He is giving life a philosophical consideration as he sits gazing at the hazy distant hills.

Let us turn another leaf.

Standing by a chair is Father Ua Tuathall of Belfast. We are seated in the shade of a tree repeating his phrases. He was wonderfully gentle and kind. There too, is Gus Petersen, the Swede, in his rowing boat. Gus married a native speaker from Omeath. He met her in the States and both returned to Ireland. Gus picked up a good deal of Irish and would often greet you in it.

In the background, you can see a dark segment of barren mountain, in the fore-ground is a thatched cottage. Those people are wearing clothes that one today associates with Aran - nevertheless, it is not Aran but the hill of Tullagh in 1912. One picture does affect me very deeply. It shows the College with a bicycle leaning against the wall. Dark-coated and whiteblouse students are seated around a blackboard. Back of all are the graceful tapering fir trees. Two little boys are sitting away from the class. With heads bowed down, they are intently studying something in the grass. They look very quiet and content. "Gasraí Eoin Mhic Neill." "Eoin MacNeill's boys." Many a time I carried the youngest lad, Turlough, on my back through that dim dark green wood.



Mícheál Mac Ardghail - seanchaí

There too, is Alice Stopford Green, who wrote *Irish Nationality*. Father Fullerton of Belfast, always, had friendly word for me and here is kindly Peadar, himself wearing a Norfolk jacket, cycling knicker-bockers, stockings and shoes. His tweed hat is upturned at the brim. An *Muinteoir Taisdil*, "The Man on the Wheel." Rain, blow or snow. Poorly paid and ill requited, the travelling teacher surely kept the language alive. Not merely that, but he made us love the old tongue. A later picture shows a motor-launch carrying the Tricolour at the mast-head. Underneath is printed, "Scholars of 1921 going on a pleasure cruise on the Lough. The Black and Tans seized the flag, but another was raised on high."

I shall never forget August 19th, 1912. I walked down, with never a care, to the ferry at Narrow Water. Johnny Bailey rowed me over for a penny, I am quite sure of the date for I am looking at it this very moment. But Peadar has wistfully written "The hand that wrote the roll is cold and no longer has vigour to wield the pen." Times were simple then, and glorious was it to walk the white dusty road to the College amid the trees. Often did I dawdle to eat the luscious blackberries of Louth. No hurry. Never a worry in the world.

The Ten Townlands of Omeath are still there, that Celtic Decapolis where the old folk once dreamed their visions in the glimmering purple twilight and told you hero-tales of the chivalrous Gael. Where are they all this drear winter hour? I have just pulled aside the window-curtains, but those well-loved hills are veiled and misty today.

I can see simply nothing of the mountain Slieve Foy; but back of it, thank God, Peadar still lives. Old and all as I am, I will cross the lough one day and walk over the winding road to meet him. Some day, when the clouds have passed away and I can clearly see all that enchanting land, where, in my young manhood, I freely found comfort and peace in the company of the laughing, warmhearted Gaels. When all is said and done and one gazes down at the grey ashes of a fireplace golden bright, it is given to but few men to have known such ecstasy.



Pictiúr stairiúil a glacadh in Ó Méith 1912

BORDER CALVARY

One bright Good Friday I crossed the little ferry at Narrow-Water (Bád an Chaoil) to make a pilgrimage to the Wayside Calvary. Winter was passing away, and in the pale, golden sunshine I thought of the poet's words:

**"And time remember'd is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten.
And in green underwood and cover,
Blossom by blossom the spring begins."**

Soon we reached the slippery stone quay, where I paid my twopence to the boatman, and walked up past that little wood where one finds such restfulness. A few moments later I cross the railway track, and, bearing to the left, strike the main road to Omeath.

High up behind me is the Flagstaff (Barr an Fheadain). They used to signal the sailing ships in Carlingford Lough from there in the days of the "windjammers."

