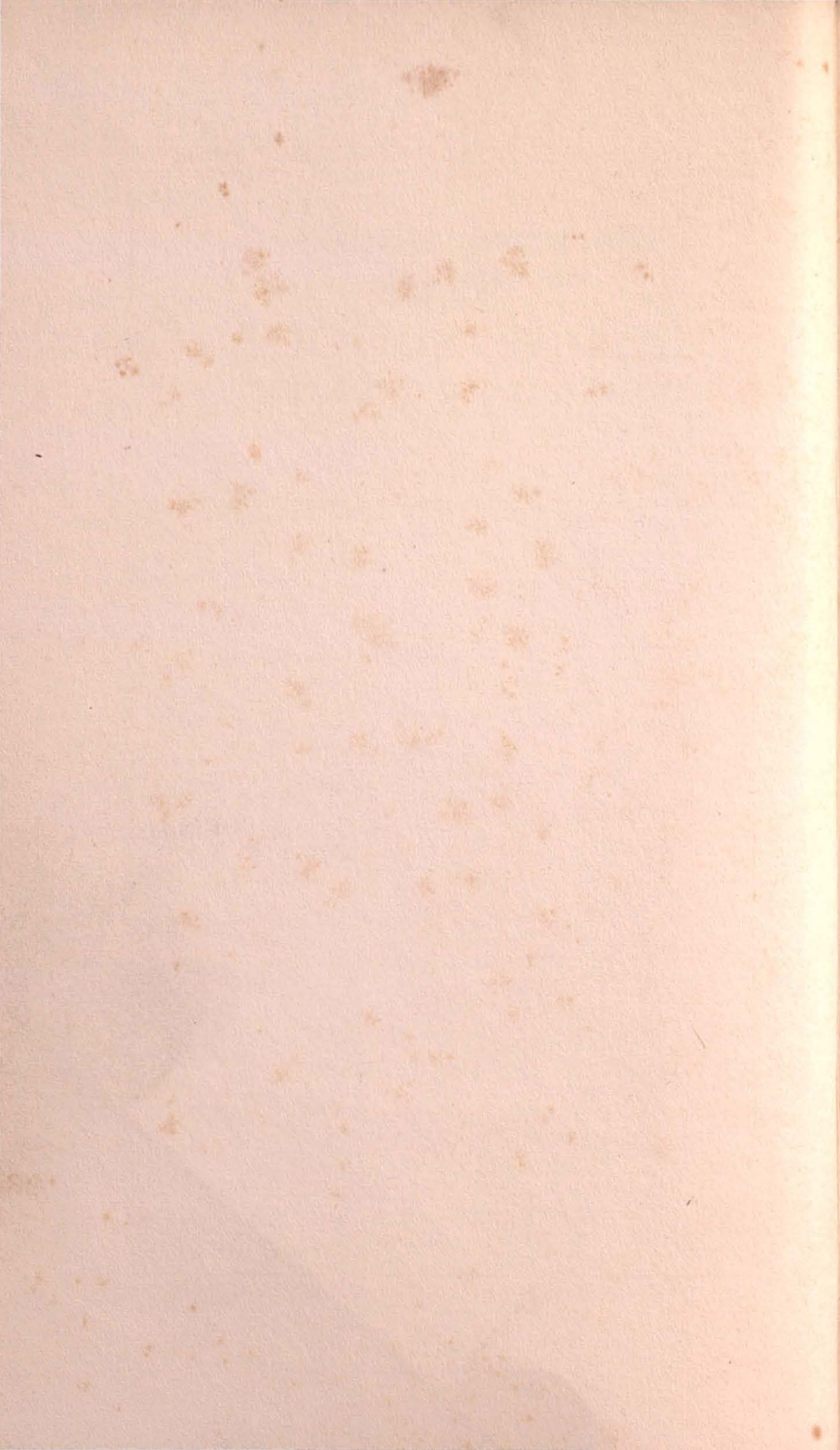


THE HEDGE SCHOOLS
OF IRELAND



THE HEDGE SCHOOLS OF IRELAND

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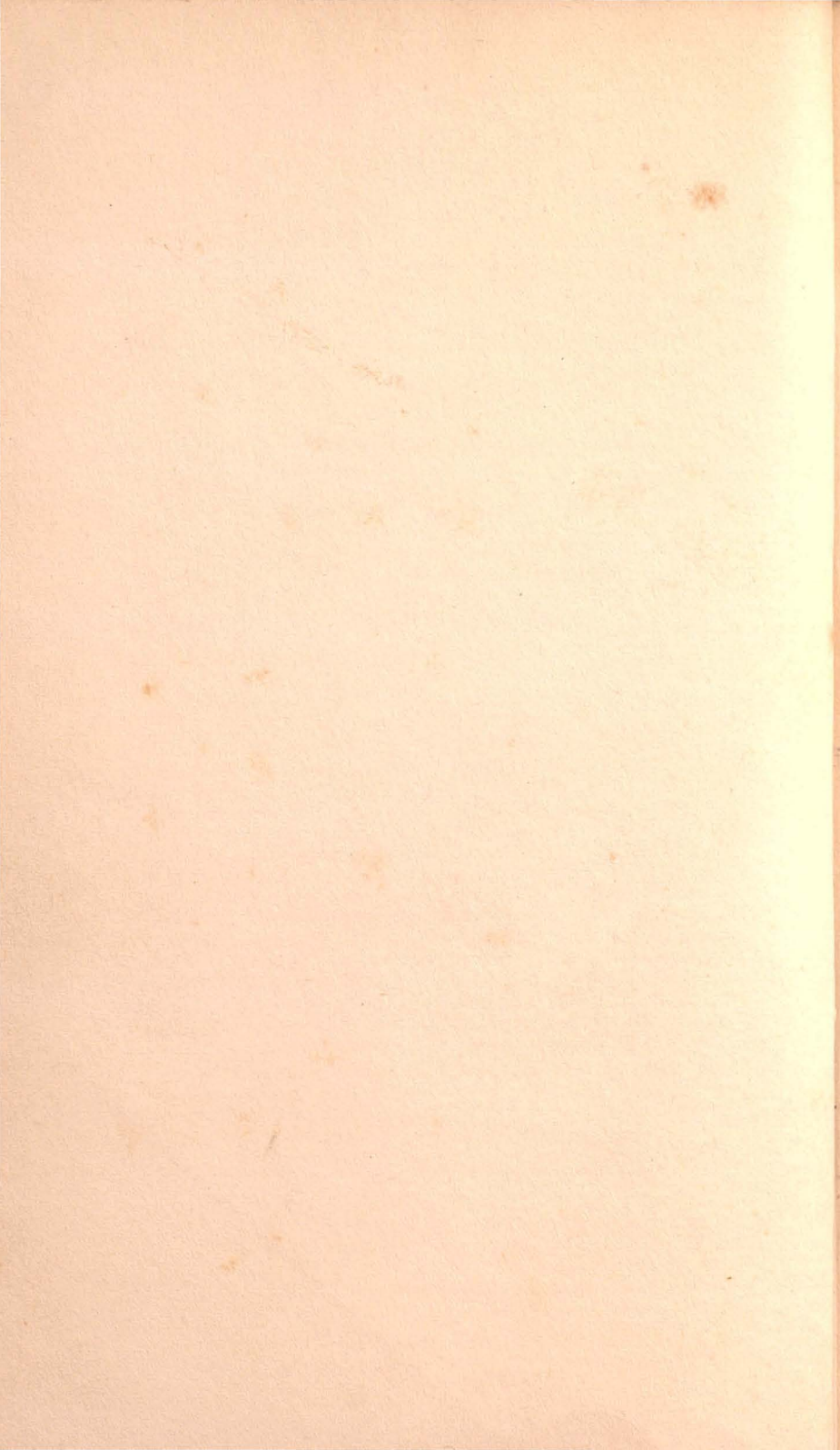
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TO MY WIFE





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INTRODUCTION.

THE writer of this well-balanced and highly serviceable account of the Popular Schools of Ireland in the later Penal Times was a secondary teacher of considerable and very successful experience, when in the Academic Year 1912-1913 he joined my class for the Higher Diploma in Education, at the Dublin College of the National University of Ireland. Having attained this professional qualification, available only for graduates, Mr. Dowling attended further and more specialised Courses for the Degree of M.A. in Educational Science, and by examination on this range of work, mainly concerned with the History and Sociology of Educational Practice, he took out that Degree in 1914.

When, at the close of the European War, Irish and British Universities came to set up the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy on the mid-European model, Mr. Dowling was admitted as an Approved Internal Student therefor, in the field of Research in the History of Education in the Department of Education at University College, Dublin. He had selected, as his range of exploration for a Thesis to be submitted for that Degree, the subject matter of this volume, and had entered on the preparation of materials, when he was offered the professional position which he has held ever since—that of Lecturer in Education, St. Mary's Training College, Hammersmith, London; later transferred to Strawberry Hill, Middlesex.

Mr. Dowling's acceptance of this appointment led to his admission, under the Regulations of the University

of London, to candidature for the Degree of PH.D., by research, in the Department of Education at King's College, Strand, under Professor Dover Wilson. The subject already selected at Dublin naturally suggested a cognate plan for the Dissertation to be undertaken at London, especially as the resources of the British Museum and other London collections could compare adequately with those available in Ireland. Both sources of information were, indeed, fully used by Mr. Dowling, who also had the advantage of native contact, fully maintained, with that enduringly important centre of Gaelic erudition and teaching, the Decies territories in County Waterford, and their adjoining lands. Mr. Dowling, as the result of his persevering studies, was in due course admitted to the University of London Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Utilising some elements included in the scope of his research work at London, Mr. Dowling next undertook two further years of exploration and inquiry, with the special aim of producing an integral account and estimate of the work done in the popular education system of Ireland in the later Penal Times. This undertaking was completed in the spring of 1932. The National University of Ireland, in its Jubilee Year, 1932-33, had established a special fund to aid the publication of research work carried out by its graduates and by members of the staffs of its Constituent and Recognised Colleges. This work was lodged for consideration under the University Regulations, and a substantial grant was made for that purpose.

The practical values of this volume on the Hedge Schools of Ireland will, beyond question, prove to be very substantial over the whole of Ireland. It deals with the critical epoch when English schooling came into

contact with the traditions of Gaelic instruction; and almost every section of Mr. Dowling's well-documented text deals with local schools, often both secondary (classical and mathematical) and elementary or vernacular in their range, and conducted by teachers who were indeed coming to use more and more the English language in their classes, but who were also enthusiastic workers in Gaelic popular and academic literature, as poets, prose-writers, and persevering scribes. In some regions, such as Decies and Meath, their work with the pen for our national language was fully maintained down to the period 1850-1875.

Naturally, this work of a Munster teacher tends to deal more fully with those regions of which the Decies and Meath were typical, the Midland and the South of Ireland. It will, perhaps, have a most desirable result if it evokes exploration of the contemporary and corresponding school-work known to have been so finely done, both in Irish and in English and far beyond both these tongues, in the popular schools of Ulster, those of Donegal in the farthest North, of Fermanagh, Cavan, Monaghan, and of the other counties north eastward towards Rathlin Island. In regard of highly efficient popular schools of the period 1782 to the Famine epoch and later, Dr. McIvor, Anglican Rector of Ardstraw and Newtownstewart, Tyrone, published in 1867, his avowal that "Tyrone has been called, I understand, the Northern Kerry; Kerry may well have been the Southern Tyrone."

A generation earlier a most notable Ulsterman, Dr. Henry Cooke, Moderator of the Synod of Ulster in the Presbyterian Church, described to a State Commission of Inquiry how from 1798 he had attended the local school taught by Frank Glass, a Catholic teacher, who in vain sought to make him, as Glass was himself, an

ardent rebel. In that school, Dr. Cooke testified, Irish English, Latin and Greek were taught; and the biographer of the Ulster leader of opinion records, from personal knowledge, the intense appreciation with which Dr. Cooke would sixty years after, recall the racy renderings which Frank Glass used to give to the Odes of Horace in their Ulster speech. From that countryside school, largely built and equipped by the pupils themselves, young Henry Cooke proceeded, in 1802, at the age of 14, to the University of Glasgow, then and for long the academic capital of Ulster.

Dr. Dowling's text exhibits, in every chapter, the fruits of his devoted industry and of his power of impartial appraisal. Its marked merit will be enhanced if it evokes in many of the regions dealt with, further specialised effort to place on record the excellent local and national service done by teachers of the Irish people.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

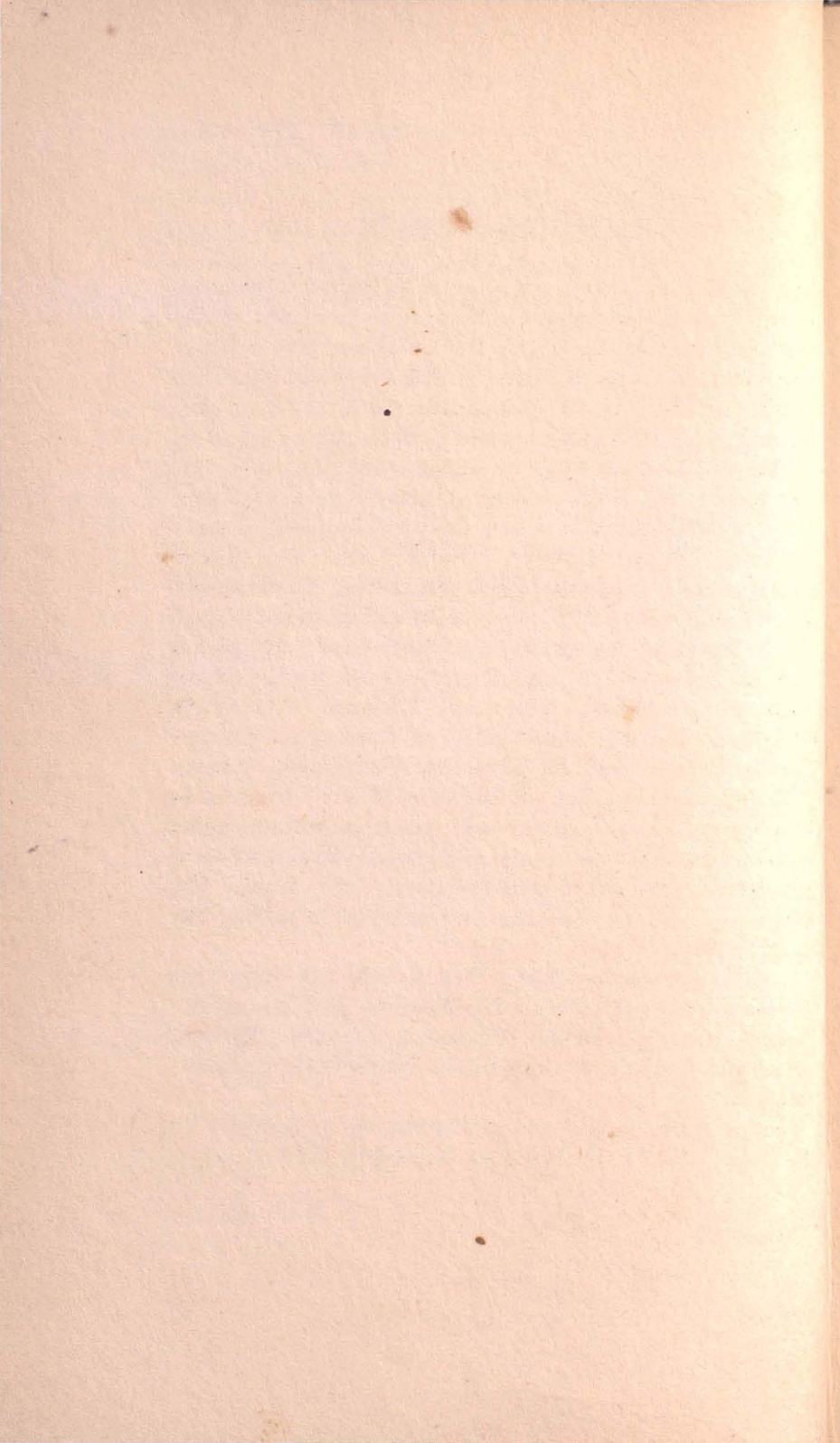
THE author of this work desires to express his most grateful acknowledgments to those who gave him advice and assistance in the search for materials, and to those who put at his disposal material which was not accessible to him, or which it was possible he might not have discovered unaided. Chief among them are: the Rev. Professor Corcoran at whose suggestion the work was undertaken; Dr. Robin Flower, Deputy Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, London; Professor Eamon O'Toole, Trinity College, Dublin; and Mr. James Fenton, M.A., Deputy Chief Inspector, Ministry of Education, Dublin, who kindly allowed him to quote from "The Songs of Tomás Ruadh O'Sullivan." He wishes also to acknowledge his obligations to many correspondents, including Professor Corkery, University College, Cork; Rev. John Breen, The Seminary, Killarney, County Kerry; Rev. E. Dowling, Gathabawn, County Kilkenny; and Mr. Seán O'Sullivan, Waterford; and to those writers whose published work in certain fields enabled him to fill out many gaps in the lives and occupations of the hedge schoolmasters. He thanks Mr. James Brennan for reading and helping to correct the proofs.

Lastly, the author hopes that he will not forget the kindness of the officials of the Reading and Manuscript Rooms of the British Museum, of the National Library, and of the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

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THE HEDGE SCHOOLS OF IRELAND

CHAPTER I.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE OLD ORDER.

I.

THE Hedge Schools enter upon the stage but a brief space after the exit of the Bardic Schools, the ancient professional schools of Ireland. According to a statement prefacing the "Clanrickarde Memoirs," the Bardic Schools survived "till the Beginnings of the Trouble in 1641";¹ these "truly National Schools,"² as O'Curry called them, finally closed down only when their patrons had become landless and homeless, or exiles.

It was not the fall of the Bardic Schools that brought the Hedge Schools into being. The Hedge Schools owed their origin to the suppression of all the ordinary legitimate means of education, first during the Cromwellian *régime* and then under the Penal Code introduced in the reign of William III and operating from that time till within less than twenty years from the opening of the nineteenth century. They filled the place, so far as that was possible, of the schools, lay and clerical, that had come and gone on the flood and ebb of the tide of fortune since the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. The Bardic Schools, on the other hand, had represented a highly developed system providing, up to the end of the sixteenth century, the nearest approach to university

1780

¹ p. cxxxii.

² "On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish," Vol. II., p. 77.

education in Ireland; and as such could have had nothing in common with the Hedge Schools as regards either the content or method of education.

It may have happened that the disbanded students of the Bardic Schools took up teaching either in the interests of learning or through economic necessity. There is no evidence of this, however; though in the lean years that followed, it is certain that few other occupations were open to them. But the "Courts of Poetry"³ which were later established with the object of carrying on the traditions of the Bardic Schools had at least the effect of fostering a love of national literature, and possibly of learning in a wider sense, which must have found its way into the Hedge Schools through teachers who were poets and members of the "Courts"—men like John Clarach MacDonnell who, at the time of his death in 1754, was "President of the court of Munster Bards."⁴ It would be rash to set too much store by this connexion with the Bardic Schools which at best could have been but a slender one. But at the same time it must not be forgotten that at the end of the seventeenth century the Bardic Schools were still within living memory, and that for more than a hundred years to follow they were spoken of and written of with great frequency and with great reverence. The periodical attempts to revive the study of Irish literature through the "Courts of Poetry" show how closely they had gripped the imagination of succeeding generations of poets. Naturally, therefore, if the Bardic Schools continued to exert any influence at all, that influence would have been at work in the Hedge Schools where nearly every Irish poet and Irish scholar of those days taught.

II.

THE ancient professional schools of Ireland had produced a long succession of poets, historians and brehons right down to the middle of the seventeenth century. It was

³ See *infra*, p. 9.

⁴ Mangan: "Munster Bards." Introd. by J. P. Dalton, p. xli.

hardly fitting that such an educational system, in existence before the coming of St. Patrick, modified then, and revised later at the great meeting of Druim Ceata at the end of the sixth century, should disappear a thousand years later without leaving, even after a period of decay, some trace of its tradition of learning and culture.

The Bardic Schools were purely secular institutions. The medium of instruction was the native tongue; and the Irish language and literature, Irish history and the Brehon law were intensively and scientifically studied. "The Course was long and tedious . . . ;" we are informed, "and it was six or seven Years, before a Mastery, or the last Degree was conferr'd."⁵ The period of study sometimes extended to as much as twenty years.⁶ "The ordinary course was twelve years," Dr. Healy states, "and each year's work was as carefully fixed as in a modern college or university."⁷ The method and nature of the work in the Bardic Schools may be gathered from a description written some years after they finally closed in 1641: "Concerning the Poetical Seminary, or School, from which I was carried away to clear other things that fell in my way; it was open only to such as were descended of Poets, and reputed within their Tribes: And so it was with all the Schools of that kind in the Nation, being equal to the Number of Families that followed the said Calling: But some more or less frequented for the Difference of Professors, Conveniency, with other Reasons, and seldom any come but from remote Parts, to be at a distance from Relations, and other Acquaintance, that might interrupt his Study. The Qualifications first requir'd, were reading well, writing the Mother-tongue, and a strong Memory. It was likewise necessary the Place shou'd be in the solitary Recess of a Garden, or within a Sept or Inclosure, far out of the reach of any Noise, which an Intercourse of People might otherwise occasion.

⁵ "Clanrickarde Memoirs," p. clxiii.

⁶ Healy: "Insula Sanctorum et Doctorum," p. 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12. See also O'Curry: "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish." Vol. II., p. 171; and Walker: "Historical Memoirs," p. 7.

The Structure was a snug, low Hut, and Beds in it at convenient Distances, each within a small Apartment, without much Furniture of any kind, save only a Table, some Seats, and a Conveniency for Cloaths to hang upon. No Windows to let in the Day, nor any Light at all us'd but that of Candles, and these brought in at a proper Season only. The Students upon thorough Examination being first divided into Classes; wherein a regard was had to every ones Age, Genius, and the Schooling had before, if any at all, or otherwise. The Professors (one or more as there was occasion) gave a Subject suitable to the Capacity of each Class, determining the Number of Rhimes, and clearing what was to be chiefly observ'd therein as to Syllables, Quatrans, Concord, Correspondence, Termination, and Union, each of which were restrain'd by peculiar Rules. The said Subject (either one or more as aforesaid) having been given over Night, they work'd it apart each by himself upon his own Bed, the whole next Day in the Dark, till at a certain Hour in the Night, Lights being brought in, they committed it to writing. Being afterwards dress'd and come together into a large Room, where the Masters waited, each Scholar gave in his Performance, which being corrected or approv'd of (according as it requir'd) either the same or fresh Subjects were given against the next Day. This Part being over, the Students went up to their Meal, which was then serv'd up; and so, after some time spent in Conversation, and other Diversions, each retir'd to his Rest, to be ready for the Business of the next Morning. Every *Saturday*, and on the Eves of Festival Days, they broke up, and dispers'd themselves among the Gentlemen and rich Farmers of the Country, by whom they were well entertain'd, and made much of, till they thought fit to take their Leaves, in order to resume their Study. Nor was the People satisfied with affording this Hospitality alone: they sent in by turns every Week from far and near, Liquors, and all manner of Provision towards the Subsistence of the Academy; so that the Chief Poet was at little or no Charges, but on the contrary got very

well by it, besides the Presents made him by the Students, upon their first coming, which was always at *Michaelmas*; and from thence till the 25th of *March*, during the cold Season of the Year only, did that close Study last. At that time the Scholars broke up, and repair'd each to his own Country, with an Attestation of his Behaviour and Capacity, from the Chief Professor to those that sent him."⁸

This account is given in English, and deals only with a School of Poetry. But neither that nor the fact that it was written when the Bardic Schools had long since passed away takes from its value. "The manners of the professional classes in Ireland, indeed the whole structure of society," Professor Bergin points out, "were so wonderfully conservative that Clanrickarde's⁹ description will probably hold good for several centuries earlier."¹⁰ No description of a Bardic School in the Irish language has yet been found.¹¹

The study of Latin seems to have been taken up at the Bardic Schools at an early date, undoubtedly through some connexion with the Monastic Schools. The poets had a considerable acquaintance with Latin literature, mostly mediaeval. "The tenth and eleventh centuries," says O'Curry, "produced a very large number of men deeply versed in our native language and literature, as well as in the classical literature of the times."¹² Quiggin, in his study of the later Irish bards, states that "the poets of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, who are known as authors of devotional verse, were evidently familiar with the religious literature in the Latin language, which flourished chiefly in France."¹³ That Latin was commonly studied and employed in oral communication is borne out by the testimony of

⁸ "Clanrickarde Memoirs," pp. clviii.-clxi.

⁹ The description is given in a "Dissertation," prefixed to the Memoirs, which was written, I learn from Dr. Robin Flower, by Thomas O'Sullivan (fl. 1722).

¹⁰ "Journal of the Ivernian Society." Vol. V., pp. 155-6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹² "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish." Vol. II., p. 104.

¹³ "Prolegomena to the Study of the Later Irish Bards," p. 32.

Father Edmund Campion, who was in Ireland in 1570 and saw a school at work: "Without either precepts or observation of congruity, they speake Latine like a vulgar language, learned in their common Schooles of Leach-craft and Law, whereat they begin Children and hold on sixteene or twentie yeares conning by roate the Aphorismes of *Hypocrates*, and the Civill Institutions, and a few other parings of these two faculties. I have seene them where they kept Schoole, ten in some one Chamber, groveling upon couches of straw, their Bookes at their noses, themselves lying flatte prostrate, and so to chaunte out their lessons by peecemeale, being the most part lustie fellowes of twenty five years and upwards."¹⁴

The Tudor *régime* hastened the fall of the Bardic Schools. The wars of Henry VIII reduced the power and fortunes of many Irish chiefs and Anglo-Norman lords who were patrons and supporters of the schools. The bards themselves, keeping alive the spirit of nationality, were a direct menace to English rule in Ireland; and, as a consequence of their continued hostility to it, there was not a period from the reign of Henry VIII to that of Charles I during which they were not actively persecuted." For example, in 1563 the Earl of Desmond was forced to give an undertaking that bards would no longer be supported or encouraged within the counties of Cork, Limerick and Kerry. An extract from the treaty which this Anglo-Norman lord was obliged to sign shows the grounds on which the English Government objected to the bards: "And as no small enormities occur by the continual recourse of idle men of lewd demeanour, called rhymers, bards, and dice-players, called *carroghes*, who, under pretence of their travail, bring privy intelligence between the malefactors inhabiting those shires, to the great destruction of all true subjects, care should be taken that none of these sects, nor other evil persons, be suffered to travel within their rules; and that proclamation be made, that whosoever shall maintain any such idle

¹⁴ "Historie of Ireland Written in the Yeare 1571," pp. 25-6.

men within their territories, should pay such fines as the President or Commissioners should think fit. And as those rhymers, by their ditties and rhymes, made for divers lords and gentlemen in Ireland, in commendation and high praise of extortion, rebellion, rape, rapine, and other injustice, encourage those lords rather to follow those vices than abandon them, and for the making of such rhymes rewards are given by the gentlemen; for the abolition of so heinous an abuse, order should be taken with the said Earl, the lords and gentlemen, that henceforth they do not give any manner of reward for any such lewd rhymes, under pain of forfeiting double the sum they should so pay, and that the rhymers should be fined according to the discretion of the Commissioners."¹⁵

The poet Spenser disapproved of them too. He, no doubt, had greater personal cause for complaint, since the patriotic strains of the bard might, at any time, arouse against him the anger and resentment of those who had been dispossessed of the lands he occupied. "These Irish Bardes" he wrote in 1596, "so farre from instructing yong men in morall discipline, that they themselves doe more deserve to bee sharply disciplined; for they seldome use to choose unto themselves the doings of good men for the arguments of their poems, but whomsoever they finde to be the most licentious of life, most bolde and lawlesse in his doings, most dangerous and desperate in all parts of disobedience and rebellious disposition, him they set up and glorifie in their rithmes, him they praise to the people, and to yong men make an example to follow."¹⁶ Nevertheless, he did not fail to pay a tribute, rather grudging, to the poems devoted to these themes: "I have caused divers of them to be translated unto me," he stated, "that I might understand them; and surely they savoured of sweet wit and good invention, but skilled not of the goodly ornaments of poetry: yet were they sprinkled with some pretty flowres of their naturall device, which

¹⁵ "Calendar of Patent Rolls, Ireland." Vol. I., pp. 486-7.

¹⁶ "View of the State of Ireland." Dublin, 1809, p. 121.

gave good grace and comliness unto them, the which it is great pitty to see abused, to the gracing of wickednes and vice, which with good usage would serve to adorne and beautifie vertue."¹⁷

Before the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century, the whole country was under English domination; many estates had been confiscated to the Crown; and the great northern chiefs, the patrons of the Bardic Schools of Ulster, had fled to the Continent. But it was Cromwell's destructive campaign, and the redistribution of land and the plantation of large territories then and later that brought about the closing of the schools.

After the Restoration there may have been some revival of learning as a consequence of the greater civil freedom enjoyed by Catholics who possessed landed property.¹⁸ "The nobility and gentry," wrote Sir Henry Piers in 1682, "value themselves very high on the stock of their antiquity and descent, and in this respect they little set by others; you shall meet with one or more antiquaries, as they are termed, that is deducers of their pedigrees, in every great family, who will with as much confidence and assurance, rip up even unto Adam, such a person's progenitors, as if Adam were but of yesterday."¹⁹

A few years later the country was plunged into war in support of the rights of James II. Then came defeat, and a complete change of policy under the new Government; laws against education were enacted on such a comprehensive scale that the hopes of the bard were gone for ever. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the state of native learning appears to have been at its lowest ebb. "The Study of the present Generation," wrote the editor of the "Clanrickarde Memoirs," "reaching no farther than to comprehend and write the common Dialect of the Language . . . Nor could it have been well otherwise, where not so much as one Country School of that kind hath been frequented since the Beginning of

¹⁷ "View of the State of Ireland," p. 124.

¹⁸ See "Dublin Review," April, 1929, p. 198. Article by Dr. W. F. Butler.

¹⁹ "Chorographical Description of the County of Meath," p. 109.

the Wars of 1641; the Gentlemen, and Quality, for the most part, that countenanc'd and supported that sort of Learning, having been thrust out of their Estates."²⁰

But the study of poetry did not cease. The Bardic Schools had declined into "Courts of Poetry." These assemblies, at which poetry was "discussed and recited," served to perpetuate the craft of poetry right down to the nineteenth century.²¹ A distinguished London doctor, who spent several years in Ireland prior to 1767, gives an account of literary gatherings at which he was evidently an honoured guest: "In *Ireland* they have their bards to this day, among the inland inhabitants, and even among the poorest of the people; . . . ; and it is a very common practice among them when they return home from the toil of the day, to sit down, with their people around them, in bad weather, in their houses, and without doors in fair, repeating the histories of ancient heroes and their transactions, in a stile that, for its beauty, and fine sentiments has often struck me with amazement; for I have many times been obliged, by some of these *natural bards*, with the repetition of as sublime poems upon *love, heroism, hospitality, battles, &c.*, as can be produced in any language; and, indeed, I have often regretted that so few gentlemen of modern learning, understand that language enough to enjoy so fine an entertainment."²² Dr. Parsons was qualified to express an opinion, for he knew the native language. "(I) attained," he writes, "to a tolerable knowledge in the very *ancient* tongue of that country, which enabled me to consult some of their manuscripts, and become instructed in their grammatical institutes."²³ He does not say in what parts of the country these meetings took place; but his statement would seem to suggest that they were not infrequent.

The Rev. Mr. Ross, Protestant Rector of Dungiven,

²⁰ Pp. cxviii.-cxix.

²¹ An excellent account of the Courts of Poetry is given in Corkery: "The Hidden Ireland," Chap. IV. See also Kenney: "The Sources for the Early History of Ireland." Vol. I., p. 53 *et seq.*

²² Parsons: "Remains of Japhet," p. 148.

²³ *Ibid.* Preface, p. vii.

County Derry, writing about 1814, is more explicit as to the object of such meetings: "The manner of preserving the accuracy of tradition is singular, and worthy of notice. In the winter evenings, a number of Seanachies frequently meet together, and recite alternately their traditionary stories. If any one repeats a passage, which appears to another to be incorrect, he is immediately stopped, when each gives a reason for his way of reciting the passage, the dispute is then referred to a vote of the meeting, and the decision of the majority becomes imperative on the subject for the future. This plan, aided by the measure of the poetry, and also that of the music, may account for the accurate preservation of these ancient poems."²⁴ A contemporary of the Rev. Mr. Ross informs us that in Cloncha, County Donegal, "some old people . . . in the most remote parts of it, occasionally repeat poetical fragments like those translated by Mr. M'Pherson and ascribed by him to Ossian."²⁵ From another contemporary we learn that old Irish manuscripts were still in the hands of the peasantry who had probably resisted more than one tempting offer to part with them; writing from Cahircorney, County Limerick, he states: "Many of the old men know the Irish language, and have some Irish manuscripts on various subjects of very old date; these are so black with smoke, and so tattered and old, that it is often impossible to know the date, title, or subject of them."²⁶

A remarkable instance of the faithfulness and accuracy with which Irish literature has been transmitted to us is given by Professor O'Máille in his introduction to a poem by Donnchadh Mór O'Dálaigh. "The following poem," he writes, "on the geography of the world and the Day of Judgement, was composed by Donnchadh Mór O Dálaigh who died A.D. 1244. The first version is taken from the Egerton MS. 161, fol. 115b, in the British Museum. The second version is taken down from the oral narration of Pádraic O Hurnaidhe, a seanchaidhe

²⁴ Mason: "Parochial Survey." Vol. I., p. 318.

²⁵ *Ibid.* Vol. II., p. 182.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Vol. II., p. 98.

of Knockdoe, Claregalway, Co. Galway, that is, almost seven centuries after it was composed." The poem has fifty-five stanzas, each of four lines. O'Hurnaidhe had "learned the poem from his grandfather, who got it from somebody who read the manuscript."²⁷

We can thus understand how much of what was retained in the "strong Memory" of the bard became, after the closing of the schools, the possession of future generations. Not a little of what was put in writing was handed on, carefully preserved and copied. Many a roll of parchment, such as old O'Bristan,²⁸ "a chronicler and principal brehon" of the County of Fermanagh, was induced to submit to the inspection of the Irish Lord Chancellor of James I,²⁹ passed into safe keeping, and was cherished and revered by its humble possessor.

