

IRISH MUSIC: EFFORTS AT REVIVAL.

As time goes on, and knowledge is gleaned, we acquire proof that this Diocese was the scene of many historic events, the home of many illustrious personages. Last year, at the dedication of St. James's Church, Clonbroney, the bold claim was asserted (and cannot be denied) that Ardagh is the oldest *extant* diocese founded by St. Patrick: that Granard was the first See to which an Irishman was appointed, and that Clonbroney was the first convent founded in Ireland. At a later epoch, great saints flourished here, e.g., St. Manchan (of Mohill and Boher), St. Ciaran, of Clonmacnoise; St. Barry, of Cloone; and St. Virgilius (Farrell), patron of Salzburg, who spread the Gospel in the very heart of Europe. In the domain of letters we claim one of the Four Masters, Oliver Goldsmith, Maria Edgeworth, John K. Casey, G. Nugent Reynolds; and, in our own day, Canon Guinan. In the field of National effort, we can point to renowned heroes: O'Ferrals, O'Reillys, O'Rourkes, McRannails, in the remote past; and to a few romantic figures in the recent fight for freedom. But our greatest glory, beyond all question, is Turlough O'Carolan. Goldsmith, in an excess of admiration, calls O'Carolan "The last of the Bards"; and Bunting helps to perpetrate this misnomer. O'Carolan is, by far, the greatest composer of music Ireland has ever produced, and our greatest genius. But a long line of famous harpers carried on the O'Carolan tradition for nigh one hundred years after his demise. To those of them who possess a local or diocesan interest, I now introduce my readers.

Jerome O'Duignan (Co. Leitrim) is the first and the most remarkable of this tuneful fraternity. He came of that illustrious clan, once very powerful in Leitrim and Rosecommon, who were hereditary bards and official historians to the royal family of O'Conor (high king of Erin) and the princely line of O'Rourke. As already indicated, one of the four masters was

an O'Duignan. Hence, Jerome, though he lived in the iron age of the penal regime, had as his dowry golden traditions of song and story. Born in 1710, he was 28 years of age when O'Carolan died. From many circumstances, we must conclude that Jerome was a pupil of the great master; that he was one of the most proficient pupils of that master; and that on many occasions he rivalled his master in wit, drollery, originality, and sheer recklessness, as well as in the inspired character of his performances on the harp. One incident of his career seems almost too fantastic for belief: yet it is told in so precise details by Arthur O'Neill (of whom more hereafter) that the story cannot be a mere invention. Here is O'Neill's unvarnished narrative. "There was a harper, before my time, named Jerome Duignan, not blind, an excellent Greek and Latin scholar, and a charming performer. I have heard numerous anecdotes of him. The one that pleased me most was this: He lived with a Colonel Jones, of Drumshambo, who was one of the representatives in Parliament for the county of Leitrim. The Colonel, being in Dublin at the meeting of Parliament, met with an English nobleman who had brought over a Welsh harper. When the Welshman had played some tunes before the Colonel, which he did very well, the nobleman asked him had he ever heard so sweet a finger. 'Yes,' replied Jones, 'and that by a man who never wears either linen or woollen.' 'I'll bet you a hundred guineas,' says the nobleman, 'you can't produce any one to excel my Welshman.' The bet was accordingly made, and Duignan was written to, to come immediately to Dublin, and bring his harp and dress of *Couthack* with him: that is, a dress made of beaten rushes, with something like a caddy or plaid of the same stuff. On O'Duignan's arrival in Dublin, the Colonel acquainted the members with the nature of his bet, and they requested that it might be decided *in the House of Commons*, before business commenced. The two harpers performed before all the members accordingly, and it was unanimously decided in favour of O'Duignan, who wore his full *Couthack* dress and a cap of the same stuff, shaped like a sugar loaf, with many tassels; he was a tall handsome man, and looked very well in it."

Mr. Bunting, who gives us this quotation from O'Neill's

MS., adds that the sugar loaf cap was the beret (barrad) of the old bards, as shown on many engravings. He decides, moreover, that the O'Duigenan anecdote is authentic. Thus, we gain a vivid picture of the social and artistic conditions prevailing here two centuries ago.

