

Literary Department.

A Gaelic Poet of the Last Century.

DR. DOUGLAS HYDE, in collecting and editing the poems of Anthony Raftery, has placed the swelling ranks of the great movement of which he is head under another debt of gratitude. The results of his labor, which was not, as may be supposed, a light one, first appeared in the *Dublin Weekly Freeman*, some four years ago as a serial, to appear in book form shortly afterwards. The task undertaken by the President of the Gaelic Movement was indeed a difficult and intricate one, but its object made it for the ardent student and scholar one of love, for it rescued from oblivion a veritable poet, as well as an interesting figure of a period of which we are beginning to forget some picturesque features.

The poems thus collected and published were, most of them, scattered through various manuscripts. To get some it was necessary to take them down *vivâ voce*. Occasionally the search was not only trying but fruitless; and always there remained the delicate task of reconciling varieties of versions, as to which it may be said, at once, that the oral one was not infrequently found to be the most authentic.

That the collection is not complete, we are not, under the circumstances, surprised. The compiler thinks that not much more than half the poems have been gathered by him, but he assures his readers that he has included the best of Raftery's work. Indeed the wonder is that he has collected so many in view of the conditions just noted, of the vagrant character of the poet's life, and of the fact that he himself, not being able to use the pen, has left no written copy or record of his poems. Naturally, therefore, only the most popular of his productions had sung themselves, so to speak, into the memory of the people who had heard them from his lips, and who have transmitted them to a younger generation, for until Dr. Hyde's collection appeared scarcely any attempt had ever been made to publish them.