The intellectual possessions of the previous generations had not been entirely lost. The great hereditary families of poets and teachers, after they had suffered the loss of patronage and of property dependent upon the beneficence of their patrons, had either fled the country or had been gradually absorbed into the peasantry.

The national literary tradition had become, in the eighteenth century, the heritage of the tiller of the soil.³⁰

III.

WE now turn to another chapter of the history of education in Ireland.

The suppression of the monasteries in 1539 removed the second great educational system. Lord Leonard Gray, then Lord Deputy of Ireland, had opposed the dissolution of those within the Pale because, he pleaded, they instructed youth in "vertue, lernying, and in the English tonge and behavior."³¹ His protest, however, was of no

²⁷ "Archivium Hibernicum." Vol. II., p. 256.

²⁸ This should be O'Brislan or O'Breislin. The 1890 reprint gives O'Bristan.

²⁹ Letter of Sir John Davies to the Earl of Salisbury, 1607. "Ireland under Elizabeth and James I." (London, 1890), p. 369.

³⁰ Cp. Kenney: "Sources for the Early History." Vol. I., p. 52.

³¹ Letter to Cromwell, 21 May, 1539.

avail. Later on, he himself took a substantial share of the plunder of the religious houses.³²

One result of Henry VIII's policy was the establishment, in certain cities, of schools for the education of the Anglo-Normans mainly. In 1565, Father Peter White, Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, taught a school at Kilkenny founded by the Earl of Ormond. Richard Stanyhurst, one of Father White's pupils, who gives an account of the school, implies the existence of many such schools throughout the country. "In the west end of the church-yard (S. Kennies church)," he writes, "of late haue beene founded a grammar schoole by the right honorable Pierce or Peter Butler erle of Ormond and Ossorie, and by his wife the countesse of Ormond, the ladie Margaret fitz Girald, sister to Girald fitz Girald, the earle of Kildare that last was. Out of which schoole haue sprouted such proper impes through the painefull diligence, and the laboursome industrie of a famous lettered man M. Peter White (sometime fellow of Oriall College in Oxford, and schoolemaister in Kilkennie) as generallie the whole weale publike of Ireland, and especiallie the southerne parts of that Iland are greatlie thereby furthered. This gentlemans method in training vp youth was rare and singular, framing the education according to the scholers veine. If he found him free, he would bridle him like a wise Isocrates from his booke; if he perceiued him to be dull, he would spur him forward; if he vnderstood that he were the woorse for beating, he would win him with rewards: finallie, by interlasing studie with recreation, sorrow with mirth, paine with pleasure, sowernesse with sweetnesse, roughnesse with mildnesse, he had so good successe in schooling his pupils, in good sooth I may boldlie bide by it, that in the realme of Ireland was no grammar schoole so good, in England I am well assured none better. And bicause it was my happie hap (God and my parents be thanked) to haue beene one of his crue, I take it to stand with my dutie, sith I may not stretch mine abilitie in requiting his good turnes, yet

³² Wilson: "The Beginnings of Modern Ireland," p. 277.

to manifest my good will in remembering his paines. And certes, I acknowledge my selfe so much bound and beholding to him and his, as for his sake I reuerence the meanest stone cemented in the wals of that famous schoole."³³

Many years later, Robert Payne came on what appears to have been a similar type of school in Limerick. "I saw in a Grammer schoole in *Limbrick*," he tells us, "one hundred, & threscore schollers, most of them speaking good and perfit English, for that they haue vsed to conster the Latin into English."³⁴ Latin, used as a medium for teaching English, probably offered a point of contact for both the native Irish and the Anglo-Normans. At the same time the Protestant cause was being pressed forward by Queen Elizabeth's Anglican bishops. The Rev. C. P. Meehan in his work, "*The Irish Hierarchy in the Seventeenth Century*," quotes an interesting letter, dated about 1585, from a teacher in Waterford to the Protestant Lord Primate of Ireland, which may be assumed to give a fair idea of the conditions obtaining in most of the larger towns of Ireland. "Since my coming hither," the letter reads, "I had not above thirty scholars, which was no small grief unto me, especially being sent hither by you; the cause why they received me was rather for fear, than for any desire they had to have their children instructed in the fear of God, and knowledge of good letters which I soon perceived by them; for within one month the most of them took away their children from me, and sent them to other tutors in the town that were professed papists, which was so great a grief unto me, that I could not tarry amongst them; for I could not possibly make myself subject to them that are no subjects themselves. The reason they allege why they took them away was, because, as they say, for that they did not profit; neither did they indeed, in that they looked for; for I constrained them to come to the service, which they could not abide, whereat they muttered privately

³³ "A Treatise containing a Plaine and Perfect Description of Ireland," written in 1586. London, 1808, p. 34.

³⁴ "A Brife Description of Ireland written in 1589," p. 3.

among themselves. There was never a boy among them that was able to read fables, and yet they murmured because I did not use them to make epistles, themes, orations, and verses; for which cause and for that they took them from me, and sent them to papists. I was willing to give it into their own hands, to bestow it where they will; so they have bestowed it on a youth that is of their own damnable profession; one that was apprentice in the town, and since that a serving man in Dublin."³⁵ Obviously, Catholic education was endeavouring to hold its ground in the cities.

Outside the Pale, in places where English rule did not extend in the full security of its power, monasteries appear to have escaped the general destruction. Sir John Davies, writing in the reign of James I, states that "the Abbies and Religious houses in *Tyrone*, *Tirconnell*, and *Fermanagh*, though they were dissolved in the 33rd of Henry the 8th, were never surveyed nor reduced into charge, but were continually possess by the religious persons, until His Majesty, that now is, came to the Crown."³⁶ We have confirmation of this—at least, in part—from a Latin manuscript written about 1600 by a Franciscan priest, named Father Mooney, who records the history of the Irish Franciscan monasteries.³⁷ Father Mooney relates that the monastery in Donegal survived even the Ulster wars of the late sixteenth century: "We fed the poor, comforted them in their sorrows, educated the scions of the princely house, to whom we owed everything, chronicled the achievements of their race, prayed for the souls of our founders and benefactors, chanted the divine offices day and night with great solemnity; and while thus engaged, the tide of war swept harmless

³⁵ Pp. 110-11. Mentioned in Calendar of State Papers, 1574-1585, p. 573. See also Corcoran: "State Policy in Irish Education," pp. 51-2. The above is an extract from the original which is in the Public Record Office, London.

³⁶ "A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued . . . 1602," p. 53.

³⁷ A free translation of this was published in 1869, under the title of "The Rise and Fall of the Irish Franciscan Monasteries," by the Rev. C. P. Meehan, who procured a copy of the original from the Burgundian Library, Brussels.

by our hallowed walls."³⁸ Further on in the manuscript there is another reference to the secular teaching given by the Franciscans: "The Tertiaries" it is stated, "did good service in Ireland, for the liberality of the native princes enabled them to diffuse learning among the poorer classes, who were always addicted to booklore. I myself have met peasant lads educated in those schools, who were as familiar with Virgil, Horace, Homer and other classic writers, as they were with the genealogies of the Milesian princes."³⁹

Though there is this evidence of the existence of Irish monasteries at the end of the sixteenth century, it is significant that between the years 1582 and 1681 about twenty colleges for Irish Catholic students were founded on the Continent: Salamanca in 1582, Lisbon in 1595, Douai in 1596, Antwerp in 1600, Prague in 1631, Toulouse in 1660, Paris in 1677. There were at least four foundations in Rome established in 1625, 1626, 1656 and 1677 respectively.⁴⁰ Substantial testimony that opportunities of securing higher education at home were becoming increasingly difficult, and that there were few or no facilities for the education of those intended for the Church.

From the end of the sixteenth century to the outbreak of the French Revolution, these colleges received great numbers of young men who left Ireland to study for the priesthood, for the army, for medicine and for law; and, in their turn, made necessary the continued existence of schools in Ireland for the early education of future entrants. No doubt, many students had been pupils of schools on the Continent; but it is equally certain that most of them received their early training at home.

We have remarkable evidence of this in the documents of the Irish College at Salamanca which furnish not only "important information regarding the families, dioceses, and native places of the students," but also a record of

³⁸ "Rise and Fall of the Irish Franciscan Monasteries," p. 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-6.

⁴⁰ Anderson: "Historical Sketches of the Native Irish," p. 112 *et seq.*

"teachers and schools in Ireland from the latter days of the bitter sixteenth century."⁴¹ The following, which is part of a statement in connexion with John Meade, who entered the college in 1598, serves to illustrate the value of these records: "Jacobus Miach Corcagensis et ejusdem diocesis, oriundus est a parentibus Dominico Miach et Elizabetha Lange, ejusdem civitatis naturalibus, catholicis et legitimo matrimonio junctis qui hunc Jacobum generunt studuit Corcagiae sub Magistro Denam (?), suspecto catholico, et Clonmeliae (Clonmel) sub Magistro Thoma a Cargia singulari catholico duobus annis . . ."⁴² The names of the student's parents are given, the diocese to which he belonged, and a brief account of his studies under two teachers in Ireland.

Trinity College, Dublin, had been founded in 1595. But by the native Irish and the Catholic Anglo-Irish it could only be regarded as a foreign institution.

1720
7
In the seventeenth century, education was given as circumstances permitted. The life of a school was at the mercy of the occasion. It waxed strong during a period of tolerance; it decayed or vanished in a time of suppression. The fate of many schools must have been such as that of the great establishment of Alexander Lynch, father of the author of "Cambrensis Eversus," which flourished till 1615. The report of the Royal Commission appointed by James I to inquire into the state of the Irish dioceses describes the final act: "Wee found in Galway a publique schoolesmaster named Lynch, placed there by the Cittizens, who had great numbers of schollers, not only out of that Province but also out of the Pale, and other partes resorting to him. Wee had daily prooffe, during our continuance in that citty, how well his schollers profited under him, by versions and orations which they presented us. Wee sent for that schoolemaster before us, and seriously advised him to conform to the Religion established, and not prevailing with our advices, we enjoyned him to forbear teaching:

⁴¹ "Archivium Hibernicum." Vol. II., p. 1. Documents by the Very Rev. M. J. O'Doherty, Rector of the Irish College, Salamanca.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 8.

and I the chancellour did take a Recognizance of him and some others of his kinsmen in that citty, in the some of 400 *li.* sterl., to his Mate. use, that from thenceforth he should forbear to teach any more, without the speciall License of the Lo. Deputy."⁴³

In the statement, on oath, of Theobald Jennings, a student at the Irish College, Salamanca, there is a reference to a teacher named Alexander Lynch: "Ego Theobaldus Jonyn literarum studiosus oriundus Cregmor in Ibernia Comitatu Mayo in Conacia, Parentes habui Riccardum Jonyn et Anaplam Theobaldi in Diaecesi Tuamensi operam dedi humanioribus litteris ibidem ab ineunte aetate sub magistris Alexandro Lince et Isacco Molaly"⁴⁴—a declaration that he was born in the County Mayo in the diocese of Tuam, and from an early age studied the Humanities under Isaac Mullaly and Alexander Lynch. Probably Alexander Lynch of Galway. There are other teachers whose names occur in both documents;⁴⁵ but we can learn little of them.

Though the suppression of schools was of frequent occurrence in the first half of the seventeenth century, yet there is evidence of much educational activity on the part of the religious orders, notably the Franciscans and Jesuits.⁴⁶

1649- Even under the Commonwealth, education was continued, though the schoolmaster was liable to be punished with the greatest severity; his life was at stake, as well as his freedom. In the Commonwealth Records we find, among various references to schoolmasters, the following: "Order touching popish-Schoolmasters to be transplanted into Connaught. The Councel take into consideration, that such persons corrupt the youth of this Nation with Popish principals. Such Schoolmasters to

⁴³ This is given in O'Flaherty: "Description of West Connaught," p. 215. For notes *re* this text see Corcoran: "State Policy in Irish Education," p. 65; and "Education Systems in Ireland," pp. 15-17.

⁴⁴ "Archivium Hibernicum." Vol. III., p. 93.

⁴⁵ See Corcoran: "Education Systems in Ireland," pp. 16, 17; and "Archivium Hibernicum." Vol. III., pp. 90, 93.

⁴⁶ Corcoran: "State Policy in Irish Education," pp. 67, 68, 70.

bee secured, and put on board of such ship bound for the Islands of the Barbadoes."⁴⁷

Great was the courage and zeal of the priest who ventured to give instruction in those days. Father James Ford taught school in a bog district: "P. Jacobus Fordus in medio vastissimi paludis ubi terra nonnihil firmior erat, aediculam construxit, ad quam vicinorum adolescentes et parvuli convenerant, et modo conveniunt, ut literis imbuantur, et fidei ac virtutum rudimentis exerceantur . . . parvuli isti, exemplo magistri, continuis vacant mortificationibus et jejuniis."⁴⁸ And about the same time Father Stephen Gelosse was teaching under equally difficult conditions in the neighbourhood of New Ross: "Stephen Gelosse, S.J., has been working in and near New Ross this year 1669, and ever since 1650 When Cromwell's tyranny ceased, Father Gelosse taught a small school in a wretched hovel beside a deep ditch, and there educated a few children furtively. When the king was restored, his companion thought they might make a venture; the hut was levelled, and a large house was built, where they opened a school. This school became famous, and drew scholars from various parts of Ireland."⁴⁹

1660
The reign of Charles II, following one of the worst periods in the history of Ireland, seems to have been, in spite of the strictures on Catholic worship, a period of comparative security for the Irish Catholic.⁵⁰ By 1682, education seems to have been on a sounder footing; not only was instruction given at home, but there was evidently closer contact with the Irish Colleges on the Continent. "The people still retain an ardent desire for learning," stated Sir Henry Piers, "and both at home and abroad do attain unto good measures thereof. There are from the highest to the lowest classes of them that are very

⁴⁷ Printed in "Archivium Hibernicum." Vol. VI., pp. 188-9.

⁴⁸ Status ac Conditio Hiberniae, 1652-6. Quin MSS. Arundel Library, Stonyhurst. Printed in Corcoran: "Education Systems," p. 26.

⁴⁹ Letter to Rome. Hogan MSS. Printed in Corcoran: "Education Systems," p. 26.

⁵⁰ See Corcoran: "State Policy in Irish Education," pp. 85-8.

ingenious and docile; in this only unhappy, that they will not breed their youth in our universities, neither in this kingdom nor in England, because of the religion therein professed, but choose rather, being not permitted to have public schools of their own, to educate their children under private professors, or else send them abroad into France or Spain for their breeding. Neither is a priest now among them of any repute, if he has not spent some years abroad."⁵¹ In the same year, 1682, Erasmus Smith complained that the schools, of which he was founder and benefactor, were being seriously injured by the popularity of the "many popish schooles" in their immediate vicinity. "My Lords . . . my designe is not to reflect upon any," he wrote to the Governors of the schools, "only I give my Judgement why these schooles are so consumptive, which was, and is, and will be (if not prevented) the many popish schooles, theire neighbours, which as succors doe starve the tree."⁵²

Catholic schools, particularly those under the charge of religious orders, flourished during the brief reign of James II when for the first time in the history of Ireland a Catholic was appointed Provost of Trinity College, Dublin.⁵³

But after the accession of William III to the throne and the introduction of the Penal Laws in this and the subsequent reigns, the position was changed. Education was forbidden at home and abroad, under the severest penalties. Catholic bishops and regular clergy were compelled to leave the country, and priests were not allowed to enter. The clergy who remained in Ireland were without their ecclesiastical leaders, and, therefore, without the means of maintaining their numbers, let alone increasing them.⁵⁴ That some of them did still teach even in the most difficult circumstances is beyond question; but their opportunities of doing so were extremely limited

⁵¹ "A Chorographical Description of the County of Meath," p. 112.

⁵² P. P. 1857-8, XXII. Part I., p. 23.

⁵³ "Archivium Hibernicum." Vol. V., p. 7, *et seq.*

⁵⁴ See Chap. II., in which the Penal Code is more fully dealt with.

and their first care was the spiritual welfare of their flocks.

The work of education was, therefore, left mainly to the lay schoolmaster who was daring enough to risk his liberty in order to teach. Schools were set up in remote and mountainous districts where danger of detection was least likely to be incurred, and where instruction might be carried on without serious or prolonged interruption. These illegal schools, the Hedge Schools of Ireland, were destined to be the channel of all surreptitious education in the country till almost the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

IV.

THE Hedge Schools were clearly of peasant institution. They were maintained by the people who wanted their children educated; and they were taught by men who came from the people, and who often believed that teaching was their mission in life. Therein lay the strength of the Hedge Schools. Patronage was a thing almost unknown to the hedge schoolmaster. Occasionally Catholic landowners showed a practical interest in the education of their tenants. Lady Esmond kept a school at Ringville,⁵⁶ and Mr. Power of Bellevue paid a yearly sum of £10 to the teacher of a school at Gurteens;⁵⁷ both schools being in the same parish of Slieverue, County Kilkenny. Such instances, however, were not common. The Catholic clergy did much to encourage the establishment of Hedge Schools, and in some cases privately paid for the education of poor children, "thus sparing families the pain of exposing their distress, or leaving their little ones destitute of instruction."⁵⁸

The poorest and humblest of the schools gave instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic; Latin, Greek,

⁵⁵ See author's article, "Illegal Education: a Study in Irish History."—*Dublin Review*, April, 1929.

⁵⁶ See Lewis: "Topographical Dictionary of Ireland," under *Slieverue*.

⁵⁷ P. P. 1826-27. XII. pp. 646-7.

⁵⁸ Fitzpatrick: "Life of Dr. Doyle." Vol. I., p. 323. See also author's article, "The Catholic Clergy and Popular Education in Ireland in 1825."—*The Tablet*, 27th May, 1933.

Mathematics and other subjects were taught in a great number of schools; and in many cases the work was done entirely through the medium of the Irish language.

Though the use of the vernacular was rapidly falling into decay during the eighteenth century, it was owing to the greater value of English on the fair and market rather than to any shifting of ground on the part of the schools. At no period did they lack teachers who were well versed in the language, literature and history of the country. Andrew MacGrath the "Merry Pedlar," Brian Merriman, the two O'Sullivans, were Irish poets; Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara wrote both Latin and Irish verse; Fitzgibbon and O'Connell were compilers of Irish dictionaries, the manuscript of the latter is in the British Museum; Humphrey O'Sullivan wrote a remarkable diary in Irish which attracted the attention of the scholar O'Curry; McElligott was an authority on Irish grammar; others were scribes, translators and collectors of manuscripts.

The Hedge Schools were the most vital force in popular education in Ireland during the eighteenth century. They emerged in the nineteenth century more vigorous still, outnumbering all other schools, and so profoundly national as to hasten the introduction of a State system of education in 1831.

19598.



CHAPTER II.

EDUCATION AND THE PENAL CODE.

"THE legislation on the subject of Catholic education," wrote Lecky, the Protestant historian, "may be briefly described, for it amounted simply to universal, unqualified, and unlimited proscription."¹ It has been said more than once that the laws against education were never rigorously put into force, but there is much evidence to the contrary. The difficulties in the way of education both at home and on the Continent were very real. I Schoolmasters were imprisoned and fined.² Substantial rewards were offered and given to those who brought about their conviction.³ Magistrates were empowered to examine upon oath any person over the age of sixteen,⁴ and many who were suspected of knowing that schools were being taught in the neighbourhood, or that children had been sent abroad for their education were, therefore, obliged to tell what they knew.⁵ Protestant schoolmasters were forbidden to employ Catholics as assistant teachers,⁶ and magistrates were warned to attend strictly both to the letter and to the spirit of the law.⁷ Schoolmaster, householder and friendly magistrate were all equally good game for the informer.

When the novelty of having the schoolmaster as quarry began to die down, or when the magistrate began to

¹ "History of Ireland in the 18th Century." Vol. I., p. 148.

² See the case of Charles Grey, "Popish Schoolmaster," in the Dublin Corporation Records. Vol. VI., p. 342. See also Corcoran: "Education Systems in Ireland," pp. 51-6; and Burke: "Irish Priests in Penal Times," pp. 300-02, 385-8, 394-6.

³ "We present £10 . . . to Capt. John Odell for his service in taking Thomas Fitzgerald a popish schoolmaster." See Burke, p. 396.

⁴ 8 Anne c. 3, s. 21.

⁵ See, for example, Burke, p. 386.

⁶ 8 Anne, c. 3, s. 16.

⁷ 4 Anne, c. s. 4.

demand more definite proofs of his statements from the informer, the authorities put more weighty, though not more effective, machinery at work. In his charge to the Grand Jury of Cork, on January 13th, 1740, Sir Richard Cox urges the jurors, the administrators of justice, to take upon themselves the role of prosecutors of the law in order to hasten the conviction of offending school-masters: "Now, Gentlemen, that there are such Offenders in the Country is notorious, although every man who entertains one of them *forfeits* 10l. Yet it is to be feared they are too often encouraged for their Cheapness by Protestants. . . . You are not to wait for regular Information; if the Offenders are within your Knowledge, you may and ought to present them."⁸

In 1745 an Act of Parliament was passed by which it was sought to continue the suppression of education: "And whereas an act made in this kingdom in the seventh year of the reign of his Majesty King William the third of glorious memory, intituled, *An act to prevent foreign education*, hath not been duly put in execution: to the end that by the strict observance of the said act, and of this present act, the peace of this kingdom may be preserved; be it enacted That at the several assizes to be held in the several counties and counties of cities and towns within this kingdom, and at the several quarter-sessions of the peace for the county of Dublin and county of the city of Dublin, this act and the said act of the seventh of King William shall be publickly read in open court by the clerk of the crown and peace respectively, after the grand jury is empanelled, and before the charge is given."⁹ The implication is obvious: the number of Hedge Schools was evidently on the increase, and communication with the Continent was more regular. The Act of William III was so complete an instrument that Edmund Burke wrote of it: "While this restraint upon foreign and domestic education was part of a horrible and impious system of servitude, the

⁸ A Charge delivered to the Grand Jury, Dublin, 1741, pp. 11-13.

⁹ 19 George II, c. 7. S. 6

(D 948)

members were well fitted to the body. To render men patient under a deprivation of all the rights of human nature, everything which could give them a knowledge or feeling of these rights was rationally forbidden. To render humanity fit to be insulted, it was fit it should be degraded."¹⁰

As late as December, 1760, we find a reference showing that the State still viewed foreign education with extreme disfavour. In his address to the Grand Juries of Dublin City and County, Judge Robinson gave this direction: "You are to Enquire of, and Present, all Misprisons of Treason, all Offences against the Acts of Parliament, made in this Kingdom, to restrain the Education of our Youth in Foreign Popish Seminaries; to hinder Papists bearing Arms at Home; and to prevent the King's Subjects from Enlisting in Foreign Service, without his Majesty's Licence; and all Offences against the Statute of Premunire."¹¹

Promise of relief came with the Act of 1782. This act admitted the undue severity of the laws against education; and it definitely stated that they had not succeeded in their object: "Whereas several of the laws made in this kingdom, relative to the education of papists, or persons professing the popish religion, are considered as too severe, and have not answered the desired effect: be it enacted That so much (of the acts 7 Wm. III, c. 4; 8 Anne, c. 3) . . . as subjects persons of the popish religion, who shall publickly teach school, or who shall instruct youth in learning in any private popish house within this realm, to the like pains, penalties and forfeitures as any popish regular convict, shall be repealed."¹²

This was not a charter of liberty to teach. The school-master was free to educate, but only on certain conditions. He had to take the oath of allegiance to the Crown. He could not have Protestant children in his school. He

¹⁰ Letter to a Peer.

¹¹ A Charge given to the Grand Juries of the County of the City of Dublin and County of Dublin, Dec. 15th, 1760, pp. 31-2.

¹² 21 and 22 George III, c. 62. S. 1.

was not allowed to teach in a Protestant school; we have instances, however, of Catholic teachers being "entertained to instruct youth in learning, as usher, undermaster, or assistant" by Protestant schoolmasters: Patrick Lynch, for example, taught at the Rev. Mr. Hare's school at Cashel.¹³ The harshest condition imposed, which has often been referred to as a new penal law against education, was that no "popish university or college" could be erected or endowed, and that no school could be endowed. This effectively hampered the organisation of Catholic education. Lastly, before a teacher could set up his school, the act required him to obtain a licence to teach from the Protestant bishop of the diocese or his representative who was empowered to grant such a licence and to withdraw it at will.

When Dr. Plunket, Catholic Bishop of Meath, desired to have one or two licensed schools in Navan, he wrote to the Anglican bishop in the following terms:

"My Lord,

The Roman Catholics of the diocese of Meath wish to avail themselves of the indulgence of the legislature, which, by a late Act, allows, under certain restrictions, persons of their persuasion to instruct youth in this kingdom. I am called upon by them humbly to request your Lordship will be pleased to grant the licence necessary for that purpose. A school so situated as to be under the eye of their ecclesiastical superior, would, they assure me, have a particular claim to their confidence; be better calculated than any other in this district could be to answer the end of such an institution; and is what they earnestly desire. Convinced, as they are, that they address themselves to a prelate of a liberal and enlightened mind, they doubt not but your Lordship will, on this occasion, concur with the wisdom and humanity of Parliament, in diminishing one of the most painful grievances they have laboured under for a series of years. To so discerning an

¹³,"Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal." Vol. XV., p. 48.

encourager of everything that tends to promote public and private happiness in this neighbourhood, I need not observe that a numerous and respectable school, authorised by the law of the land, having your Lordship's sanction, would, by attracting strangers, by diffusing civilization, and by giving additional employment to industry, be productive of substantial advantage to Navan. On my part no attention should be wanting to guard against abuses which, if I could not prevent, I should be the first to complain of. I should make it a capital object of my care that the Roman Catholic youth of this diocese should be taught to revere the civil constitution of their country; and that their affections should not be estranged from it by any unfriendly principles whatever. No steps have I yet taken to forward this business, nor shall, until acquainted with your Lordship's intentions. May I then presume to hope, my Lord, that you will grant to one Roman Catholic, or more, if necessary, qualified as the law prescribes, a licence for teaching in Navan? A line on this subject from your Lordship, with which I beg I may be honoured, shall regulate my conduct. In the meantime, it is with particular satisfaction, I embrace this opportunity of assuring you, that I am, with great respect, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient and humble servant.

P. J. Plunket."¹⁴

The date of this letter is 10 July, 1783. The reply, dated a fortnight later from Dublin, is enlightening:

"Sir,

Upon my return to town a few days ago from the county of Wexford, I received the favour of your letter, and I must beg leave to postpone giving you an answer to the application which you have made to me, until I shall have some conversation with you upon the subject, which I shall be particularly

¹⁴ Printed in Cogan: "History of the Diocese of Meath." Vol. III., pp. 86-7.

glad to have, as it will give me an opportunity of becoming acquainted with you—a circumstance which I am certain (from your general character) will always give me pleasure.

I am, Sir, your most obedient and very humble servant.

H. Meath.”¹⁵

Unfortunately we have no knowledge of what took place subsequently. There is a passage in a previous letter¹⁶ from the Protestant Bishop of Meath to Dr. Plunket which suggests that schoolmasters did actually make personal application for licences to teach: “I could not think,” writes the former, “of granting a licence to John Quin for keeping school at Navan, without having your approbation first signified to me.” As a matter of fact, the schoolmaster does not appear to have troubled about licences; certainly no other evidence of a similar nature has, to my knowledge, ever been met with.

In the Act of 1792 there was this provision: “And whereas by an act passed in the twenty-first and twenty-second years of his present Majesty’s reign, entitled: An act to allow persons professing the popish religion to teach school in this kingdom, and for regulating the education of papists; . . . it is required, That any person of the popish religion who shall teach or keep school, shall first obtain the license of the ordinary of the diocese, and it is not expedient any longer to make such license necessary; be it enacted, That it shall not from the passing of this act be necessary that the license of the ordinary shall be obtained, in order to authorise any person of the Roman catholic religion to keep or teach school; provided always, That such person shall in all other respects . . . conform himself to the said last mentioned act.”¹⁷ Though it is specifically stated here that it was no longer necessary to obtain a licence to

¹⁵ Printed in Cogan: “History of the Diocese of Meath.” Vol. III., pp. 87-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 86. Letter dated 8th Feb., 1783.

¹⁷ 32 George III, c. 21.

teach, yet we have undeniable testimony that after 1792 licences were sought for and granted, and that as late as 1814 a licence to keep a school was refused.

X In 1799 the nuns of the Presentation Convent, Waterford, were granted a licence to teach. The document reads as follows:

“Richard, by Divine permission, Lord Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, To our well beloved in Christ, Miss Elinor Power, greeting, whereas you are presented to us by the Revd. Thomas Keating, the Revd. John Power, and Peter St. Leger, Merchant, all of the City of Waterford, as a fit and proper person to teach females, and keep a boarding School for the Education of females in the City of Waterford aforesaid, we therefore, confiding, as well in the Integrity of your morals and Honesty of your life and conversation as in your skill and Ability in Instructing or causing females to be instructed; Do by the Tenor of these presents Give and Grant unto you, the said Elinor Power, (in whose fidelity we confide), full power and authority to keep a boarding School, and perform the Office of School Mistress, to teach and Instruct, or cause to be well and sufficiently taught and Instructed, such females of the Roman Catholic profession of said City, as now are, or shall hereafter be, committed to your care, strictly enjoining and Earnestly Recommending it to you to pay the Greatest Attention, as well to the morals of such children, as to teaching them the fear of God and keeping his Commandments, and we do by these presents Inhibit all other person or persons from teaching within the said City without our Licence or faculty, first to them for that purpose Granted, on pain of the Law and Contempt thereof.

“In Testimony whereof, we have caused the Seal of our Consistorial Court of Waterford and Lismore to be hereunto affixed, this 16th day of December, In the year of our Lord, One Thousand, Seven hundred and ninety-nine.—George Fleury, Registrar.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Printed in “Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal.” Vol. XIII., p. 130.

On April 2nd, 1819, the Rev. Garrett Connolly, also of Waterford, was granted a licence to keep a school.

2 "Rev. Garrett Connolly's Licence to Teach Youth and keep a Boarding School in the Diocese of Waterford

"Whereas, you have made application to us agreeable to the Statute in that case made and provided for our License or Faculty to teach Youth and keep a Boarding School in our Diocese aforesaid: We therefore presuming that you are fully competent to perform the Office of a Teacher or Schoolmaster and confiding in the integrity of your morals, life and conversation do grant unto you full power and authority to keep a Boarding School Within our said Diocese and to teach and instruct such Pupils as shall be committed to your care and cause to be paid the greatest attention as well to the moral as to the literary instruction of all your said Pupils. And we do by these presents nominate, constitute and appoint you the aforesaid Garrett Connolly a Licensed Teacher or Schoolmaster of our Diocese, aforesaid, during our pleasure you having first before us or our Commissioner or Surrogate taken the Oaths required by Law in this behalf. And we do also Inhibit all other persons from Teaching Youth or keeping School within our Diocese aforesaid without having first obtained our License or Faculty for that purpose under pain of the Law and Contempt thereof."¹⁹

In these documents it is made clear that "the ordinary of the diocese" had still the power to grant a licence, and to withdraw it at any time, and that he could put the law into force against anyone who taught or kept school within his diocese without official authorisation. Each applicant for a licence to teach had to be "sufficiently recommended as a proper person to keep school" and to produce a certificate of having "taken the Oath of Allegiance and declaration prescribed to be taken by Law."²⁰ In the licence given in 1799 to the founders of

¹⁹ "Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal," Vol. XII., p. 163.

²⁰ See Licence given to the Presentation Convent, Kilkenny, printed in Moran: "Catholics of Ireland under the Penal Laws," p. 118.

the Ursuline Convent, Thurles, County Tipperary, the act of 1782 is cited as if it were the most recent provision affecting Catholic education: "Whereas by an Act of Parliament made in this kingdom in the twenty-first and twenty-second year of his present Majesty's reign, a power is given to us to grant license to Papists . . . to authorise them to teach school, and to recall the same, WE do, therefore, hereby grant to you . . . our license and authority to teach school in the parish of Thurles."²¹

✓ The correspondence²² in connection with the application of the Rev. Peter Kenny, formerly vice-president of the "Royal College of Maynooth," for a licence to teach afford additional proof that the education clause in the act of 1792 was either misinterpreted or deliberately ignored. Incidentally it discloses the formalities which attended the granting of a licence. The negotiations were spread over a considerable period. The communication of the Anglican bishop of Kildare to Mr. Denis Scully,²³ of Merrion Square, Dublin, dated 13th May, 1814, outlines the method of procedure in seeking a licence to teach: "Your letter was left by the Revd. Mr. Kenny . . . I do not know exactly how the law stands concerning Licenses . . . It is the province of the Consistorial Court to grant such Licenses, and I should suppose it to be quite a matter of course . . . for Mr. Kenny to apply to and receive from Dr. Mitford, through the medium of the Revd. Rawdon Greene, Registrar of the Diocese of Kildare, such a paper . . ." The Rev. Rawdon Greene's reply to Father Kenny's letter of application, a little more than a week later, suggests that local representatives of the Anglican Church had much to say upon the question of permitting the legal establishment of Catholic schools: "Before the License can be sealed, it will be necessary for Mr. Kenny to procure a Certificate signed by the Minister and Church Wardens

²¹ Printed in Corcoran: "State Policy in Irish Education," p. 132.

²² MSS. original documents, Clongowes Wood College, Kildare. Printed in Corcoran: "State Policy in Irish Education," p. 141.

²³ Author of an important work on the Penal Laws.

of the Parish of Clane, setting forth that they believe Mr. Kenny to be duly qualified to 'keep a School within the said Parish for the Education and Instruction of persons professing the Roman Catholic Religion.' Upon this certificate being transmitted Mr. Greene will without delay forward the License." A letter dated 6th June from the same writer leaves little doubt as to the Protestant clergyman's authority to oppose the development of Catholic education in the district under his jurisdiction: "Mr. Greene presents his Compliments to Mr. Kenny, and begs leave to acknowledge the Receipt of his letter stating that the Parish Minister of Clane had refused to give the Recommendation upon which Mr. Kenny's license was to be granted.

"Mr. Greene is much concerned that he is obliged to inform Mr. Kenny that the License cannot be possibly be granted without such Certificate."