Very different to O'Duignan was the illustrious Arthur O'Neill. He came of the same noble stock as Shane the Proud, Hugh, the Heroic; Owen Roe, our greatest general. Born near Dungannon in 1734, he lost his sight by an accident when he was two years old, and was thus destined by fate for the profession of harper. Of his instructor, Owen Keenan, an amusing incident is related. This gallant bard incurred the resentment of Mr. Stewart (near Cookstown), and found himself within the walls of Omagh Jail. A friendly bard named Higgins, from Co. Mayo, posted to the jail, where his royal retinue easily gained him admission. The gaoler, i.e., the Governor, was absent, but we are told, his wife was passionately fond of music and cordials. In a short time the jail became the scene of high festivities, during which all the turnkeys were set drunk, the keys stolen; and, while Higgins, like Orpheus, continued to charm his fair hostess and the minions of the law, Keenan escaped. Under his able guidance, O'Neill became a brilliant harper, and at the age of fifteen began his tour of Ireland. He dressed as a prince. On his buttons, which were of silver, and as broad as a crown, he displayed the Red Hand of Ulster. Thus his appearance and escort were almost as arresting as O'Carolan's. By the time he reached his nineteenth year, he had traversed the four provinces, and had become a prime favourite here in Connaught with all the families who had been O'Carolan's chief patrons, e.g., the O'Conors, the McDermotts, the McDermott Roes, the O'Rourkes, the O'Reillys, the Croftons, of Mohill. His headquarters seem to have been the mansion of Colonel Southwell, of Castle Hamilton, Co. Cavan. (The Southwells, as far as I can ascertain, have always been loyal to the Catholic Faith). Next after Castle Hamilton, his chief resort was the mansion of Charles O'Connor (Belanagar)—"*Clarum et venerabile nomen.*" He was a frequent visitor to many other homes of the old nobility in

Ardagh and Clonmacnoise; and, as we shall see, often came to Co. Longford.

Among his Longford patrons was Mr. Peter O'Connell, of Cranary. O'Neill tells us Mr. O'Connell "*could sing and compose well*," and there was no end (limit) of his hospitality." Mr. O'Connell's family merits more than passing notice, for it is illustrious in the highest degree. One daughter of Mr. O'Connell married near Drumlish, and was the mother of the illustrious Dr. O'Higgins. This great man was born in 1794, was educated first at home, then at Aughavas and Drumsna, then entered the Irish College at Paris. While yet a student there, he became professor of English; after his ordination he became Professor of Philosophy. Then he made a grand tour of the Continent; studied for a year at Vienna (then the artistic and literary capital of Europe); then proceeded to Rome, where he won, *summa cum laude*, the Doctorate of Theology and Canon Law. Soon after he was appointed (1824) Professor in Maynooth; and in 1829 was made the first Bishop after Emancipation. His further career in Ardagh is too well known to need reference here. To return to Peter O'Connell of Cranary, "who could sing and compose well," I must record here that another daughter of his married into a family in Mullahoran, and was the grandmother of the greatest Jurist that Ireland ever produced, viz., Chief Baron Palles—the last Chief Baron, whose decisions on many great questions of constitutional law remain for ever final, and shall be quoted as long as the present order of things endures. In 1782, Arthur O'Neill stopped at Peter O'Connell's. I am indebted to Mr. D. J. O'Sullivan for the following incident. "Mr. O'Connell had a humorous servant named Jack Hart, who sang both English and Irish songs as well as Mr. Owenson, the comedian could" (Mr. Owenson was father of Sydney Owenson—'The Wild Irish Girl'—afterwards Lady Morgan). "One day, Hart, taking his master's horses to be shod, had to pass by Captain Boyers's door (the Captain lived at Mt. Pleasant), and was accosted by the Captain. Hart was in the meantime singing the song of 'Speak O Yevugh, called Joyce's tune, with the chorus of 'Obber O Roo.' 'Blast you; come in till I give you a dram,' says Boyers; on which Hart alighted, and walked into Boyers's

house, who had at that time ten gallons of shrub in the house; and between singing and drinking, they never stopped for the space of two days and two nights, and never parted until the shrub was entirely finished. Mr. O'Connell, in the meantime, imagined his man, Hart, and horses were lost; but when the shrub was out, Hart brought the horses to the farrier's to be shod, and returned home the third day. Mr. O'Connell, of course, brought him to account for his conduct. Hart, without reserve, told him the whole story, and about the ten gallons of shrub. 'Damn your body, did you finish it?' (N.B.—He did not say, 'Damn your soul.') 'Damn me, if we did not, with a little help,' says Hart. 'Why, then, damn me, but I forgive you; and I never would if you left a single drop,' says Mr. O'Connell." O'Neill adds that Boyers was parsimonious—"only when seeing company, when he would spare no expense to entertain his guests."

