



An Aimsir Cheittech

THE CELTIC TIME

MONTHLY PAPER OF THE CELTIC PEOPLES

THE ORGAN OF INFORMATION WITHIN THE CELTIC PEOPLES AND ABROAD. THE RALLYING ORGAN OF THE CELTS TO PROMOTE INTER-CELTAIC OUTLOOK & CO-OPERATION.

Printed Paper Rate. Yearly Subscription 5/- Editor: Gearóid MacGairaidh. Send correspondence to "An Aimsir Cheittech", Sráid an Duín, Corcaigh.

JUL (July) 1949.

Highland Clearances

By Calum Sean

Donald MacLeod is a typically Scottish name and one that has been borne by thousands of Scotsmen, but how many people of the present day know the Donald MacLeod, who wrote the book called "Gloomy Memories" which shed the light of publicity on the hideousness and cruelties of the Highland clearances, but more especially in Sutherlandshire, which took place roughly from the beginning till the middle of the nineteenth century?

Donald was born at Rossall, Strathnaver. When he was about twenty, his father was obliged to leave his little farm, which was destined to form part of a gigantic sheep-runn. The reason for the clearances in general was that, as a result of the Napoleonic wars, Britain was in a state of hostility with all Europe and North America. Agricultural areas were strained to yield the maximum quantities of grain, while the more northern and mountainous regions were allotted the task of supplying animal food. Greedy landowners, having coldly calculated that it would be more profitable for them to have sheep than to have human beings on the land, authorised their estate factors and agents to take steps accordingly. It should here be stated that, in common with other big landowners, the Sutherland family visited their Highland estates only once in four or five years and their underlings, rarely the most pitiless and hard-hearted vermin who ever infested this world, were thus free to act as they pleased. To make matters worse, in the name of "improvement" the estate factors had been given large tracts of land which had been the property of the clan since time immemorial and so had a personal stake. After giving notice to the unfortunate crofters to remove the heath pasture was set on fire, thus depriving their cattle of food and at the same time the crofters were forcibly prevented from gathering in their crops in the arable parts of the land. The houses which they occupied had been built either by themselves or by their ancestors. When the eviction notices had expired the occupiers were given half an hour to remove their families & household possessions. When that time had expired, whether or not human beings or furniture still remained inside gains of the factor's men at once set fire to the thatched roofs and proceeded to demolish the houses. Of such events Donald MacLeod writes: "I was present at the pulling down & burning of the house of William Chisholm, Badinaskin, in which was lying his wife's mother, an old bed-ridden woman of near 100 years of age, none of the family being present. I informed the persons about to set fire to the house of this circumstance, and prevailed on them to wait till Mr Sellar (the factor) came. On his arrival I told him of the poor old woman being in a condition unfit for removal. He replied: "Damn her, the old witch she has lived too long; let her burn." Fire was immediately set to the house, and the blind-

DONALD MacLEOD'S "Gloomy Memories"

...kets in which she was carried were in flames before she could be got out. She was placed in a little shed, and it was with great difficulty that we were prevented from firing it also. The old woman's daughter arrived while the house was on fire and assisted the neighbours in removing her mother out of the flames and smoke, presenting a picture of horror which I shall never forget, but cannot attempt to describe. She died within five days."

How were such atrocities possible in a so-called Christian country and why did such an outstandingly brave race like the Scottish Highlanders tamely submit to them? The answer is simply: (1) that they were a deeply religious people and (2) that the policy of eviction had the full weight of the law behind it. Their clergymen told them that they were being punished for their sins and worked hand in glove with the factors to drive them off the more fertile parts of the clan territory. On the other hand, the extent to which they could obtain legal redress is best illustrated by the undernoted case.

Mr. Sellar was eventually charged at Inverness Spring Assizes in 1816 with culpable homicide, fire-raising, etc., on the instructions of Robert McKil, sheriff-substitute for the county. Not only was Sellar honourably acquitted by a jury composed of the local gentry, but the sheriff-substitute, McKil, and the sheriff-depute, Cranston, the only two lawyers who had evinced any desire to secure justice for the victims of the evictions, were themselves dismissed from office immediately after the trial. Needless to say, the unprincipled oppressors of the people rightly felt that from now on, no matter how illegally they might choose to act, they would have the law at their back and they exploited their position to the full.