This seems to be directly contrary to the sense of the act of 1792. The licence granted after that period may, however, have been something of the nature of an acknowledgment that the prescribed conditions as to taking the oath of allegiance and procuring a certificate of character had been fulfilled: a formality flattering to the authorities, but tending to make more secure the position of the teacher. By law a licence to teach was no longer required; in effect, the permission of "the ordinary of the diocese" was essential. Education was thus scarcely less restricted than before.

It is extremely doubtful if hedge schoolmasters, or indeed if any but a few lay teachers, sought licences. The safety of the schoolmaster lay in his obscurity. There was no certainty that the best qualified applicant would obtain a licence; and there was no guarantee that, having once obtained it, he would be allowed to continue to hold it. Thus, the Hedge Schools, often described by contemporary writers as "unlicensed schools," were illegal institutions till the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829.

CHAPTER III.

ENGLISH SCHOOLS ON PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS IN IRELAND BEFORE 1782.

THE law was not the only opponent of national education in Ireland. There were other hostile forces. These were English schools, rival educational establishments intended mainly to wean the people from the customs, the language and, after Henry VIII's time, the religion of their country.¹

1 The first of these was the Parish Schools, instituted by Henry VIII to introduce and spread a knowledge of the English language. The Act of Parliament enjoined, on oath, every clergyman to "keepe, or cause to be kept, within the place, territory, or paroch, where he shall have . . . benefice or promotion, a schole for to learne English."²

2 Next followed the Diocesan Schools. In Elizabeth's reign an act was passed directing that a "Free School" should be set up in every diocese. "The Schoolemaster" was to be "an Englishman, or of the English birth of this realm."³ These schools were intended to provide education for the middle classes, just as the Parish Schools were to have catered for "the lower classes."³

3 During the reign of Charles I, the Free Schools of Royal Foundation were set up.⁴ While during the seventeenth century and the earlier part of the eighteenth century, a little band of classical schools sprang into existence, established out of funds bequeathed for that purpose by private individuals. Among these latter was 4 Kilkenny College, founded in 1684 by the Duke of

¹ The clergy "shall bid the beades in the English tongue." An Act for the English order habit and language. 28 Henry VIII, c. 15.

² *Ibid.*

³ 12 Elizabeth c. 1.

⁴ P. P. 1813-14. V. pp. 1-10.

Ormond, in which Dean Swift received his early education.⁵

Then came the "English Schools of Private Foundation," which were some sixty-five in number.⁶ 65

In 1669 the Erasmus Smith Schools were founded.⁷ These are of peculiar interest inasmuch as the interpretation of the charter under which they were established is still more or less a matter of controversy. "No more striking and historic instance," writes Professor Corcoran, "could be cited to show that questions of education in Ireland often have their roots in the past history of the land and its people, and in many cases can be solved only by plans that involve acts of moral judgment on the men who made that history."⁸ Three schools were established during Erasmus Smith's lifetime. "My end in founding the three schools was, to propagate the Protestant faith according to the Scriptures, avoiding all superstition, as the Charter and the bye-lawes and the rules established do direct. Therefore, it is the command of His Majesty to catechise the children out of Primate Ussher's catechism, and expound the same unto them, which I humbly desire may be observed upon the penalty of forfeiting their (the masters') places."⁹ The value of the foundation became very great during the eighteenth century; at the beginning of the nineteenth century the name of Erasmus Smith was connected with Trinity College, Dublin, with four Grammar schools and a considerable number of "English" schools.¹⁰ 3

⁵ P. P. 1813-14, V., pp. 279-287.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 289-325.

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 217-245.

⁸ "State Policy in Irish Education," 1916, p. 27.

⁹ From letter dated June 6th, 1682. Given in P. P. 1857-8. Pt. I., p. 23.

¹⁰ P. P. 1813-14, V. pp. 219-20. See also P. P. 1826-27. xii. pp. 58-63.

In Dutton's "Survey of Galway" (1824), pp. 405-6, a brief history of the Erasmus Smith foundation is given; it is a quotation from another work, but no reference is given.

"Erasmus Smyth was an Alderman of London, who came over to Ireland with the army as commissary in the year 1641 to suppress the rebellion. After it was put down, he purchased at very low rates many of the forfeited estates in various parts of Ireland, particularly in the county of the town of Galway, and neighbourhood of Sligo. Well knowing

Few of these establishments seem to have been of great importance as educative forces; and none of them succeeded in clearing even its immediate field of schools of native growth.¹¹

The Parish and Diocesan schools were stated in 1809 to have been a failure; and the blame was laid on the clergy of the Established Church.¹² The Reports of the Board of Education of 1808-12 point out that "at no time do they (the Diocesan Schools) appear to have fully answered the purpose of their Institution."¹³ The Royal Schools did not seem to have fared much better; and the Classical Schools of Private Foundation were nearly all conducted as pure businesses in which little account was taken of the claims of the children of Protestants in straitened circumstances for whose education they were in the main originally intended.

The English Schools of Private Foundation were apparently more successful. According to the expressed wishes of their founders, some received all that were brought to their doors, some received Protestants only, and some took in Protestants when Catholics were not available. Ballintay School, opened in 1776, was intended "for teaching the Children of the poor Inhabitants . . . of all religious denominations, to read and write."¹⁴ Finglas School, on the other hand, was a Charity School established in 1725, "for clothing, educating and binding out Apprentices, 20 boys of poor Popish parents to be

that his titles and tenures were very precarious, and liable at a future period to be litigated, he very cunningly made a grant of part of the lands for the founding and endowment of Protestant schools, and other charitable purposes, for which he obtained a charter, dated the 26th of March, 1669, appointing the bench of bishops, the lord chancellor, the judges, the great law officers, all for the time being, governors and trustees, well knowing that if any flaw should ever appear in the patents, titles, or tenures under which he got the estates, the law officers would always protect and make the title good to his heirs, and which has been really the case, as his heirs have possessed their immense property unmolested to this day."

¹¹ See O'Driscoll: "Views of Ireland." Vol. II., pp. 341-5; also Wakefield: "Account of Ireland." Vol. II., p. 406 *et seq.*

¹² Wakefield: "Account of Ireland." Vol. II., p. 421.

¹³ P. P. 1813-14. V. p. 113.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 308.

bred up as Protestants: If the Children of such Parents are not to be had, the Children of poor Protestants are to be admitted."¹⁵ In Colonel Robertson's bequest it was stated: "such as . . . may not be of the Established Religion are notwithstanding to share equally in this Legacy, which, it is to be hoped, will contribute to their conformation with the English Church, by enlightening their understandings."¹⁶

The last important foundation before 1782 was the Charter Schools,¹⁷ the main consideration in the establishment of which is clear from Archbishop Boulter's statement: "The great number of papists in this kingdom," he wrote in 1730, "and the obstinacy with which they adhere to their own religion, occasions our trying what may be done with their children to bring them over to our church."¹⁸ The only children that could be obtained for this purpose would naturally be the children of the very poor who would yield them up to save them from starvation.

58 The Society which was responsible for the management of the schools was handsomely financed by both the Irish and Imperial Parliaments. From its incorporation in 1733 till the year 1824 the average annual income of the Society was about £18,000 derived from public funds and private donations. Between 1820 and 1830 the income was nearly one and a half times this amount.¹⁹ The total number of establishments set up by the Society was never more than fifty-eight, capable of accommodating 2,700 children; by 1824 the number had diminished to thirty.²⁰ (30)

The children were housed, fed, clothed and instructed up to the age of about thirteen or fourteen, and were then bound out as apprentices. No children were ever restored to their parents; and as little communication as

¹⁵ P. P. 1813-4. V., p. 297.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 318.

¹⁷ See author's article on "The Irish Charter Schools," in *The Dublin Review*, January, 1932.

¹⁸ Letters written by Dr. Boulter. Vol. II., p. 10.

¹⁹ See O'Brien: "Education in Ireland." 1839. pp. 142-3.

²⁰ "Hints on the Formation of Lending Libraries," pp. 5-6.

possible was allowed between. As a rule, children were taken away to schools at great distances from their homes.

Local committees were formed to deal with individual schools; but usually the conduct of the schools was left entirely in the hands of the teacher who looked after all the needs of the boys and girls under his care. For this he was paid a salary of £12 a year, receiving in addition £7 a year for feeding and £2 a year for clothing each child, as well as nearly all the profit of the children's labour in the factory, or on the farm attached to the school.²¹

The system led to enormous abuses: the children were over-worked, badly fed and ill-clothed; and their instruction in many cases was altogether neglected.

On the 14th May, 1773, John Wesley visited the Charter School at Castlebar: "In the evening I preached at Ballinrobe," he wrote, "and on Saturday went on to Castlebar. Entering the town I was struck with the sight of the Charter School: No gate to the court-yard! A large chasm in the wall! Heaps of rubbish before the house-door! Broken windows in abundance! the whole a picture of slothfulness, nastiness, and desolation! I did not dream there were any inhabitants, till the next day I saw about forty boys and girls walking from church. As I was just behind them, I could not but observe:—(1) That there was neither master nor mistress, though it seems they were both well; (2) That both boys and girls were completely dirty; (3) That none of them seemed to have any garters on, their stockings hanging about their heels; (4) That in the heels even of many of the girls' stockings, were holes larger than a crown-piece. I gave a plain account of these things to the trustees of the Charter-School in Dublin; whether they are altered or no, I cannot tell."²²

John Howard, the philanthropist, expressed his conviction that the Charter Schools needed "a thorough parliamentary inquiry."²³ He said that he found the

²¹ See P. P. 1813-14. V. 3rd Report and Appendices.

²² Journal. Vol. III. p. 478.

²³ Howard: "State of the Prisons in England and Wales," p. 208.

children in the Hedge Schools "much forwarder than those of the same age in the charter schools," as well as being "clean and wholesome."²⁴

The account given by Sir Jeremiah Fitzpatrick, Inspector-General of Prisons, presents a vivid picture of the wretched conditions in some of the Charter Schools. The record of his visit to the school at Charleville on the 2nd January, 1786, makes painful reading: "When I arrived at this Place the Wether was exceedingly cold, and the Snow above twenty Inches deep. There were seventeen Boys and Nine Girls in the School, all ragged. I entered the House unexpectedly, leaving my Servant at a Distance, which is my Custom, lest the Idea of Inspection should occur to the Master. This Precaution afforded me the Opportunity of seeing two little Girls sitting on a table in the School-room, which was damp and clay-floored, without any Fire; their little Legs were under each other's Petticoats to keep them warm; at the same Time a Girl of ten Years old was blowing on her Infant Sister's fingers to procure them a temporary Relief from the excessive Cold. The Windows of every Room were broken, the Beds filthy; and there was not a single Sheet in the House for the Childrens Use, whose Education was shamefully neglected."²⁵

During the next forty years the abuses seem to have continued almost without intermission. More money was spent on administration than on education; the emoluments of the members of the Incorporated claimed more attention than the needs of the children in the schools.

There is scarcely an honest contemporary writer that did not distrust and despise them.²⁶ Englishmen like Wakefield and Steven exposed and condemned them. Irishmen like Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Elias Thackeray were blind to the harm they wrought. Yet the Reports on Education with which the latter were officially connected took care to point out that the Charter

²⁴ "An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe," p. 119.

²⁵ "House of Commons Journal." Vol. XII. Pt. II., p. dcccxxi.

²⁶ Wakefield: "Account of Ireland." Vol. II., p. 412 ff.; Steven: "Inquiry into the Abuses of the Chartered Schools in Ireland," p. 146-7.

Schools had failed to achieve the object of their establishment—"the conversion of the lower orders of the Inhabitants of Ireland from the errors of Popery."²⁷ After 1830 the parliamentary grant was withdrawn.

The schools on public and private foundations in Ireland, either individually or collectively, were never really concerned with the main body of the Irish people. Their educational work was confined to a minority. Many of the Classical Schools and of the English Schools of Private Foundation still remain worthy monuments to their founders and benefactors. Schools which were established purely to spread Protestantism among the Catholic population were not a success. The Charter Schools, according to Froude, were "a conspicuous and a monstrous failure."²⁸

²⁷ P. P. 1813-4. V. p. 24; see also P. P., 1825. XII., p. 29.

²⁸ "The English in Ireland." Vol. II, p. 450.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROTESTANT EDUCATION SOCIETIES.

THE restriction that it was still illegal after 1782 to endow schools obstructed effectively the organisation of Catholic education. Consequently free education among Catholics was rather uncommon. But it did not prevent the spread and increase of schools set up by private individuals in town and country. John Leslie Foster, in a letter to the Secretary of the Board of Education in 1811, stated that "hardly any other country" was "so amply provided with the means of education." He warned the Board that the people were "taking education into their own hands," and that it was high time for the State to interfere.¹

There was no clearly defined gesture on the part of the Government. But it lent its support, and in some instances granted huge sums of money to Protestant Education Societies, which appeared in greater force after the first decade of the nineteenth century. These were commonly called "Bible Societies," because the Bible was used as a class-book in all their schools.

A parliamentary grant of £300 was given in 1801 to the "Association incorporated for Discountenancing Vice, and promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion."² By 1823, the grant had increased to over £9,000.³ The establishments of this society were admittedly Protestant in character; nothing was taught in them contrary to the doctrines of the Established Church of Ireland.⁴

The schools of the London Hibernian Society, founded in 1806, professed, on the other hand, to be undenominational, but clearly were not. "It is evident," reads the

¹ P. P. 1813-14. V., p. 341 *et seq.*

² Warburton: "History of Dublin." Vol. II., p. 893.

³ P. P. 1825. XII., p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 31.

Report of the Board of Education of 1825, "that the Objects and Proceedings of the Society have given rise to a very natural Persuasion in the minds of Roman Catholics, that its members are actuated by a Spirit of Hostility to their Church."⁵ This society depended mainly on voluntary subscription.⁶

The Baptist Society, established in London in 1814, set up the majority of its schools in Connaught, using the Irish language as the medium of instruction. Its activities, however, were more in the nature of a Baptist mission, than strictly educational. "The intention of proselytism," wrote the Rev. Robert Walsh, an Anglican clergyman, in 1815, "is everywhere avowed in the most unqualified manner."⁷

It is difficult to say whether the Baptist Society meant to use the Irish language in the same way as the Irish Society which came into existence in 1819. The aim of the latter was "to employ it as a means for obtaining an accurate knowledge of English"; but it had no intention of "making the Irish language a vehicle for the communication of general knowledge."⁸

The largest and most powerful of these societies was the "Society for promoting the Education of the Poor of Ireland," usually referred to as the Kildare Place Society, taking its name from its location. It was instituted in 1811, with the object of rendering financial assistance to schools in which an undertaking was given that the Scriptures would be read without note or comment, and that all books of a controversial nature would be excluded. In 1815, the Society was given its first grant of £6,980 by Parliament with a view to putting into execution the recommendations of the Commissioners of the Board of Education issued in 1812,⁹ to the effect that opportunities of education should be given to "the

⁵ P. P. 1825. XII., p. 80

⁶ It received large sums from "The Lord Lieutenant's Fund"; an average of about £12,000 a year from 1819 to 1826. See Corcoran: "Education Systems," p. 187; also P. P. 1825, XII. pp. 58-60.

⁷ Warburton: "History of Dublin." Vol. II., p. 877.

⁸ P. P. 1825. XII., App. No. 251, p. 748.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 37-9.

lower classes of the People," and that there should be no "Interference with the particular Religious Tenets of any."¹⁰ The annual grant was later increased, and for several years before the Society was finally superseded in 1831 by the Board of National Education the amount of the grant was between twenty and thirty thousand pounds.¹¹

The educational work of the Kildare Place Society was on a very wide and perhaps original scale. Dr. Kingsmill Moore, writing in 1904, makes a substantial claim on its behalf: "It is not known that the Kildare Place Society stimulated the foundation of schools in every part of Ireland by supplying the necessary plans, and contributing liberally towards the expenses of building and equipment. It is not known that they were publishers on a large scale, bringing out on their own initiative, all the necessary school-books, and editing a cheap and convenient library, which was highly valued, not alone in Ireland, but throughout England and Scotland, and elsewhere. It is not known that they originated and conducted with signal success a large and most efficient training school for teachers. It is not known that they organised and carried out a careful system of inspection, which kept them accurately informed as to the work done in some fifteen hundred schools. It is not known that as a result of their labours, the schools of Ireland attained to an excellence which caused them to be held up for admiration and imitation by the most competent observers of the time."¹² The work of the Society was certainly on a much higher plane than that of any of its contemporaries; but, according to the Report of the Board of Education in 1825, it "failed in producing universal Satisfaction."¹³ A Protestant writer in 1820 takes much the same view: "This society has done much good. Yet it does not appear to have been as useful as the zeal and integrity of the members, and the funds at their disposal, would

¹⁰ P. P. 1813-14. V., p. 327.

¹¹ O'Brien: "Education in Ireland," p. 144.

¹² "An Unwritten Chapter in the History of Education," pp. xvii.-xviii.

¹³ P. P. 1825. XII. p. 58.

permit us to expect.”¹⁴ Sir Thomas Wyse is more critical: “the Kildare Place Society,” he wrote in 1829, “which had set out with such large professions of liberalism, was demonstrated to have acted in a manner very inconsistent with the avowed objects of its institution, and to have been totally inadequate to the purposes for which it had originally been set up.”¹⁵

✓ Though considerably more money was granted by Parliament to these societies than was deemed necessary in 1831 for the establishment of a national system of education, yet less than *twelve per cent. of the Catholic children receiving instruction in 1824 attended their schools*.¹⁶ It is evident, therefore, that the societies, so far as the great bulk of the population was concerned, fell very short of being anything in the way of a national force in education. Members of the Church of Ireland objected to them because the Bible was either read in their schools “without note or comment,” or was explained without any reference to authority.¹⁷ Catholics opposed them for somewhat similar reasons, but mainly because the schools were used as proselytising instruments; though for some years after its foundation Catholics had ardently supported the Kildare Place Society. “Proselytism,” wrote an English traveller in Ireland in 1822, “has ever been the bane of peace and social happiness in Ireland. It has been the end and aim of every school establishment.”¹⁸

The setting up of the Board of National Education in 1831, and the transfer of parliamentary grants to this new Board evoked many protests from the supporters of the societies. Mr. J. E. Gordon, a sturdy advocate of the interests of the London Hibernian Society, fought bitterly for their retention, maintaining that no other

¹⁴ “Thoughts and Suggestions,” p. 51.

¹⁵ “History of the Catholic Association.” Vol. II. App., p. xcvi.

¹⁶ P. P. 1826-7. XIII. pp. 1050-57.

¹⁷ O’Callaghan: “Thoughts on the Tendency of Bible Societies,” pp. 5-6.

(The Rev. Mr. O’Callaghan was master of Kilkenny College.) See also Jackson: “Reasons for Withdrawing from the Hibernian Bible Society,” p. 7.

¹⁸ Reid: “Travels in Ireland,” p. 365.

agency had done more for education in Ireland. "The diocesan and parochial schools established under the Acts of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, can hardly be said to have effected any thing deserving the name of education *in a national sense*: and the charter schools were just as far from having realised the views of their projectors. The same may be said of the schools upon the foundation of Erasmus Smith, and indeed of every other public and private endowment in the country. It is a fact not to be questioned, that the education of the great body of the Irish people was left to circumstances, and that it was indebted for the slow progress which it continued to make, not so much to legislative encouragement or benevolent support, as to the gradual discovery of its utility in the ordinary affairs of life. Indeed it may fairly be presumed that more schools in Ireland have traced their origin to the selfish anxiety to master the inscription upon a bank-note than to a public concern for the moral and political well-being of society in that country. The class of seminaries, however, which were called into existence by a demand for the mere education of letters is principally made up of what are termed *hedge schools*. It was long before the efforts that were made by the people to possess themselves of the elements of a practically useful education were met by a corresponding interest on the part of the Government, or the wealthy and educated classes in society; and up to that period, it would be difficult to imagine anything more wretched than those receptacles of rags and penury, in which a semi-barbarous peasantry acquired the rudiments of reading, writing, Irish history and high-treason."¹⁹

The implication here is that the schools under the societies were the dominant and most progressive factor in popular education in Ireland. As a matter of fact, the number of schools in connection with the societies in 1824 was only 1,727 out of a total number of 11,823. There were 9,352 pay schools which received no assistance of any kind; and the Hedge Schools formed the

¹⁹ "Six Letters on the Subject of Irish Education," pp. 3-4.

majority of these.²⁰ Thus the societies' schools, though in possession of substantial means, and supported by Parliament, the public press and the landed gentry, had made little progress towards establishing themselves as the nucleus, even, of a popular system of education in Ireland. The Commissioners of the Board of Education of 1824 plainly showed their lack of confidence in the societies by recommending, and securing in 1831 the establishment of the Board of National Education responsible for the administration of elementary education in Ireland.

²⁰ See P.P. 1826-27. XII., pp. 1-24.

CHAPTER V.

THE RISE OF THE HEDGE SCHOOLS.

THE beginnings of the Hedge School date back to the 17th century. The "Popish Schoole Masrs." mentioned in the Cromwellian Records who taught "the Irish Youth, trayning them up in Supersticion, Idolatry, and the Evill Customs of the Nacion"¹ were probably the first hedge schoolmasters.

But it was in the early part of the 18th century, when the continued rigorous enforcement of the laws against education rendered teaching a dangerous calling, that the Hedge School really took root. It was then, no doubt, that the term "Hedge School" was first used.

Because the law forbade the schoolmaster to teach, he was compelled to give instruction secretly; because the householder was penalised for harbouring the schoolmaster, he had perforce to teach, and that only when the weather permitted, out of doors. He, therefore, selected, in some remote spot, the sunny side of a hedge or bank which effectively hid him and his pupils from the eye of the chance passer-by, and there he sat upon a stone as he taught his little school, while his scholars lay stretched upon the green sward about him. One pupil was usually placed at a point of vantage to give warning of the approach of strangers; and if the latter were suspected of being law-officers or informers, the class was quickly disbanded for the day—only to meet again on the morrow in some place still more sheltered and remote.²

In winter the schoolmaster moved from place to place,

¹ Printed in Corcoran: "State Policy in Irish Education," p. 76. See also "Archivium Hibernicum," Vol. VI., pp. 187-8.

² The late Dr. Healy, Archbishop of Tuam, pays a striking tribute to the work of the Hedge Schools during the eighteenth century. See "Centenary History of Maynooth College," pp. 49-50.

living upon the hospitality of the people, earning a little perhaps by turning his hand to farm work, or, when he dared, by teaching the children of his host.

Later when the laws against education were less strictly enforced, school was taught in a cabin, a barn, or any building that might be given or lent for the purpose, but the name "Hedge School" was still retained. The schoolhouses are generally referred to by contemporary writers as "poor huts," or "cabbins." Latocnaye, a Frenchman who walked through Ireland in 1797, carrying an umbrella and a pair of dancing pumps, wrote an interesting description of one that he saw: "Je vis sur la route une de ces Écolles dont les Anglais prennent tant de plaisir à se moquer, et qu'ils s'appellent *School Hedges*; ce n'est autre chose que ceci; parmi des paysans aussi pauvres, il est fort naturel de penser, qu'ils ne bâtiront pas une belle maison pour leur école, en conséquence ce n'est communément qu'un miserable toit sans fenêtre, et dont l'étage n'a pas beaucoup plus de cinq pieds de haut. On doit sentir que les enfans et le maître s'y trouvent fort mal à leur aise: quand le temps permet, ils s'établissent sous un arbre ou sous une haye, et le maître donne sa leçon en plein air. Quand à moi, il me paraît tout aussi bon de donner ou de recevoir une leçon en plein air que dans une école *empuantée*: mais ce n'est pas l'usage en Angleterre."³ The people, he states, are too poor to build a decent school house for their children, they can only afford to put up a wretched building, without windows, the roof of which is only about five feet high, extremely uncomfortable for both teachers and pupils. But when the weather permits the classes are held outside under a tree, or in the shelter of a hedge.

This writer appreciates the advantages of an open-air school: "It appears to me," he says, "quite as good to give or receive a lesson in the open air as in a [he uses a strong word] smelly school."

Pat Frayne's schoolhouse in the townland of Skelgy, County Tyrone, was an equally rude structure. According

3 "Promenade d'un Français dans l'Irlande," p. 107.

to Carleton, who was one of his pupils: "A schoolhouse was built for him—a sod house scooped out of the bank on the roadside—and in the course of a month it was filled with upwards of a hundred scholars, most of them males, but a good number of them females." Unlike most schools of its kind which were closed during the winter owing to the cold and damp, this one remained open: "Every winter's day, each [scholar] brought two sods of turf for the fire, which was kept burning in the centre of the school: there was a hole in the roof that discharged the functions of a chimney. Around this fire, especially during cold and severe weather, the boys were entitled to sit in a circle by turns. . . . The seats about the fire were round stones."⁴

However mean the school building, and however great the bodily discomfort of both teacher and scholars, the atmosphere of the Hedge School seems to have been naturally lively and good-humoured. We can gather as much from Carleton's account of his rather depressing experience when he first took charge of a Hedge School. "I got a promise," he relates, "of about a dozen or two wretched boys and girls, and the gift of an uninhabited hut—one of the worst that ever covered a human head. In due time the establishment was opened, and I, William Carleton, became the master of a hedge school. Yes, a hedge school—so it must be called, for so it was. But when I bethought me of the hedge schools in which I had myself been educated, of the multitude assembled, of the din arising from the voices of the comic crew around, I felt like a hermit in a wilderness."⁵

The schoolmaster had to take what he could get; any shelter was better than none, and what he obtained was usually given to him freely. The people wanted education for their children, and very often paid more for it than they could afford. Writing in 1808 of his Irish-speaking tenants in County Sligo, Lord Palmerston said: "The thirst for education is so great that there are now three or four schools upon the estate. The people join in

⁴ "Autobiography," pp. 19-20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-7.

engaging some itinerant master; they run him up a miserable mud hut on the road side, and the boys pay him half-a-crown, or some five shillings a quarter. They are taught reading, writing and arithmetic, and what, from the appearance of the establishment, no one would imagine, Latin and even Greek."⁶ The same strong desire for education was observed by independent witnesses in other parts of the country; in fact, one writer said that it did more to encourage the efforts of the schoolmaster than anything else. In his "Statistical Survey of Kildare," published in 1807, Rawson stated: "All over the county are numbers of schools, where the lower orders have their children instructed in writing, arithmetic and reading; scarcely a peasant who can muster a crown after tithe and priest's dues, but is emulous to expend it on his little boy's education. No Sunday schools; no encouragement of the neighbouring gentry; no furthering of the benevolent plans of Lancaster."⁷ Yet in spite of lack of all endowment and of patronage, education was widespread: "The people of Ireland," wrote Wakefield a few years later, "are, I may almost say, *universally educated*: . . . I do not know any part of Ireland so wild, that its inhabitants are not anxious, nay, eagerly anxious for the education of their children."⁸

The willingness of the people to make sacrifices for the education of their children, and their co-operation with the schoolmaster were undoubtedly two of the factors that helped the Hedge School to become a vital force in Irish education.

The Hedge School, such as it was, certainly rendered possible, during the first half of the 18th century, the conduct of a kind of guerilla warfare in education. In the Report on the "State of Popery in Ireland in 1731" we find the Bishop of Derry writing to the Lords Committees appointed to enquire into "ye present state of Popery": "There are not any Popish schools; sometimes a straggling schoolmaster sets up in some of

⁶ Given in Alice Stopford Green: "Irish National Tradition," p. 20.

⁷ pp. 51-2.

⁸ "Account of Ireland," Vol. II., p. 307.

ye mountainous parts of some parishes, but upon being threatened, as they constantly are, with a warrant, or a presentment by ye Churchwardens, they generally think proper to withdraw."⁹ A note marked "N.B." in the returns of the Bishop of Clonfert, even better describes the state of affairs: "By a return made to me at my last visitation there appear'd to be a much greater number of Popish schools than are here return'd. But one of them being taken & convict'd, the rest disappear'd. Many of them have not yet ventur'd to return: And of those who did, some have again absconded upon the first notice of the order of the Lords Committees."¹⁰

Thus it happened that education was often found to flourish in remote and mountainous districts. The reputation of the Munster schools and particularly of the schools of Kerry is ample testimony of this.

The classical tradition of the schools of Kerry was evidently of long standing when Dr. Smith wrote in 1756: "It is well known," he states, "that classical learning extends itself, even to a fault, among the lower and poorer kind in this county; many of whom, to the taking them off more useful works, have greater knowledge in this way, than some of the better sort, in other places."¹¹ Further he discloses some interesting facts: "I have in my survey met with some good latin scholars who did not understand the english tongue; particularly. one *Peter Kelly*, who lived in a very uncultivated part of the county. . . . *Greek* is also taught in some of the mountainous parts, generally by persons who pick it up, as mendicant scholars, at some english school."¹² Neither is the genius of the commonalty confined to this kind of learning alone, for I saw a poor man near *Blackstones*, who had a tolerable notion of calculating the epacts, golden number, dominical letter, the moon's phases, and even eclipses, altho' he had never been taught to read english."¹³

⁹ Printed in "Archivium Hibernicum," Vol. I., p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Vol. III., p. 133.

¹¹ "History of Kerry," p. 67.

¹² A school where English was the medium of instruction.

¹³ "History of Kerry," p. 418.

The south of Ireland, generally, appears to have had a great number of schools in which Latin was taught. "The Papists," wrote Sir James Caldwell in 1764, "are not only connected by the General Tie of the Religion that acknowledges the Pope for its common Father and Head, with the Courts of *France* and *Spain*, but there is not a Family in the Island that has not a relation in the Church, in the Army, or in Trade in those Countries, and in order to qualify the Children for foreign Service, they are all taught *Latin* in Schools kept in poor Huts, in many Places in the Southern Part of the Kingdom."¹⁴

The evidence of classical teaching seems to be more abundant in Kerry than elsewhere; a circumstance that was probably due to its attraction for tourists. We have an anonymous writer in 1776 relating that the poor, ragged boy who held his horse was "well acquainted with the best Latin poets."¹⁵ And Holmes in 1797 bears further witness to the continuity of classical learning in Kerry: "Amongst the uncultivated part of the country, many may be met with who are all good Latin scholars, yet do not speak a word of English. Greek is also taught in the mountainous parts by some itinerant teachers."¹⁶

Weld, on the other hand, is rather inclined to be sceptical. "Notwithstanding my earnest endeavours during the time I continued in Kerry," he states, "I was unable to procure an interview with one of these learned peasants."¹⁷ Yet Sir John Carr, an Englishman, found a few years later this "classical spirit," as he calls it, very general among "the lower sort of people" in Kerry.¹⁸ And another Englishman, Dr. Milner, had no difficulty in finding classical scholars, and he actually "conversed for a considerable time in Latin" with two of them, "both being indigent schoolmasters."¹⁹ Here is part

¹⁴ "A Brief Examination . . ." Second Edition, p. 27.

¹⁵ "A Description of Killarney," p. 8.

¹⁶ "Sketches of the Southern Counties of Ireland," p. 151.

¹⁷ "Illustrations of the Scenery of Killarney." Edition dated 1812, p. 235.

¹⁸ "The Stranger in Ireland," p. 380.

¹⁹ "An Inquiry into Certain Vulgar Opinions . . ." Second edition, p. 332.

of a letter written by one of the latter to Dr. Milner: "Cum ex plurimis mihi compertum sit Anglos, magna ex parte existimare Hibernos, rudem incultamque esse gentem, Tullii sermonete alloqui, pace tua, mihi concedatur. Ipse, licet pauperrimus, pauperrimisque, (licet, Deo gratias, nulla macula imbutis) prognatus parentibus, prae ingenio et consuetudine hujus insulae propria, tam Latine quam Graece institutus fui; pauperesque quamplurimos—viz., scoparum venditores, rhedarios, bajulosque cognovi, qui Latinitate admodum copiose utebantur. Ipse jam peramplam familiam alendi gratia docendo occupor; et 40 pueri me nunc audiunt pauperrimis agricolis nati, ex quibus quam plurimi ingenium indolemque indicant quae quodlibet vitae institutum cohonestarent. Nam, pro certo, Deus haud divitibus solis indolem distribuit; et in hoc Comitatu animum Caesaris aut Ciceronis sub veste ruricolae invenire queas. Sed. ut Juvenalis dicit: 'Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se, quam quod homines ridiculos facit'; et alibi, 'Haud facile emergunt quorum virtutibus obstat—Res angusta domi, etc.' Valeas, serusque in coelum redeas, etc. Datum Killarniae 3^o Non Sept. Anno Salutis 1808."²⁰ The writer begs Dr. Milner's permission to address him in Latin—the language of Cicero. He states that, though born of poor parents, he was instructed in Latin and Greek; and that he has known men in the humblest occupations, broom-sellers, coachmen, day-labourers, able to speak Latin well. He says that in order to support his family he keeps a school of forty boys, sons of the peasantry, but youths, very many of them, of great ability and promise. He ends up with a quotation from Juvenal, and, wishing good health and long life to Dr. Milner, signs himself: "Jacobus Egan."

The reputation of the schools of Munster was not merely local. From nearly all over Ireland "poor scholars," and others who had learned all that they could in their own neighbourhood, and who were not yet satisfied that their education was complete, journeyed thither. There were excellent schools in other parts of

²⁰ "An Inquiry into Certain Vulgar Opinions" p. 333.



the country, but nowhere, it seems, was there within an equal area a greater number of efficient schoolmasters. "The Munster masters," wrote Carleton in 1830, "have long been, and still are, particularly celebrated for making excellent classical and mathematical scholars."²¹

The number of Hedge Schools increased very rapidly during the latter half of the 18th century. This was due, in part only, to the immense growth of the population and to the relaxation of the laws against education; for these were, so to speak, the physical conditions favourable to the spread of education. The real credit must be given to the people themselves, who were determined to have their children instructed. "The strong passion for education," stated Mr. John Leslie Foster in a letter to the Secretary of the Board of Education in 1811, "which . . . mark(s) the lower classes of our people . . . assures us, that if we do not assist them, instructed nevertheless they will be."²² In 1824 official returns were made of the schools in every parish in Ireland, and of the children attending each school. Two responsible bodies, the Catholic and Protestant clergy, supplied independently the required figures with what proved to be a remarkable degree of accuracy, for the two returns were practically identical. The number of schools throughout the country were stated to be 11,823, with 561,000 in daily attendance.²³ These returns were made during the three months ending December, 1824. About 2,500 of these were on charitable and private foundations, or connected with one or more of the Protestant Education Societies; all others were independent Pay Schools, that is, schools conducted by private individuals for their own profit and at their own risk.²⁴ The total number of schools under Catholic teachers was over 8,000; and of these not less than about 7,600 were independent Pay Schools. Under lay teachers, the remainder being usually schools attached to religious bodies or "supported by the

²¹ "Traits and Stories." Fourth edition. Vol. II., p. 151.