We shall not part company with O'Neill, just yet; for he figures largely in this narrative. Meantime, it is my duty to introduce another Leitrim harper named Charles O'Beirne. He was one of that patriotic sept who possessed extensive estates around Drumsna and Jamestown, who represented the latter borough in the short-lived Parliament of James II. in Dublin, and whose descendants are still to be found in that part of Leitrim. A distinguished member of this family was, in our own time, Ambassador to Rumania, and went down with Lord Kitchener, during the Great War, in the ill-fated *Essex*. Charles O'Beirne was born in 1712. He was thus twenty-six years of age when O'Carolan died, and was fully imbued with admiration for the great composer, and full conversant with the chief composition of the great genius. From a close study of Bunting's notes, we gather that O'Beirne, though not a great performer, supplied to the master collector (Bunting) many of O'Carolan's creations. It is of him Bunting writes that he could perform upwards of one hundred of O'Carolan's tunes, "which formed a very inconsiderable part of the real number." O'Beirne was afterwards one of the harpers who added lustre to the festivals at Granard and Belfast.

Another harper who possesses an interest for us is Hugh O'Neill (blind) who shares with Owen Keenan the glory of

having taught Arthur O'Neill, music and poetry. He was born at Foxford, Co. Mayo, of noble parentage, being related to the famous Count Taaffe. He was an honoured guest with all the great families of Connaught, but his best patron was Mr. Tonnison, of Kilronan parish, in this diocese, who gave the bard a large and profitable farm at a nominal rent, and used to bring him on a well trained horse to hunt with the Roscommon hounds. Hugh O'Neill is buried in Kilronan in the same grave as O'Carolan.

Confining attention to those harpers who lived and moved among our ancestors, we must omit reference to many other remarkable performers who lived towards the end of the 18th century. Happily we have even more interesting matter, for this short article, in a great event for which Granard may claim the glory. This was no less than *the first musical festival* held in Ireland. Mr. James Duncan, a native of Granard, became a very wealthy merchant in Copenhagen. During a busy and prosperous career in the Danish capital, he took a keen interest in the affairs of his native country, and cultivated a taste for Irish music. With a spirit foreign to that dark age, he sent to Granard ample funds for a bardic festival "where skill in the composition and performance of native airs should be encouraged by liberal premiums: and in which the gentry might be induced to take an interest by making each meeting the occasion of a splendid ball." The first meeting was held in the Market-house, Granard in 1781. It was a period of intense national excitement. The American war of liberation and the Irish Volunteer Movement had awakened the spirit of liberty even in Ireland. It was the thought of a true patriot to revive then Ireland's spirit of song and music. The Granard meeting was a complete success. The harpers present were Charles Fanning, Patrick Carr, Patrick Maguire, Hugh Higgins, Charles O'Beirne (see above), Rose Mooney and Arthur O'Neill (see above). The latter, who, as stated, was well known in Co. Longford, has left us the following account of the meeting: "Charles Fanning got the first premium, ten guineas, for "*the Coolin*." I got the second, eight guineas, for "*The Greenwood of Truagh*," and "*Mrs. Crofton*," and Rose Mooney got the third, five guineas for

"*Planaty Burke.*" The judges at the first ball were excellent and there was some difficulty in deciding the first premium between Fanning and me: but in consequence of my endeavouring to appear on this occasion *in my very best*, they decided in favour of Charles who was careless in his dress: saying at the same time that he wanted money more than I did. However, I received many handsome verbal compliments. To the best of my opinion, there were at least 500 persons at the ball which was held in the Market-house. A Mr. Burrowes was one of the stewards: he was a tolerable judge of music and was so angry at the decision of the premiums that he thrust his cane through one of the windows." From this we see that Mr. Burrowes was merciful in the use of his cane; that our old friend O'Neill was handicapped by his silver buttons, and that he must have been a true sportsman for he says the judges were excellent. We can conclude, also, that O'Carolan's music predominated.

