

MICHAEL HOGAN

BARD OF THOMOND.

MR MICHAEL HOGAN, " Bard of Thomond," was born at Thomondgate, Limerick, on the 31st October, 1828. His father was a wheelwright, and a real handy man he was. He was also an excellent musician. He could play the flute and the violin ; and the instruments on which he played were the workmanship of his own hands. When a child, young Michael used to enjoy immensely the evenings when his father played for the amusement of the family and neighbours who frequented his friendly hearth, to listen to the fine old Irish airs discoursed so tenderly on the violin, many of which, the Bard declares, have not been heard of since the death of his father.

In the early part of his career Mr. Hogan received no school education. He was, what he now terms, " a wild youth," and when sent to school he immediately set about lampooning the scholars, and even the teachers, and was instantly turned home. He was not long, however, of learning to read and write. He would get a lead pencil and paper and copy the headings of books, or a word of large print from the advertising columns of a newspaper without knowing what the words were merely imitating the copy. By being told the words, and the letters composing them, in a short time he learned to read and print not write. This practice of printing he continued, and ever afterwards he could print faster than he could write.

Mr. Hogan's first published poems appeared in the Celt, he afterwards wrote for the " Irishman," " Nation," "Munster News," and recently for the "Limerick Leader." In 1861 he collected a little volume of his works, entitled " Lays and Legends of Thomond," which was published in Dublin, and in 1867 a larger collection under the same title. This volume created a favourable impression on the minds of the public, and established the Bard's claim to recognition and public favour as a true born son of song. It was enthusiastically received, and was quickly bought up.

The career of the poet was pretty smooth, and devoid of much public interest until he commenced the publication of a series of satires. These made- him become the object of admiration to some, to others the object of fear or execration. He had a thorough command of cutting language, and when the prominent public men got out of his graces, as they so often did, he came down on them with merciless severity. Their lack of appreciation of him preyed so much on his mind that he determined to "give the citizens a bit of his mind concerning these great men."

In 1869 he commenced a series of publications entitled SHAWN-A-SCOOB (John- a-broom). These satirical pamphlets eight in number, issued at various periods were directed against the Mayor, Corporation, and other public men, impeaching them with " high crimes and misdemeanours."

The public interest in their issue was great. Their circulation was enormous, and the sensation produced by them was some-thing unprecedented during the past half century.

An outline of the general nature of them may be gleaned from the following stanza which occurs at the beginning of the eighth number.

It is entitled " The Bard's Pastoral," and is dedicated to " All who don't like it" :

" The world's a hive of vagabonds,
The Church a nest of knaves,
The State a den of scoundrels,

And the land a mart of slaves.
Princes, prelates, dukes and lords,
Are found a common clan,
But 'tis the Devil's job on earth
To find an honest man."

During the Parliamentary elections of 1880 he published another satire, on the title-page of which was "The Pictorial Gallery of the Limerick Election. A graphic illustration of the conspicuous characters and talents of the sublime orators who so magnificently figured on that most memorable occasion, by the Bard of Thomond." The contents may be fairly guessed by the title. About the same time he published a companion volume to this one. It was entitled "O'Shaughnessy's Dodging and Gabbett's Tomfoolery." Messrs. O'Shaughnessy and Gabbett were the Parliamentary candidates, and to neither of them did the Bard offer one word of praise. In 1883 he published "Cupid's Adventure," which was the last of his satirical productions. Without commenting on the wisdom of the Bard's action in publishing these pamphlets (which, if they brought him pecuniary advantage, made him many enemies), it is not too much to say that they exhibit rare powers for versification and the power of expressing thought in terse and vigorous language. These satires have never been republished, and are long since out of print. They are not included in the general collection of his "Lays and Legends of Thomond." This portly volume, the latest edition of which was published in 1880 by Messrs. Grill & Son, Dublin, contains a mine of interesting poetry, ballads of war and chivalry brimful of martial fury, legends full of enchantment and fairy music, humorous songs thoroughly Irish in sentiment and full of the richest melody.

Mr. Hogan lived for some years in a beautiful little cottage which he built for himself on the right bank of the Shannon. Here he reclaimed a piece of waste land from the river to enlarge his garden, and built a summer-house in which he penned his famous dramatic ballad, "The Bard and the Shannon." Through a series of reverses, however, he was obliged to part with it, and when leaving it he wrote another pathetic ballad entitled "Farewell to the Shannon."

For some time afterwards he was without any fixed occupation or income.

In the year 1886 he went to America, where he remained for three years. He wrote some short poems after his return home, but it was not long until his eyesight gave up, and so deficient has it become of late that he has practically "ceased his warblings."

He is now in the employment of the City Corporation, his duties being merely nominal.

All former unpleasantnesses have been forgotten, and the genial Bard is the pride not only of the Corporation but of the citizens generally.

THE BANSHEE AND THE GREAT EARL OF THOMOND.

FROM the clouds of the hill, and the gloom, of the night,
"Who is she that appears like the wintry-moon, white ?
The cold dew is gleaming, like beads, on her hair,
And she rings her gaunt hands, with a shriek of despair
Look, Earl ! the Spectre stands full in thy path,
And her angry face beareth a mission of wrath ;
There's a mist round her form that's awful to see,
And her eyes, like blue wild-fire, are turned upon thee !

