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BEING THE SPEECH OF MEENAWANNIA IN THE PARISH OF GLENTIES

PHONOLOGY AND TEXTS

BY

E. C. QUIGGIN,

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PREFACE.

THE present sketch is the first serious attempt at a scientific description of a northern dialect of Irish. Phonetic decay seems to have set in all over the Gaelic-speaking area; and consequently it is imperative that during the next ten or fifteen years every effort should be made to obtain scientific records of the speech of persons born before the famine who still have a firm grip of the vernacular. As a general rule the speech of the younger people is of little or no value to those who are trying to unravel the mysteries of Old and Middle Irish orthography, and unfortunately, whatever the Gaelic League may accomplish, it cannot preserve the vanishing sounds and shades of sounds of the older generation. Indeed I have been forcibly impressed with the great differences noticeable between speakers of different ages—a fact which is in large measure responsible for the publication of the material which I have collected during the last three years. Within this period I have fortunately been able to visit Donegal on several occasions; in addition to two long summers I have paid three brief visits to the county, and have thus had the inestimable advantage of allowing the dialect to strike my ear afresh at frequent intervals. This, however, does not render the task of describing a Gaelic dialect any the less formidable. Some of my statements may be regarded with scepticism by persons familiar with the Irish of Ulster, who will say perhaps that

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this or that characteristic is unknown to them; but I would reply that there are considerable variations within the limits of the county and that many peculiarities of Donegal given by Dinneen, J. C. Ward, and others I have failed to discover in Meenawannia. Not being a native speaker, my observations have naturally been restricted to a somewhat limited number of individuals.

My best thanks are due to the Cambridge Philological Society and to the Syndics of the University Press for their munificence in defraying more than two-thirds of the cost of this publication. I am also bound to express my appreciation of the manner in which the staff of the University Press have overcome the serious typographical difficulties incident to a work of this nature.

E. C. Q.

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p. 55 l. 16 for 'begins' read 'ends in'.

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