

REVIEWS

SCOTLAND

THE IRISH IN SCOTLAND, 1798-1845. By James Edmund Handley, M.A., B.Sc. (Econ.), Ph.D. (Cork University Press. pp. ix, 337, XV. 10s. 6d.).

This is a notable contribution to the social history of Great Britain. Working from material available in contemporary newspapers, government committee reports, street literature, magazines, books, General Assembly Reports, and a mass of miscellaneous writing, Dr. Handley has succeeded in producing a most readable, and at the same time carefully documented study which should attract the attention of all who are interested in the history of Scotland, modern industrialism, or the Catholic Church.

The first chapter sets the background with an outline of early population movements between Scotland and Ireland. It is an excellent summary which carries the story of Irish-Scottish relations from prehistoric times to the 18th century, and it would be ungenerous to dwell now on the two or three small points where we might differ from the author. Chapters follow on seasonal migration and the movement of Irish migratory labourers who squatted in turf huts along the sides of canals or railways which were being constructed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These chapters are made lively by an account of the steamship war which raged on the Clyde in the '20's and '30's of last century. The coming of the steamship facilitated immigration, so that by the middle '40's steamers were coping with 6,000-8,000 a week during the summer months; and the Irish population in Scotland was well over 5 per cent. of the whole. They provided, together with men driven from the Highlands by landlords' exploitation, the bulk of the manual labourers who were needed for the rapid growth of the new heavy industries. They supplied, too, matter first for boisterous wit and later for violent manifestations of category hatred, especially when permanent immigration became considerable. In his fourth chapter, on permanent immigration, Dr. Handley quotes an account from Kilsyth which is typical of what was happening in many of the smaller Scottish towns:

"There was not a Roman Catholic in the town when I was a boy (born 1825) and only two families of Irish blood. They were Protestants, and lived unmolested. Roman Catholic Irishmen began gradually to make their appearance. The farmers found work for them in the fields, in drainage jobs and otherwise, but so bitter was the feeling against them that there was no house room for them in the town. 'Beans, peas, and a guinea' was the sentence used to test their nationality, and if so be the suspected stranger called it 'Binns, piz, and a ginny' he had to go. . . . When the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway was made and

the Roman Catholic Irish invaded the town in hundreds, the native antipathy smouldered deep. For a while it broke out only in taunts and sporadic battles at street corners, but at last it burst out into a big cruel riot, which lasted for hours. The Irish were being pursued through the streets and chased up closes into their houses. They jumped from windows, and everywhere fled, wounded and bleeding."

The passage illustrates the mixture of religious, racial and economic motives involved in the relations of natives and newcomers. But the Irish did not always flee, and sometimes there were counter-attacks and pitched battles, between Irish and Highland or Lowland navvies, or between Irishmen and town mobs. There were even battles between Irish and Irish, when provincial rivalries were stirred up by whisky on Saturday or Sunday nights. Dr. Handley describes one of these:

Once on a Sunday evening a fierce fight involving some three hundred broke out between them (Monaghan and Donegal men) in the Saltmarket of Glasgow. The battle rolled backwards and forwards for hours. Irishmen coming home from evening service in the Catholic chapel of St. Andrew's in the neighbourhood rushed into their houses to change from their Sunday clothes into fighting gear. At the height of the disturbance some of the leaders gave vent to their exuberance by executing step-dances on the edge of the battlefield before joining the combatants. A crowd of 10,000 spectators assembled in the Bridgegate and Saltmarket. The police arrived but were kept on the outside of the throng feebly waving their batons to no purpose.

Such incidents as this gave scope to journalistic wit, and the newspapers of the time made many sallies against the immigrants, sometimes calling out articles in their behalf from other Scottish writers. In the chapter dealing with the reaction to immigration Dr. Handley shows a fine objectivity. In the following chapter, on the destitute Irish immigrant, his ability to handle facts and figures interestingly is severely tested, but most readers will probably find that he succeeds in holding their attention, even when most occupied with tables of statistics.

Chapters on the condition of the immigrant and the native attitude to them, conclude the book. The first of these two chapters has one of the best accounts of the 19th century Glasgow slums that can be found. It was into these slums that the bulk of Irish immigrants found their way, forming large communities of depressed proletariat which rapidly grew to be the greater part of the Church in Scotland. Dr. Handley records the tumultuous early days of these communities, their gradual settling down, and the development of religious, political and educational effort which was part cause, part consequence of that settlement.

In the main, the story of the settlement of the Irish and their

peaceful acceptance by the native population, apart from occasional outbursts, belongs to later in the 19th century, and will no doubt be told in the second volume on which Dr. Handley is now working. This is all too short an account of a fascinating book which is full of sidelights on such widely separate subjects as the " sack-em up men," David Livingstone, the etymology of *navvy*, prize-fights, Fr. Theobald Mathew, and trade unions.

The Bibliography has some lacunae which leave it rather one-sided with regard to the first chapter. For example, Dom Odo Blundell's *Catholic Highlands of Scotland* might well be included, for the sake of those who cannot consult Prof. Smith's unpublished MS on the history of Scottish Catholics in Penal Times. Dom Odo's second volume has most of the material given by Dr. Handley on pp. 14-15. And it is a pity to ignore Dr. Douglas Simpson's works on the Celtic Church, or Professor Childe's *Prehistory of Scotland*. There are a few misprints still to be corrected: pp. 17, 20, 85, 129, 183, 247, 253, 279, 328. Lastly, grateful though one must be to Cork University Press (and to the University of London Publications Fund), for so valuable a book, something ought to be said about the way in which the publishers have produced the volume. The type is mercifully legible, but its arrangement is poor; and the binding is deplorable. The first edition was hideous in design, but was helped out by a dust-cover which was simple and dignified. In the second edition the cover is somewhat improved, but the dust-cover has been replaced by another of more " popular " type, showing a husky but obviously sweet-natured Irish lad on the point of leaving his native hills for the pitheads of Scotland. Surely Cork University Press can do better than this. Indeed, in Cork itself another firm of publishers is already showing the way.

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SELECTED POEMS OF HUGH MACDIARMID. Edited by R. Crombie Saunders. No. 6 Poetry Scotland Series. (William MacLellan, Glasgow. 6s.).

POETRY SCOTLAND. Second series. Edited by Maurice Lindsay. (Illustrated). (William MacLellan. 5s.).

The Scottish literary revival, which began roughly twenty years ago, has reached during the last six years a new stage which is attracting widespread interest not only among the Scottish reading public but even in England. When the war began the movement was still apparently only Hugh MacDiarmid. He was neglected to an astonishing degree in his own country. Most of his books were hard to get. His most loyal followers were small groups of students in the Scottish universities. He had no regular publisher, and no certain channel for the communication of his poetry and criticism to the reading public. All this is changed. MacDiarmid is still easily the most considerable figure in Scottish letters to-day, and