Reviews

JOURNAL OF THE OLD LIMERICK SOCIETY: CUMANN SEANDACHTA LUMNIGHE:

We have great pleasure in extending our congratulations to the Committee of the Old Limerick Society on the successful foundation of a body devoted to the study and preservation of the antiquities of the City of Limerick. It is the only provincial society of its kind in Ireland, and besides helping "to cultivate a better spirit" in Limerick, it should do much to stimulate the formation of similar societies in other Irish towns.

We would like to see it work in closer co-operation with the Thomond Archaeological Society, which has done such good work in the North Munster area since the beginning of the century. The aims of the two societies do not clash, and much good to both would arise from such co-operation. The one occasion on which they did combine, on a visit to the Irishtown, was an outstanding success.

The modest subscription of 2/6 should ensure a very large membership, and the additional charge of 1/6 for the journal is a reasonable one.

The Society published its first journal in December last year, and it is a most creditable performance. As long as its editorship remains in the same hands there is little fear of its falling in scholarship or general interest. Most important article in the present number is, of course, "Old Limerick Private Bankers," by Mr. Eoin O'Kelly, a prominent Limerick Banker. This is a part only of Mr. O'Kelly's whole research work into the private bankers of Ireland, and we look forward eagerly to its completion. Granting due credit to Mr. C. H. Tenison, who published his own work on the same subject in the Cork Archaeological Society Journals some fifty years ago, Mr. O'Kelly has given us many more interesting facts and figures. The reviewer would like to have seen more biographical details concerning the bankers' private lives, but this is a personal bias and not strictly the subject of the paper. Perhaps the author was right to exclude them.

The paper is, in all, so excellent that criticism is impossible but, perhaps, the reviewer might point out a few minor errors and slips for correction in the finished work. P. 8—Michael Farnell was the grandson, not the son of Patrick Farnell of Ballyvaglogh. P. 9—Camass is near Bruff, not Croom. P. 10—"Mr. Farnell's unfortunate absence just then remains unexplained." This is not so. Farnell had transferred his property to his family, retaining only a life interest in it, in order to avoid liability for the bank's debts. But as the deeds were not three years old when the smash came, they could have been revoked—and so Farnell disappeared. He eloped with Miss Ross Lewin of County Clare, the title deeds of whose estate he had lodged with Ball's Bank in Dublin as security for his debts to them, and the latter sold out the Ross Lewins to recover their losses. P. 14—George Evans Bruce married a Miss Bailey of Lough Gur, not the sister of Eyre Evans, who would have been a very close relative, in fact, his mother. Further information concerning this worthy can be obtained in that amusing if vitriolic satire, "The Nosegay," and the trial that followed its publication. P. 14—William Roberts of Mount Rivers was the uncle of Bruce.

The selection of references seems rather arbitrary, but we presume this will be remedied in the completed work.

"Memories of the Old Theatre Royal" contains some casual reminiscences of the early 20th century Theatre in Limerick. It is wrong, however, to state that Limerick was without a theatre from 1822 to 1841. The Assembly Rooms, which had been in use in the 18th century, were again used during this period, and Keen appeared here in 1824 and James Sheridan Knowles in 1854. There was also, of course, an earlier theatre in Peter's Cell, and John O'Keeffe gives an interesting account of his adventures there before Heaphy, whose daughter he married, built the Theatre in Cornwalls Street. The author states that the theatre could accommodate 1,300 persons and was the largest in Ireland after the burning of the Theatre Royal in Dublin. Now from a plan before me I see that the Pit and Stalls could only accommodate 158 persons, the Circle 136 persons, while there were three (not two) boxes on each side which held between them 24 people. This leaves us with the corollary that the Gallery held 942 persons.

The short article on Arthur's Quay should have been more strictly edited. There are three mis-statements of fact in the first paragraph. 1.—"The Arthurs, Creaghs, Whites and others did not rule Limerick for over 400 years prior to 1840. In fact for 200 years before that date, no Arthur, and only one Creagh and one White was Mayor of Limerick. 2.—The Arthurs were Mayors of Limerick more nearly 60 than 44 times. 3.—It was not a ship of
the Arthurs, but one of David Comyn, which lead to open hostilities between the merchants of Galway and Limerick. However, the article is more in the nature of family reminiscences than a concise historical survey, and should prove of interest to many Limerick readers.

The journal also contains a short article in Irish on the Trade Guilds of Limerick, and a list of Limerick Societies which had accounts in the Limerick Savings Bank during the years 1840/60, as well as an introduction and an account of the proceedings of the Society.

In future numbers it would be better to illustrate by photographs rather than by drawings, particularly when the latter are done from memory. The reviewer would also like to see a change in the cover, which is woolly and overcrowded. Finally, the matter of whether the seal of the City should be topped by a cross or a pennant is one which has not yet been satisfactorily decided.

R.H., 24/6/47.


As we go to press the above two books on Monasterboice have again indebted us to that eminent Irish archaeologist, Professor Macalister. This is, of course, merely a continuation of a life-long study, as witness his Muireadhach of Monasterboice, published by Figgis in 1914. The latter was magnificently produced in large quarto form and on beautiful art paper, with handsome margins and unexcelled photographs. The present volume is inferior in format, paper and the reproduction of its photographs. This, however, must be mainly attributed to the present high costs of production and the inferior paper obtainable. This is said in no carping spirit, for Mr. Tempest is the finest printer and publisher working in Ireland to-day and the present production is no exception. It is a handsome volume and would do credit to any firm specializing in fine, and expensive limited editions. While on this subject of book production, we might remark that it seems to us that the frontispiece to the present volume attributed to Messrs. Thos. Mason & Sons, is a reproduction of that in the earlier volume, and there attributed to Mr. R. Welch.

Dr. Macalister divides up his text into three parts. I, The Founder; II, The History; and III, The remains of the Monastery. The first two parts take up but thirteen pages and the rest of the book's seventy-nine pages are devoted to a detailed description of the remains, the churches, the round tower, the crosses, &c. Of particular interest is his identification of the various biblical scenes depicted on the panels of the crosses, while with his usual nimble brain, Dr. Macalister is seldom at a loss in suggesting variant readings for the more obscure ones. For instance, for one panel he gives us our choice of THE WORSHIP OF THE GOLDEN CALF, or MOSES STRIKING THE ROCK. In fact, Dr. Macalister's comment on the work of Kingsley Porter "with admirable photographic plates, though the interpretations offered for some of the sculptures must be received with caution," can be applied with equal justice, we consider, to the work of Dr. Macalister himself.

In all, this book is a worthy companion to the great works of Crawford, Kingsley Porter and Henry on Irish sculpture, and is unreservedly recommended to all who are unlucky enough not to possess a copy of the earlier work "Muireadhach, Abbot of Monasterboice." Even for them, the addition of a description and excellent illustrations of the West Cross would warrant its purchase. With nineteen whole plates and seventeen illustrations in the text, the price of 10/6 cannot be considered an unreasonable one.

The small 6d handbook is an excellent little guide for visitors to the hallowed spot. What a pity more of our Irish shrines and monuments are not similarly well provided for.

R.H., 7-7-1947.