²² P. P. 1813-14. V. p. 342.

²³ The number given in the returns made by the Catholic clergy was 568,964. P. P. 1826-7. XII., p. 4.

²⁴ P. P. 1826-7. XII., p. 18.

Collections and Subscriptions of the Roman Catholic Inhabitants of certain Parishes, and under the superintendence of Roman Catholic priests.”²⁵

A number of these independent Pay Schools were town schools and city “academies,” but the vast majority of the Pay Schools were truly Hedge Schools, and it was to these that the education of the great bulk of the population was entrusted.

In 1830, Sir Thomas Wyse, stated in a letter to Dr. Doyle: “. . . . the lower class (in Ireland) proportionally to their position, are better educated than the middle and upper. It is the contrary on the Continent.”²⁶ From point of view of numbers, the schools in Ireland compared most favourably with those in the rest of Europe.²⁷ The standard of the work done in the Hedge Schools was higher than that done in any other school of equal social status. The curriculum, for one thing, was more extensive; while the attainments of the hedge school-master were usually of a more liberal nature. The very least that was taught in the Hedge Schools included reading, writing and arithmetic. Other subjects found their way into the curriculum according to local needs, and in so far as the qualifications of the teacher would allow: history, geography, book-keeping, surveying and navigation. Latin and mathematics were commonly taught; sometimes Greek; and in Irish-speaking districts instruction in all these subjects was given in the vernacular. At the beginning of the 19th century, however, English as a medium of instruction was rapidly replacing Irish. “Amidst some of the wildest mountains of Kerry,” declared Weld in 1806, “I have met with English schools; and even seen multitudes of children seated round the humble residence of their instructor, with their books, pens and ink, where rocks have supplied the place of desks and benches.”²⁸ It, therefore, happened

²⁵ P. P. 1826-7, XII., p. 17. See author's article: “Catholic Clergy and Popular Education in Ireland in 1825”—*The Tablet*, 27th May, 1933.

²⁶ “Memoirs of Sir Thomas Wyse, K.C.B.,” p. 16.

²⁷ There is ample evidence in support of this statement. See, for instance, Glassford: “Popular Education in Ireland,” pp. 5-8.

²⁸ “Illustrations of the Scenery of Killarney,” pp. 217-8.

that in many parts of the country the "bare-legged peasant," as Townsend called him, spoke two languages fluently.²⁹ English was a comparatively recent acquirement at this time; Richard Lovell Edgeworth wrote in 1811: "... they [the Irish peasantry] have within these few years made a greater progress in learning English, than the Welsh have made since the time of Edward the First, in acquiring that language."³⁰ But the native language was not neglected for all that. There was a good output of Irish poetry right up to the middle of the 19th century; and in certain districts the use of the language was never discontinued.

Given that the pupils were willing, and that they had the ability to profit by instruction, yet they could only go so far as individual teachers of the Hedge Schools could direct and lead them. To have brought it about that "the lower class" were comparatively better educated than any other in Ireland was an achievement that could only have been accomplished by a regular system of education. As a body, the hedge schoolmasters were unorganised; yet they were bound by a tie stronger than any artificial organisation. Coming from the people, they were themselves usually educated in the Hedge Schools where doubtless they were the best scholars When circumstances permitted, they went further afield in search of knowledge; ultimately returning to their native county if not to their native place. There they settled down, the little community which each had for his province receiving all the advantages of the experience and knowledge gained during a pilgrimage that rarely lasted less than a year. The greater schools set the pace; the greater schoolmasters inspired enthusiasm and effort among their brethren. There was keen competition between local schools; and reputations could only be won by the superior acquirements of the schoolmaster and the excellence of his teaching.

²⁹ Townsend: "Survey of the County of Cork," p. 266. See also Newenham: "View of Ireland," pp. xiii.-xiv.

³⁰ Letter to the Secretary of the Board of Education, dated 22nd April.--P. P., 1813-4. V. pp. 339-40.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEDGE SCHOOL AT WORK.

ONE day James Nash, the old hedge schoolmaster, said to his friend Thomas Francis Meagher: "My school is below there, and I flog the boys every morning all round, to teach them to be Spartans."¹ The extent of the punishment which the gentle old Nash would administer is not actually known; but, like McElligott the Limerick schoolmaster, he would evidently take no excuse for neglect of study. Carleton gives the impression that discipline in the Hedge Schools was not, as a rule, severe; rather the opposite, even when good work was expected of the pupils. In his criticism of the regulations in force in the schools under the National Board of Education, he says: "I think it a mistake to suppose that silence, among a number of children in school, is conducive to the improvement either of health or intellect. That the chest and lungs are benefited by giving full play to the voice, I think, will not be disputed; and that a child is capable of more intense study and abstraction in the din of a schoolroom, than in partial silence (if I may be permitted the word), is a fact which I think any rational observation would establish. There is something cheering and cheerful in the noise of friendly voices about us—it is a restraint taken off the mind, and it will run the lighter for it—it produces more excitement, and puts the intellect in a better frame of mind for study. The obligation to silence, though it may give the master more ease, imposes a new moral duty upon the child, the sense of which must necessarily weaken his application."² Carleton loved the bustle and busy hum of the schoolroom; he would have the schoolmaster take into serious account the child's

¹ Griffith: "Meagher of the Sword," p. 288.

² "Traits and Stories." Fourth edition. Vol. II., p. 210.

natural propensities rather than look to his own personal comfort. He is fully alive to the value of the social factor in education; the boy should work with others: "Do not send him," he advises, "in quest of knowledge alone, but let him have cheerful companionship on his way."³ For a very sound reason he does not wish to banish from the schoolroom the schoolboy's joke, his occasional outbursts of merriment in class, or even a little horseplay: "It is an exercise to the mind," he asserts, "and he will return to his business with greater vigour and effect."⁴

He emphasises some very important aspects of education, which perhaps were neither fully realised nor clearly understood in his day. For example, he points out the need of studying the child-mind: "Children are not men, nor influenced by the same motives—they do not reflect, because their capacity for reflection is imperfect; so is their reason; whereas, on the contrary, their faculties for education (excepting judgment, which strengthens my argument) are in greater vigour in youth than in manhood. The general neglect of this distinction is, I am convinced, a stumbling block in the way of youthful instruction, though it characterises all our modern systems. We should never forget that they are children; nor should we bind them by a system, whose standard is taken from the maturity of human intellect. We may bend our reason to theirs, but we cannot elevate their capacity to our own. We may produce an external appearance, sufficiently satisfactory to ourselves; but, in the meantime, it is probable that the child may be growing in hypocrisy, and settling down into the habitual practice of a fictitious character."⁵ He scorns a system of education that would not produce in the child a spirit of "honest and manly independence."⁶ He would have the child behave at school with as much freedom as he would in his natural surroundings, and learn as a child would learn in a sympathetic atmosphere. He has little regard for the mechanical methods of teaching which were the

³ "Traits and Stories." Fourth edition. Vol. II., p. 220.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 220.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 220-21.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 221.

distinctive features of the "mutual system": "Bell or Lancaster would not relish the pap or caudle-cup three times a day; neither would an infant on the breast feel comfortable after a gorge of ox beef. Let them, therefore, put a little of the mother's milk of human kindness and consideration into their strait-laced systems."⁷ It is not to be thought, however, that the dignity of the teacher should suffer: "a master should be a monarch in his school, but by no means a tyrant."⁸

We know very little of the system of teaching in the Hedge Schools; but that there was a system is fairly evident from the general agreement between the few vague descriptions of class teaching that are given. A pupil of the old Callan "Hedge School," who afterwards became one of the first members of the Irish Christian Brothers, relates his experience of school organisation: "Our mentor seemed quite oblivious of the economy in time and labour secured by grouping boys of the same standard of knowledge. We were taught individually, and our day was spent almost entirely in 'rehearsing' and 'writing.' Writing meant copying headlines set by our teacher. He did little more than exhort us to 'rehearse' and hear us repeat what we had learnt by 'heart.'"⁹ Subjects such as writing, arithmetic, mensuration and book-keeping were generally well taught in the Hedge Schools; but unfortunately we find few references to the actual teaching of them and none with any details of value. Townsend, author of the "Survey of the County of Cork," published in 1810, writes: "In these country schools, the masters are often sufficiently competent to their business. Writing and arithmetic are what they usually teach best. In many of them, however, the mode of instruction is altogether ludicrous. All the boys gabble the lesson together as loud and as fast as they can speak, which is called rehearsing. The preceptor when he perceives any one approaching, to show his diligence, enforces this confusion of tongues, and seems to rate the

⁷ "Traits and Stories." Vol. II. Fourth edition, p. 222.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 221.

⁹ "Edmund Ignatius Rice and the Christian Brothers," p. 49.

progress of improvement by the scale of vociferation."¹⁰ In Carleton's sketch, "The Hedge School," the teacher instructs his pupils to rehearse in order to impress the passer-by: "Silence, back from the door, boys, rehearse; every one of you rehearse, I say . . . till the gentleman goes past."¹¹ Writing of the schools of Kilmanaheen, County Clare, the Archdeacon of Kilfenora says that they were "on an old established plan, reading aloud or humming together."¹² Though the evidence here indicates the prevalence of rehearsing in the schools, Townsend, a most uncompromising critic of the Hedge Schools definitely implies that it was not universal; indeed it might have been general only in the poorer class of Hedge Schools. It had, however, its uses. Where books and writing materials were too expensive for the children to purchase, learning by heart was an economy as well as an obvious aid to retaining information. Again, there was much subject matter which could not be obtained except from costly text-books; but this the schoolmaster usually acquired for himself in the first instance, and then taught to his class sometimes with the aid of manuscript copies, more often without.¹³ Further, rehearsing kept the school occupied as a whole, and helped to maintain a show of discipline and industry in the classroom.

A teacher of one of the London Hibernian Society's schools gives an interesting description of his day's work: "Our school begins precisely at ten o'clock in the morning; for we cannot begin earlier, as many of the children come from a distance. Every child must be in his seat by that time. I then open the school by reading a psalm or hymn. After that, they all repeat a task to me, of grammar or spelling, and then a lesson in classes, for I have them all classed together according to their

¹⁰ "Survey of Cork." Addenda, p. 63.

¹¹ "Traits and Stories." Fourth edition. Vol. II., p. 162.

¹² Mason: "Parochial Survey of Ireland." Vol. I., p. 495.

¹³ Many hedge schoolmasters used text-books in manuscript form usually their own compilation; they kept several copies of these and lent them to their favourite students.

"Manuscript elementaries" are mentioned by Henry Monck Mason, in his evidence before the Board of Education in 1825. See P. P. 1825. XII., p. 745.

several abilities. About twenty of the children write on paper, twenty on slate, and twenty on sand.

"After writing they all have a lesson, and a task of scripture verses which they commit to memory. I have now many good monitors, who assist me very much. I wish you could send me some premiums for them. The labour of the day is concluded by reading a psalm, and making a few remarks of a religious nature, suitable to the subject, and adapted to their capacities, to which they listen with great attention."¹⁴

The main features of the plan of work seem to be individual examination of prescribed lessons, grouping of scholars according to their attainments, the practice of committing matter to memory, and the employment of monitors to lighten the work of the teacher. It is maintained that in the Hedge Schools there was no such thing as grouping children in classes; all pupils were taught individually. But here was a rival of the Hedge Schools with the grouping system in full swing, taught by a man to whom the hedge schoolmaster was not in the least inferior.¹⁵ As for the monitorial system, Carleton declares that it was in common use in the Hedge Schools; he has a good deal to say in favour of the system as it was employed in the Hedge Schools: "I know not whether the Commissioners of Education found the monitorial system of instruction in such of the old hedge schools as maintained an obstinate resistance to the innovations of modern plans. That Bell and Lancaster deserve much credit for applying and extending the principle (I speak without reference to its merits) I do not hesitate to grant; but it is unquestionably true, that the principle was reduced to practice in Irish hedge schools long before either of these worthy gentlemen were in existence. I do not, indeed, at present remember whether or not they claim it as a discovery, or simply as an adaptation of a practice which experience, in accidental cases, had found useful, and which they considered capable of more

¹⁴ Hibernian Society. Fifth Report, p. 20.

¹⁵ See Carleton. "Traits and Stories." Fourth edition. Vol. II., p. 145.

extensive benefit. I remember many instances, however, in which it was applied—and applied, in my opinion, though not as a permanent system, yet more judiciously than it is at present.”¹⁶ It is contended that what Carleton refers to here was the practice of appointing a boy, who had finished his ordinary schooling and who wished to continue his studies, as usher or assistant, such as Patrick Lynch was at the Rev. Mr. Hare’s school, or Richard McElligott at the Limerick school where he first began to learn classics. But anyone who has had experience of a country National school of about 1895 under one teacher, and with an average attendance of fifty, say, will recognise the significance of the instructions given by Carleton’s caricature, Mat Kavanagh, when he is about to absent himself for half-an-hour: “You literati will hear the lessons for me, boys, till afther I’m back again; but mind, boys, absente domino, strepuunt servi—meditate on the philosophy of that; and, Mick Mahon, take your slate and put down all the names; and, upon my sou—hem—credit, I’ll castigate any boy guilty of misty manners on my retrogradation thither; ergo mementote, cave ne titubes mandataque frangas.”¹⁷ In these one-teacher schools of less than a generation ago it was usual for the teacher to put two or three of the older boys in charge of junior classes, while he himself was engaged with a particular class. At the end of the lesson the teacher briefly examined each class, sending the senior boys in turn back to their ordinary work at which they remained until he needed them again. These boys, who were selected for their special abilities in reading, writing, arithmetic or other subjects, often spent as much as half their day in teaching. And it was purely an honorary post though much sought after. I am inclined to think that this practice was somewhat of the nature of the monitorial system in the old Hedge Schools; but where the “poor scholar” took a hand, it was rather in the capacity of an usher or assistant master, though an unpaid one.

¹⁶ “Traits and Stories.” Fourth edition. Vol. II., pp. 218-19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 224.

References to teaching are seldom come upon. Carleton boasts that he learned his letters in a single day : " It was while we lived in Towney that I was first sent to school. I remember the occasion well. I could not have been more than six or seven years of age, and until that day I had never seen a letter of the alphabet. The reader may judge of the surprise of my family when they found on my return that I had not only learned the alphabet, both large letters and small, but had actually got as far as *b-a-g*—bag. Daniel O'Connell, at the age of four, had done better than that; he learned the whole alphabet from David Mahony, a wandering school-master, in the space of an hour and a half, " perfectly and permanently." ¹⁹

A contemporary, one of the Commissioners of the Board of Education of 1825, complains of the " mechanical and laborious methods by which the memory is exercised," adding that the " understanding and moral powers " seem to have no claim upon the teachers' attention.²⁰ His attack is directed mainly to the Hedge Schools: " In the ordinary pay schools, and above all in that poorest class, formerly called Hedge Schools, we do not look for an intelligent system of instruction; the teacher himself is too ignorant, or, if naturally endowed, has not the ability to exercise the minds of his pupils."²¹ These charges could not be generally true. Taking, for instance, Peter Galleghan as an example of the teacher of the poorest class of school, we find that he has written down in his own hand notes on the most up-to-date methods of teaching the ordinary school subjects—reading, grammar, arithmetic, etc., and much information on various topics which showed that he kept well abreast of the times. The country schoolmaster who taught the Griffins at Fairy Lawn " was a man of great integrity, of very industrious habits, an excellent English scholar, a good Grammarian, and wrote a beautiful hand."²² Pat

¹⁸ " Autobiography," pp. 11-12.

¹⁹ O'Connell: " Life and Speeches of Daniel O'Connell." Vol. I., p. 6.

²⁰ Glassford: " Popular Education in Ireland," p. 12.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 20.

²² " The Works of Gerald Griffin " (1843), p. 40.

Frayne and O'Beirne, two of Carleton's teachers, were both excellent at their work; that, at any rate, is the reputation which Carleton gives them. Many of the Hedge Schools were attended by the children of non-Catholic parents sometimes in preference to sending them to schools run by teachers of their own denomination. The popularity of the schoolmaster, to whom pupils came from other parts of the country, was based upon his ability to teach as well as upon his wit and knowledge. "To exercise the minds" of its pupils would seem to have been one of the traditional aims of the Hedge Schools; that is, if one may judge by the schoolmaster's fondness of displaying his learning, and of proving his ingenuity in argument. A ready tongue, a quick wit were weapons which often proved invaluable to the hedge schoolmaster; and woe to the reputation of the teacher whom they failed at a critical moment! We are told that when a barefooted peasant boy was rebuked for reading the classics as so much waste of time, he replied: "*Est quodam prodire tenus, si non datur ultra*"²³—an answer that should have confounded and silenced his critic.

The kind of text-book used in the Hedge Schools is a fair indication of the methods of teaching employed. Wall's "*Hibernian Preceptor*"²⁴ contains in the list of subscribers the names of over a hundred teachers, many of whom were hedge schoolmasters. The first eleven lessons in this work deal with "*The Elements of Spelling*," and give examples of "the most common and general sounds of the letters, and which children should be habituated to before they enter into the various changes of sound which the same letters should have." A few extracts will serve as illustration of his methods:

"Lesson I. Ab, eb, ib, ob, ub.
ad, ed, id, od, ud.

"Lesson VI. Bow, cow, mow, now, how,
sow, vow, brow, plow, grow

²³ Weld: "*Illustrations of the Scenery of Killarney*," p. 233.

²⁴ Vol. I., 1810; Vol. II., 1812.

"Lesson X. Ai sound exemplified.
Air, fair, fair, lair, . . ." ²⁵

The Reading Lessons begin on page 47; and here we find, in the first two sentences of Lesson I., a statement to the effect that spelling came before reading: "It is a fine thing to know how to read; but we must know how to spell first. We cannot read till we can spell." Then after long lists of words of two syllables, which the scholar is expected to have mastered, comes the assurance: "Now that I have learned to spell better; I hope I shall be able, and may read better now." The Archdeacon of Ferns was shocked to find that this order was not followed in the Hedge Schools in the parishes of Adamstown and Newbawn, County Wexford: "Here," he wrote, "an attempt is made to teach them to read before they can spell, and to write before they can read." ²⁶ Could it be possible that the teachers in these schools realised the advantages of teaching reading, spelling and writing concurrently, and were deliberately acting according to what they believed to be a better plan?

In the teaching of arithmetic the method of work seems to have been very carefully devised. In Deighan's Arithmetic, each rule is clearly given, and followed by two sets of examples, the first of which consists of carefully graduated problems while the second contains more difficult questions. "In forming the first collection of examples," we find it stated, "the Author has scrupulously avoided the inadvertence of former writers, by rendering them unembarrassing and easy, and rising in such a gradual succession, without the anticipation of any subsequent rule, as scarcely to require the tutor's assistance, except now and then to explain the nature of the process, and examine the truth of the operation." ²⁷ The writer is also aware of the value of the correlation of arithmetic with other subjects, for he adds: "by these examples great accession of knowledge will be acquired in Chronology, History, Mechanics, Astronomy, and the

²⁵ Wall: "The Hibernian Preceptor." See Vol. I., pp. 4-11.

²⁶ Mason: "Parochial Survey of Ireland." Vol. I., p. 5.

²⁷ p. iii.

useful Sciences.”²⁸ The treatment of the rules is very lucid, particularly those dealing with fractions. His handling of the decimalisation of money compares very favourably with modern methods; the reader may judge for himself:

“To find the decimal of any number of shillings, pence, and farthings by inspection.

“Rule.—Write half the greatest even number of shillings for the first decimal place figure, and let the farthings in the given pence and farthings possess the second and third places, observing to increase the second by 5 if the shillings are odd, and the third place by 1 when the farthings exceed 12, and by 2 when they exceed 37.

“Note.—The demonstration of this rule is as follows: as shillings are so many twentieths of a pound, half of them must be so many tenths, and consequently take the place of tenths in decimals; but if they are odd, their half will always consist of two figures, the first of which will be half the even number next less, and the second a 5; and this confirms the rule as far as it respects shillings. Again, farthings are so many 960ths of a pound; and had it happened that 1,000 instead of 960 had made a pound, it is plain that any number of farthings would have made so many thousandths, and might have taken their place in the decimal accordingly. But 960 increased by one-twenty-fourth part of itself is equal to 1,000; consequently any number of farthings, increased by their one-twenty-fourth, will be an exact decimal expression for them in thousandths, whence if the number of farthings be more than 12, a twenty-fourth part is greater than a half, and therefore one must be added, and when the number of farthings is more than 37, a twenty-fourth part is greater than a penny halfpenny, for which two must be added; and thus the rule is shewn to be right.”²⁹

Deighan's Geography was the fruit of his own personal investigation and observation; a fact to which he calls attention in the preface. Lynch emphasises the value of the exercise of reasoning and judgment, and the importance of research in the study of geography.³⁰ We have

²⁸ Deighan: “A Complete Treatise on Arithmetic,” p. iv.

²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 230-31.

³⁰ See Lynch: “Geographical and Statistical Survey of the Terraqueous Globe”

proof, too, that mathematics as taught in the Hedge Schools was of an eminently practical nature: when Dr. Hincks was giving evidence before the Education Committee in 1835, he was asked the question: "Are you aware that, in making an ordnance survey in Ireland, great facility existed in finding competent persons to assist the surveyors at ordinary labourers' wages?" and he answered: "I have not heard the circumstance before; but from what I saw of the country people in the south of Ireland, and the desire for knowledge amongst them, I am not at all surprised at the circumstance; there were a great many of the hedge schools, where there was given a great deal of scientific instruction."³¹ Dr. Bryce, another reliable authority, gives equally valuable evidence in relation to the teaching of Latin.³² So that apart from any question of organisation and methods of teaching, the work in the Hedge Schools must, in general, have been sound.

To show that the Irish schoolmaster had a keen appreciation of advance in methods of teaching, we may cite the "recommendatory letter" given above the names of McElligott, O'Brien, Geoghagan, and other Limerick teachers, and published in the "Limerick Gazette" of Feb. 2, 1813, shortly after the appearance of the third edition of Deighan's Arithmetic:

"We, the undernamed, being always anxious for the prosperity of our Pupils, do request their Parents to provide them with Mr. Deighan's *Third Edition of his Universal Arithmetic*, as being the only Book extant, whereby Youth can acquire a knowledge and facility of the most modern and concise methods of Counting-house calculations. Should we be induced by prejudice or ancient customs to continue *Gough* or *Voster* in our Schools, to us it may be said, that we wish to deprive those committed to our care of the invaluable advantages contained in this Work. *Gough* and *Voster* deserved well in their day, but their methods are now become too tedious and elaborate, and are totally exploded in every Counting-house of eminence. We should deem it reprehensible and

³¹ P. P. 1836, XIII., p. 20.

³² *Ibid.* p. 2. See p. 69 *infra*.

incompatible with the honest discharge of our duties, did we not thus publicly declare our sentiments; and we further add, that no other Treatise on Arithmetic, but Mr. Deighan's, shall meet our sanction or support in our Schools, until such time as we shall see (*if possible*) another which shall add more to the improvement of our Pupils."

CHAPTER VII.

THE STANDARD OF KNOWLEDGE ATTAINED.

IN a document, dated April 9, 1789, containing the private report of Dr. Curtis, Rector of the Irish College at Salamanca, we find entries such as the following:

"Dn. Patricio Mangan, student. A native of the Archdiocese of Dublin, of Catholic and Noble parents, 22 years of age, he has enjoyed a burse for four years. He made much progress in his native land in Latin, Greek, French and other branches of Humanities. In this College, he has studied Hebrew, Mathematics and Philosophy, and is at present in First Year's Theology; in all this, he has progressed commensurately with his great talents, application, and excellent conduct. He is a youth of great promise."¹

Nearly all the students mentioned in this report "had learned the Humanities very well at home," or "had learned sufficient Humanities at home to enter this College." Altogether there were at Salamanca in 1789 twenty-six such students from nearly as many counties in Ireland; and, since the Irish College had been incorporated with the University of Salamanca in 1608, the qualifications for entrance must in many cases have been of corresponding university standard. Further, from the number of Irishmen who received important official appointments on the Continent, and secured University professorships, their early training must have been sufficiently sound to enable them to profit by University teaching. Dr. Milner was convinced that "the Irish students in the foreign universities, down to the very period of the late revolution, carried off more than a due proportion of prizes and professorships, by the sheer merit of superior talents and learning, and a much greater

¹ Printed in "Archivum Hibernicum," Vol. IV., p. 53.

proportion than fell to the lot of all other foreigners put together."²

Carleton tells us that by the age of thirteen or fourteen he had "*only* got as far as Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' Justin and the first chapter of John in the Greek Testament."³ This was after a period of three years under Charles McGoldrick in a school at Tulnavert. Considering that at this time it was the custom to put scholars through the grammar and syntax of each language before giving them a text-book,⁴ this might be regarded as an achievement; though Carleton does not seem to look upon it as such himself.

A knowledge of classics was more widely spread than has been generally supposed. Writing from Dungiven, County Derry in 1814, the Rev. Alexander Ross declares: "Even in the wildest districts, it is not unusual to meet with good classical scholars; and there are several young mountaineers of the writer's acquaintance, whose knowledge and taste in the Latin poets, might put to the blush many who have all the advantages of established schools and regular instruction." Indeed he gracefully acknowledges the aid he received from one of them who knew Irish, English and Latin well.⁵

Education was largely a question of opportunity. Where instruction was to be had, and where it could be availed of, the results were generally of a high order. Thomas Reid, an Englishman travelling in Ireland in 1822, a writer of independent judgment, observed that "it is not unusual for members of the same family to devote themselves to all the grovelling toil of husbandry, without being able to show even a little reading and writing, while another more fortunate in education displays an accurate knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics."⁶

Crofton Croker found a knowledge of classics to be

² "An Inquiry into certain Vulgar Opinions . . ." Second edition, p. 16.

³ "Autobiography," p. 38.

⁴ See evidence of Dr. Bryce given before Select Committee on Education in Ireland, P. P. 1836, XIII., p. 3.

⁵ Mason: "Parochial Survey," Vol. I., p. 314.

⁶ "Travels in Ireland in 1822," p. 243.

quite general in the south of Ireland. "Among the peasantry," he writes, "classical learning is not uncommon; and a tattered Ovid or Virgil may be found even in the hands of common labourers."⁷ But he gives no idea of the standard attained.

We are, however, fortunate in having extremely important testimony in this connection from another source. In giving evidence before the Select Committee on Education in Ireland in 1835, the Rev. Dr. Bryce, a Protestant clergyman, Principal of the Belfast Academy, stated in reference to classical teaching in Ireland that he considered the standard of Latin prose composition inferior to that in Scotland, and probably to that in England; but he added: "I ought to notice, however, that I have found young men intended for the Roman-catholic priesthood, much superior to any others in Ireland in respect of Latin prose composition."⁸ Now, since most of those entering the Church were bound to be products of the Hedge Schools, it follows that classics were at the very least as well taught in the Hedge Schools as in any other school in Ireland.

While the teaching of Latin continued to claim attention, the study and use of Irish would seem to have been declining. Anderson points out that of the three great Celtic speaking races of the British Isles only the Irish were losing grip of their native language; Gaelic was being studied more intensely in the highlands of Scotland, and the use of the vernacular was becoming more widespread in Wales.⁹ Ever since the time of Henry VIII the use of Irish was expressly discouraged. Queen Elizabeth certainly approved of translations into Irish of the Book of Common Prayer and the New Testament, but not with a view to enable the people to read their own language. In later years Bedell's translation of the Bible appeared, but again with a religious, not an educational, purpose.¹⁰

⁷ "Researches in the South of Ireland," p. 326.

⁸ P. P. 1836. XIII., p. 2.

⁹ "Memorial on behalf of the Native Irish," p. 6.

¹⁰ Anderson: "Historical Sketches." Second edition, pp. 52, 53, 59 *et seq.*

At the beginning of the 19th century a more determined effort on the part of the English Government in Ireland was made to employ the language as a medium of instruction, for it was believed that there were about one and a half millions of people who spoke no other language but Irish. It was pointed out that it would entail much less expense to teach these people to read in their own native tongue and then use that as a basis for the study of English, than to teach them English at once.¹¹ Further, the language was looked upon as a religious barrier as well as a racial barrier.¹²

In 1824 there were considerably over two million people who spoke the Irish language. This was a remarkable number considering that it had rather become the fashion for some time to eschew the language in favour of English. That it still remained so vigorous was due partly to tradition and partly to the conservative character of the Irish peasantry. The long line of Irish poets imbued with the spirit of the Bardic Schools did not cease till well on into the nineteenth century; and the country still boasted of men learned in the language, literature and history of Ireland whose chief occupation was teaching. There were parts of the country where the people manifested no desire to learn the English language.¹³ It was such places that Dewar had in mind when he wrote: "Everyone has heard of the hedge schools, so common in Ireland, where crowds of poor children on the side of the road are taught to read and write. In every instance where the Irish language is taught, and where there is no offence given to the prejudices of the natives, parents discover the utmost solicitude to have their offspring instructed, and almost universally send them to school."¹⁴ Another writer, Mr. J. B. Trotter, sometime private secretary to Charles James Fox, the famous English statesman, noted particularly the lack of books in Irish-

¹¹ Anderson: "Memorial on behalf of the Native Irish," pp. 64 *et seq.*

¹² Shaw: "Survey of Tullaroan," pp. 133-4.

¹³ See Hardiman: "History of Galway," p. 294.

¹⁴ "Observations on the Character . . . of the Irish," Chap. XI., p. 139.

speaking districts: "Books in Irish are not to be had" he stated. "The best authors—the noble ancient poets drest in their own interesting and expressive native language, would be greedily read by the Irish who had received any education. For their sensibility, quickness, and comprehension of intellect are truly admirable!"¹⁵

Printed text-books in the Irish language were rare and expensive. A grammar of the Irish language, an English-Irish dictionary and grammar, a Catechism "in the Irish language and character, with corresponding pages in English," were all printed on the Continent during the 18th century. About the same time Dr. Gallagher's sermons were published in Dublin, as were the catechisms one in English and one in Irish of Dr. O'Reilly, bishop of Armagh; while an Irish-English dictionary was published in Paris by Dr. John O'Bryan, bishop of Cloyne.¹⁶ Some of these went through several editions, and some of them certainly found their way into the hands of hedge schoolmasters in Irish-speaking districts of the South and West. But it is more than likely that most of the literary possessions of the teachers of those days were in manuscript. Yet there were able classical scholars whose only other language was Irish; there were men who had mastered the difficulties of Old and Middle Irish; there were teachers who had a fine appreciation of Irish literature; there were individuals who were good grammarians. The Rev. Robert Walsh, one of the compilers of Warburton's "History of Dublin," gives us some idea of the knowledge of Irish and Latin that might be found among the hedge schoolmasters: "In an excursion we made, last summer, to Glandelach," he writes, "we found the Irish inscription on O'Toole's monument and heard on inquiry that the schoolmaster could read it. We found him in a wretched hovel, with several scholars too tall to stand upright in his school-room. He freely decyphered the obsolete inscription, transcribed it into modern Irish with great neatness, and added a translation in classical Latin. His scholars were

¹⁵ "Walks thro' Ireland," p. 46.

¹⁶ Anderson: "Historical Sketches," pp. 95-99.
(D 948)

sitting on stones round the wall of the hovel, and none of them had shoes or stockings."¹⁷ Dewar, himself a Gaelic scholar of some distinction, and, therefore, a reliable authority, relates his surprise at coming upon a peasant who showed a critical knowledge of Irish grammar: "I was astonished to find in the wildest parts of Donegalshire, a man with neither shoes nor stockings, who gave me a very clear and correct account of the peculiarities of Irish Grammar."¹⁸

That these schoolmasters were fond of imparting to their pupils the best that was in them we have sufficient evidence. Some of them boasted of having produced the most renowned Irish scholars in the country. Eugene Cavanagh, the Limerick schoolmaster and poet, writing about 1825, expressed a high opinion of the attainments of one of his pupils: "Patrick Carroll, a pupil of mine now living in Ballinstona, between Kilmallock and Bruff, is certainly the ablest and most universal Irish linguist that (I) know now in existence."¹⁹ And while teachers were proud of distinguished pupils, pupils were no less proud of having been taught by teachers of repute. "It is a curious fact," wrote the late Dr. Standish O'Grady in 1853, "that almost every Irish scholar who has appeared at either side of the Comeragh mountains for more than the last eighty years, has been a pupil of Donnchadh himself or one of those instructed by him."²⁰

In many parts of the country the people spoke two languages well. For example, in West Cork "the lower class of the people," according to Newenham, "for the most part, spoke English as fluently as the Irish language."²¹ English they used in business affairs, while Irish was the language of the home and the fields.

Its employment as a school subject was on the decline mainly through lack of Irish text-books, and partly

¹⁷ Warburton: "History of Dublin," Vol. II., p. 876.

¹⁸ "Observations on the Character . . . of the Irish," Chap. XI., p. 139.

¹⁹ Flower: Catalogue of Irish MSS. in the British Museum. Vol. II., p. 179.

²⁰ "Adventures of Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Con Mara." Introd. p. 4.

²¹ "View of Ireland." Preface pp. xiii-xiv.

because a knowledge of the English language was essential in ordinary dealings at large fairs and markets. The hedge schoolmaster was often proud of his English. In the home parents were particularly careless of imparting a knowledge of Irish to their children; in fact, they sometimes looked upon the ignorance of the younger generation in this respect as an advantage when they wished to discuss private affairs in their hearing. Yet the schoolmaster must have deplored what was happening, for every now and then we find him either defiantly singing the praises of the language or regretting its decay. He has been instrumental, however, in the preservation of thousands of legends, songs and poems, and in helping to perpetuate the use of his native tongue.

Besides Latin and Irish, there was another subject in which the Hedge Schools showed a good deal of proficiency. This was Mathematics, which, in one way or other, was taught in practically every school. Two advertisements from the same issue of "The Ennis Chronicle" offer an interesting comparison: The following appears on the front page:

"Mr. Meehan's School.

