



No. 24

2 pages

'BRING HIM TO BARRINGTON'S'

by Kevin Hannan

The recent calamitous closure of Barrington's Hospital brings to mind a number of near misses in its tortuous life when its very existence hung in the balance, even when the indispensable nature of its services was appreciated by almost everyone in Limerick. The records show that there was always a reluctance on the part of the powers-that-be, and indeed the community at large, to contribute sufficient funds for the operation of the hospital. Despite its enormous value as the first general hospital in the city, there was all too often an extraordinary apathy towards the maintenance of such a priceless gift.

In the 1860s, a shortsighted Limerick Corporation withdrew its annual grant of £400. The reasons for this drastic withdrawal of funds were barely whispered at the time. According to the *Limerick Chronicle*, in December, 1872, the newspaper did not 'wish to enter into the causes which led to this step on the part of the Council. Perhaps if it were taken now, the importance of the hospital and the duty of the Council would be regarded in a far different light'.

The loss of the Corporation grant was a body-blow to the governors of Barrington's, who had to struggle hard to keep the hospital open, particularly at times when there was no alternative to the vital services provided there, except for the very limited facilities available at the Workhouse Hospital ('the Poorhouse'), an incredible situation indeed! Even the mere thought of being carted off to the Workhouse kept many praying for the survival of Barrington's. A *Limerick Chronicle* correspondent, in 1872, asked:

"Would any gentleman send a sick domestic to workhouse hospitals, with their cold, bare, limewashed walls and unsympathetic associations - associations destructive of self-respect among the humbler classes? ... In Barrington's Hospital, on the contrary, the patient experiences all the comforts - perhaps much more than the comforts - of home: and there are facilities for the admission of relatives and the enjoyment of their society which the sick appreciate in a way that those who enjoy good health cannot understand."

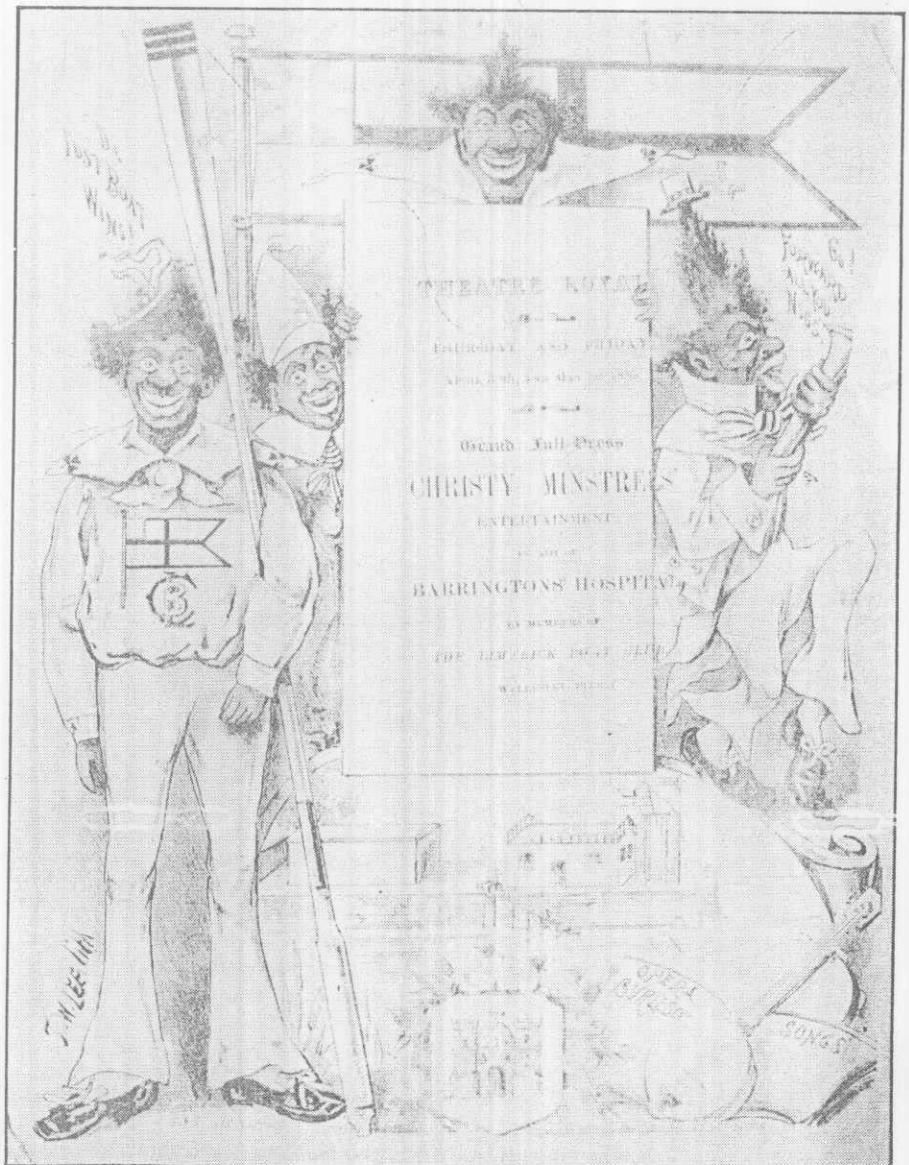
A curious bequest was made to the hospital in February, 1863, by the Marquis of Landsdowne. This gift of

