

PIPERS I HAVE KNOWN

Addressing the editor of the *Tablet*, Father J. O'Neill, Waikivi, writes:—

You were kind enough to give me space recently for a few notes on the subject of pipe music, and I am tempted to think you may find room for some supplementary reminiscences. The veteran Father Golden, by his racy and instructive comments, encourages me to believe that your readers will be interested.

My earliest remembrances of pipe music are connected with the band of the 72nd Highlanders, a regiment that was stationed in my native town when I was a small schoolboy. When the weekly parade and grand march of the regiment brought them past our school, business came to a standstill with us young urchins, and all the vigilance of the master could not prevent a number of us from slipping out on various pretexts and joining the parade. How we revelled in the ear-splitting notes of the pibrochs and the low muttering of the kettle-drums, little recking that we would get home at evening dog-tired with the long march. As the years went by other Highland regiments came and went and contributed to our enjoyment of the soul-stirring war pipes, the history of which was of course a sealed book to us, but which appealed to our national feelings as something that was a part of ourselves.

One of the most successful players on the Uilleann pipes (pronounced "willin," a word that is sacred to Barkis) that I remember was an elderly man who travelled on the steamer *Rosa*, which plied on the Shannon for tourists and visitors to the seaside. We called him "Old Times," and regarded him with the greatest veneration. He varied the playing of war marches on the war pipes with dance music and melodies on the Uilleann pipes. One of his favorite airs was "Brian Boru's March," well known to every parish band in the Old Land. To diversify the proceedings on the river trip amid the finest scenery and most historic associations of Erin he would versify the expression of his thoughts to that grand old air. After many years some of his improvised verse comes back to memory, and amongst your readers, those who tripped on the Shannon 40 or 50 years ago will recognise the old man's racy recommendation to all and sundry to go to Killkee:

Ye Garryowen boys with your frolic and noise,
Just listen to me, just listen to me;
If ye take my advice ye'll be off in a trice
To lovely Killkee, to lovely Killkee.

Then get out on the rocks in the slender curroch,
And go into the cave, go into the cave
Where the banshees and mermaids and fairies and elves
Are cresting the wave, they may give you a stave.

Oh ye Limerick lasses, as the sunny day passes,
Leave the shop and the farm, don't feel any alarm.
For faix I've a notion a dip in the ocean
Will do ye no harm, will do ye no harm.

Arrah tunder and turf, if ye saw the bright surf
As it rowls on the say, as it rowls on the say,
Not all the young gags that hop on the flags
Would keep ye away, would keep ye away.

I can't say how many more verses were given out by the old man, but I know the time passed rapidly and pleasantly for all of us.

Amongst the many pipers that fell upon evil days I must include old Paddy Horrigan. We used to call him "Hurricane." He had a sightless dragged eye and a badly dragged-up dog. When Paddy and his pipes were new he was in great request at weddings and social gatherings of all kinds, and was well known at every fair and races in Munster. But the piper and the pipes were getting old and out of re-

pair. Some years ago I knocked against him in the principal thoroughfare of Ennis, and oh! what a change—an asthmatic pipe under his arm and another in his chest! I thought of Caoch O'Leary, who after his wanderings came back to the once smiling farm to find that his fair-haired little friends of former years—Eileen, Kate, and Mary—were gone for ever, and with them all the merry-making of old times. Poor Caoch, he went "home" the next day to his long home. I don't suppose Paddy has survived till now. I paid him for a blast, and then I soon paid him to stop the blasted noise. I encouraged him to get his windpipe medically attended to, and also to get his Uilleann repaired and tuned. Later in the same summer, while on a bike trip from Lisdoonvarna to Killkee in company with the genial P.P. of St. Mary's, Limerick, I met Paddy on a lonely part of the road where there was nothing but the Atlantic and America on one side and all Ireland on the other. I found a great improvement, and sat on the roadside fence to enjoy the strains that came "willinly" at the call of the deft fingers of my old friend. I must have remained a considerable time, for when I overtook my rev. friend I had to submit to a discharge of epithets that required the old Gaelic tongue to do justice to them.

In New Zealand we have had a piper, Mr. Coghlan, who had a very fine instrument, on which, no doubt, many of your readers have heard him play. He had a good selection of airs, and manipulated the drones to good effect. How curiously we are constituted was exemplified in one of the uses to which Coghlan put his pipes. He would imitate the various noises made by a locomotive train. He regarded it as his *pièce de résistance*. With that inimitable smirk of self-satisfaction with which he used to regard his audience he led them into the mysteries of the marvellous train imitation. "Now she is lavin' the station" (a moderate whistle being the sign). "Now she is goin' across a wooden bridge" (a rumbling of the low notes of the drone marking the interesting event). "Now she is goin' into the tunnel," etc., etc. I question if one in the audience would suspect what was meant if he had not kindly informed us. Apart from this childishness, the old man gave a good rendering of the ancient music of Erin. I wonder whether he has passed away, and if so where his pipes have gone to. Could any of your readers throw any light on the matter?

We have at least one living exponent of the Irish bagpipe music in the person of Mr. Patrick Galvin, of Cardrona. His enthusiasm may be gauged from the fact that failing to get anyone to tune his Uilleann in Australasia, he made a trip to Ireland for that purpose. I had the pleasure of seeing him head the first "Irish language" procession in Dublin some 18 years ago, playing the "Wearing of the Green" and other national airs on his war pipes. May he long flourish!

My sketch would be incomplete if I did not make mention of Seaghan O'Failan, one of the founders of the Cork City Irish Pipe Band, who emigrated from Ireland a few years ago, and whom I met in West Australia. He has become a resident of Geraldton, W.A., but I believe he has a secret wish to see New Zealand, where he reckons the grand old patriot, Father John Golden, amongst his friends.

Though I could tell interesting stories in these various connections, I fear I have already occupied considerable space, and will conclude with—*To buan treun caradh.*

BOOK NOTICES

Received: *Reason; The Round Table; The Scottish Review*; also C.T. publications: *St. Vincent de Paul*, by Henry Somerville; *Failure and Other Stories*, by Miriam Agatha.

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