The second festival was held on the 2nd March, 1782. All the former competitors came again. It was hoped that the celebrity of the first meeting and the value of the prizes, would have attracted many new candidates: but only two such appeared, viz., Edward McDermott Roe, one of the Alderford family who proved O'Carolan's most devoted patrons, and Catherine Martin from Co. Mayo. This fact alone is strong proof that the ancient harp of Ireland was doomed. The prizes were awarded as at the first meeting: and Mr. Burrowes must have left his cane at home for no untoward incident occurred.

The third and last festival at Granard was held in 1785. Mr. Duncan, himself, came from Copenhagen to be present; hence the meeting was the most splendid of the three. Only two new names, however, appear on the list of competitors—i.e., Lawrence Kane, Co. Leitrim, and James Duncan, Co. Down. Kane was probably one of the great Dungiven clan, and one of that family who had settled at Keonbrook near Carrick and to one of whose ancestors O'Carolan dedicated several songs. O'Neill again describes this historic event . . . "A gentleman named Miles Kane railed uncommonly about the distribution of the premiums (they were adjudged as at the first

and second meetings) and swore a great oath—'That it was the most *nefarious*¹ decision he ever witnessed.' I don't know what he meant, but he used the expression. Lord and Lady Longford² attended this ball, and the meeting was vastly more numerous than either of the two former ones. Quality (persons of rank) from forty miles around attended, and there was not a house³ in town but was filled with ladies and gentlemen: and the town was like a horse fair, as there was not stabling for a twentieth part of the horses that came: there were at least 1,000 people at the ball. In consequence of the harpers who obtained no premium having been neglected on the former occasions, I hinted a subscription which was well received and performed; and indeed, their proportions exceeded our premiums."

All my readers will, I feel sure, thank me for these long verbatim quotations from Arthur O'Neill's *Autobiography*. They reveal the culture and charity of a perfect gentleman, the candour and humility of a real Christian and, at the same time, a penetrating insight of human selfishness and prejudice. The word "*nefarious*" baffled him. It afterwards became a powerful political explosive for use "*on the floor of the House*" and on platforms. Miles Kane's use of it was devastating and caused disorder in Granard. James Duncan, the benevolent promoter of those great enterprises, was pained and disillusioned by the jealousies and ugly scenes and never again made any attempt at holding a musical festival in the town of the Moat.

But the spirit which actuated Mr. Duncan survived and came to life with renewed energy in Belfast. Some gentlemen of that prosperous and (then) patriotic town (among others Dr. McDonnell, Robert Bradshaw, Henry Joy, and Thomas Russell) determined on renewing the efforts of their patriotic countryman, Mr. Duncan, for the preservation of the harp. Their manifesto is worthy of reproduction.

Belfast, December, 1791.

"Some inhabitants of Belfast feeling themselves interested in

(1) Miles was enraged either on O'Neill's behalf or because his own relative Lawrence Kane got no prize. Let us hope for the better motive.

(2) The present Lord and Lady are worthy of their antecedents.

(3) Granard, in 1785, had almost 500 houses and a population of 2,400.

everything which relates to the honour, as well as the prosperity of their country, propose to open a subscription which they intended to apply in attempting to revive and perpetuate the *Ancient Music and Poetry of Ireland*. They are solicitous to preserve from oblivion the few fragments which have been permitted to remain as monuments of the refined taste and genius of their ancestors.

"In order to carry this project into execution it must appear obvious to those acquainted with the situation of this country that it will be necessary to assemble the *harpers*, those descendants of our ancient bards, who are at present almost exclusively possessed of all that remains of *music, poetry and oral traditions of Ireland*.

"It is proposed that the harpers should be induced to assemble at Belfast (suppose on the 1st July next) by the distribution of such prizes as may seem adequate to the subscribers and that a person well versed in the language and antiquities of this nation should attend with a skilful musician to transcribe and arrange the most beautiful and interesting parts of their knowledge.

"An undertaking of this nature will, undoubtedly, meet the approbation of men of refinement and erudition in every country. And when it is considered how intimately the *spirit and character* of a people are connected with their *national poetry and music*, it is presumed that the Irish patriot and politician will not deem it an object unworthy of his patronage and protection."

This trumpet call from Belfast had the result of mustering ten of Ireland's best harpers. The meeting was held in the large hall of the Exchange on the 11th, 12th and 13th July, 1792—proof sufficient that *then* Belfast paid no attention to the "glorious and immortal memory."

