IV

CELTIC STUDIES

IRISH STUDIES

By M. Dillon

PERIODICALS. RC, I contains an article by Nils Holmer on the preposition do, which he suggests is etymologically distinct from the preverb do- (to-) and cognate with OE. tô, &c. The preverb then remains unexplained, but a list of compounds is given to illustrate its uses. A. G. van Hamel contributes a study of the name Partholón, and of the traditions concerning the hero of that name, and concludes that the Partholón of the Book of Invasions was originally a fertility spirit. A. Berthelot has an article on ‘L’Irlande de Ptolémée’, and J. T. McNeill writes on ‘Cummean the Long and his penitential’. The editor, J. Loth, the doyen of Celtic studies, who died early this year, discusses some Irish forms in his ‘Notes étymologiques et lexicographiques’. The edition of the Annals of Connacht, which begins in this volume, is noticed below.

In ZCP, xx (1) Miss Dobbs has edited genealogies of the southern Uí Néill from the Book of Ballymote and other MSS., with notes and an index. R. Thurneysen, in an important article on van Hamel’s recent edition of the Lebor Bretnach,\(^1\) discusses the name Nennius, and shows that Nemnius is probably the true form. There follows a careful comparison of the newly discovered Irish version, for which van Hamel had claimed primacy, with the text of the Chartres MS., and it is shown that the former derives from the latter. Finally, the name and fame of the hero, Arthur, are upheld as historical.

Béaloideas, iv (2) has appeared. Recent articles which concern Irish studies are R. A. S. Macalister, ‘The Ancient Inscriptions of Kells’ (JRSA, lxiv, 16); R. Thurneysen, ‘Nachträge und Berichtigungen zu KZ, lix, 1 ff.’ (KZ, lxi, 253); T. F. O’Rahilly, ‘Notes on Irish Placenames’ (Hermathena, xxiii, 1933); P. Grosjean, ‘La Prophétie de S. Malachie sur l’Irlande’ (AB, li, 318); M. Duignan, ‘The Uí Briúin Bréifni Genealogies’ (JRSA, lxiv, 90); R. S. Loomis, ‘The Irish Origin of the Grail Legend’ (Speculum, viii, 415).

\(^1\) See YWML, iv, 177.
CATALOGUES. Two more fasciculi of the catalogue of Irish MSS. in the Royal Irish Academy have appeared, xi by G. Murphy and xii by E. Fitzpatrick.

LANGUAGE. The Max Niemeyer Verlag has undertaken the publication of a concise dictionary of Early Irish. This welcome enterprise was projected by Hans Hessen, who was killed in the War, and the dictionary bears his name. The first fasciculus contains the introduction and the letter A (to ascnai). The method of spelling and arrangement of words which have been adopted have aroused criticism, but they are clearly stated. An obvious defect is the clumsy bilingual form. English was necessary, for there are many students of Irish who cannot understand German; but how many are there who cannot understand English? Errors and ghost words have not been entirely eliminated, but the dictionary will be a great boon, and Dr. Vernam Hull and the other editors are doing a real service to Irish studies.

C. Borgström (Hermathena, xxiii, 54) has put forward a new explanation of the distinction between absolute and conjunct endings in Old Irish, which would arise from the use of suffixed and infixed pronouns with absolute and conjunct forms respectively. The theory merits attention, but it depends upon Meillet’s doctrine of distinct systems of endings for thematic and non-thematic inflexion. It is well known that one of the great troubles for the learner of Modern Irish is the lack of a good grammar. The only comprehensive book was O’Donovan, which dates from 1845, and the alternative has been the Christian Brothers’ Grammar, which is limited in scope and not free from errors. A new grammar by the rev. Professor O’Nolan has now appeared and may be helpful, but it seems to have gone to press without proper revision. The chapter on phonology is very weak, and the morphology not always well arranged. Dr. O’Nolan specializes in syntax, and this section of his grammar is the most successful. There is a chapter on prosody and an appendix on word-formation.

LITERATURE. The first volume of Chadwick’s Growth of Literature is of great interest to students of Irish, for in this comparative

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2 Hessen’s Irish Lexicon, a concise dictionary of Early Irish with definitions in German and English, first part, Halle, Niemeyer, 1933.