

ceol agus amhánaíocht
na héireann

le
DOMNALL Ó SÚILLEABÁIN

Anna máiriú as
Muriel Brandt, A.R.H.A., A.R.C.A.

Anna éir amac do Coirte Comhnaóma
Cultúra na héireann as Colm Ó Lochlainn
Ác Chiac: Fé comarca no dCpí gComneal

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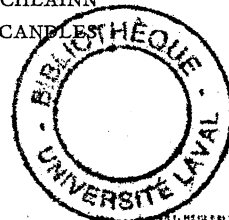
IRISH FOLK MUSIC
AND SONG

by
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DUBLIN: AT THE SIGN OF THE THREE CANDLES



But a tragic event was impending which brought any such prediction to naught. Pigot returned home the following September, and he writes in his private diary: "Quite gaily, as usual, my first place to go was Baggot Street; but I was told that Davis was ill, had been ill for some days. Next day they said he was 'better', but I could not see him—and then his brother told me his illness was scarlet fever. It was Sunday. On Tuesday morning John O'Hagan came down to Dalkey to tell me that Thomas Davis was *dead*."

"For a long time afterwards I could not realise it—so entirely had Davis and I lived together while he lived at all. . . . It was this habit of living *with* Davis, of always imagining him *in* everything connected with the country, that so entirely crushed my projects. After his death I could think and speak no more of politics, because my previous plans had all included him as a sort of corner-stone."

Thenceforward Pigot concentrated on the cultural aspects of nationality, apart from earning his living at the Irish Bar. He helped John O'Daly with the music of his *Poets and Poetry of Munster*, published in 1849, and he was one of the two Honorary Secretaries of the Society which brought out Petrie's notable volume six years later. For a long period he wrote the annual descriptive catalogue of the Royal Hibernian Academy's art exhibition and he was also prominent in a number of artistic and educational projects. Disgusted at the turn Irish politics had taken after the disruption of the Young Ireland movement, he went to Bombay in 1865 and practised at the Indian Bar with such success that he made an independent fortune in five years—but at the cost of impaired health. He then returned home, dying soon afterwards in 1871. His collection of more than two thousand

airs entitles his memory to be cherished as that of a man who deserves well of his country.

The collectors whom we have so far been considering were townsmen whose mother tongue was English. The next was a man of another type with a different background. Three miles west of Dingle in James County Kerry lies Ventry Strand, one of the loveliest spots in Ireland, as well as one of the most legendary. Here, in the year 1828, was born James Goodman, a son of the Rector of Dingle. At that time—and indeed for many decades afterwards—not a word of English would have been understood by the generality of the people. Stories, legends, music and poetry existed in abundance on the lips of the local farmers and fisher-folk, and James became a devotee of Irish music very early in life, learning to play the flute before he left home.

In due course, Goodman graduated at Trinity College, adopted his father's profession and was appointed to a curacy near Skibbereen. In 1860 he was transferred to Ardgroom, near Castletownbere, which was then just as Irish-speaking as Ventry; and it was during his six years' residence in this place that he compiled his great collection of traditional airs. An old piper friend from Dingle, Tom Kennedy by name, followed him to Ardgroom. Goodman took down from Kennedy literally hundreds of tunes, and his genial nature brought him contributions from many other singers and players.

From 1866 until his death thirty years later Goodman was Rector of Skibbereen and Canon of Ross, and for the last twelve years of his life he was also Professor of Irish at Trinity College, spending six months of the year in Dublin and the

other six months in Skibbereen. There can seldom have been so Gaelic a parson. Down at the rectory it was no uncommon sight to see the reverend piper comfortably seated under the shade of the trees on the lawn, where his friends and neighbours



were always welcome to enjoy his company and his music—Catholics no less than those of his own communion. It was also his custom to vary his playing with songs in Irish, rendered in the proper traditional way.

Up in Dublin, Goodman brought with him the atmosphere of West Cork. He bade to his rooms in Trinity College all those—and they were many—who delighted to hear him perform: the crimson cover of his fine set of union pipes being set off by his white cravat, while his foot beat time to the music. Some of the other professors used to be among

the audience, notably the redoubtable John Pentland Mahaffy, afterwards Provost, who is perhaps the last man that one would associate with this type of diversion. So matters continued until Goodman's death at home in 1896. He died a poor man, for his charity was unbounded without distinction of religion; and his musical manuscripts were the most valuable of his possessions.

It is a curious fact that these were all compiled during the short period that he was a curate at Ardroom. If he noted other tunes, earlier in Kerry or later at Skibbereen, their location is unknown. Still, he has given us an abundance of song airs, marches and dances of all kinds, mostly taken down by himself but occasionally copied from manuscripts. At the end of it all he has written: "*Do críochnaigheadh an obair-si liomsa an 26 lá don mhí Septembar Aois Chríost 1866 in Ardhróm in Iarthar Chorcaighe*", which means: "This work was finished by me on the 26th day of September, 1866 in Ardroom in West Cork". He might well feel proud. For he had rescued for posterity close on two thousand Irish traditional melodies, in each case with their proper titles in Irish or English; and these had come from a part of Munster untouched by other collectors.

About the time that Petrie founded the Society for the Publication of Irish Melodies, a young man arrived from County Limerick to take up a post in Dublin. This was Patrick Weston Joyce, who was born in 1827 in the Irish-speaking village of Glen-osheen, in the Ballyhoura Hills. A large number of the airs of his native place were stored in his memory but he was unaware whether they had been published or not, because at that time he knew nothing

Patrick
Weston
Joyce,
1827-1914