In this list we meet six harpers who attended the festivals at Granard.*

- I. Denis Hempson (blind) from Co. Derry. Aged 97 years.
- II. Arthur O'Neill (blind) from Co. Tyrone. Aged 58 years *(Granard).
- III. Charles Fanning from Co. Cavan. Aged 56 years *(Granard).

- IV. Daniel Black (blind) from Co. Derry. Aged 75 years.
- V. Charles O'Beirne from Co. Leitrim. Aged 80 years. *(Granard).
- VI. Hugh Higgins (blind) from Co. Mayo. Aged 55 years. *(Granard).
- VII. Patrick Quinn (blind) from Co. Armagh. Aged 47
- VIII. Rose Mooney (blind) from Co. Meath. Aged 52 years. *(Granard).
- XI. James Duncan from Co. Down. Aged 45 years. *(Granard).
- X. William Carr from Co. Armagh. Aged 15 years.

A Welshman named Williams attended this meeting. I know not if he be the same who competed against Jerome O'Duignan in the Irish House of Commons. We are told his execution was very great and in marked contrast to the sweet expressive tones of the Irish harpers, but did not impress the judges.

This greatest public efforts to revive and preserve the national instrument and the national music of Ireland demands special study and analysis.

I. Fanning was awarded the first prize, 10 guineas, as at Granard (3 times) for his performance of "*The Coolin*" with variations suited to the piano. O'Neill was the greatest harper but, as at Granard, secured only the second prize, 8 guineas. All the other competitors were awarded 6 guineas each.

II. This last meeting of the Irish harpers reveals deplorable facts. (a) Seven of the ten competitors were over 50 years of age; (b) six of the ten competitors were blind; (c) only one juvenile entered—proof positive that the harp was doomed.

III. The Belfast meeting establishes beyond all possibility of denial that O'Carolan's genius dominated the music of Ireland. Of the twenty-four test pieces performed by the competitors, eighteen are O'Carolan's compositions. Charles Black, of Co. Derry, played three pieces: "The Receipt for Drinking Whiskey," "Sir Festus Burke," and "Thomas A Burke," all by O'Carolan. Patrick Quinn (Co. Armagh) played "O'Carolan's Devotion," and "Grace Nugent." Rose Mooney (Co. Meath), played "Sir. Charles Coote," "Mrs. Judge," and "Fanny Power." Practically no competitor omitted one or more of O'Carolan's tunes.

IV. Besides, the ten harpers gave a special performance of the tunes held in greatest esteem by themselves. They played 29 of their favourite airs, and of these 19 are O'Carolan's compositions. I do not know any composer of any nation who can command similar respect, allegiance and popularity.

Not the least important outcome of the Belfast Festival was the appointment of Edward Bunting as Secretary, with a special injunction "to take down the various airs played by the different harpers, without adding a single note to the old melodies." Bunting was then in the 19th year of his age, a very capable musician, and the meeting of the harpers inspired him with the high purpose of "making the study and preservation of our Irish melodies, the main business of his long life." On some future occasion I may treat of his life and labours for Ireland. Suffice it to state now that he set to work on his labour of love, by revising the tunes he had collected in July, 1792, and by visiting Connaught in '92-'3 in search of more material. His first volume was published in 1796 and contained 66 airs, elaborately edited and magnificently produced. Petrie says: "Of the excellence of the melodies in this first collection it is hardly impossible to speak in terms too high. There is hardly an air in it undistinguished for beauty and character." Bunting's second volume (1809) contains 77 airs, and his third volume (a monumental work) contains 151 airs and tunes.

Before leaving the Belfast festival, I wish to give Bunting's description of the performers. "They were in general, clad in a comfortable homely manner, in drab-coloured or grey cloth, of coarse manufacture. A few of them (particularly O'Neill and Higgins) made an attempt at splendour. . . . Some had horses and guides when travelling through the country, others their attendants only, who carried their harps. They seemed perfectly happy and contented with their lot. They were not invited again, for the promoters decided that the harp would not be saved by assemblies of old men.

But in 1807 the *Belfast Irish Harp Society* was instituted for the support of a teacher and the training of a number of blind boys from the age of ten. That such a project was possible redounds to the credit of Belfast. No doubt, the great festival of 1792 and the appearance of Bunting's collection in

1796 created the proper atmosphere for this heroic attempt. The society spent about £1,000, raised by private subscription, and continued its activities till 1813. Arthur O'Neill was the teacher and the society continued to pay him a salary of £30 till his death. The project was too big to continue but, to the Harp Society, Ireland owes the saving of the harp from total extinction, for in 1819 the only harpers in Ireland were the blind pupils of O'Neill.