Today the lough is shimmering like a vast lawn of light beneath the mauve horizon. Modern influences penetrate but slowly here. One has entered a new world. Women with black shawls round their heads drive little donkeys burdened with creels, for this is a "mountainy" district. Gaelic is still spoken by the old people of the hills. I could easily leave this room in Warrenpoint and cross o'er to a little cottage where an old lady speaks the language. I could do it in twenty minutes and forget all about that gramophone nearby that is playing a neurotic selection from "The Desert Song."

But I'm rambling from the main road. Where was I? Yes. On the road to Omeath. They say Iseult was born here. Somehow or other, on this golden spring day, with the fresh streams tinkling along and a distant view of the fiord before my gaze, I think rather of the music of Grieg, and not that of Wagner. Grieg who expressed his patriotism so candidly in his sonatas! Some day we shall produce a Grieg. But Iseult inspired Wagner and here, it is said, she was born. Certainly it is worthy of her, this idyllic little spot, with its quiet bay, where the sea on that day was so clear that one could count the stones below it, the rippling water so crystalline that it tempted one to stoop and let it trickle through one's fingers - a heavenly nook, with its long curves of the shore and the purple hills a-trembling on its mirrored quiet breast.

Straight ahead is Slieve Foy, the genius of the place. Olympian in his detachment, he has seen enough and in consequence is inscrutable. Across the water is County Down and I recall Florence M. Wilson's magnificent poem "The Man From God Knows Where":

**"Two winters more, then the Trouble Year,
When the best that a man could feel
Was the pike he felt in hidin's near.
Till the blood of hate and the blood o' fear
Would be redder nor rust on the steel
Us ones quit from the mindin' the farms :
Let them take what we gave wi' the weight of our arms
From Saintfield to Kilkeel."**

The Wayside Calvary is situated in the grounds of the Fathers of Charity at St. Michael's and was erected by the members of the Community themselves. They have now a beautiful chapel, and their kindness to me on visits to them is not forgotten. The Stations resemble those seen abroad, but few places on the Continent could afford them such a shrine. One opens a gate and leaves the world behind. A crowd has already gathered, and quietly awaits the hour of three. Men of the world, country folk, bare-footed children, fashionably dressed ladies, venerable looking mountaineers telling their beads in Irish, and a few palefaced students home for the Easter vacation. In the commune of Christ there are not such things as class distinctions.

The procession, headed by a cross-bearer approaches at last. The candle flames are flickering in the light Spring wind casting on the snowy surplices of the acolytes a softened golden radiance. Singing in four-part harmony the Stabat Mater, they make the Way of the Cross. On the shore some men are gathering saffron-coloured sea wrack. Baring their heads as the procession passes, they kneel on the cold hard stones, a group whose inarticulate Faith might well inspire a Millet.

At last the Crucifix is reached: against the rose window of the sky it stands in clear defined relief: a robin flutters quietly at the foot of the Cross and recalling the legend of the red-breast, one instinctively visualises the first Good Friday - its tense, dramatic incident: its Supreme Agony amid such mystic and enduring loveliness.

The Station ended, I wind my way homewards. Along the winding high road a thousand tapers of the whin are gleaming, and high in an opal cathedral the thrushes chant their song. It is night when I reach the little town. Gazing across the lough, I can see the golden lights in many a mountain house.

One after another, like the candles at Tenebrae, I watch them disappear, and soon the high altar of the hills is draped in velvet black. Across the "fields of sleep" the night wind soughs its requiem, and over all, as if presiding at some beneficent ceremony, are seen the trembling stars.



Traditional mode of transport in Omeath

Ba mhaith linn ár mbuíochas a ghabháil leis na daoine seo a leanas a chuidigh linn an forlíonadh seo a ullmhú : Seán Daly, Rinn Mhic Giolla Rua; Margaret Comer, Conradh na Gaeilge, Iúr Chinn Trá; John Bannon, Iúr Chinn Trá; John McCavitt, Ros Treabhair; Conradh na Gaeilge, Co. Lú; Bradley Family, Baile Hill; Margaret McWilliams, Iúr Chinn Trá; Fabian Boyle, 'Irish News'; Maureen Armstrong, N.I.V.T.; Louise Dodds, Rinn Mhic Giolla Rua.

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