Opens the 14th Instant for the usual reception of Grown-up Youth, who wish for speedy improvement in Accompts, Use of the Globes, and the necessary branches of the Mathematics.

Ennis, Jan. 6. 1794."

The second advertisement is on the last page, and reads:

"James Burke will open School in the Court House of Ennis on Tuesday the 7th of January next, where Youth will be carefully instructed in Book-keeping, Writing, Figures, and Reading."

These, of course, are town schools, but the same notions regarding the importance of Arithmetic and allied subjects prevailed in country schools, in the higher classes of which Mathematics was taught in conjunction with the elements of book-keeping, land measuring, and sometimes navigation and astronomy.

In the "Survey of the Parish of Tullaroan," the Rev. Robert Shaw, writing in 1819, gives an idea of what was achieved in the ordinary country school: "Altogether there are about 150 children educated, about 80 of whom proceed as far as the double rule of three, and about 30 acquire a knowledge of book-keeping. About one-third of this number attends in winter-time, in consequence of the difficulty of going in bad weather. The average rates of tuition are—book-keeping, 4s. 2d. a quarter; common arithmetic, 3s. 4d.; reading and writing from 1s. 8d. to 2s. 6d."²² Considering that Shaw was a strong opponent of the Hedge Schools, we may assume that this was the minimum achievement in these establishments.

Richard Lovell Edgeworth is very emphatic in his opinion of the respective arithmetical attainments of the children of poor parents and the sons of the well-to-do. He writes: "I rely upon the event of any trials that may be made upon boys of the higher and lower classes in Ireland, in which I am certain it will be found that not only the common, but the higher parts of Arithmetic are better understood and more expertly practised by boys without shoes and stockings, than by young gentlemen riding home on horseback or in coaches, to enjoy their Christmas idleness."²³ A clear tribute to the work of the Hedge Schools.

Carleton informs us that he himself "got a tolerably good notion of Gough's Arithmetic"; though he is careful to point out that he had no taste for Mathematics. Speaking of Pat Frayne, the hedge schoolmaster, he says: "My brother John made a first-rate arithmetician; but Pat could never succeed in that direction with me. I had no genius for science, nor was I ever able to work out a proposition of Euclid during my life."²⁴

Glassford found that Arithmetic was one of the most popular of school subjects. "Arithmetic," he writes in one place, "is a favourite branch of instruction with the

²² p. 135. The text gives "only in summer time."

²³ Letter to Lord Selkirk, 1808. Printed in "The Black Book of Edgeworthstown," pp. 194 *et seq.*

²⁴ "Autobiography," p. 24.

Irish people generally."²⁵ In another place he calls it "the Irishman's hobby."²⁶ Not alone was there considerable attention given to it at school, but it was studied with interest afterwards. Carleton tells us of "a man who kept a public-house," who was so interested in mathematics that he "corresponded for years, in the mathematical department, with one of these small publications, which went among the lower classes at that time—sometimes called 'The Lady's Almanack,' and sometimes 'The Lady's Magazine.' " These were annuals which had a section devoted to mathematical problems, the questions being inserted one year, and the solutions being given the following issue. Such distinguished men as Professor McCullough of Trinity College, Dublin,²⁷ and the late Lord Kelvin's father were noted contributors to them in their day.

Bicheno, author of a book entitled, "Ireland and its Economy," published in 1830, suggests a reason for the study of Arithmetic in Hedge Schools. "In the common Catholic schools," he states, "arithmetic and geometry were carried to some length "; to which he adds in a footnote: "The inducement to study these seems to be the practical application of them in measuring land, which is carried to such minuteness, as seems ridiculous to those who have been used to see farms of 500 and 600 acres."²⁸

The evidence of the Rev. Dr. Hincks with regard to progress of mathematics and science in the Hedge Schools is extremely important. Dr. Hincks was well qualified to speak on the subject; he had had considerable experience in teaching in the south of Ireland. From 1790 to 1815 he taught in the city of Cork; from 1815 to 1821 in Fermoy, at which date he was appointed principal of the Belfast Academical Institution, a position he still held in 1835. "I have known instances," he stated, "of very considerable advance in science, especially in mathematics, in the very lowest schools. I have known persons pro-

²⁵ "Tours in Ireland," p. 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 66.

²⁷ "Autobiography," pp. 166-7.

²⁸ "Ireland and its Economy," p. 285.

curing scientific books, and apparently able to make use of those books, who were in very great poverty, in the south of Ireland especially. I think there is much more of such taste for scientific acquirements in the south than in the north''²⁹

²⁹ P. P. 1836, xiii., p. 20.



CHAPTER VIII.

SCHOOL BOOKS.

TO the great mass of the people the price of books was prohibitive. A shilling in Irish money represented, in the most prosperous part of the country, a full day's wage for a farm labourer; in poorer districts it would have paid three days' wages.¹ For that reason alone books were rarely bought, and for the same reason the possession of a few books was a thing to be proud of.

An advertisement in the "Ennis Chronicle" of March 3rd, 1793, gives some idea of the price of books at this period:

"RATIONAL SPELLING BOOK.

"Just published by the printer hereof, a New and improved Edition of the Rational Spelling Book, price 1s. 7½d.; Watt's ditto, 1s. 7½d.; Universal ditto, 1s. 1d.; . . . Dowling's Book-keeping, Voster's Arithmetic, with an extensive assortment of School Books . . ."

Unfortunately, none of such advertisements gives a more complete list of the books commonly used in the schools. The above were probably popular prices. Other books were more expensive. Bonnycastle's Arithmetic cost 2s., Patrick Lynch's Irish Grammar was advertised at 3s. 3d., and Deighan's Geography of Ireland cost 6s.; text-books which few scholars could afford to buy.

There were a number of works on arithmetic in general use. Voster's Arithmetic was the oldest. This was superseded by Gough's; and the latter, in the early part of the 19th century, by Thompson's. On seeing a copy of Gough's Arithmetic in the hands of a well known teacher, Carleton affected to be shocked: "'Gough's,' he exclaimed, . . . 'Surely it is not possible that you are

¹ See Dutton: "Survey of Galway," p. 358; Young, "Tour in Ireland." Vol. I., p. 369; Reid: "Travels in Ireland," p. 133; and others.

teaching the system of a man who for years has proved himself to be ignorant of the doctrine of proportion! I thought I should have found Thompson here, not Gough—but indeed, Mr. Newland, I did expect to have met you with Homer or Virgil in your hand, and not with such a schoolboy's book as Gough's Arithmetic.'"² There was also an Arithmetic by Darling in use in the Blue Coat Hospital, Dublin;³ and judging by the number of "Recommendatory Letters" which its author received from teachers throughout the country Deighan's Arithmetic must have enjoyed great popularity. As regards the other branches of mathematics, it seems that Bonnycastle's Geometry and Algebra, Simpson's Euclid, Keith's Trigonometry, and others of equal merit were in the hands of a great many schoolmasters. Bonnycastle was among the books of Tomas Ruadh O'Sullivan, the poet-schoolmaster; and Lynch had obviously a sound knowledge of Keith's mathematical works. Bonnycastle and Keith were teachers of note in their day; the former taught at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, the latter described himself as "Private Teacher of Mathematics."

There were also text-books of history, geography, the use of the globes, and navigation, the latter being particularly in evidence in schools in or near seaport towns.

Text-books were occasionally written by Irish schoolmasters; and knowing how difficult it was to put any book on the market, we cannot but admire their industry and courage. Sometimes the manuscript of a work was submitted in turn to those who were likely to subscribe to it. It is pleasing to note, however, that in lists of subscribers the names of teachers are usually in the majority. Lynch was author of many notable works; Deighan wrote text-books of geography, book-keeping, algebra, and arithmetic; George Wall, stated to be "Teacher of Reading, Elocution, Geography, etc.," published at Parsonstown in 1810 the first volume of "The Hibernian Preceptor," and the second volume two years later at

² "Autobiography," p. 263.

³ P. P. 1813-14. V., p. 151.

Dublin. No doubt most of these books found their way into both town and country schools.

The lack of text-books of arithmetic, book-keeping, geography, etc., was not a serious handicap to the scholar, for he had at his disposal all that his teacher knew. Usually the schoolmaster who undertook to teach these subjects had sufficient knowledge for the purpose; and even when he could not afford to buy the latest text-books, he had in manuscript form the most up-to-date information both as regards matter and method obtained by himself from a variety of sources. The large folios written by some of the schoolmasters are evidence of this. There is some reason to believe that these were occasionally sold to other teachers, for in the manuscript of Peter Galleghan, possessed by the Edinburgh University Library, the author gives a broad hint that it is worth at least five pounds.⁴

The attention of contemporary writers is almost entirely directed to the reading books found in the Hedge Schools. Dutton, for example, gives a list of the readers he discovered in use in the schools of County Clare. "The state of education," he wrote, "may be easily appreciated, when it is known that, with the exception of a few universal spelling books, the general cottage classics are :

- History of the Seven Champions of Christendom.
- Montelion, Knight of the Oracle.
- Parisimus and Parismenes.
- Irish Rogues and Raparees.
- Freney, a notorious robber, teaching them the most dangerous mode of robbing.
- the most celebrated pirates.
- Jack the Bachelor, a noted smuggler.
- Fair Rosamund and Jane Shore, two prostitutes.
- Donna Rosina, a Spanish Courtesan.
- Ovid's Art of Love.
- History of Witches and Apparitions.
- The Devil and Dr. Faustus.

⁴ I have had this information from Professor O'Toole, who consulted the Edinburgh MS.

Moll Flanders—highly edifying, no doubt.

New System of Boxing, by Mendoza, etc., etc.”⁵

He also mentions “Alibaba,” and a book entitled, “Seven Sleepers.”⁶

Wakefield, writing about four years later, quotes Dutton’s list at full length, and adds: “the books which Mr. Dutton enumerates are common. I met with nearly a similar list in Wicklow; and I found such, or as bad, in very general use.”⁷ Another contemporary, giving information concerning the schools of the parish of Kilrush, County Clare in 1816, writes in the same vein: “The hedge schools are as miserable, and the books in them as worthless as they have been observed to be in other parts of Ireland. Indeed so universally similar are the latter in this country, that a list of those found at the schools here in 1808, served to enumerate those at present used in one of the northern parishes.”⁸ It seems rather a pity that the last two writers do not strike an original note, and give the names of the better types of book found in the Hedge Schools, instead of taking their cue from Mr. Hely Dutton.

Carleton is particularly condemnatory of the reading books used by school children: “The matter placed in their hands,” he states, “was of a most inflammatory and pernicious nature, as regarded politics; and as far as religion and morality were concerned, nothing could be more gross and superstitious than the books which circulated among them. Eulogiums on murder, robbery and theft were read with delight in the histories of Freney the Robber, and the Irish Rogues and Rapparees; ridicule of the Word of God, and hatred to the Protestant religion, in a book called Ward’s Cantos,⁹ written in Hudibrastic verse; the downfall of the Protestant Establishment, and the exaltation of the Roman Church, in Columbkil’s

⁵ Dutton: “Survey of Clare,” pp. 236-7.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 238.

⁷ “An Account of Ireland.” Vol. II., p. 401.

⁸ Mason: “Parochial Survey.” Vol. II., p. 465.

⁹ This was a poem, in four cantos, entitled: “England’s Reformation.” By Thomas Ward; printed in London in 1715.

Prophecy, and latterly in that of Pastorini;¹⁰ a belief in every kind of religious imposture, in the Lives of the Saints, of St. Patrick, of St. Columbkil, of St. Teresa, St. Francis Xavier, the Holy Scapular, and several other works disgraceful to human reason. Political and religious ballads of the vilest doggerel, miraculous legends of holy friars persecuted by Protestants, and of signal vengeance inflicted by their divine power on their persecutors, were in the hands of young and old, and, of course, fixed in their credulity.

"Their weapons of controversy were drawn from the Fifty Reasons, the Doleful Fall of Andrew Sall, the Catholic Christian, the grounds of the Catholic Doctrine, a Net for the Fishers of Men, and several other publications, of the same class. The books of amusement read in these schools, including the first mentioned in this list, were, the Seven Champions of Christendom, the Seven Wise Masters and mistresses of Rome, Don Belianis of Greece, the Royal Fairy Tales, the Arabian Nights Entertainments, Valentine and Orson, Gesta Romanorum, Dorastus and Faunia, the History of Reynard the Fox, the Chevalier Faublax; to those I may add, the Battle of Aughrim, Siege of Londonderry, History of the Young Ascanius, a name by which the Pretender was designated, and the Renowned History of the Siege of Troy; the Forty Thieves, Robin Hood's Garland, the Garden of Love and the Royal Flower of Fidelity, Parismus and Parismenes; along with others, the names of which shall not appear upon these pages."¹¹

This list has the quality of variety, if it has nothing else. Most of the books here were probably the cheap reprints issued at Dublin, Limerick, and Cork, and known as the "Burton books," or "sixpenny books."¹² In Dublin no less than four booksellers, we are told, were engaged in the sole business of issuing them, and one

¹⁰ The people were warned by the Catholic clergy against giving credence to these prophecies. See Fitzpatrick: "Life of Dr. Doyle." Vol. I., p. 203; also P. P. 1825, XII., p. 758.

¹¹ "Traits and Stories." Vol. II., pp. 234-6

¹² First printed in 1700, by Nathaniel Crouch, under the name "Burton." See "Irish Book Lover." Vol. II., pp. 110 and 128-9.

bookseller had four printing presses; altogether some 300,000 books were published annually, and circulated throughout the country mainly by hawkers who invariably did a flourishing trade in them.¹³ Parents undoubtedly bought some of these books, for they were the cheapest on the market, and handed them on to their children when the latter required something to read from at school. In fact it was these books, or nothing.

The London Hibernian Society regarded the books they found in the Hedge Schools as "nonsensical . . . containing Fairy Tales, the History of St. Patrick, the Seven Champions of Christendom, the Scapular, &c., or at the very best Aesop's Fables."¹⁴ The Hibernian Bible Society called them "foolish legends which poisoned the minds of youth."¹⁵ Other semi-religious bodies endeavoured to suppress these "licentious books," as they were pleased to call them. The earliest efforts of the "Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion" were directed to this end; the Association had recourse first to moral suasion, and finding that no use brought the law to their aid in order to induce the hawkers to abandon their trade in these books.¹⁶ The Kildare Place Society based their plans on a much sounder footing; they sought to supplant them by providing other books. They issued a series of reprints, on the sale of which they allowed a wide margin of profit, fourpence in the shilling, to hawkers. It is stated that, as a result, they got hold of the market in cheap books, and finally of the printing presses.¹⁷ This is scarcely correct, for the books against which their campaign was undertaken were in vogue at a much later date; indeed it was not until after 1824 that they were called "Chap Books": and Thackeray mentions them in "The Irish Sketch-Book."¹⁸

¹³ Warburton: "History of Dublin." Vol. II., p. 875.

¹⁴ Hibernian Society. 9th Report, p. 46.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 10th Report, p. 16.

¹⁶ Warburton: "History of Dublin." Vol. II., p. 888.

¹⁷ "Hints on the Formation of Lending Libraries in Ireland," pp. 12-13.

¹⁸ See "Irish Book Lover." Vol. II., p. 110; Vol. I., p. 158.

The Cheap Book Society also published books, which were not bibles or tracts, to take the place of the "sixpenny books." In its first printed report, the Society announces the success of their efforts: "the avidity amongst the lower orders of this people for mental improvement keeps full pace with the generous labours of their benefactors and instructors."¹⁹

In Mason's "Parochial Survey of Ireland" there are a good many references to the readers used in the Hedge Schools. The facts in each case are supplied by the local clergyman of the Established Church. It is stated that in Kilmore, County Roscommon, "the books in general use are, the common spelling books, short histories, or other narratives, and the usual authors on Arithmetic, such as Voster and Gough."²⁰ In Errigal-Keroge, County Tyrone, it would appear that no particular book was employed as a reader for the schools: "The mixture of books that the children use is a great impediment to improvement at these schools. The spelling-books are of various kinds, and bad sorts; and the books for those advanced to reading, are generally those sold by pedlars of odd volumes of novels."²¹ In connection with the Hedge Schools of Middleton, County Cork, we find it stated that "the books generally read in these schools are Catholic."²² In the Survey of Rathline, County Longford, the report points out: "The books they (the children) read are not calculated to impress on their tender minds either a sense of religion or virtue; they are generally story-books, or some vulgar ill-written histories."²³ The compiler of the Survey of Tracton Abbey, County Cork, makes no comment on the value of the books used in the parish schools. "In each parish," he writes, "there is at least one (school), kept by a Roman Catholic master, and in which the children learn to read in such books as their parents may have, including every

¹⁹ Printed in Shaw: "Survey of Tullaroan," p. 148. See also Warburton. Vol. II., pp. 874-5.

²⁰ Vol. II., p. 405.

²¹ Vol. III., p. 166.

²² *Ibid.* p. 271.

²³ Vol. III., p. 292.



variety, from the 'History of Reynard the Fox' to 'Chesterfield's Rules of Politeness.'"²⁴

At least one writer, other than Carleton, draws attention to the fact that political pamphlets found their way into the schools, and were used as reading books. The Rev. Robert Shaw in the Survey of Tullaroan, published in 1819, states: "the books used, are the common primer, and the universal spelling-book. Books for reading in, are very few in number, and of that description well known to those who examine the books which pedlars and petty shop-keepers sell to the country people, such as the histories of robbers, &c., and particularly that pernicious little book, 'the Articles of Limerick,' of which several thousand copies are sold every year throughout every part of the nation, which it is impossible for children to read, without imbibing a spirit of disloyalty to the government, and hatred of the present royal family and English connection."²⁵ A book that would have caused this writer more anxiety still was a little text entitled: "A Sketch of Irish History by Way of Question and Answer for the Use of Schools."²⁶ This must have been well known to schoolmasters, though only one reference to it has been met with. The Commissioners of the Board of Education reported in 1825 that they saw a copy of it in one of the schools established by the Christian Brothers.²⁷

The preface to this book explains its object: "The complete neglect," writes the author, "of giving children any information on the subject of the history of Ireland, in most instances: and the general misrepresentation in those cases, where it has been touched upon gave rise to the following Sketch. The expression of truth in the most concise terms and in language suited to the capacities of those for whom the work is designed, was the only object kept in view. How far this has been attained must be decided by the Judgement of the Public."

²⁴ "Parochial Survey," Vol. III., p. 473.

²⁵ p. 135. The Articles of Limerick are given in every important text-book of Irish history.

²⁶ Printed in Cork, 1815.

²⁷ P. P. 1825, XII., pp. 755-6.

As far as the facts of Irish history are concerned, the account given is a just one; but it shows up the English government of Ireland in the most uncompromising way, and with a bitterness that could hardly fail to affect its readers. Undoubtedly the book was intended as an antidote to the biassed accounts of certain contemporary writers, and to arrest the growth of a servile spirit that was beginning to be noticeable among many prominent Irish Catholics almost on the eve of Catholic emancipation. This work running only to forty-seven pages is well planned, and exceedingly well written. I should imagine, however, that it was more suitable for adults than for school children.

The study of history was completely discouraged in the schools. The absence of books of history in the various charity schools was part of a well defined policy. Richard Lovell Edgeworth explains: "I have been told, that in some schools the Greek and Roman histories are forbidden; such abridgements of these histories as I have seen are certainly improper; to inculcate democracy and a foolish hankering after undefined liberty, is not necessary in Ireland."²⁸ Taking their cue from this leading authority on education, contemporary writers are emphatic in their opinions that the teaching of history, particularly in the Hedge Schools, laid the foundations of discontent, and of disaffection to constituted government. All reading matter was to be suppressed, except what was specifically intended to inculcate "piety and morality, and industry."²⁹

There is evidence of the existence of readers of the definitely "school book" type. "The Priests" states an agent of the London Hibernian Society, "endeavoured to persuade their audience to withdraw their children from any teacher who would not teach them in the 'Reading Made Easy'; 'Child's New Play Thing,' &c., &c."³⁰ The two mentioned here occur in the list of the

²⁸ Letter to the Committee of the Board of Education, dated Nov. 8, 1808. P. P. 1813-14. V. 3rd Report, App. No. 10, p. 109.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 109.

³⁰ Hibernian Society. 14th Report, p. 62.

"sixpenny books" published in Dublin.³¹ No doubt, there were many such school books which Dutton, Carleton, and others have omitted to mention.

The charges which these writers level against the books in the hands of the children attending the Hedge Schools are manifestly unjust. In the first place, very few of the books were really bad in themselves, they were mostly romantic tales; and, secondly, they were never used as class books; each child read his lesson from the book he happened to possess at the time, and that was the end of the matter as far as the teacher was concerned. Indeed it might well have happened that there were as many different reading books in the school as there were children who read. "It has occurred to a Member of our Commission," states a Report of the Commissioners of the Board of Education in 1825, "to see, in a School in the County of Sligo, a Child holding the New Testament in Its Hands, sitting between Two others, one of whom was supplied with the 'Forty Thieves,' and the other with 'the Pleasant Art of Money Catching,' while another at a little Distance was perusing the 'Mutiny Act,' and all reading aloud their respective Volumes at the same Moment."³² The view that such works were never employed as class books is supported by Fitzgibbon, one of the masters of Chancery in Ireland, who wrote in 1868: "Both the Commissioners of 1806 and of 1824 animadverted on the pay schools which then existed, observing, that the instruction afforded by them was extremely limited, and the masters, in general, very ill-qualified to give even that instruction, having themselves been taught in schools of a similar description. That, instead of being improved by moral and religious instruction, the minds of the pupils were corrupted by books calculated to incite to lawless and profligate adventure, to cherish superstition, or to lead to dissension or disloyalty (*vide* Report of 1825, p. 38).

"This stricture on the schools and the books was

³¹ See article on "Irish Chap Books," in *Irish Book Lover*, Vol. I., pp. 157-9.

³² P. P. 1825. XII., p. 44.

founded on evidence, that certain books mentioned by some of the witnesses were used in those old schools; among them the lives of two Irish highwaymen, named Freny and O'Hanlon, which appear to be the books alluded to as inciting to lawless and profligate adventure. It should have been noticed that no one of these books so objected to ever was a school-book, in any school. They were two-penny romances, which boys bought with their pocket-money, and read for mere amusement; and many of them, if not all, were of a very harmless character. Being voluntarily read, in addition to the school tasks, they promoted ability to read, which was some set-off against the assumed moral ill affects of them."³³

The Report of the Board of Education of 1825³⁴ gives a remarkable list of books found by the Commissioners in common use in schools, a very great number of which were books of sound literary and historical value. In addition to those given under the headings of "Catechisms" and "Religious Works," there are beneath the title, "Works of Entertainment, Histories, Tales, etc.," such books as—I give a selection—Don Quixote, The Vicar of Wakefield, Hume's History of England, Drake's Voyages, Travels to the North Sea, Life of Buonaparte, Mme. de Sévigné's Letters, etc., etc.³⁵ We might, therefore, go a little further than Fitzgibbon, and say that the schools had at their disposal a sufficient variety of books not only to enable practically every child to read, but also to give opportunities to many of them of acquiring a taste for literature and history.

³³ "Ireland in 1868," pp. 76-7.

³⁴ P. P. 1825. XII. App. No. 221, pp. 553-9.

³⁵ This list, though containing nearly 500 volumes is by no means exhaustive for it is compiled from the returns made to the Commissioners from four counties only—namely, Donegal, Kildare, Galway and Kerry. See Appendix.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAKING OF THE SCHOOLMASTER.

THOSE who took up teaching as a profession had generally some claim to distinction in learning. We find one schoolmaster referred to as the best classical scholar in Munster,¹ another as possessing an excellent knowledge of Irish, a third as one of the best book-keepers of his day in the North of Ireland,² and so on. We know definitely that many were distinguished poets, that several were writers of important works on languages, history, geography, mathematics, and other subjects, while not a few were authorities in their own branches of study.

We find, too, that it was because of their superior knowledge that many young men became schoolmasters; for instance, in a statement on the condition of education in Dungiven, County Derry, we learn that "private schools in almost every townland . . . are kept in general by the native Irish, who, having pursued their taste for literature . . . can afterwards find no other employment for their talents or acquirements."³ It is certain also that many qualified for teaching by a severe apprenticeship under schoolmasters of repute. Their aim was to learn all they could, and in such a way as to be prepared at any time to defend their title to the knowledge they had gained.

The real work of the young scholar, who was ambitious to continue his studies, began when he had learned all that was possible from the local schoolmaster. He then left his native place and proceeded to other schools. The undertaking was an arduous one, for the student was poor, he had to travel long distances, he had constantly

¹ This was John Nunan who taught Theophilus O'Flanagan. See Warburton : "History of Dublin." Vol. II., p. 931.

² Carleton : "Autobiography," p. 19.

³ Mason : "Parochial Survey." Vol. I., p. 329.

to prove his aptitude for learning; and his knowledge was repeatedly put to the test.⁴ Fortunately education was held in such high esteem that the hospitality of the peasant and the knowledge of the schoolmaster were invariably at the service of the humble seeker after learning. The young student was then known as a "poor scholar," a figure that looms very large on the romantic side of Irish education at this time. It was possible for him to acquire in this capacity an education to fit him as a teacher; or if he had a vocation for the priesthood to qualify for entrance to an ecclesiastical seminary in Ireland or abroad.

There is a poem in Irish called "The Poor Scholar's Blessing,"⁵ written about the middle of the eighteenth century by a young student who travelled in search of knowledge from Galway to the schools of Kerry. The poem tells of his journey, of the illness that prevented him reaching his destination, and of the hospitality he received at the hands of strangers.

"Long has been my weary wandering, without one living
soul to bear me company,
I have come from the distant North, from far Banan-
loch.
I have journeyed thence on foot,
I longed to reach the dwellings of the sages, whose
houses are in Killarney, by the waters of Lough
Lein;
I longed to hear them utter the music of their verses;
I longed to study with them—to be guided by their
lore."

When I left my home in Galway, high hopes surged
within my breast;
I reckoned on my talents and on my learning too.
I brought this lore, these talents,
To the high-minded, open-hearted sons of the land of
Kerry.
But I lost the sweet boon of health.
I made no friends by the way;
I became an outcast from kith and kin."

⁴ Carleton: "Traits and Stories." 4th Edition, Vol. II., pp. 146-50.

⁵ Printed in O'Connell: "Last Colonel of the Irish Brigade." Vol. I., pp. 57-60. (English version only.)

There are touching references to the kindness and hospitality shown him. He tells us :

“ With tenderest compassion they helped me in my need;
A noble beauteous lady snatched me from the
grave.”

And again he says :

“ Though long I tarried,
None would let me feel the burden of a boon conferred.”

His hostess was a lady of good family, and for those days comparatively wealthy. He addresses her :

“ Gracious and illustrious lady, whom the Son of God
Loveth for bounteous deeds,
Thy charity is not in vain.
The priest, the monk, the scholar bless thee!
Thou hast the blessing of the maids
Who seek no earthly spouse.”

Many of the old Irish families had still a great regard for the poet and the scholar; but it was usually among the peasantry that the stranger found a heartiest welcome. “ Blessed with a potato to eat,” says a contemporary, “ and a potato to share with a stranger, a poor Hibernian is happy.”⁶ Hospitality was, as M. de Jouy put it, the “ vertu favorite des Irlandais.”⁷

Carleton's account of his journey to Munster as a poor scholar is interesting. He carried with him five pounds in notes sewn in his coat, and thirty shillings in loose cash in his pocket. “ My outfit was simple enough,” he tells us, “ but a portion of it very significant of the object of my journey. My satchel consisted of a piece of grey-beard linen, made after the manner of a soldier's knapsack, and worn in the same fashion. At a first glance, every one could see that it was filled principally with books, whose shapes were quite visible through it, and the consequence was that my object as a young traveller was known at a glance. I never stayed in the towns as I went along, but always at the small roadside inns, where

⁶ Hibernian Society. 12th Report, p. 23.

⁷ *L'Hermite en Irlande*. Vol. I., p. 133.

I was treated with kindness to which I could scarcely render justice by description." He points out how little money he was required to spend on his journey: "During this youthful pilgrimage such was the respect held for those who appeared to be anxious to acquire education that, with one exception alone, I was not permitted to pay a farthing for either bed or board in the roadside houses of entertainment where I stopped."⁸

Crofton Croker informs us that the poor scholar was usually the most promising pupil of the hedge schoolmaster. He also mentions that friendly relations existed between teacher and scholar, a matter on which Carleton expresses a different opinion. "The highest class of scholars," writes Croker, "is composed of men as full grown, and often as old as the master himself, distinguished by the name of 'poor scholars' or 'strangers' These strangers are, generally, the sons of reduced farmers and natives of Ulster and Connaught, who having swallowed all the classical information within their immediate reach, range through the bogs of Munster to complete their knowledge of Latin, and to acquire the Greek tongue. The village schoolmaster gains little from this class of students; but the glory of possessing pupils who, when they return to their native provinces, will spread his fame, appears to him an adequate recompense. Nor is his generosity confined to their education; he also contributes his exertions towards their subsistence, and obtains for them gratuitous lodging in some neighbour's cabin."⁹

Carleton would appear to suggest that the schoolmaster regarded the teaching of a poor scholar as a profitless undertaking. In this view he stands, I think, almost alone.

It seems to have been customary for a schoolmaster to give a favourite pupil a letter of recommendation when the latter was leaving to pursue his studies in another district. Such a letter was called a "Pass," which, according to Professor Power, was "a sort of introductory

⁸ "Autobiography," pp. 69-70.

⁹ "Researches in the South of Ireland," p. 326.

letter or recommendation given by a poet or teacher to a successful pupil, friend, or protégé; it was sometimes in rhyme, but more frequently in a peculiar style of stilted and grandiloquent prose, reminding one of the discourse of a public orator on the conferring of honorary degrees."¹⁰ The "Pass" given to Richard Fitzgerald by Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara in 1759 is probably a typical example. The poet, however, makes use of it to express his scorn or his dislike of certain contemporary schoolmasters. The "Pass" begins by setting forth at great length the physical and mental attributes of the bearer; it demands for him the best of board and hospitality, with full liberty to go where he should choose; and it gives explicit directions that he be allowed to mix only with the learned and refined. "I ordain and command that he be not forced to associate or eat with illiterates or cowherds, dog-boys, dog-fanciers, or cold-whistling fellows, or with long, chilly, tiresome and talkative schoolmasters without culture, courtesy, or learning, such as . . . (here follow the names of some of these schoolmasters, among whom are mentioned "Giddyhead O'Hackett," "Coxcomb O'Boland," and "Buffon O'Mulcahy") . . . as these have not been initiated or exercised in the elements or beauties of learning or real knowledge; but are continually spoiling and extinguishing the young folks who are without Latin or good manners."¹¹

Croker furnishes a brief and all too general account of the poor scholar's method of acquiring knowledge: "The enterprising spirit of these literary adventurers is surprising; they will start from the home of their infancy—traverse the southern parts of the island—visit every village—sojourn in every school—examine every local curiosity, and return to their birth-place, after perhaps a year's absence, without having, for that space of time,

¹⁰ "Life of Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara," p. 11. See also Hayes (Dr. Standish O'Grady): "Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Con Mara" p. 9.

¹¹ The "Pass" is given in Irish in Hayes, pp. 9-11, and in the "Gaelic Journal," Vol. II., p. 270, where it is translated by F. Fleming. See also Power's "Life," pp. 11-12.

expended or even possessed a single half-crown; so warm is the hospitality of the peasantry, and so high their respect for learning! With the schoolmaster, too, it is a matter of special pride to be visited from remote distances; and it is not unusual to hear the respectability of a school estimated by the number of its 'stranger pupils.'"¹² It is stated by Croker that poor scholars were usually aspirants for the priesthood; "after wandering in search of learning through the country, they made their way to France, Spain, or Portugal; studied, and were ordained in the colleges of these countries, and returned to exercise their profession in Ireland."¹³ Carleton says that when it was the ambition of a poor scholar to become a schoolmaster the period of study in the Hedge Schools was considerably extended.¹⁴ It was of a different nature, too; the former aimed at the acquisition of knowledge for a specific purpose, the latter's ambition was usually literary supremacy. For this reason literary controversies between teacher and pupil became an important feature in the intellectual formation of the schoolmaster.

Carleton states that when a scholar had learned all that his local teacher had to give, he issued a challenge to the teacher to meet him in a contest of knowledge before competent judges. If defeated the pupil remained under his old teacher; but if victorious he went on to another school where he continued his studies. Again a contest took place with his new teacher; and once again if victorious he moved on. In this way he increased his stock of general information, acquired real knowledge and became more subtle in argument. After a year or two he returned home, and again challenged his first teacher. If the contest was decided in his favour, he sometimes took over the school while the teacher was compelled to go elsewhere. The position of the hedge schoolmaster was evidently no sinecure; he was liable at any time to be deposed by a younger and abler teacher.

If one may judge by the absence of reference to these

¹² *Researches in the South of Ireland*, pp. 326-7.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 327-8.

¹⁴ "Traits and Stories," 4th Edition, pp. 146 *et seq.*

contests, they were not common. Carleton, however, would seem to suggest the contrary, for he informs us that he witnessed one at which the local parish priest was the presiding judge.¹⁵ They were bound to become farcical, and it is probable that other means were adopted to establish the supremacy of the more learned schoolmaster. There is this much to be said in their favour, however: they helped to promote a high standard of knowledge among teachers, and they rendered continuance of studies and efficiency in teaching a vital necessity. It would scarcely be wise to rely too much on Carleton's evidence, or to advance the claim that teachers were generally trained in this way. More likely the system, if it did continue to obtain, was considerably modified.

Poor scholars went their rounds in search of knowledge until about the middle of the nineteenth century, long after the introduction of the system of National Education; in fact, almost until the last of the old Hedge Schools had vanished. Lady Chatterton, who visited Ireland in 1838, met some poor scholars during her stay; she describes them as "that interesting race who feed their minds with the crumbs of learning that fall from the hedge schools, and their bodies with the stray potatoes they pick up in the farm-houses."¹⁶

The professional status of the schoolmaster was usually determined by his reputation for knowledge and his success as a teacher. Hence his aim was immediately to achieve a name for wit and learning, and afterwards increase his local reputation by the success of his teaching. Though the co-operation of the people whose children he taught was indispensable to him at the outset, it rested with the schoolmaster when once established to keep up the attendance at his school. The Hedge Schools, it will be remembered, were under the direct authority of their teachers, generally owned by them and always depending for their existence upon the fees paid by pupils. On the entrance of a rival into the field, it behoved the schoolmaster to defend his ground successfully, or move to

¹⁵ "Traits and Stories." 4th Edition. Vol. II., pp. 147-8.