In that year (1819) a further gallant attempt at revival was made—to show that the spirit of James Duncan still lived. This attempt—*Mirabile dictu*—originated in India. The Governor-General of that mighty Empire was a noble Irishman—the Marquis of Hastings. Prompted by the noblest patriotic motives he enlisted the interest of other Irish residents in India in a final effort to save the Irish harp. We may mention among these General Sir Wm. Casement, Sir Francis McNaghten, Major Kennedy and his brothers, John W. Fulton, and A. G. Caulfield, working in co-operation with the Marquis of Downshire, the Marquis of Donegal and the Earl of Belfast, resident in Ireland. The contributors in India sent over £1,100 to Belfast and thus the work of the Harp Society was revived and continued for over twenty years. In 1839, the society had only two boys under instruction. One of these, Wm. Murphy, had his eyesight perfect, and had a natural taste for music. If the society had adopted only pupils of this character the result might have been quite a success. But the system of adopting blind boys for instruction in all the mysteries of music, and in all the technical intricacies of a most difficult instrument was clearly against the law of nature and ab initio doomed to failure.

Meantime readers may inquire what was Dublin doing for Irish music, while Belfast was launching these noble movements. It is true that in imitation of the Belfast Harp Society of 1807, a similar society was established soon after in Dublin, that large sums were contributed; but there was no Arthur O'Neill in Dublin and the project soon came to an end. It is gratifying to find that the citizens of Dublin, 1809, held in the Rotunda a meeting in commemoration of O'Carolan. Patrick Quinn of Portadown, one of the harpers who had competed at Belfast in 1792, was selected to play the compositions of the great master

and covered himself with glory. He was so elated by the commendations he received in Dublin that, on his return to Portadown he never again touched his fiddle (which brought him a good harvest), but confined all his art to the harp.

This narrative would not be complete without reference to the efforts of a Belfast citizen named McFaul to awaken interest, in our own times, in the harp. About thirty years ago, this enterprising firm began to manufacture harps of a quite serviceable type. Some of these found purchasers in our diocese and a ready sale in our cities. The almost entire lack of expert teachers, as well as the extreme difficulty of acquiring by one's unaided efforts, anything like a decent proficiency, rendered this venture unavailing. But though the Harp, as our national instrument is no more, there are harpers among us. There are harpers too, in Britain; and all who possess a Radio set will admit that no other in the vast assortment of instruments can make such deep and thrilling appeal to heart and ear. It is a curious fact that the Irish listener can hear the harp far oftener from B.B.C. stations than from Athlone. Surely it is no impertinence to suggest to our broadcasting masters that they will gain popularity and honour by allowing us to hear with greater frequency the sweet tones of the sweetest, softest instrument on earth.

That it can be revived is easy enough. Indeed this is infinitely easier than the revival of the language. Revival is submerged by many fantastic activities that lead nowhere. Bounties, doles, tariffs and boycott are all the rage: spiritual values count nil.

Observant readers may have deduced from these and former notes in our Journal the surprising fact that the great efforts at revival, and Bunting's resulting publications, are mainly concerned with *Connaught music*. Many facts suggest themselves in explanation. The old Gaelic nobility and genius were driven into Connaught under the merciless clearances of the Stuarts and Cromwell and after the surrender at Limerick. In a special degree Mayo, Sligo, Roscommon, and Leitrim, are the concentration camps of the Gael. Thus we have here O'Sullivans, McCarthys and Butlers, as well as O'Dohertys, O'Kanes, O'Neills and O'Donnells. Thus Connaught is the refuge of the few remnants of our culture and genius. I would

not be true to my main purpose if I did not assert again what I sought to prove many times, that Connaught's predominance in music is the work of O'Carolan. A refugee himself, under the most degrading regime ever enacted, for forty years he exercised a benign sway of joy and consolation and left a living tradition which must be regarded as our most precious. His pupils and his music supplied the crowning glory to the Granard and Belfast festivals. And when Edward Bunting wished to add to his store, naturally he came to O'Carolan's province, the home of bright treasures—discovered much, and missed much—because he searched only Sligo and Mayo and left Roscommon and Leitrim alone. The search has yet to be completed.

