

# REVIEW

IRISH HISTORICAL STUDIES, VOL. XI, No. 12. SEPTEMBER 1958

The current issue contains two papers: "The Rise of a Catholic Middle Class in Eighteenth Century Ireland" by Maureen Wall, and "Connacht in the Eighteenth Century" by J. G. Simms. Both are valuable contributions to that little known period of the 'hidden Ireland'; moreover, in the tradition of this Journal, both are thoroughly objective and satisfying. Miss Wall draws her material from many sources and shows that many prominent Irish Catholics in the 18th century, when they were prohibited from being land owners by the penal laws, engaged in various forms of trade and business both home and inter-continental with eminently satisfactory results to themselves. She deals with Limerick trade and prominent trading families such as the Roches and the Arthurs, drawing upon White's Mss., Lenihan, and Begley. She shows incidentally that these developments in many cases were not "a rise" but rather a descent in the social scale, for many who took part in them were the descendants of the "Irish Papist" gentlemen of the Petty Survey of 1854 who were deprived of their lands and forced to engage in what the Victorians used to look down on as "trade". Some additional light might have been obtained on the position in the smaller country towns by consulting some of the later 18th century Directories which—although they do not give the religious denomination—provide lists of merchants, doctors, etc., with obviously Catholic names in these smaller localities. There also will be found the names of those who followed such avocations as tobacco manufacture, snuff making, chandlery, nail making, milling, boot making, and all these other skilled trades which have been destroyed by mass production. In the earlier years of the century at least moreover such now-forgotten occupations as "peruke making" and "stay making" were to be found in the larger towns and made good livings for those who engaged in them.

Dr. Simms's paper deals more with the Catholic country squire who was more common in Connacht than elsewhere. He shows that many of them had to become Protestant or at least "conform" in their eldest sons to hold their lands but many of them, like the O'Connors of Belnagare or the famous Martin family of Galway were powers in the land that no one could gainsay. He gives details of their style of life and extravagance which provide a justification for Lever's novels.

The remainder of this number is taken up with the most valuable continuation of "Writings in Irish history 1957" and Addenda. We regret that the valuable papers in our Journal are not noticed in either by some error which we are sure has been overlooked. There are also a number of reviews. One of these is of "Studies in Irish Literature and History" by James Carney. This is a specialist work of an apparently controversial kind. We regret that having read the review which runs to more than nine pages we were, in our ignorance, left with no clear idea of what the book was about. It (i.e. the review) is full of long words some of which like "methodological" and "loanwords"—again no doubt in our ignorance—we have never seen before. Genuine scholarship has nothing to gain and everything to lose by this sort of writing. If a writer or reviewer has anything to say on a subject—and especially on one which may be a specialist one—the clearer the manner in which he states it the better. There is nothing to be gained either by the scholar or the otherwise intelligent reader by having to attempt to disentangle his ideas from a mass of polysyllabic words.