£3,000 was subject to the condition that "... the hospital be open at all times to the natives of Co. Kerry'. Apparently, the interest on this money helped to maintain the institution during the hard times following the loss of the Corporation grant.

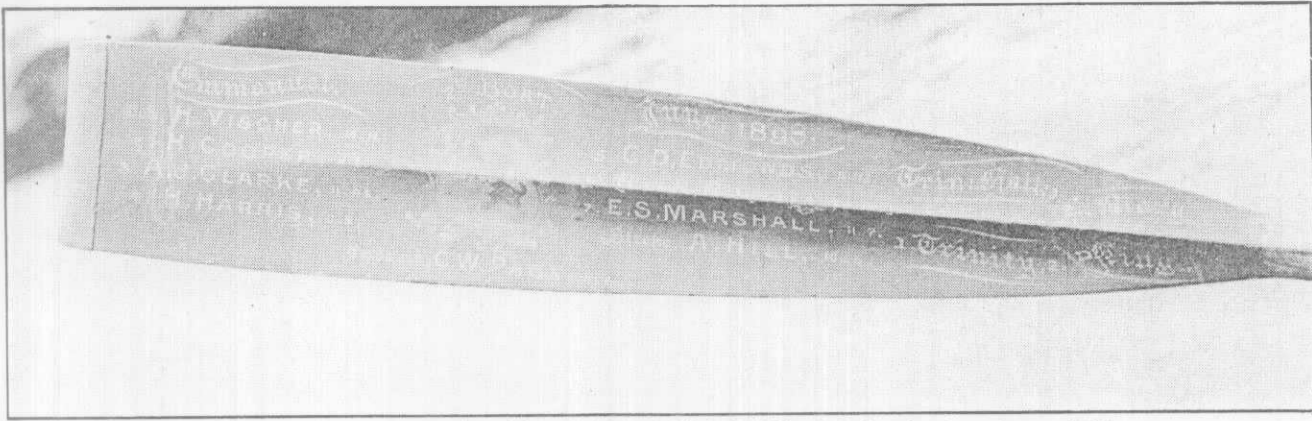
The sword was about to fall on the hospital at the beginning of 1879 when the Congregated Trades of the city were successful in influencing the Corporation to make an annual grant of £100 to Barrington's. Although this was only a quarter of the original grant, it was

sufficient to supplement other fund-raising projects with which the hospital governors had become masters during the years of struggle. However, small and all that the grant was, its legality was disputed in the courts.

After some lengthy legal arguments, Judge Fitzgerald requested the Finance Committee of the Corporation to inquire as to whether Barrington's Hospital was an institution where fever patients were admitted. At this meeting a number of people deposed that they were treated for fever at the hospital; these included Michael Hogan, the Bard of Thomond, who declared that both his brother and himself had been fever patients there. No



Limerick Boat Club poster, advertising 1885 concerts in aid of Barrington's Hospital.



This oar was presented to Limerick Boat Club by Charles Barrington, June, 1896.

William Keays, Mr. Malachy O'Connor, Mr. M. Duhy, etc.'