In the earliest clearances the dispossessed crofters had been allotted small holdings on moors, frequently on indifferent or poor soil, but, as the clearances extended in scope, the former tenants were compelled to accept tiny plots on boggy or rocky ground along the coastline plots that were quite incapable of supporting a family. To make ends meet, inland crofters with no previous experience of the sea, had now no alternative but to take up fishing (when they had enough money to buy old boats that were no longer seaworthy) and many lives were lost as a result. From a state of relative comfort they were now at one fell swoop, reduced to absolute poverty and in fact the number of deaths due to starvation was not few. To sustain life at all, there were times when the

...people had to eat broth made of nettles thickened with a little oatmeal. The fortunate crofters who had managed to retain their cattle led them and mixed the blood with oatmeal, which they afterwards cut into slices and fried. With such revolting barbarity were those innocent victims of the clearances treated that the factor, with a full knowledge of these facts, even posed around constables at the only place where shell-fish were to be found in order to prevent the starving people from gathering them.

Although the noble duke and his henchmen did everything in their power to keep the outside world in ignorance of what was going on in Sutherlandshire, the main facts, thanks very largely to the tireless efforts of Donald MacLeod and a few other sympathisers, at length became known not only in Britain, but also in the colonies and in the U.S.A. A large sum of money was raised for the relief of the dispossessed tenants and how that money was used is another black chapter in the sombre story of the Sutherland clearances.

It was laid down by those in authority that every male and female considered by the local Boards of relief as able to work was not to be given relief without working for it. To test their real need of relief and their willingness to work, they were allowed one pound of meal as payment for ten hours' work. In many cases the meal so adulterated that it was dangerous even for swine to eat it. As Donald MacLeod demonstrated, by for the greater part of the money raised for the relief of the clearance victims was actually spent on improving the estates of the very landowners who were directly responsible through their inhuman evictions from the clan territories. To add insult to injury, those who had been forcibly removed from the land of their ancestors were afterwards compelled to repay, whatever they had received by way of relief in kind, viz., meal, potatoes, seed oats and barley.

It was not to be expected that a man like MacLeod, who fearlessly publicised the appalling events in his native Sutherlandshire, would be allowed to continue his exposures indefinitely without retaliation. At this point it should be explained that the charges levelled by him against the Duke of Sutherland and his henchmen were so irrefutable that he (MacLeod) was never summoned for libel or defamation of character. Nevertheless retaliation came in the following typical manner. One day, while he was at work about forty miles away, a gang of men entered his house. His

EDUCATION IN NATIONALISM

(III)
Those who stand for a closer union between the Celtic nations and for a strengthening of the influence of Celtic ideas in the life of Europe may sometimes envy the progress of the six Scandinavian nations (including Iceland and the Faeroes) towards a similar goal for Scandinavia. While this progress has not led them to political federation or military alliance, it has resulted in a strange sense of common interests and ideas, a "fellowship resulting from an appreciation of the dignity of man, the right of personality, and the freedom of the peoples."

That is how common Scandinavian ideal is defined in a long and remarkable article by the Danish author, Gorgen Bukdahl, on "Adult Education in the struggle for Peace," just published at 20/- by G.E.C. Gad, of Copenhagen. It is an ideal with which the Celtic readers will find themselves in sympathy and their own experience as members of small nations enable them to appreciate Bukdahl's discussion of the relation between true nationalism and internationalism.

"You must learn to say 'I'—You must be something yourself before you can be of service to others...This is true of human beings; it is true of nations. The nation must live through its historical coherence in order to reach liberation through collaboration with other peoples. The nation must find fulfilment in its distinctiveness (expressed through history and the mother tongue) if it is avoid stumbling where collaboration is concerned."

To all interested in Celtic language problems too, Bukdahl's account of the struggle for the revival of the Norwegian "Landsmaal" is of vital interest.

Bukdahl's article is by no means the only one in this 400 page symposium which we might study with profit. There are numerous articles on the life of rural communities and on the co-operative and adult education movements in many countries, which are relevant to our own problems. Since the symposium is published in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the International College of Elsinore, many pages are devoted to a lively re-telling of its history. The College has already been attended by 12,000 students from all parts of the world; and several writers stress the desirability of having similar colleges set up in other countries. Certainly, if we had such a college catering primarily for young people from the Celtic nations, though also welcoming students from outside, it would be a powerful means of promoting inter-Celtic consciousness and solidarity.