¹⁶ "Rambles in Ireland," p. 21.

another district. When two teachers settled in the same neighbourhood the rivalry between them often became very acute. We are told that when Peter O'Doirnin and Maurice Gorman both taught schools at Forkhill, County Armagh, the latter lost all his pupils, and was forced to leave the district because of a satire written upon him by O'Doirnin.¹⁷ This method of displaying one's own powers by showing up a rival's weaknesses dates back to the Bardic Schools. The rivals here were, both of them, scholars and poets.

The hedge schoolmaster was not wanting in diplomacy. Necessity compelled him to be something of a showman. Peter Daly's letter to his friends at Bohermeen is evidence of this. He makes a shrewd reference to some of his rivals who were suspected of taking assistance from one of the "Bible Societies." Daly was a friend of Peter Galleghan; both taught in County Meath. Here is the document :

"Peter Daly's thanks and acknowledgements to his Friends in Bohermeen, when he came there to teach their Children.

"With all the desires that Friendship inspires
 I offer my thankful Endeavours
 To those who have been my Friends in Boarmeen,
 Conferring their generous favours—
 Because they agreed, and Heaven decreed
 To place me in that Situation
 Of spreading among their Innocent Young,
 The rudiments of Education.
 The Love I possess I cannot express,
 Nor even too silently smother
 This little amends, because my old Friends,
 Preferred me before any other—
 With gratitude now I solemnly vow,
 That while I have life to inherit
 I'll ever discharge my duties at large,
 And do them the Justice they merit,—
 I'll prove as a truth that docible youth
 Ne'er met a more capable Master,
 And faithfully do much credit unto,
 My newly encouraging Pastor.
 In teaching the young our old *Mother Tongue*

¹⁷ Hayes : "Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Con-Mara," p. 8.
 (D 948)

At least I may venture to mention,
 I'm better than some who greedily thumb
 The Bible-Society-Pension.
 May Sanctity wreath the Churches of Meath,
 That dare not be crown'd with a *Steeple*,
 As Heaven provides for Teachers and Guides,
 Who live in the Love of their People.
 I'll never forget the moment I met
 Those true-born sons of shillaly
 With whom I would fain for ever remain
 Their dutiful Friend—Peter Daly.”¹⁸

A more daring method of propaganda was adopted among town teachers who used the newspaper as their medium for self-advertisement. Beneath two notices in “Finn’s Leinster Journal,” dated Jan. 2, 1793, announcing the results of the Christmas examinations in Mr. Lawler’s School, and Mr. Buchanan’s English Academy, Coalmarket, Kilkenny, there appears the following:

“CARRICK-ON-SUIR SCHOOL.

“Vacation will commence on the 21st instant, and end on the 20th of January.

“Mr. O’Brien requests that the Gentlemen who honour him with the Education of their Children, may be so obliging as to get them examined during the Vacation, which mode will, perhaps, better ascertain their Proficiency than those Examinations at School which may be conducted with Partiality and even Deception. An excellent Mathematician *lives in the House*, who instructs the young Gentlemen in Writing, Arithmetic, Book-keeping, and the Branches requisite for Those who may be intended for the Revenue, the Army, the Navy, or the University.

December 20, 1793.”

The tone of this certainly indicates professional jealousy; but none the less it points out the teacher’s readiness to submit his pupils to external and independent examination. It suggests a weakness or laxity in the method of examination, which would imply a corresponding inexactness in the results. In good country schools where the business of education was of paramount importance to both teachers and pupils, much less attention

¹⁸ Egerton, 208, f. 137b.

was given to examination, and more to the actual progress of individual scholars.

Schoolmasters did not achieve local fame only; their reputation among the body of teachers and among the people generally was almost national. Pupils came to them from all parts of the country either as paying students, or as poor scholars; and after two, three or four years' arduous work they returned to their native places to prove as schoolmasters themselves the merits of their teachers, or they went to the Continent to continue their studies—and to remember for a long time the comparative greatness of their earlier tutors' scholarship.

Thus, within the body of hedge schoolmasters, and entirely controlled by them were all the factors essential in promoting a knowledge of the elements of the content of education, opportunities of cultivating a taste for languages, literature and mathematics, and means by which even the poorest scholar might receive advanced instruction. There were numerous points of contact between teacher and taught; and between parent, teacher and pupil; all contributing to a fine activity in education, and playing an important part in the making of the hedge schoolmaster.

CHAPTER X.

THE INCOME OF THE SCHOOLMASTER.

THE income derived from teaching was usually very small. The fee paid for spelling was about 1s. 8d. a quarter—in some schools as much as 2s. 2d. was charged. For reading the fee was a little higher, generally 2s. a quarter, while the charge for writing varied from 2s. 2d. to 3s. 3d. a quarter. Arithmetic stood at a higher figure, 4s. 4d. to 7s. a quarter.¹ Latin was about 11s.; “the schoolmaster at Ennistymon teaches latin at 11s. 4½d. per quarter.”²

At first glance it might appear that the salary thus secured to the teacher was for those days a comparatively good one; but it depended on three variables: the number of pupils in the school, their attendance through the winter months, and the actual payment of fees.

Since, needless to say, the question of remuneration was an important factor in the schoolmaster's decision to set up an establishment, the number of children at the Hedge School was fairly large as a rule. Though the average number in attendance at the Pay Schools was no more than forty-three,³ many of these schools had upwards of one hundred pupils. It was evidently not an uncommon thing for the teacher to test the possibilities of a neighbourhood before finally settling down there. Carleton relates that Pat Frayne kept school for only one day in Towney: “It was *his* first day of opening the school, and also his last in Towney.” He had but three pupils.⁴ Later, however, he settled in Skelgy, where he had over one hundred children, boys and girls, in his school.⁵ With that number in regular attendance a schoolmaster might

¹ See Newenham: “View of Ireland,” App. No. 26; also Mason: “Parochial Survey,” Vol. I., p. 98; Vol. II., p. 73.

² Mason: “Parochial Survey,” Vol. I., p. 495.

³ P. P. 1826-7, XII., p. 23.

⁴ “Autobiography,” p. 12.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 19.

reasonably expect a moderately generous return for his labours. Taking it that the majority of children learned reading, a smaller number writing and arithmetic, the teacher's salary might be reckoned at about £50 a year. In actual fact the income of the teacher was usually much less. Even in towns, payment for teaching was poor; in the city of Kilkenny, Francis Grace with a school of 65 pupils had an income of £50 a year, while John Kelly, who taught as many as 117 children made only £40 a year; some town teachers earned little more than £20 a year.⁶ Often the meagreness of the salary was due to the poverty or the indifference of the parents. Tomás Ruadh O'Sullivan tells us in one of his poems that he taught for as little as sixpence a quarter:

"It was my shame
To be teaching children for sixpence a quarter."⁷

Peter Galleghan's income was exceedingly small; the amount he got in fees from his pupils was £6 per annum, at least, that is what is given in the Parochial Returns made in 1824.⁸

Generally speaking, the position in country districts was not so bad, as the teachers were often part paid in kind; turf, butter, eggs, and home-cured meat were to be obtained where money was not forthcoming. 'Every winter's day,' says Carleton, writing of Pat Frayne's school, "each (scholar) brought two sods of turf for the fire." He further declares that Pat Frayne "continued to get more butter from his pupils than five families like his could consume."⁹ Very often, too, the schoolmaster was boarded and lodged free at the houses of the better-off families. Tomás Ruadh O'Sullivan lived in this way for many years. In reference to the school fees usually charged, a contemporary writer observes: "These have been the terms for half a century back; and the wretched

⁶ See Carrigan: "History of the Diocese of Ossory." Vol. III., App. pp. 511-12, also P. P. 1826-27, XII., where details of the schools in each parish are given.

⁷ "Songs of Tomás Ruadh O'Sullivan." Edited by James Fenton. Second edition, p. 22.

⁸ P. P. 1826-27. XII. p. 732. See p. 136 *infra*.

⁹ "Autobiography," pp. 20-21.

men who are employed in the important business of education, have no encouragement whatever, except the hospitality of the parents of their pupils."¹⁰

Attendance at school during the winter was very irregular. This was due to many causes: bad weather, the fact that numbers of children had long distances to travel—when Carleton lived at Springtown, he had to walk a distance of eight miles to school and back—and the unhealthy condition of the schoolhouse itself which was often cold and damp. Consequently fees fell at this time, since those who did not attend did not pay. Sometimes the teacher received in addition to his board and lodging a little money for teaching the children of his benefactor; but as a rule, in poorer districts especially, he was satisfied with his lot if he could tide over the lean period of winter without absolute discomfort.

Occasionally it was difficult to collect the small sums of money owing to the teacher. Such was the case, we learn with the teachers of the Hedge Schools at Kilmactigue, County Sligo: "Many of these poor schoolmasters," writes the Rev. James Neligan, an Anglican clergyman, "do not earn sixpence per day by their continual labours, from the small allowance paid to them, and in many cases promised, but not paid; so that they are often obliged to have recourse to the magistrate, to recover the miserable wages of 1s. 8d. per quarter."¹¹ That there were such cases is likely enough, but it is doubtful if the teacher appealed to the law. He had a mightier weapon, which he used with discrimination but without mercy. His power of satire was his greatest asset; and in pillorying his enemies he was careful not to offend his friends.

In one¹² of Peter Galleghan's manuscripts, we come upon some verse evidently written by a schoolmaster who had endured much at the hands of parents.

¹⁰ Mason: "Parochial Survey." Vol. I., p. 598.

¹¹ Mason: "Parochial Survey of Ireland." Vol. II., p. 374.

¹² This manuscript entitled "Peter Galleghan's Collections in English and Irish. Entirely written by Himself . . . January 16th, 1824," is in the possession of Professor Eamon O'Toole, Trinity College, Dublin, who very kindly allowed me to examine it.

" THE TUTOR'S FAREWELL.

" A Tutor gratefully presents
His sincere thanks and Compliments,
To any in or out of town,
Who to him have favours shown,
Taketh leave of them to pass,
Due compliments to another Class
Whose time entirely would engross,
Without affording him a toss,
Ye learned Criticks pray take heed,
Whoever with you may succeed,
That in morals he be sound
In learning solid and profound
Quite capable with ease to teach
All things within the human reach,
Then if along with him he brings,
A School-house with some useful things,
Finds himself in food and raiment,
Teach for little or no payment,
Or daily seek out bed and board,
Such as the country may afford,
Is content to lodge his soul-case,
Sometimes in a sowed up foul case
Cause children who cannot speak
To spell and read within a week.
Remove their natural defects,
Illuminate their Intellects,
Teach them that famous rule Position
Before they understand Addition
Book-keeping in particular
Of Sciences the best by far,
For many who will never stop,
In either Counting house, or Shop,
Discipline apes to them reveal,
The use of Compasses and scale,
To measure timber, Land survey,
With a puck-tether made of hay,
Which will do as well as any
And secure the ready penny,
Which a proper chain would cost,
Altho' it might next day be lost,
Which would be a great vexation
To any in your situation.
If any be so mean and base
Your Scurvy office to embrace,
If he applies upon my word
He's very fit to be prefer'd.
You savage despicable crew.
To ever more I bid adieu."

The authorship of this doggerel is not known. It was probably composed in haste; but we may be sure that it was often recited with relish.

Even in town schools the same difficulty in securing payment of fees appears to have existed. An advertisement in "The Ennis Chronicle" would indicate as much:

"All persons indebted to the late Pat Monitor, Schoolmaster, are hereby cautioned from paying any Person, but Mary Monitor, of the City of Limerick, his Widow and Sole Administratrix, she being the only Person legally authorised to receive the same.

Dated 10th Jan., 1794."¹³

Thus with school charges so small, the loss of his pupils during the winter months, and the non-payment of fees, the hedge schoolmaster's income was indeed a small one.

The economic position of the teacher was not, however, really so critical. His knowledge and his very status constituted him the leading authority on all matters of moment to the community. His advice and help were sought and generally paid for in money or in kind, and where neither of these were forthcoming he invariably managed to gain in prestige. His social standing in the parish was of considerable importance to him; for the higher it was the more the people looked to him as guide and counsellor. "A hedge schoolmaster," writes Carleton, "was the general scribe of the parish, to whom all who wanted letters or petitions written, uniformly applied—and these were glorious opportunities for the pompous display of pedantry."¹⁴

There was a more dignified use than that of mere letter-writing to which the schoolmaster could put his pen. Printed books in Irish were scarce at this period, and such as were on the market were mostly Bibles, Catechisms and Irish Grammars.¹⁵ Irish literature, ancient and modern, was to be found only in manuscript form;

¹³ "The Ennis Chronicle," January 13th.

¹⁴ "Traits and Stories." Fourth edition. Vol. II., p. 222.

¹⁵ Anderson: "Historical Sketches." Sections I., VII., and VIII.

rare manuscripts, originals and copies, were scattered throughout the country; poems, songs and stories, many of which had never been written down were on the lips of the people.¹⁶ Here the schoolmaster whose knowledge of Irish was sufficient found employment and exercise for his talents. For his own pleasure he frequently transcribed old manuscripts; more often, perhaps, he was engaged to do so. The work was tedious and difficult, and since many of the manuscripts were in bad condition, it was a test of patience and of skill. A large proportion of the Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy, the British Museum and elsewhere is the work of hedge schoolmasters; and much of the matter of the later manuscripts is their composition.

In the Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum there are numerous references to schoolmasters who filled from time to time the important rôle of scribe. Thus we find that a certain manuscript was "written in 1767 by Sean O Cinnéide—i.e., 'John Kennedy,' who was (says O'Curry, an excellent authority) a schoolmaster at Ballyket, near Kilrush, in Clare."¹⁷ Another manuscript was "for the most part written, hastily and in a very poor hand, by a country schoolmaster, that was very well known in his day . . . at various places in his native county of Limerick and in Clare."¹⁸ Maurice O'Gorman, who is described as a "country schoolmaster," was employed in 1783 by Chevalier O'Gorman to copy out the Dublin Annals of Innisfallen.¹⁹ Michael O'Lonagan, scholar and transcriber of MSS., was also a schoolmaster.²⁰

No post brought the schoolmaster into greater prominence than that of parish clerk. It was a position of trust to which no salary was attached. His added

¹⁶ Mason: "Parochial Survey." Vol. I., p. 318; Vol. II., p. 98.

¹⁷ O'Grady: Vol. I., p. 589.

¹⁸ O'Grady: Vol. I., p. 664.

¹⁹ Flower: Vol. II., pp. 48, 49, 451. See also O'Grady: Vol. I. p. 498.

²⁰ Flower: Vol. II., pp. 415-16.

(D 948)

sense of dignity, his friendship with the parish priest, his new and perhaps more intimate relations with the people were sufficient recompense. We can cite Carleton again as an authority: "The schoolmaster had also generally the clerkship of the parish; an office, however, which in the country parts of Ireland is without any kind of salary, beyond what results from the patronage of the priest, a matter of serious moment to a teacher, who, should he incur his Reverence's displeasure, would be immediately driven out of the parish. The master, therefore, was always tyrannical and insolent to the people, in proportion as he stood high in the estimation of the priest."²¹ The schoolmaster was sometimes not so easily got rid of. Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara continued to teach at Slieve Gua long after he had lampooned Father John Casey, of Stradbally; but he had the temerity to do the same to "a young woman of the parish who promptly retaliated by burning the school-house over his head, and forcing him to fly the locality."²² In the absence of grave moral faults, the urgent demand for schoolmasters probably assured them their positions. The arrogance which Carleton imputes to them is possibly an exaggeration; it may be no more than a caustic reference to their innocent pride and vanity. Carleton is too fond of the language of hyperbole to be taken very seriously, in this matter at any rate, for schoolmasters were not likely to be offensive to their patrons.

In his *Survey of Clare*, Dutton states that "sometimes a trifling addition is made to the master's little income by drawing examinations, bail-bonds, petitions, summonses, etc., etc."²³ It would almost seem as if the ability to carry out legal transactions was a necessary qualification for the post of schoolmaster, for we find Owen Roe O'Sullivan recommending himself to the people of Knocknagree on the strength of his competence to deal with such important matters as:

²¹ "Traits and Stories." Fourth edition. Vol. II., pp. 256-7.

²² Power: "Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara," p. 3. See also Hayes: "Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Con-Mara," p. 5.

²³ pp. 235-6.

"Bills, bonds and informations,
 Summons, warrants, supersedes,
 Judgment tickets good,
 Leases, receipts in full,
 And releases, short accounts,
 With rhyme and reason,
 And sweet love letters for the ladies."²⁴

The diary for the year 1793 of John Fitzgerald, a schoolmaster in the city of Cork, is full of references to the various offices he performed for his neighbours, for which there seems to have been recognised charges. Here are a few extracts:

"7th Jan.—Constant smart rain the whole day and most part of the night. Drew marriage articles between Thos. Wood and Bridget Murphy, and got 8s. 1½d. for my trouble. The remainder of the 58th Regt, marched this morning for ——. Crouch gave me two pots of porter at my fireside. I wrote a letter for him to J. D. Maindue, M.D., Esq., Bloomsbury Square, London."²⁵

"1st April.—A cold, dry windy day. Ed. Parks was appointed City gaoler in the place of Thos. Sharp. . . . Wrote a petition for the journeymen horseshoers to raise their wages, and got 2s. 8½d. for my trouble."²⁶

"24th May.—Such another fine day as yesterday. The Union were out this day. I treated Charles Hart to five pots of porter, and he bestowed on me a half hundred of dutchified quills, one quire of large, and three quires of short, letter paper. Wrote a petition for Henry Nicolls, and got 2s. 8½d. for my trouble."²⁷

"29th June.—Cloudy, cool weather. Captain Brick sent for me to go to Evergreen, I suppose to draw his will, but when I went to his house he adjourned the business till to-morrow morning. After I came home Miss Wrixon sent me a posey and some salad. Wrote a petition for Barth. Mahony, and got 2s. 8½d. for my trouble."²⁸

"29th August.—A fine pleasant day; very heavy rain most part of the evening. Began to teach Whetham's son and Parker Dunscombe at Mr. Hinck's school, and is to

²⁴ Given in "Amhrain Eoghan Ruadh Uí Súilleabháin," leis an Athair Pádraig Ua Duinnín. Introd. p. xxii.

²⁵ "Cork Hist. and Arch. Soc. Journal." Series 2, Vol. XXIV p. 154.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Vol. XXV., p. 42.

²⁷ *Ibid.* Vol. XXXI., p. 50.

²⁸ *Ibid.* Vol. XXV., p. 102.

give me but a guinea a quarter in the future, but I don't know how it will be with regard to the quarter now going on. Cornelius Sweeney gave me 11s. 4½d., and I drew three presentments for him on the new account. Sam Hobbs forced me against my will to drink a tumbler of red wine in his house. I taught Henry Fortescue at Mr. Maguire's house this day, and I drew three presentments for John Raymond, but he gave me no money for them. I drew a fourth presentment for Cornelius Sweeny on the new account, which remains yet unpaid."²⁹

It is probable that the country schoolmaster was quite as actively engaged; though he derived perhaps more prestige than emolument from such duties.

²⁹ "Cork Hist. and Arch. Soc. Journal." Vol. XXV., p. 105.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SOCIAL PRESTIGE OF THE SCHOOLMASTER.

THE teachers of the Hedge Schools were, with very few exceptions, all men. There is mention made of a Dame's school at Piltown, County Kilkenny, but it is specifically stated that it was a school "for very young children."¹ Glassford, who was a member of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Ireland in 1824, declares that the Hedge Schools would be called "dames' schools" in England.² But this is untrue, since in the first place the Hedge Schools were taught by men; and secondly the curriculum was wider, and the standard of attainment was much higher. Dame schools were attended by children up to about the age of seven, and were often merely what Professor Frank Smith calls "baby-minding institutions"³ providing at most the barest rudiments of instruction.⁴ "Their educational importance is slight,"⁵ whereas the Hedge Schools occupy a worthy position in the history of Irish education. Hence the Irish schoolmaster was immediately on a higher footing than the teacher of the "dames' schools for very young children"; his knowledge was superior, his work was more extensive in scope, he was a teacher of older pupils as well as of young.

His social standing among the people whose children he taught was remarkably high. He was one of themselves, but different in the respect that he was a man of some learning. They regarded him as a friend whose

¹ Mason: "Parochial Survey." Vol. I., p. 369.

² "Notes of Three Tours in Ireland in 1824 and 1826," p. 117.

³ Smith: "History of English Elementary Education," p. 38. See also Birchenough: "History of Elementary Education in England and Wales," p. 3.

⁴ Smith: "History of English Elementary Education," p. 150.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 30.

counsel was to be sought in all circumstances of stress and difficulty, and whose decisions in important matters carried weight. No function of consequence, wedding, christening, or harvest-home took place at which he was not a prominent figure.

A writer of pronounced anti-Irish views gives us a striking sketch of the village schoolmaster of 1820: "The country schoolmaster is independent of all system and control; he is himself one of the people, imbued with the same prejudices, influenced by the same feelings, subject to the same habits; to his little store of learning he generally adds some traditionary tales of his country, of a character to keep alive discontent. He is the scribe, as well as the chronicler and the pedagogue of his little circle; he writes their letters, and derives from this no small degree of influence and profit, but he has open to him another source of deeper interest and greater emolument, which he seldom has virtue enough to leave unexplored. He is the centre of the mystery of rustic iniquity, the cheap attorney of the neighbourhood, and, furnished with his little book of precedents, the fabricator of false leases and surreptitious deeds and conveyances. Possessed of important secrets and of useful acquirements, he is courted and caressed; a cordial reception and the usual allowance of whiskey greets his approach, and he completes his character by adding inebriety to his other accomplishments. Such is frequently the rural schoolmaster, a personage whom poetry would adorn with primeval innocence and all the flowers of her garland! So true it is that ignorance is not simplicity, nor rudeness honesty."⁶

Here we have an unintentional tribute to the social prestige of the hedge schoolmaster, and to the democratic spirit of the education with which he was identified. Being himself one of the people, the schoolmaster naturally shared their opinions on questions of politics. It was really no discredit to him to recall "traditionary tales of his country" even of a kind "to keep alive discon-

⁶ "Thoughts and Suggestions on the Education of the Peasantry of Ireland," pp. 12-13.

tent." They were probably such tales as would be cherished in any country. This writer is not the only one to charge the hedge schoolmaster with being the organiser of secret political societies, "the centre of the mystery of rustic iniquity" Carleton does it; the schoolmaster in his sketch, "The Hedge School," was a notorious character in this respect. But such writers are very apt to attribute the very worst motives to any popular political activities.

The amount of legal business which the schoolmaster was able to transact was immense. He made out wills, drew up leases, measured land, conveyed property; did everything in fact that would ordinarily come the way of a country lawyer. Nearly every schoolmaster possessed copies of the true legal forms of wills, leases, etc., examples of which may be seen in some of the MSS. of Peter Galleghan, who was himself the possessor of many "useful acquirements."

The accusation that the schoolmaster was fond of strong drink is scarcely more true of the teaching profession than it is of any other occupation at this time. Indeed surprisingly few references to drinking among schoolmasters are met with, and even these often come under suspicion. For instance, we find a clergyman objecting to the manner of the election of a teacher to an endowed Protestant school at Ballintoy, County Antrim, which, according to the terms of the bequest has to be made by the parishioners assembled at the Easter vestry: "The only qualification," he writes, "necessary, on these occasions, for the candidate to possess is, the capability of drinking whiskey, and sharing it with the electors; and whoever entertains best, and drinks deepest, is sure of gaining his election."⁷ There is no definite reason why the schoolmaster should be specially pointed to as one whose character is complete only when he has added "inebriety to his other accomplishments."

Contemporary opinions of the hedge schoolmaster are interesting, even if they are usually adverse. Sir John Carr

⁷ Mason: "Parochial Survey." Vol. I., p. 158.

who travelled in Ireland in 1805 stated that the country schoolmaster was a "miserable breadless being," nearly as ignorant as his own scholars.⁸ Wakefield is even more critical. "The common schoolmaster," he wrote, "is generally a man who was originally intended for the priesthood: but whose morals had been too bad, or his habitual idleness so deeply rooted, as to prevent his improving himself for that office. To persons of this kind is the education of the poor entirely intrusted; and the consequence is, that their pupils imbibe from them enmity to England, hatred to the Government, and superstitious veneration for old and absurd customs."⁹ The Rev. Robert Shaw, writing in 1819, proposed getting rid of the teachers of the Hedge Schools: "It would be the wisdom of the government and the public," he said, "to take it (education) out of the hands of persons ill-qualified to give it a proper direction, and to carry it on under some plan calculated to instil into children principles of moral and civil order, through proper masters and proper books."¹⁰ Carleton went so far as to state that "disloyal principles were industriously insinuated" into the minds of the children "by their teachers."¹¹ Yet the schoolmaster might have taught nothing more than a few facts of history that did not reflect credit on a government which for centuries had repressed Ireland (to use the expression of the late Sir Graham Balfour) "without mercy and without intelligence."¹²

National history cannot be read without forming prejudices of some kind; and this is more true of a subject race which can only find in its history an account of its past glory, its wrongs and its present plight. No one has yet discovered a conquered race that is entire in its loyalty to its conqueror. Minor illegalities among a free people are merely punishable by law; but when committed by a subject people, they are regarded as open defiance

⁸ "The Stranger in Ireland," pp. 250-51.

⁹ "An Account of Ireland," Vol. II., p. 398.

¹⁰ "Survey of Tullaroan," p. 148.

¹¹ "Traits and Stories," Fourth edition. Vol. II., p. 234.

¹² "Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland." Second edition, p. 78.

and disloyalty. This point of view must not be overlooked when forming a judgment of the character and political outlook of the Irish schoolmaster.

Crofton Croker has a high estimate of the schoolmaster's standing in the community: "In Munster," he writes, "the village schoolmaster forms a peculiar character; and, next to the lord of the manor, the parson, and the priest, he is the most important personage in the parish. His 'academic grove' is a long thatched house, generally the largest in the place; surrendered, when necessary, for the waking of a dead body, or the celebration of mass while the chapel is undergoing repairs; and on Sundays, when not otherwise engaged, it is used as a jig or dancing house."¹³

He draws a lively picture of the schoolmaster among his friends: "In an evening assembly of village statesmen he holds the most distinguished place, from his historical information, pompous eloquence, and classical erudition. His principles verge very closely indeed on the broadest republicanism; he delivers warm descriptions of the Grecian and Roman commonwealths; the ardent spirit of freedom and general equality of rights in former days—and then comes down to his own country, which is always the ultimate political subject of discussion. He praises the Milesians—he curses 'the betrayer Dermot'—abuses 'the Saxons strangers'—lauds Brien Boru—utters one sweeping invective against the Danes, Henry VIII, Elizabeth, Cromwell 'the Bloody,' William 'of the Boyne,' and Anne; he denies the legality of the criminal code; deprecates and disclaims the Union; dwells with enthusiasm on the memories of Curran, Grattan, 'Lord Edward,' and young Emmet; insists on Catholic Emancipation; attacks the *Peelers*, horse and foot; protests against tithes, and threatens a separation of the United Kingdoms! These are his principles, which he pronounces with a freedom, proportioned to the patriotic feelings of his auditory; before congenial spirits he talks downright treason; in the presence of a yeomanry

¹³ "Researches in the South of Ireland," p. 326.
(D 948)

sergeant, an excise officer, a parson's clerk, he reasons on legitimate liberty; he is an enemy to royalty and English domination. Nor do these political sentiments confine themselves to the limits of mere declamation; he is frequently the promoter of insurrectional tumults; he plans the nocturnal operations of the disaffected; writes their threatening proclamations studiously mis-spelled and pompously signed, Captain Moonlight, Lieutenant Firebrand, Major Hasher, Colonel Dreadnought; and General Rock, *Night Errant*, and Grand Commander of the Order of the Shamrock Election."¹⁴

The charge of being implicated in "insurrectional tumults" can neither be substantiated nor completely disproved for want of evidence. It is probably an exaggeration. We do know that Tomás Ruadh O'Sullivan was a great admirer of O'Connell, the originator of one of the greatest constitutional movements in history; and that James Nash, the Waterford hedge schoolmaster, disapproved of Thomas Francis Meagher's idea of employing physical force as an instrument in Irish politics. Nash, the poor schoolmaster, was a believer in constitutional methods; Meagher, the son of a wealthy merchant, and educated in England, raised the standard of armed force in 1847. This is how Meagher describes Nash: "The schoolmaster was full of humour, full of poetry, full of gentleness and goodness; he was a patriot from the heart, and an orator by nature. Uncultivated, luxuriant, wild, his imagination produced in profusion, the strangest metaphors, running riot in tropes, allegories, analogies and visions. Of ancient history and books of ancient fable he had read much, but digested little. He was a Shiel in the rough. Less pretentious than Phillips,¹⁵ he was equally fruitful in imagery and diction, and more condensed in expression."¹⁶

The gifts of the hedge schoolmaster and his influence were often used on behalf of popular candidates seeking election to parliament, a fact which may account for their

¹⁴ "Researches in the South of Ireland," pp. 328-9.

¹⁵ Shiel and Phillips were two famous Irish orators.

¹⁶ "Meagher of the Sword," p. 286.

unpopularity with the opposing party. This was an honour rarely paid to schoolmasters in other countries. Here is an extract from one of Nash's political speeches, a mixture of audacity, humour and pedantry; he defies the enemies of his native land: "Let them come on, let them come on; let them draw the sword; and then woe to the conquered!—every potato field shall be a Marathon, and every boreen a Thermopylae."¹⁷

The description of the teacher in the village schools of France before the revolution offers many points for comparison with that of the Irish hedge schoolmaster: "Le maître avait un sort généralement envié; il était entouré d'une grande considération. Associé à l'enseignement chrétien que donnait le prêtre, il distribuait l'éducation en même temps que l'instruction; les parents ne lui confiaient pas seulement l'intelligence, mais l'âme et la conscience de leurs enfants. Honoré de tous, conseil de la plupart, arbitre des différends, dépositaire de bien des secrets; jouissant d'ailleurs d'un revenu qui, modeste dans certains endroits, était dans d'autres assez considérable, il ne sentait pas le besoin de changer de lieu. Les uns passaient une partie de leur vie, les autres leur vie tout entière dans la même commune, et l'on en citerait plusieurs où, pendant près de deux siècles, les maîtres se sont succédé de père en fils."¹⁸

The Irish schoolmaster enjoyed a prestige at least as high as this; but the remuneration for his labours was rarely as good. It was by no means uncommon too for families in Ireland to devote themselves to teaching for several generations. Father and son occasionally taught schools in the same parish. In Slieverue, County Kilkenny, Daniel Sullivan, Senior, conducted a school of eighty pupils, sixty boys and twenty girls; while at the same time his son also Daniel Sullivan taught a school at Rathpatrick, Gurteen, a distance of about two miles.¹⁹ Even father and daughter were sometimes found in charge of schools in the same district; the school in the Catholic

¹⁷ "Meagher of the Sword," p. 287.

¹⁸ Pierre: "L'Ecole sous la Révolution Française," p. 18.

¹⁹ P. P. 1826-27. XII., pp. 646-7.

chapel at Phillipstown was "in charge of a girl of fifteen, her father being engaged at another in the neighbourhood"; further, "nine girls in the school were . . . preparing for *confirmation*."²⁰ The Irish schoolmaster also seems to have been responsible for a large share of the teaching of religious doctrine in the Hedge Schools. We have evidence of this from a comparatively early date. In the diary of Dr. Plunket, Catholic bishop of Meath, respecting his visitation of 1780, there are several statements to this effect: "The parish clerk or schoolmaster may begin the work of catechetical instruction, but it belongs to the pastor alone to carry it on and finish it with success. This truly great business will never appear important enough to young people unless they hear and see the pastor *himself* teach the Christian doctrine every Sunday and holiday at stated hours. To form the tender souls of young people to virtue, by instilling the saving truth and maxims of our holy religion, is one of the noblest functions of the priesthood; it would be a pity to surrender it up to the laity. Were we inclined to do so, we cannot without inevitable danger to ourselves; we are to be the responsible persons at the last day: *animam ejus requiram de manu tua*."²¹ This is a clear exhortation to the clergy to take the responsibility of teaching religious doctrine, and not to leave it entirely in the hands of the schoolmaster. On the other hand, it is proof that both parent and priest entrusted the children's spiritual welfare to the teacher.

In the official statements of the French authorities on the independent village schools of France under the First Republic, we find a curious parallel to the kind of criticism prevalent among the opponents of the Hedge Schools; criticism which too often bears the imprint of prejudice and misinterpretation to carry any great conviction with it. In Ireland it was alleged that the schoolmaster aroused and kept alive a spirit of hostility to constituted authority; in France, the complaint was that

²⁰ Glassford: "Notes of Three Tours in Ireland," p. 2.

²¹ Given in Cogan: "History of the Diocese of Meath." Vol. III., p. 39.

the teacher did not submit quietly to the new *régime*. "Tous les maîtres et maîtresses d'écoles privées," it was said, ". . . . sont les suppôts du fanatisme et de la royauté C'est la raison d'être de leur succès."²²

One of the very few gratuitous compliments to the character of the schoolmaster comes from the pen of a Protestant clergyman, who wrote from Carne, the extreme westerly point of County Wexford: "There is one school, not endowed, where almost every child, from five years old and upwards, goes for instruction in spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic, and some are also taught the Latin classics At this school (the master of which is James Fortune, of the Roman Catholic religion, a man of very correct morals) are to be seen between 70 and 80 children of both sexes in the summer season, all decently clothed."²³ The entire population of Carne was 640.

