

# THE CARNEGIE

# LIBRARY

**D**ue to the benevolence of Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish millionaire philanthropist, a Carnegie Free Library was established in the city. Other Carnegie Libraries were also set up in many cities and towns throughout the country. The library building was sited in Pery Square. With indecent haste the name of the library was changed to Limerick Free Library. The only part of the library open to the public was a small reading room in which the literate poor could read the daily papers and secure refuge in the warmth of the room from the freezing temperatures in winter. A corridor, flanked by a counter, was presided over by the Librarian and Assistant Librarian.

In winter the library was a dark, dismal gas-lit ghetto of dog-eared volumes. In summer the place was almost deserted. Books could only be borrowed by first perusing a catalogue and then giving the title and number of the selected volume as well as a brass plate with the borrower's number. The borrower was then closely questioned in order to establish his *bona fides* in the library.

Some of the books in the library dated back to 1836 and earlier. Included in the stock were a half-dozen Irish-English dictionaries and Bedel's Bible in Irish (1827). The tenor of many of the books extolled the gloom and horror of the dead past.

## The Origin and Use of the Round

by P.J. Ryan

**Towers** by George Petrie (1847), Vol. No. 2654, sought to prove a Christian origin for those graceful spires. He claimed that the round towers were belfries in an age when bell founders did not exist, and the only "bells" extant were four scraps of bronze tied together with leather bootlaces. His views were palatable, acceptable and propagated by a grateful clergy. Her Majesty Queen Victoria graciously created him Sir George for his wondrous perspicuity. The clergy of all denominations sang his praises while the laity intoned **Deo Gratias**.

**The Towers and Temples of Ancient Ireland** by Marcus Keane (1867), Vol. No. 4780, claimed that those erect conical-capped towers were pre-Christian temples of phallic worship of the joyous veneration of the penis, near some of which were later built the crude fortress-like early Christian churches in an attempt to usurp and acquire the venerability accorded to those temples dedicated to the

oldest of all religions or cults.

The Congregated Trades sent two men who, with the president and secretary of the Pork Butchers' Society, gave their honest labour in the furtherance of literary endeavour. The Town Clerk, the Secretary of the Library Committee and the Hon. Treasurer, helped by the City Librarian, with the assistance of the Assistant Librarian, made this Library Committee a formidable barrier to progressive thought and inspired writing.

Because of the fame of Gerald Griffin, as a poet, playwright and novelist, and Aubrey de Vere, Curraghchase, as a poet, it was felt that the city might possess some rare literary talent which, if discovered, could be developed into the creation of a literary masterpiece, to enhance the fame of the city. To this end the Catholic Literary Institute was founded.

The common workman who worked for twelve or more hours each day had little time or energy for literary pursuits. The Bard Of Thomond, Michael Hogan, got no grace or papal blessing from that literary institute, with its thousand volume library of dogma and doggerel.



The Carnegie Library, Pery Square.