The Earl rein'd in his black war-horse, and gazed,
With his sword turned down, and his visor upraised ;
And he saw standing out on a cliff, in his way,
The dismal, White Woman of lonely Craiglea.
One hand she outstretched, like a skeleton bough,
And one was close-press'd to her cold stony brow ;
While her lips breathed curses that awfully fell,
On his spirit and brain, like the sentence of hell.

" The mighty of Erin is laid on the earth,
And her war-lions, bleeding, have fled to the North ;
For thou, curst apostate ! hast reddened thy steel
With the glorious heart's blood of the clans of O'Neill !
May the rank steam of death from that red slaughter field
Where you taught the proud Chieftains of Ulster to yield,
Be shaped to a scourge by the finger Divine,
To wound, waste and wither the slaves of thy line !

" Chiefs of Kincora ! immortal in song !
Whose arms flashed death 'mid the fierce battle throng,
With scorn, look down from your high dwelling-place,
On the slave-making recreant who sprang from your race !
In their grandeur and might, did those chiefs ever dream
That their offspring would cover their glory with shame ?
Did they from their shores the grim sea-robbers chase,
For their sons to be servants to robbers more base ?

.....

"Perdition will grasp the low heirs of thy line,
And the death-curse of freedom brand all that is thine !
Till its vengeance shall leave not a stone of thy walls,
Nor a fire on thy hearth, nor a slave in thy halls !
Eternal contempt on the clay you went forth,
With the Saxon to crush the Red Hand of the North !
Hark ! the cry of your country rings up from her tomb ;
' Assassin of Erin ! Lord Thomond, go home !'

" Go home, you apostate ! and drink your red wine !
May the odour of corpses be round where you dine !
And the tears of gaunt widows mix black in your bowl,
And the cry of starved orphans strike hard at your soul !
Go home may the charnel pits, gory and deep
Where your countrymen fester bring balm to your sleep !
May your soul feast on visions of famine and flames,
And the death-shriek of Erin be heard in your dreams !"

Modern Irish poets (1894)

Author : Paul, W J

Subject : Poets, Irish; English poetry — Irish authors

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/modernirishpoets00paulrich>

In submitting this new edition of native Songs, Ballads and Legends to the public, I merely wish to introduce them as the offspring of national poetic ardour.

In the succeeding pages the reader will find many war-poems on the chivalrous valour of the noble Gael, in the grand and proud old days of Royal Eire, when the bard was the companion of the King, and gold was less prized than song. I have also varied the volume with some romantic Legends, founded on the Fairy superstitions which our noble peasantry so dearly love, and which have never failed to lend an airy charm to Irish poetry. These Fairy pieces have some slight traditional ground-work, but the super-structure belongs to the ideal region of Fancy, in which I have dreamt and revelled whilst alone on the bright green banks of the kingly Shannon, when summer sunset was stealing away from the sleeping flowers, and the dewy curtain of night lay on the silent meadows.

Though a new book of Irish poetry, like all native manufacture, may deserve patronage and support, yet it too often receives neither, and therefore our fine literature has almost become extinct, like our noble language.

Many of the learned tribunals of my native land have awarded the palm of merit to the produce of my Parnassian farm ; and though I have had a late and bad harvest, yet I fear I shall be early enough for a worse market.

Twelve years ago I made my first advance in the market of letters, and was remorselessly fleeced by a Printer's devil, who stormed my air-castles, broke through the entrenchments of Mount Helicon, sacrilegiously seized on the chattels of the sacred Nine, and drove me from the ramparts without the honours of war. I was not much dispirited at such an unexpected repulse, for poetry lost nothing of its enjoyment, and the Muse waved a bolder wing than ever, and now I again enter the poetical arena to fight for fresh laurel boughs. I know my rhyming tilts will not please everyone - some may condemn and some may applaud, but every honest lover of poor old Ireland will believe that I meant well for her sake.

To the lovers of Ireland's splendid traditions and olden glories, I present this volume of "Lays and Legends." They are not clothed with classic mantles, neither do they shine with the gaudy tinsel of Art. I offer them as the simple creations of a natural poetic imagination ; the outpourings of a heart glowing with love for the noble sons and daughters of the Emerald Isle. My proudest and best reward shall be a place in my country's memory, when the Redeemer will call her from the tomb of alien bondage.

The first edition of these Poems, which appeared in 1867, would have been a great success were it not for the shameless and faithless conduct of the publisher, who promised to have the book ready in three months, but it was two years before I could get it out of his hands, and then only in unbound sheets. Consequently, the public grew tired of waiting, and the subscribers angry and disgusted.

Some time previous I made another venture in Dublin, and fared worse, for although I have the publisher's memoranda for 7,000 copies printed and published, yet I never received anything more substantial than the memoranda. If this is not profitable business with a vengeance, I challenge all the enterprise on earth for success. I often think that I was born to live on cobwebs and rainbows, and to have accounts nowhere only in JACK DELAY'S Bank, where I never get principal or interest; but there's good times coming, as the sailor said when he was drowning, " I might catch a spar of the wreck yet."

THOMOND.

Lays and legends of Thomond, with notes (1880)

Author: Michael Hogan

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/laysandlegendst00hogagoog>