The lovable character of certain of the hedge schoolmasters is fortunately portrayed for us by friends and benefactors who knew them intimately. The following note²⁴ was discovered in a manuscript of Peter Galleghan, which is in the library of Edinburgh University: "These 16 volumes of Irish manuscript were willed and given to me by Peter Gilleghan, a hedge schoolmaster and good transcriber of Irish manuscripts and collector of Irish songs—in the year 1855. He lived near Kells in the Co. Meath, and was very thankful to me for some little kindnesses which I conferred on him and on his only relative—a niece since dead—I doubt much if any of our national schoolmasters²⁵ have the talent perseverance patriotic feeling that this poor fellow possessed. I trust that I have to a certain extent rendered him independent and happy in his latter days without his applying to any society for his support (of which he had the greatest abhorrence). He was one of the most single-minded and

²² Babeau: "L'Ecole de Village pendant la Révolution," p. 145.

²³ Mason: "Parochial Survey." Vol. III., p. 130.

²⁴ For this I am indebted to Professor Eamon O'Toole.

²⁵ The teachers in schools under the National Board of Education which was established in 1831.

honourable and upright men that I have ever met, and was I believe the last of that noble class of the last century called 'Irish Hedge Schoolmasters.' He knew nothing of Classics and differed in this from his fellow 'Hedge Schoolmasters' in the South and West—but his heart and feelings even in his lowly position were such as every Irishman may be proud of. He has gone that road which we all must travel, would that all our lives were as blameless as his." The note is signed "E. G. F."; and on the inside of the cover of the MS. opposite the last page is the inscription: *Ex libris Eugeni Guilford Finnerty.*

Thomas Francis Meagher, wealthy, educated, gifted, an eloquent speaker, and a distinguished soldier, pays a fine tribute to the character of James Nash, as he records the death of the old hedge schoolmaster: "Like all the poor, honest, gifted men—the rude bright chivalry of the towns and fields—who thought infinitely more of their country than of themselves—he died in utter poverty companionless, and nameless."²⁶

Galleghan and Nash were two schoolmasters who continued to teach long after the National System of Education had been established and had made almost next to impossible the existence of independent rural schools; one, the simple country schoolmaster possessing no great attainments, but industrious and competent to instruct the children of the locality in the rudiments of knowledge; the other, gifted but eccentric, patriotic but opposed to extreme measures in politics. It was for such as these that the peasantry threw open their hospitable doors, for whom they built school houses, or, in lieu of that, lent them barns where they might teach.

In a recent publication, "The Black Book of Edgeworthstown and Other Memories," the editors imply that it was unusual for Protestants to attend Catholic Pay Schools. Referring to the success of Lovell Edgeworth's school, they state that "for ten years (1818-1828) the miracle lasted—an Irish school that knew no distinction

²⁶ "Meagher of the Sword," p. 289.

of class or creed."²⁷ As a matter of fact, the Hedge Schools welcomed every scholar brought to their doors. In the North of Ireland Protestants freely attended schools under Catholic teachers; for example, Carleton tells us that so many Protestants attended a school at which he was a pupil that their withdrawal necessitated its closing down.²⁸ In the South, the Hedge Schools were frequently resorted to by Protestants, whose religion, needless to say, was never interfered with. Indeed the old Hedge Schools did more to bring about friendly relations between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland than any schools or systems of education have done since.

²⁷ p. 222.

²⁸ "Autobiography," p. 38.

CHAPTER XII.

THE POET SCHOOLMASTERS.

TEACHING in those days was a profession which seems to have had a particular attraction for those who had a taste for literature. Nearly every Irish poet of the 18th and early 19th centuries appears to have been a schoolmaster; though, needless to say, but few of the great body of schoolmasters were poets. In teaching, the poets had excellent employment for their talents, but not of the kind that brought them any pecuniary reward. It enabled them to exist while they wrote, and gave them for the practice of their art a degree of genteel leisure that was unknown to other occupations. The poets may have made unreliable teachers, though it is by no means clear that they did; but their knowledge was invariably above suspicion. Their wit, their eloquence, their views on life, their originality of thought which must have coloured all their dealings with their pupils were more than ample compensation for their failings. They are remembered with sincere affection. Their frailties are forgotten.

The claims of Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara to notice among the poet-schoolmasters are many: he was a classical scholar, a noted teacher, and an Irish poet of no little merit.

Born in 1715 at Cratloe, County Clare, he disappears from view till 1740. Nothing is known of his early education; though it is generally believed that he was a student at one of the Irish colleges at Rome, but of that there is no definite assurance. Foley appears to think that his education was completed at Limerick.¹ In 1740 he was teaching in Coffey's classical school at Sliabh Gua,

¹ See his introduction to MacNamara's "Eachtra Ghiolla an Amaráin," p. 3.

near Dungarvan. It may be of interest to mention here that this school prospered under successive teachers for more than eighty years afterwards.² MacNamara's stay was not of long duration; as a result of having lampooned a young woman of the neighbourhood, he was forced to leave. He opened a school of his own in the parish of Modeligo, two or three miles away. In 1743, he had again moved; this time to a district known as "The Barony," near Youghal. He is supposed to have gone to Newfoundland in 1745; for one of his important poems³ deals with his voyage there. However, Professor Power dismisses this notion and believes that he spent the ten years following 1745 in the neighbourhood of Waterford city.⁴ O'Reilly, writing much nearer to Donnchadh's time, is much of the same opinion.⁵ He is next heard of in 1759 teaching at Ardeenlone in the parish of Newcastle, about ten miles from Waterford. He called his school "Ath-na-Scoile." From here he dated his "Pass" to Richard Fitzgerald, and hither came James Gray, a poor scholar, from the County Meath to be taught by Donnchadh Ruadh.⁶

The Poet seems to have offended the clergy, the people, or his brother poets, for in 1764 he was compelled to give up his school, and another was appointed in his place. About this time he conformed to the Established Church, and was appointed clerk to the Protestant church of Rossmire, near Kilmacthomas. His successor at the school, according to tradition, did not have an easy time; "Donnchadh, dismissed from his school, and smarting under the indignity, and its practical consequences, made formal report—so, at any rate, it is stated—against the teacher appointed in his stead,"⁷ and he, too, had to give up the school to escape punishment by the law. This action does not reflect any credit on the poet. It is

² "Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal," Vol. XIII., p. 133. Article by Mr. O'Caseide, pp. 131-9.

³ "Eachtra Ghiolla an Amaráin"—"The Adventures of a Luckless Fellow."

⁴ "Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara," pp. 6-7.

⁵ "Irish Writers," p. 231.

⁶ Power: "Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara," pp. 11-12.

⁷ See Power: "Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara," p. 17.

known, however, that he afterwards repented of what he had done. The later part of his life was passed in the neighbourhood of Kilmacthomas, County Waterford, where he is supposed to have been tutor in various families. He died in 1810, at the great age of ninety-five.

As a schoolmaster Donnchadh seems to have enjoyed a wide reputation. He had an excellent knowledge of Irish; for years after his death, students boasted that they had learned their Irish from him. His knowledge of Latin was considerable. At the age of eighty he wrote an epitaph in Latin for Tadhg Gaedhealach O'Sullivan, a fellow poet, the friend of his later years:

"Thaddeus hic situs est; oculos huc flecte viator
 Illustrem vatem parvula terra tegit;
 Heu! Jacet exanimis, fatum irrevocabile vicit
 Spiritus atque volans sidera summa petit.
 Quis canet Erinidum laudes, quis facta virorum?
 Gadelico extincto Scotica musa tacet.
 Processit numeris doctis pia carmina cantans
 Evadens victor munera certa tulit;
 Laudando Dominum praeclara poemata fecit,
 Et suaves hymnos angelus ille canet.
 Plangite Pierides, vester decessit alumnus,
 Eochades⁸ non est cunctaque rura silent;
 Pacem optavit pace igitur versatur in alto
 Ad superi tendit regna beata patris."⁹

In his study of the Munster poets of the 18th century, Professor Corkery gives MacNamara a high place in his list of minor poets. "One beholds in him," he writes, "a many-sided genius, wanting neither in depth nor in wit, nor in music, nor in strength, as reckless of his power, of his only riches, as he was of everything else, temporal and spiritual"¹⁰ His ode to the hills of Ireland has been rendered into English verse by James Clarence Mangan.¹¹ The poem treating of his supposed voyage to Newfoundland, "The Adventures of a Luckless Fellow,"

⁸ Owen Roe O'Sullivan, the poet who died in 1784.

⁹ Taken from Foley's Introduction to MacNamara's "Eachtra Ghiolla an Amárain," p. 3.

¹⁰ "The Hidden Ireland," p. 268.

¹¹ "Poets and Poetry of Munster." Fourth edition, pp. 55-61.

is his longest and greatest work. Professor Power describes the poem as "a kind of burlesque Aeneid in which the poet, in playful mockery, affects to narrate his own adventures." He says that "there are passages of much eloquence and fire, and throughout there is evidence of considerable poetic power."¹² O'Reilly points out that "there are some lines by no means inferior to any of Virgil's."¹³

In this poem Donnchadh Ruadh, as he was popularly called, makes one or two references to his profession:

Múmeadó rcoile doob' obair dom laetib,
'S a'púin don pobul suibfolam an céirto rin.

"Teaching school was my daily work, and to tell you the truth, it isn't a paying job."¹⁴ And again when he speaks of his friend William Moran:

A ndeirinn do tabairtinn mar mhalairt le buirdeacur
Ar beit ra baile nó i gcalaó-ports éigin,
Ar beit ran m'barúnaig 'om neartuagó roir gaeólaib
As reic mo ceatramhan 'r as rmaectugó mo tréada,
Nó fairir an ragar eus teagare go réim dam
Ir blaire na leanna go fairirins san éileam,
Nó ar Sliabh géal gCua rug buaó na péile
As riar luét duanta, o'ruaó, 'r a gcléireac,
Farru William Ó Mo'gráin fonn-áirto léigeanra
Do canraó reann-dán ór ceann cláir m'éaga.

"I would prefer

To exchange all that I have here written
Just to be once more at home, or in some sea-port town;
To be in the Barony, growing rich among the Gaels,
Singing my songs and chastising my scholars,
Or with the priest—who gave me good and gentle
advice,

And was generous with his ale.

Or on bright Sliabh Gua than which there is no place
more renowned

For entertaining poets, men of learning and scholars,
Or with the high-souled and erudite William Moran,
Who would chant a poem of ancient form over my still
remains."¹⁵

¹² "Donnchadh Ruadh MacNamara," p. 7.

¹³ "Irish Writers," p. 231.

¹⁴ Foley's edition, lines 11-12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, lines 123-132.

Donnchadh sang to the people; he taught their children; he sharpened his wits upon them. Yet they seem to have loved him.

A notice of his death appeared in "The Gentleman's Magazine," November, 1810: "Oct. 6. At Newtown, near Kilmacthomas, in his 95th year, Denis Macnamara, commonly known by the name of Ruadh or Redhaired. During 70 years, at least, of such a rare course of longevity, this extraordinary man had been looked up to by his contemporaries in Irish literature, as possessing that poetical eminence which ranked him among the most celebrated of the modern bards."¹⁶

A far greater poet than Donnchadh Ruadh taught a little school in the village of Feakle, County Clare in 1770. He was Brian Merriman, the author of "Cúirt an Mheádhon Oidhche" (The Midnight Court). Very little is known of his life: he was born near Ennis in 1747; he was a teacher at Feakle where he farmed about twenty acres of land at the same time; he gave up his school to become resident tutor in the families of the local gentry; later he taught mathematics in the city of Limerick; the news of his death appeared in the "General Advertiser and Limerick Gazette," dated July 29, 1805: "Died—On Saturday morning, in old Clare-street, after a few hours' illness, Mr. Bryan Merriman, teacher of Mathematics, etc."¹⁷

Somewhere in his early thirties Merriman wrote "Cúirt an Mheádhon Oidhche," a remarkable poem of over 1,200 lines in length. It was his only extensive work; beyond two other short poems, nothing else of his has been found; but that has been sufficient to establish him as a poet of high rank. "In the history of modern Gaelic literature," wrote Foley, "two strikingly original figures stand out—Keating and Merriman—and the latter was the more original of the two. Only by those who

¹⁶ p. 493.

¹⁷ See Corkery: "The Hidden Ireland," pp. 238 *et seq.*; also O'Grady: Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum. Vol. I., p. 495.

have pored over much Gaelic literature can the full extent of that originality be appreciated."¹⁸ Mr. Stephen Gwynn's criticism of Merriman's great poem is in quite another vein: "the poem is the nearest equivalent for 'Tam O' Shanter'—but not so proper."¹⁹

Owen Roe O'Sullivan, the Kerry poet, was a man of many callings. He was schoolmaster, private tutor, spalpeen, vagabond, sailor and soldier; he began and ended by being a schoolmaster.²⁰ Like Donnchadh Ruadh, the fascination of ruling the literary destinies of a village community lured him back to his original calling. He was born at Meentogues, in the county of Kerry, in 1748. He went to a classical academy at Faha, where, Dr. Dinneen states, "the course comprised, besides Irish, English, Latin and Greek. In Greek Homer seems to have been a favourite, and in Latin, Virgil, Caesar and Ovid."²¹ At the age of eighteen he opened a school of his own, but owing to some grave indiscretion he was forced to abandon it after a short time. The next ten years were spent as a spalpeen or itinerant farm-labourer in the counties of Limerick and Cork, or as a wandering schoolmaster, just as it pleased his fancy or he found expedient. He visited his native county of Kerry from time to time, and occasionally taught there during those ten years. For a while he did settle down at Donoughmore, County Cork, and run a school there. At another period he was tutor to a family called Nagle, who lived near Fermoy. This appointment came to him in a curious way. When he was actually a hired labourer on Nagle's farm, a woman, also a servant of the family, desiring someone to write a letter for her to her master, approached Owen who immediately complied with her request. The letter was written in four languages—Irish, English,

¹⁸ "Cúirt an Mheadhon Oidhche." Edited by Foley, p. 1.

¹⁹ "The Observer." Feb. 10, 1929.

²⁰ Corkery: "The Hidden Ireland," pp. 193-226; Dinneen: "Beatha Eoghain Ruadh Uí Shúilleabhan," p. 40 *et seq.*

²¹ "Amhráin Eoghan Ruadh Uí Shúilleabháin," Introd. p. xi.

Latin, and Greek.²² Mr. Nagle made inquiries about the writer, and afterwards engaged him to teach his children. But this post also he left in disgrace. Sometime later he joined the British Navy, and was attached to a ship in the fleet of Rodney. From the navy he went into the army, and was stationed in England till he managed to obtain his discharge. Then he returned to his native county and set up school at Knocknagree. Shortly afterwards he received a violent blow on the head in some stupid quarrel; he neglected his injury; fever ensued and carried him off at the early age of thirty-six.

He was known to his contemporaries as "Eoghan an Bhéil Bhinn" (Owen of the Sweet Mouth), so beautiful were the songs and poems that he wrote in the Irish tongue. And critics of to-day pay like tribute to his poetic genius.

He has left one document which is of peculiar interest insomuch as it sets out the entire list of qualifications which a hedge schoolmaster was expected to possess, though strangely enough all mention of classics is omitted. This was a letter to Father Fitzgerald requesting him to announce from the altar on Sunday that the writer is coming to teach at Knocknagree:

"Reverend Sir—

Please to publish from the altar of your holy Mass
That I will open school at Knockagree Cross,
Where the tender babes will be well off,
For it's there I'll teach them their Criss Cross;
Reverend Sir, you will by experience find
All my endeavours to please mankind,
For it's there I will teach them to read and write;
The Catechism I will explain
To each young nymph and noble swain,
With all young ladies I'll engage
To forward them with speed and care,
With book-keeping and mensuration,
Euclid's Elements and Navigation,
With Trigonometry and sound gauging,
And English Grammar with rhyme and reason.
With the grown-up youths I'll first agree
To instruct them well in the Rule of Three;

²² Professor Corkery has informed me that he has never seen this document, and that he doubts if it exists.

Such of them as are well able,
The cube root of me will learn,
Such as are of a tractable genius,
With compass and rule I will teach them."²³

This, I take it, is a crude attempt at translation in rhyme, but probably gives a fair idea of the contents of the original which was in Irish. John Daly attributes a much more dignified epistle to the pen of Owen Roe.

A ŠAŠAIRT ŠIL ČÁIÖ.

A ŠAŠAIRT ŠIL ČÁIÖ, A BRÁČAIR NÉILL IS AIRT,
DA TEARMANN SÁM DON DÁIMH IS D'ÉISSE I ŠCEAST,
I ŠCATAIB ROIMH NÁMHAÖ, I MBEÁRNAIN BAOŠAIL NA 'DTREAS,
AITRIS DO ČÁC ŠO 'DTÁMIS MÉ 'NA MEASC.

CUM TEAŠAISC ŠAC TÁNA I RÁIÖTIB ŠÉIMH NA SEAN,
LE LAÖIM DOB ÁRSA 'S I NÖÁNTAIB ŠAÖÖLŠE STAIR,
'S AN ŠLAFARNAČ NÁMHAÖ ŠO D'ÁRÖUIŠ RÉIM IS REAČT
I BFEARAINNAIB FÁIL 'NA 'DTÁMIS ŠAÖÖIL TAR LEAR.

ŠCAIPEAÖ NA BFEARA-ČON CALMA CRÖÖA ČAÖIM,
IS LEAŠAÖ NA BPLAČA BA PLEABAC I NÖÖNTAIB ŠAÖIÖIL,
A MBEAČA ŠAN AISIÖŠ AŠ ŠALLAIB LE FÖIRNEART ÖLIŠE,
DO ČUIR SEALAÖ CUM TEAŠAISC ŠO ŠLAISE NA TEORAÖ ŠIMH.

A ŠAŠAIRT ŠAN MEANŠ, IS CEANNSA ČAÖIM-MÉINNEAC,
'S IS ŠASTA ŠLAN-MEABAIR I RANN ŠAC LAÖÖÖE LÉIŠEANTA,
AITRIS MO ČALL Ö'S CEANN AR PRIMH-ČLÉIR TŮ,
ŠO ŠTEAŠASCAM CLANN ŠAC 'DREAM 'NA ŠCRUINN-ČÉIMIB.

A metrical translation of this is given by Edward Walsh:²⁴

"Pure learned priest! akin to Neill and Art,
Whose power protective cheer'd the poet's heart,
The first in danger's van—(so bards have sung them),
Pray tell thy flock a teacher's come among them.

"Well skill'd in ancient Greek and Roman lore,
Fame-laden lays since Erin's days of yore,
And eke the foeman's tongue, upborne by Law,
Whose phrase uncouth distorts the Gaelic jaw.

²³ Given in "Amhráin Eoghain Ruadh Uí Shúilleabháin," leis an Athair P. Ua Duinnín. Introd. p. xxii.

²⁴ "Reliques of Irish Jacobite Poetry," pp. 42-3.

“Upborne by Law which exiles heroes tall,
Which dooms, by traitors’ steel, the chieftain’s fall,
Dooms Erin’s brave no refuge save their God;
And me to wield the village pedant’s rod:

“Mild man of God, and fair religion’s glory,
Deep read in holy tomes and tuneful story,
With thy sweet tongue consign to village fame
What learned lore enwreaths thy poet’s name!”

The school at Knocknagree did not last long. The poet’s restless nature set him wandering once more. Had he settled down like Quartermaster Thomas Byrne, the hedge schoolmaster who taught Oliver Goldsmith, we might have had many a better story to tell of him, and more of his musical poetry.

In 1785, a year after Owen Roe’s untimely death, there was born, also in the kingdom of Kerry, Tomás Ruadh O’Sullivan—no relation of Owen Roe’s, as far as I can gather, and later most unlike him in everything except in so far as he, too, was a poet and a schoolmaster.²⁵ Tomás Ruadh was sent to a school at Gortnakilla, and afterwards to a college in Dublin. The latter was done through the kindness of Daniel O’Connell, some of whose triumphs the boy had celebrated in lively verse. He remained in Dublin for three years when a severe illness interrupted his education. After convalescing at home for some time, he refused to go back to Dublin. Then he became a schoolmaster, and taught in many places in Kerry, at Cahirdaniel, Portmagee, Aughtubrid, Ballinskelligs and Waterville. The only change he had from this mode of life was during the short time he worked as postman between Cahirciveen and Derrynane.

Tomás Ruadh appears to have lived at the houses of the more prosperous people of the district in which he taught. His company was eagerly sought; he had a

²⁵ The facts that follow are taken from Mr. James Fenton’s sketch of the poet’s life. See “The Songs of Tomás Ruadh O’Sullivan.” Collected and edited by James Fenton. Second edition.

goodly measure of wit, he played the fiddle well, he sang his own songs, and he recited with feeling his own poetry and the poems and legends that were his heritage. Everywhere he was received with hospitality, and everywhere his hosts became his dearest friends. Unlike many of his dual calling he led a blameless life. He remained a bachelor; he seems to have had one romance in his life which is the subject of his song—"Nóirín Chnuic na Groidhe." He was kind, tender-hearted, and full of good humour. He won the friendship of men like Father Diarmuid O'Sullivan, the scholar and poet, whom he styles "the gentle prince," and of the great O'Connell, who was always ready to extend to him his patronage.

In his poetry he does not forget that he is a schoolmaster. He relates in a quaint little poem how much his schoolhouse is in need of repair:

Tá tús rcoile beas tear i n'Orrom Caorí aSam
 Láim le toé aeread an srinn ;
 Bíonn rcoláiríde na háite go léir ann
 'S ó gac baile ó'n rtaob eile de'n tír.
 'Nuair a tásann an báirtead ó'n rréir oramn
 Cráðann ir céarann mo éiríde,
 Agus do tángar as cáram mo gaoilte
 O'iarparó áobairín éigín de'n tuigé !

"I have a little school at Dromcaor
 Beside a pleasant and wonderful lake;
 All the children from round about come hither,
 And all too from every townland in the district.
 When the rain comes down from the sky upon us,
 My heart is torn with sorrow,
 And I came to ask my friends
 For a little straw to thatch the roof."²⁶

He possessed, for a schoolmaster who changed the field of his labours so often, a very large collection of books. It was an accident that inspired the poem which tells us what books he had, and loved and cherished. At this time, he was moving to Portmagee, and in crossing Derrynane harbour the boat was wrecked; all the bags in which his books were packed went to the bottom, "great bags filled

²⁶ "Songs of Tomás Ruadh O'Sullivan," p. 111.
 (D 948)

with books, mostly written with the pen."²⁷ He laments the loss of them in a poem entitled: "Amhrán na Leabhar"—The Song of the Books:²⁸

Dá ruibáilpáinn éirfe ir Alba
 An Ffrainc, an Spáinn ir Sapaná,
 Agus fóir aifíir dá n-abráinn
 Sác áirto pé'n rae,
 Ní b'fáiginn-re an iomaí leabharéa
 B'féarr eólar agus cairébe
 Ná ir mó bí cum mo maiteara
 Cé táro ar rírae.
 Mo éreac! mo cúma! 'n-a n-eapnam fáo
 Do fágaró mé!
 Ir móir an cúrra maireéne
 Agus cáir liom é!
 Malaet Dé ir na héaglaire
 Ar an scapraiz spánóa malluigé,
 Do bátaró an long san anpó,
 San sála, san saot.

"If I walked through Ireland and Scotland
 And France, and Spain and England,
 And yet again if I travelled
 In every direction under the moon,
 I would not get as many books
 That were so full of knowledge and wisdom
 Or of such benefit to me.
 Although they are now gone.
 Alas! woe is me! that I was left
 Without them!
 Great is my sorrow of mind
 And my trouble!
 The curse of the Almighty One and His Church
 Be upon the vile, treacherous rock
 Which sank the ship, without a storm,
 A gale or even a breath of wind."

Then follow seven stanzas giving a list of the books that were lost. There are interesting comments upon some of them or upon their authors, which show how dear they were to their owner, and how much he felt the losing of them:

²⁷ "Songs of Tomás Ruadh O'Sullivan," *Introd.* p. 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 43-9.

Æi Diotcéam, Dúnlain, Dórtar ann,
 De-Catone Bónicastle ann,
 Agus riasáil Uí Dubháin tarruamste
 Ar doir na rae ;
 Ó Mósáim, an leóman calma
 Do reáibad ar tráct na rairrse
 Tus cúntar cóir cá nveadad uaimn
 An taoroe ar a rcéit.
 Æi Eúclro ann san veapmas
 Ó Eógan míae,
 Do múm bris túir sad airte glie
 Ar cómar an trléibe.
 Bpaimre ceap philorophen
 So nglaoðann na vpaorite "Oraculum,"
 As innrint vpaoríveadta 'r feara
 Do'n té surb' eol do léigean.

" There were Dechan²⁹ and Dowling³⁰ and Voster³¹ in it
 And De Catone and Bonicastle³²
 And Duggan's laws relating
 To the moon's age;³³
 And Moran, the adventurous one,
 Who wrote about the sea
 And gave us a true account
 Of the ebb of the tide.³⁴
 There was Euclid too
 By Owen May,
 Which explained the beginning of every wise method
 Of measuring the mountains.
 Also a branch of knowledge peculiar to philosophers
 Which wise men call the 'Oraculum.'
 Giving power and knowledge
 To those who can read.

Æi Comarpoirto ir Ó hAllmuirám,
 Ir Céitinn, leabair an treanóair,
 Ir Práirter mílir Cairil,
 Ar a vtráctad ré ;

²⁹ This may have been Paul Deighan's Arithmetic, or the same writer's Geography of Ireland.

³⁰ There were at least two text-books by Dowling, one on Arithmetic and one on Book-keeping. Both were in common use about 1800.

³¹ This was probably Voster's Arithmetic.

³² John Bonnycastle of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, wrote text-books of Arithmetic, Algebra, Euclid, Mensuration and Astronomy.

³³ A poem dealing with the changes of the moon.

³⁴ Evidently some work on Physical Geography. I have been unable to find any trace of this.

B'i pceimle Cat' Cluan' Tairb ann
 I n-ar' oibin' Brian na Danair uaimn,
 Ir an trlige sur buair Maelpeaclaimn
 Ar an namair i bpléir.
 B'i Cat fionntpága na leatán-bairc
 O'pás táinte tréit,
 Ir Cat énoic an áir eus amhair deap
 Tair páile léi.
 Cat maige Mucruimhe mar tnearcaraó
 Art Aen-fir, tréim-peap calma,
 Cat Sléibe Gabhra, ir eacópoma
 Ir áir na Triae.

" There were Comerford and O'Halloran³⁵
 And Keating's book of history
 And the sweet Psalter of Cashel
 Of which he (Keating)³⁶ treats;
 There was an account of the Battle of Clontarf
 Where Brian rid us of the Danes,
 And how Malachy defeated
 The enemy in combat.
 There were the Battle of Ventry of the broad boats
 Where thousands were laid low,
 And the Battle of Knockanar which brought the fair
 maiden
 Across the sea.
 And the Battle of Maghmuchruimhe where was killed
 Art Aenfhir, the powerful,
 And the Battles of Slieve Gabhra, and Aughrim,
 And the Slaughter of Troy.

B'i pól Ó Brian, an t-eagra,
 So roiléir éirir Gaedilg i n-anéput
 Eus maigla laoiré ir leabairéa
 Oo eac le léigearn ;
 Ó Comdealbáin na scantalaé
 " Ó Corcaig bíg " na mbaircanna,
 " I bfairce Cill' Allair "
 I n-ar áitpeaó pé.
 B'i Tairg Gaedelaé, éigre an treancair
 'S an páir glain réim ;
 Agus Aigneap áro an peacairg
 Leir an mbáir i bpléir ;
 Leabair Uí Duinn san deapmaó
 Ó Ceapac Cuinn na mbairle-poiré ;
 'S Rirteáro Ó Caoim ó eatair gil
 Baile áta Cliaé.

³⁵ Two well-known Irish historians.

³⁶ Dr. Geoffrey Keating, the historian.

" There was Paul O'Brien,³⁷ the grammarian,
 Who put Irish into shape for us
 And gave us the rules of song and story
 So that all could read them.
 There was O'Conlon of the canticles
 ' From Little Cork ' of the ships,
 (Which is situated) ' in the diocese of Killala '
 Where he lived.
 There was Tadhg Gaedhealach,³⁸ the learned historian,
 Who wrote so exquisitely;
 And the Argument of the Sinner
 With Death,
 Doubtless, the Book of Denn³⁹
 From Cappoquin of the banks;
 And Risteard O'Keefe from the fair city
 Of Dublin."

Among the remaining books mentioned are: The Life of St. Patrick, the Elegies of Aithne Falvey, the New Testament, the Epistles of St. Peter and of St. Paul, " a copy of the Apocalypse of St. John, who loved charity," the Old Testament, the Laws of Moses, the Sayings of Solomon, the Paradise of the Soul, Dr. Gallagher's Sermons—one of the few books printed in the Irish character, the Defence of the Mass, the Book of Leinster, and the Farmer.

The poem finishes with the lines:

1r ná cuirfeadh aen-níó ar fáinne
 So brát lem' né ;
 Moladh le Rí na ndíneal ngeal,
 Mo fláinte 'nár do éiríod orm,
 1r an fúineann úr ó'n anrad,
 San bárad teacht ríor !

" Never again will I send anything
 Upon the sea;
 Praise to the King of the bright angels,
 Who gave me back my health,
 And saved the crew of the vessel
 From destruction."

³⁷ Professor of Irish at the " Royal College of Maynooth."

³⁸ Author of " The Pious Miscellany."

³⁹ Patrick Denn was a schoolmaster at Cappoquin, Co. Waterford. See Mr. Seumas O'Casey's note on Denn in " Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal," XVI., pp. 45-6.

So mild and philosophical an ending, when the sensitive poet had lost not a mere library, but what he could never have again—a collection of books which had taken a lifetime to acquire, and a number of manuscripts, the labour of his own pen! No wonder he cries:

Dá riubairtáinn Éire ir Alba
 An Fhrainc, an Spáin ir Sárana,
 Agus fóir ariúir dá n-abairtinn
 Sáe áirio pé'n pae,
 Ní bfaíonn-pe an iomaio leabairtá
 B'fearr eólar agus cairde
 Ná ir mó bí cum mo maideara
 Cé táio ar tpeae.

“If I walked through Ireland and Scotland
 And France, and Spain and England,
 And yet again if I travelled
 In every direction under the moon,
 I would not get as many books
 That were so full of knowledge and wisdom
 Or of such benefit to me.
 Although now they are gone.”

The poet died in 1848. He was sadly missed from many a homely fireside. But his songs lived on, and with them the kindly spirit of the singer.

No one can read the list of books in the possession of Tomás O'Sullivan without wondering how he came by them. They exhibit a remarkable variety, by no means haphazard. Many of them, the histories of Comerford and O'Halloran, for instance, were most expensive books; and even Deighan's Arithmetic cost 5s. 5d., Irish; that is five shillings in English coinage. The hedge school-master had little money to spare, sometimes he had scarcely enough to live upon. We can well imagine then the sacrifices he must have made to put a few shillings aside for the purchase of a book. When he could not do that, he had to borrow the book from a more fortunate friend, and make a copy of it in his own handwriting—the toil of many arduous hours. But who knows that he did not enjoy every minute of it!

It is not improbable that Tomás O'Sullivan's collection of books represented the typical hedge schoolmaster's library, for a knowledge of many subjects was a practical essential of the hedge schoolmaster's equipment. It secured him a degree of importance in his own profession, as well as in the people's estimation; and it was of considerable value in maintaining the independence of his school. The teacher with many subjects at his command could manage, up to a point, without the help of an assistant. This versatility was often found coupled with an extensive knowledge of one or two subjects; showing that while the schoolmaster appreciated the present and material worth of a general knowledge of school subjects, his intellectual activities were not confined within the narrow limits of his immediate work.

The poet schoolmasters were not lacking in academic requirements. Donnchadh Ruadh was well known as a teacher of Irish and Latin; Brian Merriman was described in his obituary notice, not as a poet, but as a "teacher of Mathematics"; Owen Roe O'Sullivan gives a long catalogue of his own qualifications; and the books of his namesake, Tomás, are admirable witnesses in favour of their owner.

The poets probably taught as efficiently as those teachers who had not the gift of song—and with more memorable effect.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEACHER OF THE CITY "ACADEMY."

THERE was no clear-cut distinction between the town or city "academy" and the Hedge School proper. They shared the same character of illegality; the curriculum in the "academy" was practically the same as that of the better class of Hedge School; and many of the town teachers had themselves received all their education in the Hedge Schools. What difference there was, was one of opportunities, of environment, and perhaps of results arising from the regular attendance of pupils. Some of the teachers of town schools were remarkable men. But the hedge schoolmaster does not suffer by comparison with the best of them. They had many advantages which he had not; but those who knew and cultivated the Irish language approached so close to the true hedge schoolmaster both in spirit and in tradition that they might be regarded as hedge schoolmasters working under better conditions than their fellow-teachers in country districts.

Gerald Griffin's first teacher, Richard McElligott, presents an interesting study: he was self-taught, pursuing his work with such zeal and industry as to attain a high degree of proficiency in the subjects he set out to teach; his knowledge of the native language and literature was considerable and scholarly; and he wrote an "exquisite" hand.

In an advertisement in the "Limerick Gazette" of 1805, we find him describing himself as "a Teacher of six and thirty years severe Study and uninterrupted Experience, of well-known abilities in every branch of School Education, and of unremitting Exertion in their Improvement."¹ He was certainly a man of great

¹ Issue of Jan. 7.

perseverance and of some originality, and he possessed a large measure of self-confidence. He was author of "two small works" on Latin and Greek, he informs us, "the labour of some years, comprizing and applying every principal word, rule, and idiom in both Languages, contrived in such a manner that, it is almost impossible for any student of common understanding not to have a radical, correct, and extensive knowledge of both Languages in half the time usually devoted to these studies."² In another advertisement he gives some idea, a vague one though, of the nature of these works:³ "McElligott will teach, if required, immediately after Lilly's grammar, a small work comprising every elementary word, rule, and peculiarity of the Latin Language; which work in itself is sufficient for a knowledge of the language, for such as may not have leisure to proceed farther; and to such as proceed through the Classicks, it will nearly spare them the trouble of consulting a Dictionary throughout the whole course. McElligott begs leave to call the attention of the Public to this small Latin Work, as it and another on the same plan in the Greek Language must, he presumes to say, if Education shall ever constitute a national concern, be considered of the highest rudimental importance."⁴ He seems to have devoted much time to the study of methods of teaching, and, on his own authority to have reduced the labour of instruction and of study to the effective minimum: he "begs leave to inform the Public, that he teaches to Spell, Read, and Write the English Language correctly; that his rules for Reading, derived from the highest authorities, have never before been fitted for Schools; and that his English Grammar is so clear as to be immediately understood, and so concise as to be easily retained. Penmanship according to the only method that leads to facility and correctness; a Method unknown in our Schools. Arithmetick and Book-keeping on the most concise and elementary principles in less than one-third of the usual

² "Limerick Gazette," January 14, 1806.

