

STERLING SONS OF IRELAND

II.—EDWARD LYSAGHT.

(FOR THE N.Z. TABLET, BY O. O'MEL.)

Bless the country, say I, that gave Patrick his birth,
 Bless the land of the oak, and its neighboring earth,
 Where grow the shillelagh and shamrock so green!
 May the sons of the Thames, the Tweed, and the
 Shannon,
 Drub the foes who dare plant on our confines a cannon;
 United and happy, at Loyalty's shrine,
 May the rose and the thistle long flourish and twine
 Round the sprig of shillelagh and shamrock so green!

This is the happiest sentiment contained in that rollicking song, 'The sprig of shillelagh,' by the subject of the present article; and the same sentiment (though voiced at a period when all that should have tended to promote it had effaced the feeling by the dire means of bloodshed and bribery) has lived over a long span of one hundred years to expand, in these our times, into apparent fruitfulness. The sons of the Thames, the Tweed, and the Shannon are battling together on many a far-flung battle-front, determined to keep a dauntless and powerful foe away from the sacred confines of the Briton and the Gael. Irishmen, in common with Scots and Britons, are giving all they actually possess—their lives, to sustain a sentiment dear to the hearts of many a far-seeing constitutionalist during the past century. The sentiment has been realised, and Britons should indeed be grateful; but will Ireland realise her cherished hope of one hundred years—her right to govern her own household? Time alone can settle this question. We have reason to hope that it may be realised, though the history of Ireland is a record of torn scraps of paper, broken treaties, repudiated promises, and rifled hearthstones. Nevertheless, the great hope is strong within us, and we can only trust that history shall not once again repeat itself.

'Pleasant Ned Lysaght' had the great hope of freedom strong within him when he marched behind Henry Grattan in the Volunteer movement. Lysaght was a far-seeing constitutionalist, but he lived to realise a broken heart over 'the cruel knaves and bigot slaves' who betrayed and sold their national birthright in a critical hour. Lysaght lived in a stirring period, a darksome time illumined at intervals with golden flashes of promise. Then, as now, grim war scourged Europe, and Ireland, bedraggled but in smiles and tears, nervously scanned the horizon through the serried spears of her Volunteers. How alike are the times—fateful 1782-1803 and 1911-1916!

Edward Lysaght, lawyer, wit, poet and patriot, was born in County Clare in 1763. His parents were Protestants, and he belonged to the same religion. But the romantic environments amid which he was reared, the simple loyalty of his peasant school-fellows, and the great germs of liberty that had been wafted from the Old and New Worlds to commingle and sink deep in the fertile soil of Ireland had much to do with the development of the manly soul of the youth. He grew up among companions and scenes that could not fail to mould into kindred aspiration and devotion a subject endowed with the sensitive chords of bardic feeling. He sang and the woods sang with him, and this natal symphony in a few years burst into the full flood of unbridled song, for Lysaght was a singer: he gave to the world the songs of his heart—witty and humorous songs, lively songs of clean passion, and patriotic poems—unornamental but of healthy style. Much, indeed all that was best, of his poetry has been lost. He is now chiefly remembered by the 'Sprig of Shillelagh,' and that typically Irish song, 'Kitty of Coleraine.' Mr. T. P. O'Connor has remarked somewhere that 'the "Sprig of Shillelagh" remains to this day a perfect photograph of the now extinct being it portrays.' It is noteworthy that happy early associations influence the great majority of us all through life, and, in gen-

eral, too, what we happen to be is traceable to those early influences. It was thus with Lysaght. His first schooling of importance was conducted by the genial Father Patrick Hare, of Cashel, whither the parents of our patriot had sent their boy. In this high-class school young Lysaght delved deep into the glowing and sad pages of his country's history, and the lessons were not acquired in vain. He was a studious boy, and while noted at this institution for devotion to his books, Father Hare discovered two other budding traits in his pupil that in after life were to earn for him the happy appellation of 'Pleasant Ned Lysaght.' In our mind's eye we can conjure up with tolerable accuracy the noisy Irish Bar of a later period, and the animated Volunteer parades; and it is not difficult to hear the peals of boisterous laughter that repaid 'Pleasant Ned's' witty sallies, and the echoed remark, 'Here comes Pleasant Ned.' Edward Lysaght was pleasant in school and forum, at home and abroad; yet withal, his heart beat heavily for Ireland, and many a big tear he dropped on the mournful book that holds her story. He was typically Irish—a man of wit in one word, and a passionate patriot in the next.

When Lysaght left Father Hare's homely school, there were tears and fervent 'slanleaghts' showered upon him in Cashel. In 1779, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, and while there his father died, an event that so upset the young student that he abruptly left the college and hurried home to County Clare to console his widowed mother and in turn receive consolation from her. In 1784, he passed his examination for the Middle Temple, London, and was accepted as a student therein. While there he won many valuable prizes, and, owing to his great wit and brimming humor, he secured a host of friends and admirers. He took out his M.A. degree at Oxford, and, when his country was passing through the most tragic period of her history as a nation, in 1798, he was called to the English and Irish bars. Perhaps, it was well for him that he was far away from the disturbed arena of Irish politics at the time, as it is very probable that her great goodness of heart and love of country, might have led him, as others of similar temperament had been lured.

He did not prove successful at the bar in England, and he made little by his practice. After his marriage the meagre practice he casually secured could not save him from debt: his creditors pestered him severely, and he approached his father-in-law (whom all along he had considered as quite a financial person) for monetary help in his troubles. To his sorrow—and his keen sense of humor—he discovered the paternal marriage relation in straits as formidable as his own, and in disgust and fright he left England determined never to see that unlucky land again. In the course of a confidential talk with Sir Jonah Barrington relative to this trying period of his existence, Lysaght remarked that he discovered his father-in-law, whom he had believed to be a wealthy Jew, was in reality only a bankrupt Christian! It was a fair wind that wafted this good-hearted patriot back to his native land. Unlike others of his countrymen, then as well as now, he found fame and fortune in the land that gave him birth. He soon won the big hearts of his countrymen throughout the length and breadth of the land, and built up a considerable reputation as an orator. His business as a lawyer developed gradually, and his legal services were eagerly sought. Sunshine after a stormy passage expanded Lysaght's easy heart, and the comparative comfort he was attaining, coupled with the spell of his native surroundings, evoked the full flood-tide of his muse. Every moment he had at his disposal found him busy at his verses. He wrote in the club, in the courts, on the coach, and at home. He wrote a great deal, but his best pieces that made a name for him have been lost. Many stray Irish magazines were enlivened by his ready pen, and perhaps some day a few of them may be unearthed. As a wit and verse-maker he delighted every man of prominence in the Dublin of that period, but as an incorruptible patriot his name and fame have descended to us, and

IN COLD WEATHER

no beverage is so acceptable as SYMINGTON'S COFFEE ESSENCE.
 In two minutes you can have a delicious warm drink. If you haven't tried
 it, you should do so at once.