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Some Dundalk Song Books

Author(s): E. R. M. Clintock Dix

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Some Dundalk Song Books.

THE single sheet Ballads are still "with us" and are vended, even in Dublin, occasionally, by our street singers, but their predecessors, the little eight paged song books, have died out and only rarely are to be found in country houses or at book auctions. It may be thought that such ephemeral and often vulgar and trashy "literature" deserved to perish completely, but to this view I venture to dissent strongly. The songs and ballads of our people are interesting in more ways than one. The ballads of each county, each town, differ somewhat and indicate the local taste of the time in ballads social, moral and political. The travelling ballad-monger knew, and judged, the local tastes, and had these little songbooks locally printed, sometimes without a printer's name or even a date. In these local productions are often found local allusions and records of local events otherwise forgotten, perhaps, though more general topics form usually the subjects of these songs. I have in my collection four of these song books printed in Dundalk, and some short particulars of them may interest the readers of this Journal. They are dated from 1806 to 1808. Each has a very rude woodcut on the front page. The following are a list of the songs or ballads in each:—

- I.—A favourite song, called *Grattan and Latouche*, to which are added: 2, *The Beautiful Maid*; 3, *Paddy's Ramble to London*; 4, *Nobody Coming to Marry me*; 5, *Dear Little Cottage Maiden*.
- II.—*The Will*, to which are added: 2, *Love and Scorn*; 3, *Drinking Song for the Ladies*; 4, *The Pyeman*.
- III.—A new song called *The Habit Shirt and Pogey*, to which are added: 2, *The Snug Little Island*; 3, *The Shipwrecked Tar*.
- IV.—A new song, called *The Sporting County Meath Boys*, to which are added: 2, *Poor Tom*; 3, *The Rambler from Clare*; 4, *Prince Eugene*.

These songs are almost all of a general nature, only three having a local subject, and even these relating to matters outside the County Louth—i.e., *Grattan and Latouche*, *The Rambler from Clare*, and *The County Meath Boys*. Still we can judge from these something of the taste in ballads of the Anglo Irish of Dundalk and its neighbourhood a century ago, and, perhaps, our local members could discern local indications in some of these songs (which I am unable to do), if they could read and carefully examine these song books. For example, is "Pogey" a local name or term for any part of female wearing apparel?

There is one point, however, of special interest, namely, that in the song entitled *The Habit Shirt and Pogey* there are two stanzas in Irish, phonetic no doubt, but they would not be put there if their readers or hearers knew nothing but the "Deapts," and shows that the ballad singers catered a little for the Gael as well as the Gall.* It would be interesting to know if any of these ballads are still sung or known in the County Louth.

There are many other Dundalk Songbooks in the British Museum, and also some in the Royal Irish Academy. Some day, perhaps, these will all be carefully examined and the local matter in them noted down and published in this Journal.

If any readers of this Journal have any local songbooks, I hope they will communicate particulars to me or to the Editor.

A reproduction, by photographic process, of the front page of one of these little song books is given here to illustrate this article.

E. R. M'C. DIX.

* Mr. Joseph Lloyd has very kindly rendered the two Irish stanzas into correct form, and his rendering and translation is subjoined. It is very difficult to achieve a task of this kind where the Irish is spelled phonetically and in Roman type, and even Mr. Lloyd, with his special skill and knowledge, has to note as uncertain some of his renderings and consequent translation.

A New Song, called the
Sporting county Meath Boys.

To which are added,

2. Poor Tom,
3. The Rambler from Clare,
4. Prince Eugene.



Dundalk, Printed in the Year 1808

Ṫá breicpeá caebe is cruinn-ógairde (?) ar rtacán móir ve cáilín burde,
le pairiún nó caoi iao (?) éa n-fuil rí tmuaisgead aet oirgeo le gairne A, B, C.
Á, uair mo tiorra (?), ciero mo rgeala, iat nó réan níó nac ual,
le coilear bréagad ruar geal tpreagad paol habit léinead éom uub le gual.

ná pór a' géag le habit léinead nó béir leat éagcaoin ar reat vo fadgail,
zan bó zan céill ar fíor-óroé-béarla paol fíor-mair (?) féile (?) zuri b' aic an oir.
Saoileann í féin mar bairnógain na tpreige nó an uile glé (?) zac níó éuair ar tuinn
le coilear bréagad ruar geal tpreagad agur habit léinead uonn (?) piginn nó bonn.

If you should see a coif and a round "pogey" on a big stake of a yellow girl
In a fashion or way (?) they are not to be pitied any more than the "gowdy" of A, B, C.
Ah, by my troth (?), believe my news, luck or good fortune is a thing that is not natural
With a lying collar up white and Grecian splendid about a habit shirt as black as coal.

Do not marry the damsel with a habit shirt or you will lament it during your life;
Without a cow, without sense, with very bad English, with very good hospitality (?), that
the two are pleasant,
She thinks herself like the queen of Greece, or like every bright one, everything that went
over the wave (sea) (?)
With a lying collar up bright and splendid and a brown (?) habit shirt of a penny or a groat.