

IRISH HISTORY

MARCH 1, 2010

GOOD EVENING GENTLEMEN. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO WERE NOT PRESENT AT LAST MONTHS MEETING. I SPOKE ABOUT DOUGLAS HYDE, THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF MODERN IRELAND. HE WAS ELECTED IN 1937 AND TOOK OFFICE IN 1938. I THINK YOU WILL FIND THE SECOND INSTALLMENT OF HIS STORY INTERESTING.

WHILE A YOUNG BOY DOUGLAS WOULD CROSS MEADOWS AND BOG FIELDS ON DAILY RAMBLES. HE WAS OFTEN INVITED TO STOP FOR TEA AND A BISCUIT IN THATCHED CABINS THAT DOTTED THE COUNTRY-SIDE OF COUNTY ROSSCOMMON IN THE FRENCH PARK VILLAGE AREA. HIS WELCOME WAS WARMEST IN THOSE HOMES WHERE IRISH WAS THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN. THEY WERE AMUSED THAT A MASTERS BOY HAD AN EAR FOR THE IRISH LANGUAGE. THIS ABILITY WON ATTENTION AT HOME AS WELL. HIS FATHER ASSUMED THAT HIS THREE SONS WOULD FOLLOW THE FAMILY TRADITION AND ENTER THE MINISTRY.

AS DID HIS FATHER, AND BOTH GRAND PARENTS. HE WAS LAUGHED AT FOR TRYING TO LEARN IRISH, BECAUSE IT WAS A SERVANTS LANGUAGE. HE SHOULD INSTEAD SPEND HIS TIME LEARNING EUROPEAN LANGUAGES AND LEARN TO READ THEIR LITERATURE, AS THAT WOULD BETTER SERVE HIM IN HIS CHANCE TO PASS THE ENTRANCE EXAM TO STUDY AT TRINITY COLLEGE. HIS FAMILY AGREED TO HIM STUDYING THE IRISH LANGUAGE WHILE EARNING A DEGREE IN THE MINISTRY. THEY HOPED THAT HE WOULD BECOME A MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND IN A IRISH SPEAKING AREA OF COUNTY MAYO. HE ENTERED TRINITY IN 1880. HE LOVED THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATED IT'S POETRY INTO ENGLISH AND WROTE POETRY AND PROSE IN THE IRISH LANGUAGE. THIS WAS JUST A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AS TO WHAT A BRILLIANT YOUNG MAN HE WAS THAT EVENTUALLY EVOLVED INTO THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF MODERN IRELAND AT THE AGE OF 68.

WHEN HYDE OCCUPIED THE PRESIDENT'S HOME AND OFFICE IN 1938, HIS WIFE LUCY, BECAUSE OF HER MEDICAL CONDITION STAYED AT HOME IN FRENCHPARK.

HIS SISTER ANNETTE, FIVE YEARS YOUNGER THAN HIM BECAME THE PRESIDENT'S HOSTESS, ARRANGING HIS PERSONAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS. WHILE THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT WAS NOT BEING ABLE TO CONTROL THE PARTY IN POWER, IT WAS A VERY IMPORTANT OFFICE FOR IRELAND. HE COMMUNICATED WITH THE LEADERS OF IRELAND AND THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND, AS WELL AS THE LEADERS AND COMMON PEOPLE OF OTHER COUNTRIES THAT SOUGHT HIS HELP. HE SPENT EVERY MORNING HAND WRITING LETTERS TO EVERYONE WHO CONTACTED HIM.

THE FOLLOWING LETTER HE RECEIVED IS A GOOD EXAMPLE AS TO WHAT HE FACED EVERY DAY. THE LETTER IS FROM MRS. MAHON FROM COUNTY ROSSCOMMON. SHE SENT A PLEA HIM ASKING HIS HELP TO GET HER SON OUT OF THE BRITISH ARMY. HIS FATHER HAD TAKEN ILL AND WAS GIVEN ONLY A WEEK TO LIVE. "I WILL BE PUT OUT OF MY PLACE SHE LAMENTED, WITHOUT A MAN OF THE FAMILY TO WORK THIER SMALL HOLDING. HYDE WAS POWERLESS TO PROVIDE THE HELP SHE REQUESTED, ALTHOUGH HE WELL UNDERSTOOD HER PLIGHT.

