

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"DR. WHITTY."*

We are not, perhaps, humorous as a nation, nor are we, perhaps, sufficiently grateful for its saving sense when we come across it in this dull world. But probably the majority would be consciously or unconsciously the losers if there were no George Birmingham at large. At this present crisis more particularly are we bound to stimulate cheerfulness in ourselves and those around us. The book we have chosen for comment this week is not one of the latest, but as it has not so far appeared in our columns we hasten to make reparation and advise those that are "down-hearted" to read it.

Needless to say, Dr. Whitty is Irish of the Irish. The doings, chiefly civic, of Ballintra, a small town on the coast of Connacht, is the theme. The occasion of a visit of the Chief Secretary awoke in the inhabitants the idea of asking him for funds to erect a pier. Of course there had to be a deputation. Michael Geraghty warmly supported Dr. Whitty. He was by profession a builder, and the only man in Ballintra to whom the contract for building a pier could possibly be given.

Dr. Whitty would have both Father Henaghan and the Protestant minister on the deputation. "What impresses a Chief Secretary more than anything else is a union of all creeds for a common object. When he sees Father Henaghan and Mr. Jackson standing hand in hand in front of his motor car, he'll be prepared to give us a light-house if we want it, let alone a paltry pier."

Consent having been obtained, the pier was built within the year. Our friend Michael Geraghty, having trusted to the inspector being a fool, had docked the pier twenty-seven feet of the required length. The inspector happened to be a friend of Dr. Whitty.

"Surely to goodness," said the doctor, "you're not going to spend the whole morning measuring the thing!"

But the inspector stood firm, and Michael was found wanting.

"You shut up, Michael," said Dr. Whitty, "and don't be making a fool of yourself. Come on out of this, Eccles. I suppose after the way you've behaved to poor Michael, you'd hardly care to bathe off the end of his pier. It wouldn't be decent."

Dr. Whitty set his friend down in a comfortable chair, offered him whiskey, which he refused, and tobacco, which he accepted, then he began.

"Geraghty," he said, "is a decent man. You could see for yourself that the stones he built it of were real stones."

"If there had been any other material in the country cheaper than stones," said Eccles, "I haven't the least doubt he'd have used it, and tried to persuade me afterwards it was stones, otherwise I daresay he's decent enough."

* By G. A. Birmingham. Methuen & Co., London.

Said Michael afterwards, "Did you get him persuaded, doctor?"

"I did not. Don't give up heart, Michael; we're not beat by a long way yet."

A few months later "old Thompson" was sent down to measure and found it eighteen inches over the required length. Michael was paid in full.

The explanation was found in Dr. Whitty's letter to his friend Eccles.

"It was perfectly simple. Anybody but a hidebound official would have hit on the dodge at once. We added the twenty-seven feet on the shore end. Stones, as you said, are cheap here, and I helped him dig the bank." Delightful Dr. Whitty.

The foregoing incident shows his resource and nimble Irish wit. It is shown again in his manipulation of a Suffrage meeting which he called in mistake for an Anti.

"I don't want people to sign against their will," said Mrs. Challoner. "If there's a woman here who sincerely believes——"

"There isn't," said Father Henaghan.

"There is not," said the doctor, with emphasis.

Mrs. Challoner spoke of Dr. Whitty afterwards in London "as a singularly open-minded man, one of the very few who are ready to surrender an opinion when it is clearly shown to be wrong."

Charming Dr. Whitty!

No less resourceful was he at a luncheon party when the entomologist and his daughters were asked to meet a select few to discuss etymology as well as they knew how. We leave Dr. Whitty on the return from his honeymoon raging because the band had played "Love's young dream" as a welcome. "If I had had a glimmer of common sense I would have known there wasn't a man in Ballintra fit to organise a thing of that sort properly but myself." H. H.

A SONG IN PRAISE OF COUNTRY LIFE.

Oh! the odorous bloom
By spendthrift Nature spread.
Lilac and chestnut overhead.
Under, in spangled gloom,
Bracken and heath,
Heath and bracken,
Poppy and bluebell and broom.

Oh, the jewelled rush
Of life into music glad—
Mad as my heart with the summer is mad—
From furrow and sedge and bush;
Robin and wren,
Wren and robin,
Blackbird and linnet and thrush.

Oh! that this day might cease
Not while the days endure.
Here might we, far from the world's loud lure,
Win for the Soul's increase
Laughter and life,
Life and laughter,
Worship and work and peace.

—James Cousins.

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