From the report of the proceedings at Glenstal that day, it is clear that the Trinity fours were not successful in the Philadelphia regatta. Said Mr. Gubbins in his speech, typically fulsome of its time perhaps, though not necessarily any the more so than may be heard on similar occasions today:

'And though they were not the winners, still, they were not ingloriously defeated – though they were not the victors in the great international regatta, they were victors to a certain extent in proving that Irish gentlemen are the equals, if not the superiors, to any other gentlemen in the world.'

But it must be noted that in his *Cork Evening Echo* feature of 1 September, 1977, James A. Whelan says that Charles Barrington 'brought back the Philadelphia Graduate Cup', and this is confirmed in the *Hampshire Telegraph* interview. No reference to this achievement, however, is made in the *Chronicle* report of the festivities at Glenstal. But that report does

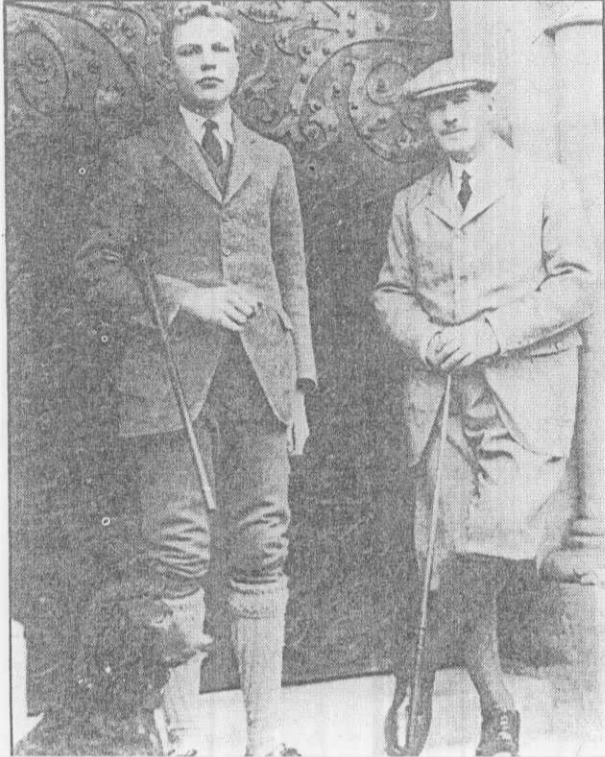
remain in Glenstal as long as he had life, and until the hand that received them had moulded into dust'. Referring to the tea service he had received, Croker

10,000 acre Glenstal estate gave the newly-weds a gift of £240, then a considerable sum. They had two sons and a daughter, and James A. Whelan says that it was the daughter's tragic death which caused them to move to Botley, near Southampton.

Apparently, Charles was for years one of the oldest inhabitants in that part of Hampshire, and remained very active to the end. He and his wife took long daily walks on the beach at nearby Netley, and he continued rowing into his seventies on the Botley River, adjoining his estate. He died at Botley on 12 August, 1943, aged 95.

Such are the principle details of one sporting life. Clearly, Charles' love for and ability at sport were shared at least by some members of his family, and it is fitting that their family home, since it became a school, has produced many fine performers in athletics, cricket and rugby, among them John Blayney, capped for Ireland against Scotland in 1950. The sporting Barringtons would surely have approved!

It has been claimed that Jonah Barrington, former world champion



PLE

(DESI

Some ten miles east of Limerick, and a little beyond the village of Murroe, on the estate of Sir Charles B. Barrington, Bart., in a place called Vaucluse, is a small garden absolutely original in design and in many senses unique.

One is always open for pretty surprises in originality when visiting picturesque localities: there are the mountains which sleep beneath the royal colour of the heath, valleys which delight the eye with their little straggling villages and silver streaks of streams; and in other places we wander into glades where it would be unholy to break the unspeakable stillness, not exactly silence, because that little noiseless noise – the very sigh that silence breathes – the soul-stirring trickle of water hid from view in the mossy richness of the ground-tinkles its little bell-like sound. 'Tis while wandering about a country where such sights are almost commonplace that one, as it were, trips over the little gem of a garden which is the subject of the present paper.

Firstly, it may perhaps be best to commence with the cause behind this grand effect, and for that reason I will first deal with the man. Mr. Ryan – for that's his name – is a fine, athletic build of a man, standing somewhere about six feet high, with just the slightest of that stoop,