High praise is given in this book to the contribution of Welsh and Scottish students to the life of the International College; and their separate nationality is recognised, but no specific mention is made of Irish or Breton students (let alone Cornish or Manx). In my opinion, it would be an excellent (Continued next column).

ent thing it a strong representation of students from all the Celtic countries were to attend this year's summer and vacation course at Elsinore (of which full particulars may be obtained direct from the college). Not only might they learn much and make valuable contacts there, but they would have a unique opportunity of enlightening an international audience (hitherto often regrettably ill-informed on the subject) about the existence and the ideals of the Celtic peoples. And, in doing so, they would be making a really practical experiment in inter-Celtic co-operation and greatly strengthening that "Unity in diversity" which is the only sound foundation for true nationalism and true internationalism.

NOELLE DAVIES.

Mura mbeadh ann ach an Creideamh Catoiliceach?

(Ar Lean)
"Sin treith a bhain leis an ainm a chonaic saighdiúirí ghliú Eireannach ar díobh uaf, na Sasana ar shraideanna Bhaile... *(The rest of the text is heavily blurred and partially illegible)*

"Behold a proof of Irish sense, Here Irish wit is seen, Where nothing's left that's worth defence We build a magazine."

"Ce déirt sin? "An fear dúirt, más buan mo chúinne, le Sasana." "England, mark well, my country gave to thine, All knowledge both terrestrial and divine, Her language gave to Scotland."

"Cosúil le still Goldsmith, Ach ní raibh cúl aige-sean ar aois orda na hEireann, na ar Ghaelach a bheith in Albain."

"Fear a chomhairsire, agus a chomhairsiúir—Dán Swift ina dhán ar Naomh Pádraig, Sasanaigh a Sasanaigh an bheirt dar ndoigh, ó na caighdeán cinnte againn arís. "Go díreach, níl mé féin ag taobh leis na barála naocht me duit arís. Ach is fú m'achnamh a dheanamh orthu."

"Ní linn na sé chondae feasta, os ionann Eireannach agus Sasanaigh Catoiliceach. Na ní Catoiliceigh formhor na ndaoine Agus dá dtugáid Sasanaigh orthu, le tu ag deamh ag bfuáighean an freagra gearr gheotha só thair a Soldier Song. "Ach, na bcaitinn leis sin. Da dtugadh sé sa teall nach raibí dúirt ar bith BUN'SÁGH fíghtha idir Eirinn agus Sasana ach an creideamh a bheith ag formhor na ndaoine ar bhfí Stát a choinneá, nó an gearmoftaí s, da mbhfuá feir e?" (Ar lean ar leath. 1, Lughnasa)

We mourn a Great Breton

The greatest Breton scholar in our time and one of the greatest Breton figures of the century, Fransez Vallee, died on the 3rd June, in his 89th year.

He was held in the highest esteem in the Celtic countries, particularly in Wales in the learned and nationalist circles with whom he had kept in close contact during his life. He was an inter-Celtic personality of the first order and one of international reputation among Celtic philologists.

Fransez Vallee did not only distinguish himself by his gigantic and most valuable work for the Breton language, but by his outstanding character: he was revered by all for his unbounded love for Brittany, his righteousness of mind, his limitless devotion for the cause of his country and her language to which he devoted his whole life-time, revenue and thoughts, his interest for the other Celtic countries and their achievements, his simplicity of heart and of life, his humility. He was a true idealist, and a formidable worker with a long-sighted purpose and a relentless drive.

Almost blind in the late years, he never stopped working up to the time of his death. Only a few months ago, he was writing to "An Aimsir" to stimulate and encourage us in our work. His name "An Tad Vallee" (Father Vallee) was the symbol of his countrymen's respect and feelings. "St Fransez Vallee" as he was sometimes referred to, the symbol of their veneration. May the good example of this true son of Celtic bear fruit amongst the Celts, and may his soul rest in peace. I.M.

Ireland and the Celtic Congress

In a letter to the "Evening Mail" under the above title, Mr. L. S. Goggin, a member of the Celtic Congress, Irish Committee, wrote as follows, apart from many other excellent things: "Many reasons exist at the present moment for a keen interest here in the only international congress which is available to those countries which are allied in the possession of a unified cultural outlook, Celtic in character—Britanny, Ireland, Man, Scotland and Wales, in which last mentioned country this year's Congress is due to take place, at Bangor, early in August."

"The problems connected with the restoration of, or even the creation of a Celtic mode of life, though varying from one country to the other, have much in common."

"In every way congress action furnishes a ready weapon for achieving something world-wide on all fronts. One may be permitted therefore to express the hope that there will be many visitors from this country to the university city of North Wales during August, and that the opportunity will be utilised for an exchange of ideas and plans likely to bring these small countries more destructively into the mosaic of European cartography. None at this date will deny that they have still an important contribution to make to world civilisation."