³ Possibly in manuscript. I can find no trace of them.

⁴ "Limerick Gazette," January 31, 1815.

time. . . . Geography in a much more clear simple and concise manner than has ever appeared in print. . . ."⁵

Griffin's biographer, the novelist's brother, relates that as an uncouth boy McElligott entered a "large and respectable school" in Limerick, and declaring that he would not follow his father's trade, earnestly begged for a position as teacher in the school. His only qualification was his handwriting which "could scarcely be distinguished from an engraving"; and on the strength of this he was appointed "writing master." Thus began the career of Richard McElligott. "(He) was soon induced by one of the more advanced scholars to learn the classics, to which, as well as to other studies necessary to a teacher, he devoted himself with so much energy, and made such progress, that he soon had the proud satisfaction" of becoming by sheer industry "a most respected classical teacher in the city." In this capacity he acquired a reputation as "a man of singular ability and industry," and one who saw to it that his pupils did not shirk their work; "he was a good teacher, and knowing well from his own experience, what it was possible to accomplish by industry and attention, would take no excuse for neglect, but punished those who were guilty of it in such a manner, as gave him a character for great severity."⁶

He was pedantic, and perhaps a trifle conceited; pardonable faults in one who had achieved so much through his own efforts. Gerald Griffin's brother tells an amusing story of his mother's conversation with him on the subject of her sons' education: "My mother went to school with the boys on the first day of their entrance; 'Mr. McElligot,' said she, 'you will oblige me very much by paying particular attention to the boys' pronunciation, and making them perfect in their reading.' He looked at her with astonishment. 'Madam,' said he abruptly, 'you had better take your children home, I can have nothing to do with them.'" She expressed some surprise. 'Perhaps, Mrs. Griffin,' said he, after a pause,

⁵ "Limerick Gazette," January 31, 1815.

⁶ Works of Gerald Griffin (1843). Vol. I., p. 16-19.

'you are not aware that there are only three persons in Ireland who know how to read.' 'Three!' said she. 'Yes, madam, there are only three—the Bishop of Killaloe, the Earl of Clare, and your humble servant; reading is a natural gift, not an acquirement. If you choose to expect impossibilities, you had better take your children home.' My mother found much difficulty in keeping her countenance, but confessing her ignorance of this important fact, she gave him to understand that she would not look for a degree of perfection so rarely attainable; and the matter was made up."⁷

In the meagre account given by Griffin there is no hint of condescension, no note of patronage; the writer simply pays a direct tribute to the sterling qualities of the gifted, if somewhat eccentric, schoolmaster. McElligott was a contributor to the first volume of the "Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Dublin," of which he was an honorary member. His contribution was "a very able and learned essay . . . on the grammatical structure and literature of the Irish language," running to forty pages, and exhibiting an extensive knowledge of works on Latin, Irish and English grammar. The other two names that appear in this volume are those of the well-known Irish scholars—Theophilus O'Flanagan and Professor O'Brien of Maynooth College. He was also believed to have written an Irish grammar, which does not appear to have been published.⁸ Like the dictionaries of O'Connell and Fitzgibbon, and the Irish Grammar of James Scurry,⁹ it probably could not be put on the market without some financial assistance. In the long list of subscribers to the second edition of Deighan's Arithmetic there appears the name of McElligott, where he is described as "Professor of General Languages and Mathematics."

Mr. T. M. O'Brien, another of Gerald Griffin's teachers, also from the city of Limerick, offers a striking contrast to McElligott. He was a more finished product; he was effective without any ostentatious display of strength;

⁷ Works of Gerald Griffin. (1843.) Vol. I., pp. 18, 19.

⁸ *Ibid.* Edition of 1857, p. 22, footnote.

⁹ See pp. 139-40, 144-5.

and he showed no trace of pedantry. Whether he had the great native ability of McElligott, it is impossible to say. Gerald Griffin went to his school at Limerick at the age of eleven. "Here" writes his biographer, "he had the high advantage of having as an instructor, one who was passionately devoted to the ancient poets, and showed a highly cultivated taste in their study. In addition to his natural bent, he therefore caught up much of this spirit, and from this, as well as from a good natural capacity, made very rapid progress. He was exceedingly fond of Virgil, Ovid and Horace, particularly the first, which he read with such an absorbing interest that his lessons lost all the character of a schoolboy's task."¹⁰ After some time he was withdrawn and sent to the village school at Loughill, which is situated on the Shannon about twenty-eight miles from Limerick. The new teacher was a young man lately up from the "Kingdom of Kerry," capable but rather unpolished? Gerald Griffin's work under O'Brien was of value to him then. "The tastes . . . which he had acquired in Limerick never left him, and there was always a strong contrast between the elegant, yet simple language, which Mr. O'Brien had taught him to seek for in his translations, and the rough, homely, and straightforward methods pursued at the village school."¹¹ The comparison is clearly in favour of the town teacher.

There was a fourth teacher whom Griffin mentions. When they first lived at Fairy Lawn they had as tutor the teacher of the school in the neighbouring village of Loughill. "He could only devote the first part of the day to us," wrote Griffin, "and he was so active and punctual in his attendance, that we were usually dressed and seated on the side of the bed for some time before we had sufficient light to go to our lessons. . . . We remained with him until breakfast hour when he went away to his school, but usually returned in the evening to give us lessons in writing and Arithmetic."¹²

¹⁰ Works of Gerald Griffin, p. 50.

¹¹ *Ibid* p. 51.

¹² *Ibid*. p. 42.

What a pleasing picture Griffin gives us of the Irish schoolmaster as compared with those drawn by his contemporaries! Griffin was a man of good social position; his facts were drawn from personal experience; and he had no object in setting out anything but the truth, unlike Carleton who must caricature the schoolmaster to attract the interest of his readers, or Sir John Carr who must uphold the best traditions of the "Tour in Ireland." The teacher has suffered much from prejudiced and uninformed biographers.

Philip Fitzgibbon¹³ was another town teacher who appears to have occupied a position of importance among schoolmasters of his day. He taught Classics, English Grammar, Geography, the use of the Globes, Book-keeping, and he is said to have been a good mathematician. He was also a scribe; he wrote Irish verse—at least a poem in praise of the Irish language, translated by Mangan, is generally attributed to him;¹⁴ and he was the compiler of a dictionary, the manuscript of which was evidently mislaid. for though contemporaries like Patrick Lynch and James Scurry were aware of its existence they could not lay their hands upon it. The notice given him by Ryan in his "Biographia Hibernica," published in 1821, is as follows:

"Philip Fitzgibbon was a native of Ireland, and ranked high in the mathematical world. He is likewise celebrated for 'a bit of a blunder' that he once committed, arising from the following circumstance. He was supposed to possess a more accurate and extensive knowledge of the Irish language than any person living; and his latter years were industriously employed in compiling an English and Irish dictionary, which he left completed, with the exception of the letter S, *and that he appeared to have totally FORGOTTEN*. The dictionary is contained in about four hundred quarto pages, and it is a remarkable

¹³ See notes by Mr. Seumas O Casaide in the "Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal," XIX., pp. 50-51; and "The Irish Book Lover," IX., pp. 74-75.

¹⁴ Mangan's Poems, pp. 60-62.

instance of patient and indefatigable perseverance, as every word is written in roman or italic characters, to imitate printing. This with many other curious manuscripts, all in the Irish language, he bequeathed to his friend, the Rev. Mr. O'Donnell. During what year he was born is not known, but he died at his lodgings in Chapel-lane, Kilkenny, in April, 1792."¹⁵

Fitzgibbon died at the age of eighty-one. His dictionary was never printed, and the manuscript has not yet been found.

One of the most distinguished teachers of town schools was one who was himself a product of the Hedge Schools. This was Patrick Lynch,¹⁶ a native of the County Clare, who received his early education from a schoolmaster at Ennistymon. "His master knew no English," writes a contemporary, "and young Lynch learned the classics through the medium of the Irish language acquiring an excellent knowledge of Greek, Latin and Hebrew."¹⁷ His studies were interrupted for about five years owing to the necessity of lending a hand on the farm at home. After that he became in turns usher in a school at Cashel, private tutor to a family in County Kilkenny, and teacher of a school at Carrick-on-Suir where, it appears, he supported the widow and children of his predecessor.

In 1808 he was proprietor of the "Classical and Mercantile School at No. 30 Lower Ormond Quay," Dublin;¹⁸ and in 1815 he was appointed secretary to the Gaelic Society which was founded for the preservation and translation of Irish manuscripts and the study of the Irish language. He died in 1818 at the age of sixty-four.

Lynch was a writer as well as an unusually good teacher. His first work of real importance was "The

¹⁵ Vol. II., p. 131. See also Anderson : "Historical Sketches," p. 100, footnote.

¹⁶ For a full account of Lynch's life see Mr. O Casaide's article in the "Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal." XV., p. 47 *et seq.*

¹⁷ Warburton : "History of Dublin." Vol. II., p. 936.

¹⁸ See Mr. O Casaide's article in "Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal," XV., p. 47 *et seq.*

Pentaglot Preceptor: or Elementary Institutes of the English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Irish Languages, Vol. I., containing a complete Grammar of the English Tongue. For the Use of schools, and peculiarly calculated for the Instruction of such Ladies and Gentlemen, as may wish to learn without the help of a Master."¹⁹ This was issued at Carrick in 1796. A second edition of this appeared in 1805, under the title of "A Plain, Easy and Comprehensive Grammar, of the English Tongue; in which the Definitions & Rules necessary to be committed to Memory are composed in Familiar Verse, with a Preliminary Essay, containing, among many other useful Observations on the Theory, Structure and Analogy of Languages in general, A Critical Review of the most celebrated English Grammars hitherto Published." This also came from the press at Carrick.

He did not get out the remaining volumes of the "Pentaglot Preceptor," as he originally intended, but he published in 1817 a little book of 104 pages, entitled: "The Classical Student's Metrical Mnemonics, containing in Familiar Verse. all the necessary Definitions and Rules of the English, Latin, Greek and Hebrew Languages." It is evident that Lynch had a number of completed works on hand, for in the same year two other books came out. One was a text-book of elementary astronomy—the titles of his publications are always attractive: An Easy Introduction to Practical Astronomy and the Use of the Globes; including, in Mnemonic Verses and Rhyming Couplets, as the most Effectual Means hitherto invented for Assisting the Memory, the necessary Axioms, Definitions and Rules of Chronology, Geometry, Algebra and Trigonometry, with the Prognostics of the Weather, &c., &c. For the Use of Schools and Young Ladies." The other was a text-book of the geography of the world and a history of Ireland, the title of which reads: "A Geographical and Statistical Survey of the Terraqueous Globe including a Comprehensive Compend of the History, Antiquities and Topography of Ireland.

¹⁹ For a more complete account of the published works of Lynch, see the author's article in *Studies*, Sept., 1931.

Embellished with a Curious Map of Eire. For the Use of Schools and Adult Persons." This is a work of about 350 pages, of which 190 are given to geography and the remainder to history.

He published a very useful little grammar of the Irish language in 1815, the scope and limitations of which were clearly indicated in the title: "Introduction to the Knowledge of the Irish Language as now spoken; containing A Comprehensive Exemplification of the Alphabetic Sounds, and a complete Analysis of the Accidents of the declinable Parts with the pronunciation of each Irish word employed in Illustration, so far as could be effected by the substitution of English Characters Systematically arranged and Methodically disposed in fourteen short Synoptic Tables." He also wrote a life of St. Patrick, a work of which John O'Donovan, the famous Irish scholar, had a high opinion, and a life of St. Columcille, both of which were published. He edited Alvary's Latin Prosody and Wettenhall's Greek Prosody; and for a time he was responsible for the success of Grant's and Lady's Almanacks. At the time of his death he had several other important works in hand which were not published.²⁰

Lynch's writings show a thoroughness, accuracy and finish that could scarcely be expected from one who wrote so much and upon so many subjects and who, while he was writing, was engaged in the laborious occupation of teaching. They are clearly the fruits of industry, patient research, wide reading and, in the case of *The Classical Student's Metrical Mnemonics*, much ingenuity. How long he spent upon any particular work is not known; but it must be observed that most of his important books were not published till he was over sixty, when he had been nearly forty years teaching.

In the list of subscribers to the *Pentaglot Preceptor* there are the names of teachers, scholars of repute, university professors, Catholic and Protestant clergymen, and distinguished laymen, showing the high opinion in

²⁰ Mr. O Casaide gives a complete list of Lynch's published and projected works in the "Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal," Vol. XV., pp. 107-120.

which Lynch was held by his contemporaries. And posterity has not reversed their judgment.

McElligott and Lynch were undoubtedly outstanding figures among the teachers of their day. But they did not overshadow the hedge schoolmaster. If anything, the relative achievements of the latter were greater, and of a more enduring character.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST OF THE PHILOMATHS.

THE dictionary of a hedge schoolmaster named Peter O'Connell, who was born at Carne in the County of Clare about 1743, forms a landmark in the history of Irish scholarship. The dictionary was the work almost of a lifetime; it was begun in 1785, and was completed only a short time before O'Connell's death some forty years later. O'Connell received assistance, facilities at least, for his work from Charles O'Connor of Belanagare, and from Dr. O'Reardon of Limerick with whom he lived from 1812 to 1819. It was never published. The original manuscript, of which there is a copy in Trinity College, was secured by Hardiman, and sold by him to the British Museum, although he had promised O'Curry that he would never let it pass from Ireland.¹

A memorandum by Hardiman on folio one gives some of its story: "The compiler was the best Irish scholar of latter times—He was forty years occupied on this Dictionary, to which he was continually adding to his death, which happened near Kilrush in the County of Clare abt. the year 1826—when he had it complete for publication. It is the most copious Dictionary ever compiled, and is particularly valuable for explaining the *ancient* Irish, and manuscripts of Ireland—

"He was for a long time with old Charles O'Connor at Belanagare; & was several years in the highlands of Scotland, where he acquired many ancient words and phrases—

"When I heard of his death, I was apprehensive that this work wd. be lost; & I went from Dublin to Kilrush,

¹ O'Curry: Catalogue of Irish MSS. in the British Museum, 1849; p. 81 *et seq.*

where I purchased it from his friends, and had it transcribed for the press."²

O'Curry, who knew O'Connell well, and was probably one of his pupils, had a high opinion of the work; while the late Dr. Standish O'Grady considered that O'Curry's estimate was far too low.³ According to Dr. Kenney, the American scholar, O'Connell, the hedge schoolmaster, was "one of the most remarkable of the forgotten scholars of the early nineteenth century."⁴

There was at Callan, County Kilkenny, a schoolmaster named Humphrey O'Sullivan,⁵ who was a collector of Irish MSS. Many of his manuscripts are in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, while some few are to be found in the library of Maynooth College. He is also said to have written poetry. But his most interesting contribution to literature is his diary, the singular qualities of which so favourably impressed O'Curry. "This diary," the latter wrote, "contains observations on the state of the weather, Irish botany and ornithology, fairs, markets, politics, history, war, peace, etc., etc. It is a very curious and, indeed, important document on account of the various topographical, historical and botanical observations it contains. . . . There is not, perhaps, in existence so minute and circumstantial a record of those years as the present; and the language in which they are expressed is very correct, and sometimes elegant."⁶

The author was son of Denis O'Sullivan, also a schoolmaster, who had migrated from Kerry to the County Kilkenny about 1790. Both father and son taught in Callan for some years. The father died in 1808.

² Egerton, 83. See also O'Grady: Catalogue of Irish MSS., Vol. I., p. 161 *et seq.*

³ O'Grady: Catalogue of Irish MSS. in the British Museum, Vol. I., p. 163.

⁴ "Sources for the Early History of Ireland." Vol. I., p. 67.

⁵ For the information given here I am indebted to Mr. Seumas O'Casey's sketch of Humphrey O'Sullivan's life in "Gadelica." Vol. I., p. 53 *et seq.*

⁶ Hodges and Smith Catalogue (Royal Irish Academy), p. 532. Quoted by Mr. O'Casey.

Humphrey, finding later on that teaching was more of a crutch than an actual support, opened a draper's shop in Callan. He continued teaching, though, till 1831.

The most recent testimony to the value of this unusual work is given by Mr. Seumas O Casaide, who has edited the diary for the year 1827: "In the history of modern Irish literary effort his diary holds a unique place. No such Irish diary has hitherto been published, and it is more than probable that no other such diary has been preserved. It reveals its author as at once a genuine patriot, a close and affectionate observer of nature and of rural life, and a man who though engaged in the routine of business was yet of a poetic and romantic turn of mind."⁷

Some of those who wrote made a practical success of their literary ventures. Paul Deighan's *Arithmetic* first published in 1804 went into three editions within a few years. The full title of this work is: "A Complete Treatise on Arithmetic, Rational and Practical: Wherein the Properties of Number are clearly pointed out; The Theory and Practice of the Science are deduced from first Principles, and demonstrated in a familiar Manner; with a Great Variety of Proper Examples in all the Rules, Perfectly suited to The Man of Business, Academies, Schools, and Students of every Denomination, Desirous of Becoming Proficient in Accounts." This must not be taken as a sign of pedantry; for it was the custom in those days to give a fair idea of the contents of the text on the title-page; it was done by both Irish and English writers of text-books.

Deighan was a schoolmaster in the little town of Ballina in the county of Mayo,⁸ who moved to Dublin some time after the publication, in 1804, of the first edition of his *Arithmetic*; for the second edition, dated 1809, was "sold by the Author, at his School Book and Stationery Warehouse, No. 5 Swift's Row," Dublin. He

⁷ "Gadelica." Vol. I. (1912-13), p. 53.

⁸ See article entitled "Some Southern Schoolmasters of a Hundred Years Ago," in "Waterford Arch. Soc. Journal," Vol. XVII., p. 33 *et seq.*

seems to have submitted the manuscript to a great number of schoolmasters throughout the country, for in addition to a long list of subscribers' names, the Arithmetic contains many "Recommendatory Letters" from teachers, the earliest of which is dated from Dublin, April 18, 1803, and written by Benj. Workman, M.A. There are several well-known names here: Samuel Whyte, who is said to have taught Tom Moore, the poet; Richard McElligott, of Limerick, Gerald Griffin's first teacher; and Mark Morton, Patrick Lynch's rival who signs himself "Calculator and Compiler of the principal Almanacs of Dublin, and Master of the Mercantile and Mathematical Academy, 31 Lower Ormond Quay, Dublin." Two of these appreciations are given in verse, the second of which is the more entertaining and perhaps the more appreciative:

" LINES

OCCASIONED BY READING MR. DEIGHAN'S MS.

Adequat memoriam & nomen ejus cum omni posteritate.

O Happy Volume! eminently great,
 With ev'ry vari'd excellence replete;
 Fair fruit of skill matur'd and toil intense,
 Enrich'd by science and improv'd by sense;
 As I thy curious pleasing page pursue,
 New beauties crowd on my astonish'd view;
 The muse, amaz'd, inquires who could contrive,
 To make one digit do the work of five,
 Lo here a more surprising wonder's seen,
 One figure does the duty of fifteen!
 As I admire each proposition fair,
 The pronic number and the perfect square,
 The puzzling intricate equation solv'd,
 As Grecia's chief the Gordian knot dissolv'd;
 Lost in amazement, I exclaim 'Tis he,
 Fair Alexandria's subtle sage I see,
 Adorn'd with bays and dignify'd by truth,
 In all the bloom of renovated youth.'

How many sophs, to sense and science blind,
 Range through the realms of nonsense unconfin'd,
 Unaw'd by shame, and unrestrain'd by law,
 Their labour chaff, and their reward a straw;
 Neglected and despis'd, they sink in shame
 To that oblivion whence, unsought, they came.

The muse, indignant oft with grief has seen
 An author led by ignorance and spleen,
 With snail-pac'd speed, but unremitting toil.
 In attic chamber waste the midnight oil,
 With waste of paper, loss of ink combin'd,
 And pens from public offices purloin'd.
 'Tis done! and the Herculean task is o'er,
 The pupil is no wiser than before.
 But DEIGHAN of a more enlighten'd mind,
 More innate genius, talents more refin'd,
 More skill by assiduity increas'd,
 A sounder judgment, and a juster taste,
 To him a more exalted task is due
 To teach the pupil and *the master too*.

Proceed my friend, nor dread the Cynic's sneer,
 Can worth like yours from *such* have cause to fear?
 And as the path of science you pursue
 This little maxim always keep in view,
 Tho' spite and envy all their arts exert,
 FAME FROM TRUE MERIT NEVER WILL
 DEPART.

JOHN BARTLEY.

Drumcondra, 17th May, 1804."

The Arithmetic was dedicated "To all those who think that a Knowledge of Accounts is Useful to Mankind, from the King on the Throne, to the Lowest Subject."

In 1810 Deighan published a rather ambitious work on the geography of Ireland, entitled "A Complete Treatise on the Geography of Ireland on a New Plan, never before attempted by any Writer, adapted to the Merchant, the Gentleman, the Politician, the Antiquarian, the Naturalist, the Scholar and the Artist." In his address to the reader, Deighan states: "the Author, at a considerable expence, has travelled in different directions, upwards of 8,000 miles in this his native island. From his own personal observation, he is enabled to offer what never has been before attempted by any writer, *a true and accurate Geography of Ireland alone*." This work was dedicated to "Richard Kirwan, Esq., LL.D., F.R.S., President of the Royal Academy,⁹ and member of most of the literary

⁹ A brief account of Kirwan is given in Warburton: "History of Dublin," Vol. II., pp. 924-5.

institutes of Europe." The author was described as "Paul Deighan, Philomath."

Nearly every schoolmaster seems to have had a special pride in bringing something more to his work than was immediately necessary. Many of them compiled manuscript volumes of interesting, and often curious information. These manuscripts appear at one time to have been quite common. Crofton Croker, who wrote in 1824, mentions them: "Modern manuscripts, in the Irish character, may be met with in almost every village, and they are usually the produce of the leisure hours of the schoolmaster; there is little variation in their contents, which consist of verses wherein Fingal, Oscar, Ossian and St. Patrick are important characters. A dialogue in particular between Ossian and St. Patrick, in which the latter endeavours to convert the bard to Christianity, and one of some length between Death and a Sick Man, are among the most common. In addition to these are found translations from the classics, and frequently from some of Dean Swift's verses into the Irish, with a variety of receipts, prayers and charms. The possessor of such manuscript regards it with a degree of affection bordering on veneration, and only on particular occasions is it produced.

"To hear the contents of one of these monotonous olios read aloud, is considered by the peasantry a treat of the highest order, and large numbers will assemble on a winter's evening around the turf fire of a farmer's cabin for that purpose."¹⁰

Peter Galleghan, a schoolmaster in the County Meath, wrote several volumes of this kind. One of them, entitled "Peter Galleghan's Collections in English and Irish, Entirely Written by Himself,"¹¹ and dated "January 16th, 1824," contains 838 pages, bound together (probably by the author himself) to a strong leather back. The writing, both in English and Irish, is in a good, clear, artistic hand. The contents of this volume

¹⁰ "Researches in the South of Ireland," pp. 331-2.

¹¹ The property of Professor O'Toole, Trinity College, Dublin.

form a sort of cyclopaedia of general, useful and, sometimes, valuable information. There are extracts from English literature, prose and poetry, numerous Irish poems and translations from Irish, verses on a variety of subjects, some of them little more than doggerel. In history there are translations of portions of Keating, and long extracts from Leland's "History of Ireland." There are notes on geography, astronomy, mathematics and philosophy. Arithmetic gets special mention: he gives short methods of calculation in the solution of arithmetical problems, and he spends some little space on the more popular side of the subject, golden number, magic squares, etc. In addition, there is a quantity of eminently practical information: household and medicinal recipes; diseases of cattle and sheep and their remedies; legal advice; copies of wills, petitions, prayers in Irish, love letters, advertisements from English and Irish newspapers, obituary notices, and marriage notices. Here and there, one meets with long lists of songs, tunes, jigs, reels and hornpipes. Everything, indeed, that the needs of a village community would demand, and much that would add to its intellectual store.

When we come to realise the circumstances in which Peter Galleghan's lot was cast, we cannot but admire the courage, industry and perseverance by which the daily round of his life must have been characterised. He probably wore a threadbare coat, he must have been often without little things which we would call necessities, but he managed to buy good paper on which to write, good pens, good ink, and to find some secluded place in which to write in that elegant, finished hand of his.

The statement of his teaching during a period stretching over twelve years gives the pitiful tale of what must have been the experience of many a hedge schoolmaster:

"An Exact Account of the Several Places at which I've Taught, together with the Date, as follows.

"On my first commencement, in Ardamagh at Francis Flood's house, on June 9th, 1814. Again at Tom Lynch's near the bog, on the first of Feb. 1815. Then at P.

Muldoon's, on May 1st, 1815. Continued school there untill October, 1816, left off. Then commenced at my own place in June, 1817, 2 mos. Then commencd. at Nancy McMahon's, Dec. 9th, 1817. Continued there untill May, 1819. Then removed to Christopher Gearty's house on May the 6th, 1819. Continued untill May 1st, 1820. Then removed to Owen Gearty's stable, on Monday, June 5, 1820. Continued untill October following. Then commenced. at Pat Muldoon's on Wednesday, Novr. 22nd, 1820. Continued untill 23rd of May, 1821. Commenced. again at Widow Flood's, Ardamagh, on Thursday, May 24th, 1821, & continued untill 23rd Octr. following; then commenced. at Hugh Tullys, Ardamagh, on Wednesday, December 12th, 1821, untill May, 1822. Then continued in Widow Floods again from May 1st, 1822, untill October following. Then commenced. at P. Muldoons on Thursday, January 2nd, 1823, untill September 26th, 1823, at which I have drawn a Memorandum of the above places, the time and Date, &c. Peter Galleghan—After shutting up school at P. Muldoons at Castlecom, September 26th, 1823, I had no school untill February, 1824. I Set out for Michael Clarkes, White wood, and opened school at his place on February 1th 1824, and continued no more than a fortnight untill I shut up again. Then I had no school untill the June following. I opened school at Owen Cassidy's house in Tamhas on Friday, 9th June, 1824, and remained there untill Sat., Octr. 2nd, 1824, & then removed to Philip Cassidy Monday, Octr. 4th, 1824, & remained untill the 10th Octr. & shut up school till Nov. 29th, and began untill the 13th of April, 1825, & commenced. in Cruisetown, Monday, April 18th, 1825, for 12 Mos."¹²

Such, in bald narrative, is the history of twelve years in the life of this hedge schoolmaster—an epic of trials and disappointments, and of a seemingly great struggle for existence. The official returns of the Commissioners of the Board of Education in 1825 give the naked facts: Peter Galleghan's school is described as a "Pay School"; the building in which he taught was "a stone wall cabin" costing about £5; the number of his pupils was 42; he was unassisted by any Society or by local patronage; and his "Total Annual Income . . . arising

¹² Given on pp. 789-90 of the MS. in Professor O'Toole's possession.



in all ways from the School," amounted to about £6.¹³ His own written record of twelve years' teaching, meagre as it is, fills out the story. We learn that the longest continuous period during which he taught in all this time was seventeen months; the shortest was only a couple of weeks—and short periods were not uncommon. There were gaps of three, four, even eight months when he did not teach; and, it must be noted, these periods were not confined to any definite part of the year, showing that it was want of a school house rather than the rigours of the winter or the abundance of employment in the summer that interrupted his work. But nowhere is there any trace of bitterness or dissatisfaction with his lot. He may have been too proud to complain. He certainly was full of courage, and full of faith in himself. He had the friendship of men better favoured by fortune. And there was always the knowledge that a warm welcome awaited him whenever he pushed open the half-door of the humblest dwelling.

It was his misfortune to have lived at a time when life for the hedge schoolmaster was becoming increasingly difficult. The old Hedge Schools were passing, and slowly giving place to the schools under the National Board of Education. It was the day of the young man; and the older ones who had deserved well of their time and of their country were being rapidly forgotten.

¹³ P. P. 1826-27. XII. p. 732.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

THE introduction of a State system of primary instruction in 1831 rang the death-knell of the old independent Hedge Schools. But the end was long in coming: they were too vigorous, too much part of the people to disappear at once; the new schools, since they gave only the mere rudiments of instruction, could not replace them. The truth is, they were never superseded by any *one* type of school: it was not until after the passing of the Irish Intermediate Act of 1878 that the last of the Hedge Schools vanished.

Little more remains to be said.

The Hedge Schools, which "braved the penalties of the penal code to keep alive some fragments of scholarship,"¹ which taught classics and mathematics to the children of the people, now belong to the past. They were of noble origin: for nearly two centuries they occupied a position of honour in Ireland; Europe knew their alumni; America welcomed their teachers;² and not a few great scholars owed much to them.

Writers have, many of them, described the Hedge Schools as poor, wretched, inadequate, mischievous. But let the worst be said of them, and it may still with truth be maintained that they represented a system of education truly democratic and truly national. With their passing, the last link with the ancient Gaelic schools of Ireland was severed.

FINIS.

¹ Kenney: "Sources for the Early History of Ireland," Vol. I., p. 52.

² See Roberts: "Ireland in America," pp. 95-6, 100, 101.

APPENDIX.

A list of books used in the various Schools situated in the four following counties in Ireland; abstracted from the sworn Returns made to the Commissioners—*viz.* :

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|---------------------|
| County Donegal | ... | ... | Province Ulster. |
| County Kildare | ... | ... | Province Leinster. |
| County Galway | ... | ... | Province Connaught. |
| County Kerry | ... | ... | Province Munster. |

Distinguishing Catechisms, Religious Works and Works of Entertainment.¹

Catechisms.

ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

Stopford's.
Mann's.
Marriott's.
Lewis's.

PRESBYTERIAN.

Shorter's.

ROMAN CATHOLIC.

Butler's.
Fleury's.
The Poor Man's.
Historical Catechism.
General Catechism.
Reilly's (Irish) Catechism.
Devereaux's Catechism.
Donlevey's Catechism.
M'Mahon's Catechism.
Coppinger's Catechism.
Philosophical Catechism.

Religious Works.

Testament.
Dr. Troy's Scripture Lessons.
Dr. Gallagher's Irish Sermons.
Think Well on it.
Imitation of Christ.
Parables, Miracles, Sermon on the Mount, from New Testament.
Allen's Alarm to Unconverted Sinners.
Gahan's Extracts from Old and New Testament.
Crossman's Introduction to the Knowledge of the Christian Religion.
Questions on the Gospel of St. Luke, by Rev. Thomas P. Magee.
The Christian Atonement.
Preparation for Death; or, the Churchman on a Sick Bed.
Moore's Monitor.
Roman Catholic Manual.

TRACTS :

Last Hours of the Rev. J. Cowper.
Work of the Holy Spirit.
Parental Duties.
Hopes of Eternity.
Trimmer's Scripture Lessons.
Watt's Hymns.
Sellon's Scripture History.
History of the Jewish Nation.

¹ P. P. 1825. XII. App. No. 221, pp. 553-60.

Footstep to Mrs. Trimmer.
 An Answer to Excuses about the Sacrament.
 Spouse of Christ—the Best Marriage.
 Christian Morals—Selected from some of the Epistles of the
 New Testament.
 Christian Covenant.
 History of our Saviour.
 The Path of Paradise. (Gahan).
 The Key of Paradise. (Gahan).
 The Poor Man's Manual.
 The Christian Directory.
 Abridgement of Christian Doctrine. (Butler).
 Defence of Catholic Principles.
 Travels of St. Paul.
 Ward's Errata to the Protestant Bible.
 An Essay for Catholic Communion.
 Challoner's Reflections.
 Economy of Human Life.
 Life of God in the Soul of Man.
 Thomas à Kempis.
 Life of St. Benedict.
 Portrait of a True and Perfect Christian.
 History of the Saints.
 St. Augustine's Confessions.
 Spiritual Combat.
 Fifty Reasons.
 A Treatise on the Difference between Temporal and Eternal.
 The Stations.
 St. Francis de Sales.
 Jeremy Taylor's Contemplations.
 Treatise of the Scapular.
 Dupin's History of the Church.
 Dr. Milner's Exclamations.
 Life of St. Mary of Egypt.
 Life of St. Joseph.
 Maxims of Christian Philosophy.
 The Holy Law Explained.
 The Spiritual Combat.
 A Treatise by the Bishop of Barcelona.
 Grounds of Catholic Doctrine.
 Paley's Principles.
 Reeves' Bible History.
 Prince Hohenlohe's Prayer Book.
 Fleming's Meditations.
 Life of the Blessed Virgin.
 St. Joseph and St. Anne.
 A Dissertation on Indulgences.
 Reflections on the Prerogative of St. John.
 Life of a Catholic Christian.
 Hell Opened to Sinners.
 An Epistle to an Unconverted Reader.
 The Nature of Conversion.
 Timothy O'Sullivan's Pious Miscellany, in Irish.
 Secker's Lectures.
 Heaven Taken by Storm.
 Hervey's Meditations.
 The Duties of Man.
 Parson's Christian Directory.
 Pastorini's Prophecies.
 Moylan's Devotions.
 Penton's Reflections.

Bishop Wilson's Sermons.
 The Saint's Everlasting Rest.
 The Virgin's Nosegay.
 The Litany of Saints.
 Plain Directions for Spending One Day Well.
 Life of Father Thomas.
 The Shortest Way to End Disputes in Religion.
 The Protestant Trial by the Written Word.
 Life of St. Cyprian.
 Life of St. Augustin.
 The Victory of Grace over Sin and Death.
 Funiculus Triplex; or, Cord of St. Francis.

Works of Entertainment, Histories, Tales, etc.

Don Quixote.
 History of Troy.
 Modern Story Teller.
 Life of Baron Trenk.
 Jack and His Eleven Brothers.
 Hibernian Tales.
 Guy, Earl of Warwick.
 History of the Seven Wise Masters and Mistresses of Rome.
 Death of Abel.
 Vicar of Wakefield.
 Dean Swift's Letters.
 The Battle of Aughrim.
 The Siege of Londonderry.
 Polite Preceptor.
 Tristram Shandy.
 Sandford and Merton.
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