Obituary

DÁITHÍ Ó CEANTÚIL (DAVID CANTWELL)

"Dob é an t-iascaire ab fhrearr é a bhí riamh i gCroma"—chuala mé fear ag rá na bhfocal sin nuair a fuair Dáithí Ó Ceantúil bás ar an 14ú Feabhra 1963. Agus duírt an fear áirithe seo a lán eile i dtáobh Dháithí Uí Cheantúil, ag moladh an iomad tréithe breatha a bhí aige. Ar ndóigh, idánach ba ea Dáithí—muinteoir scoile, staraí, nádúrálach, ilbhéarlach, dinnseanchaí agus oighre dhistineach ar Fhili na Máighe.

Ó Líath Mór Mocheamhóigh, i dTiobrad Árann Thuaisdi, a tháinig Dáithí go Cromadh ar dtús, sa bhliain 1910, chun post a ghlacadh mar muínntear sa scoil náisiúnta agus chaith sé an chuid eile dá shaol san áit, "ag teagasc na n-óg"—sea, agus ag teagasc na sean, leis, agus ag teagasc na meánaosta, agus gach aon duine riamh a raibh sé d'adhair air teagmháil leis. Muinteoir agus mac léinn ba ea é gach lá riamh; spéis as cuimse aige i ndaoine, agus i ngach rud dar chruithneach Díag.

Thosaigh sé ar iodáilis a fhoghlaímn nuair a bhí sé sa Choláiste Oiliúna i ndRóm Conrach, chun go bhféadadh sé Dánta le léamh sa bhuntseanga. Bhí sé istigh i siop a thadhbhailteach tamall gairid roimhe sin agus chonaic sé cóip den *Divina Commedia*. Scilling an praghais a bhí marcailteach a dháirgh an duine, mar a d'eirleadh sé féin, ba "scolaíre bocht" é an uair áfis, agus thairg sé raol ar an leabhar do bhean an tsiopa. D'fhéach sé in air dhimheasúil air, agus ara si leis de ghnúth tarcaisneach: "A dtabharfá masla do chuirimhne oiriúní Dante le raol suarach a thairiscint ar a shaothar buanachlúiteach?" Fuair sí an scilling láithreach.

Bhí eolas maith aige ar an Laidín agus ar an bhFraincis; agus mheáin sé Gréigis do fhéin, agus do chuimhneadh in Éire. Bhí a chumas i b'fhéidir do phobal aithint do dhaithe an t-ainm na scolaíochta a dhéanamh i scoileanna ina raibh an léann Heilíneach tóis fear mheas. Agus má bhi sé in ann oile agus tuin a bhaint as rithim Homer agus Thucydides bhí sé in ann freisin ciall a bhaint as bheárlach rúna da dtíneáird.

Bhí an-chur-amach aige ar Fhili na Máighe agus ar an gcuid fillochta. Agus má tá a fhios againn inniu cá háit i gCroma a raibh an teacht ósta ag Seán Ó Tuama biodh a bhfuilchos sin ar Dháithí, mar is eisean a tháinig ar an eolas, eolas nach raibh le fáil i leabhar na lárnachscríbhinn, ach i mbéaloideas aon tseandúime anmhain.

Búdar é leis ar logainmneacha an cheantair—foilsioth eiste leis ar logainmneacha pharóiste Chroí Charma sa n-irisleadh seo i 1952--; agus ní raibh bliain nár thug sé d'áltaí na scolaí ar cuairt ó dtí Mainistir an Aonaigh agus Díseart Aonghusa, ag insint stáir na bhfothcrách sin doibh, agus a taispeáint doibh na ngnéithe eagsúla ailtireachta iomtu. Aoióthar do chuid an scoláire a raibh Dáithí Ó Ceantúil mar muinteoir aige.

Bhí suim leathan aige sa tseandálaiocht, mar ní hamhain go raibh staidéar déanta aige ar an t-áiteanna mar Mhainistir an Aonaigh agus Díseart Aonghusa, a bhí, mar a dhéanaf, ar leac a dhorais aige, ach bhí staidéar déanta aige freisin ar shean sihialtaíochtaí an domhain; sihialtaíochtaí na Breataineach agus na Naisticeach cuir i gcás; agus ní raibh sé gan eolas ar na tochtáití Mhíceánachá na ndá na Fíoraí Éigipteacha.