A regrettable incident of these various *concentrations* on Connaught is that the music of Leinster and Munster was neglected 140 years ago, just when that music was fast disappearing. What the loss to Ireland is, who can tell? Whether great or small, the loss is beyond repair. Let us hope that the net loss is not too serious. Lovely haunting melodies, like our Faith, have the knack of lingering on in the mountains, glens and bog islands, and a master collector has come at last in our own day, in the person of Fr. Walsh, C.M. Had there been a Duncan, a Bunting, or a Walsh in Munster 130 years ago, what a difference?

I shall conclude these rather desultory notes by quoting a noble tribute by one great Irishman to another. Dr. McDonnell was chiefly responsible for organising the harpers' festival in 1792, and for the Harp Society's activities in 1807. On the former occasion he invited all the competing harpers to his house in Belfast and O'Neill assures us, "they could not be better entertained if they were peers of the realm, so great was the assiduity of the doctor and his family." The doctor was instructed in the harp by O'Neill and luckily Bunting asked him in 1838 for his personal recollection of the famous harper, and so was enabled to print the following tribute in the introduction to the great collection of 1840:—

"In compliance with your request, I furnish you with some particulars of my acquaintance with Arthur O'Neill, the Irish harper, from whom you procured some information prior to your first publication. My father, who had a great fondness

for music, selected O'Neill as the most proper person he then knew to teach his children; and he lived in our house for two years in this capacity; but my father's death in 1780 put an end to this study, which we found very difficult on account of the teacher being blind. At that period almost all harpers were blind; this profession having been humanely reserved as a provision for the sons of reduced gentlemen who happened to be blind; a calamity then much more common than at present, owing to improvement in the treatment of smallpox. During the two years he lived in our house, he was treated as a poor gentleman, and had a servant. He was a man of strong natural sense, pleasing in his manners, and had acquired a considerable knowledge of the common topics, so that he could acquit himself very well in mixed society, when encouraged to converse. He had, according to the custom of these itinerant musicians, travelled several times over all Ireland, and became thereby acquainted with several of the principal families, who were in the habit of entertaining such persons; among these there were some Protestant families, but the harpers frequented mostly the houses of the old Irish families who had lost their titles or were reduced more or less in their estates. These they would visit once in two or three years, and remain from a week to a month in each house; and it was generally a time of rejoicing among the young and old when one of these itinerants appeared. As to the character of O'Neill, I found him a perfectly safe companion, a man of veracity and integrity, not at all addicted to boasting or pretending to anything extraordinary; he never affected to compose or alter any tune, but played it exactly as he had been taught by his masters, Hugh O'Neill (and Owen Keenan), for whom he always expressed great veneration.

I think, therefore, you may rely with the greatest confidence on any information he gave you as to the technical names of the strings and parts of the harp, and names of the different notes, or strokes upon the harp. He was as incapable, as he would have been disinclined, to have invented these terms, which I think of great consequence, as connected with the liter-

ary history of music; and if in the course of human events, your singular ingenuity, zeal, and success, in discovering those ancient airs shall be the means of preserving O'Neill's name also from oblivion, it will always gratify me to remember that I was the means of introducing you to each other."

For the present, we must part with Dr. McDonnell, Edward Bunting, the harpers who made history at Granard and Belfast, and Mr. James Duncan. But we shall renew acquaintance, at least, with some of them.

M. J. MASTERSON.

Note on the 3rd Granard Festival.

The Ven. Archdeacon Donohoe informs me that Mr. Duncan brought A. O'Neill as an honoured guest to the house of his niece—Mrs. O'Reilly. This lady was the grandmother of the highly respected teacher, familiarly known as "Master Pat." O'Neill states that one, Bernard O'Reilly, Ballymorris, was hostile to Mr. Duncan, and tried to break up the festival. This same Bernard earned from the P.P. (Rev. Patk. Kiernan) the following note in the parish record: "Rixatus Bernardo O'Reilly et aliis," i.e., "this rowdy gent tried in vain to compel the venerable pastor to resign." Father Kiernan restored St. Patrick's ancient church at Granardkille in 1772. He died at Coolarty shortly after the 3rd festival. Tradition says he was the uncle of Most. Rev. Dr. Kiernan, Bishop of Clogher. His huge walking stick is still preserved, and with Fr. Daly's axe deserves a place in our Museum.