Bhí sé ina bhall de Chumann Seandálaiochta Thuaidhlmhuirí, agus lá áirithi
JOHN DEVANE, M.D., F.R.C.S.I.

Dr Devane takes his place in the proud line of Limerick’s doctor scholars to rank with the seventeenth century Thomas Arthur, with Sylvestor O’Halloran of Cahirdavin and with the brothers Fogerty and M. J. Malone who come nearer to our time and whose friendship John Devane enjoyed as a young practitioner. His enthusiastic interest had much to do with the decision to publish the Arthur Manuscript in our Journal. He collaborated with Dr Richard Hayes, his life-long friend, with William Doolin and with Dr J. B. Lyons in their investigations of O’Halloran’s career as surgeon and historian. He was fond of recalling his moment of elation as he led William Doolin to the recently discovered O’Halloran vault in Killeely churchyard.

The County Infirmary, Mulgrave Street, where Dr Devane worked for half a century, was in the line of succession to an earlier hospital founded in St Francis’s Abbey in 1766. O’Halloran had been associated with the place from the beginning, and Dr Devane was happy to find the commemorative tablet among the debris at the Abbey. He had it erected in the entrance hall of the Infirmary, and though the building now serves a different purpose the Technical School authorities are having the slab kept in position notwithstanding the structural alterations in progress.

St John’s Hospital is still sited where buildings of the former citadel were converted into a Fever Hospital in 1781. Happily Dr Devane left among his papers an account of St. John’s which embodies much of Limerick’s medical history. His manuscript, all our members will be glad to learn, is being prepared for publication in some suitable form.

The doctor, through instinct and professional training, had a flair for history which is life’s drama. There was general appreciation of his presence at the Society’s lectures.
and outings whenever he could manage to attend. In his eighty years—seventy of them in Limerick, and in one parish—he saw Limerick and Ireland pass from semi-feudal conditions into the modern age. That the transition could be achieved without shattering unsetlement was due in some measure to statesmanship, and perhaps in greater measure to the deep unconscious influence, the stature, the quality and character of a few score of such 'quiet men' as John Francis Devane. Limerick will seem different without him, the highways and byways that he knew from school days, the quiet lanes beyond the suburbs where he took his Sunday stroll. With the passing years he had become part of our history as ever widening circles of his countrymen of every allegiance came to value and regard him as a towering figure. His interests ranged wide over the five Continents but his heart was anchored by Shannonside. And so it was that all Limerick mourned when the news came of his passing on Monday evening, January 20th, 1964. He now rests among his own.

M.M.

Proceedings, 1963

The year began with the Annual General Meeting held on February 28th. After the meeting, an t-úsáal Éamonn de hOír, Director of the Placenames Commission, gave a lecture on two of the most outstanding scholars of the last century, E. O'Curry and J. O'Donovan, renowned for their work in many fields of Gaelic scholarship, particularly in connection with the work of the Ordnance Survey.

On March 29th Mr. Percy Le Clerc, Inspector of National Monuments, lectured to the Society on "Our Archaeological Heritage," a lecture which sparked off an animated discussion afterwards.

On the 1st of May the evening outings began with over sixty members visiting Quin Abbey and the inauguration site of the Kings of Dal gCais at Magh Adhair, Co. Clare.

On May 29th Dr. Robert Cussen conducted an evening tour to Rathkeale Abbey, Castlematrix, Nantenan House, and to Kilbeha House which was built by the historian Martin Haverty.

The annual Summer excursion took place on Sunday, June 16th, to Kilmacduagh Church and Round Tower, Coole, the home of Lady Gregory, Yeat's tower at Ballylee, Doonas, and Corcomroe Abbey.

The Autumn lectures started on the 24th of October when Mr. Alma Fitt gave us an illustrated talk on Copenhagen and Elsinore, the castle always associated with Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

Our last lecture of the year was held on December 12th when Dom Hubert de Varebek, O.S.B., spoke on "Ancient Flemish Painters," a lecture which once again illustrated the breadth of the Society's interests.