

odes and bacchanalian songs. MacDonell, certainly the best poet of the period, has been favorably compared with his more fortunate but not more gifted contemporary, Pope, whom he resembles in many ways. Ossianic poetry of merit was composed by O'Neaghtan, and later by Comyn, but perhaps best known among the Irish peasantry of the present day are the famous Munster poets of the end of the eighteenth century, Merriman, slightly sensuous but otherwise excellent, Teig O'Sullivan, elevating and religious, and Macnamara, Owen O'Sullivan and MacGrath, wild eccentric geniuses.

This wonderful poetical revival may be regarded as the sudden outbursting into song of a highly musical nation. Hitherto it had been the bards that were the poets of the country, now it was the people ; and simply on account of their greater naturalness, the people surpassed the bards. Still it is on account of not having enough of this very naturalness, that the poets have failed to acquire the fame that otherwise would have been theirs. The lyric was what the school excelled in, and the lyric of all classes of poetry is the most apt to sacrifice sense to form. But these poets must not be judged too severely if they occasionally indulged in word play, for they had a musical people to write for, and the people were their only patrons.

The only important prose work of the period is a volume of Bishop O'Gallagher's Sermons, which, though it unfortunately contains many Anglicisms, is perhaps the most popular Irish book ever printed.

Though one hundred really respectable Irish poets flourished during the eighteenth century, as the century closed scarcely a line of Gaelic poetry was being written and what was written could hardly be called literature ; and so it has continued to the present day. This is directly traceable to the penal laws, and, in this particular, the scarcely more just laws of our own century, which have almost succeeded in completely destroying the Irish language. The sole language of nineteen-twentieths of the people in 1740, a century later Gaelic was spoken by only one half the population and of these five-sixths were bi-linguists, while at the present day, not more than a few tens of thousands of the Irish race do not speak English, and hardly one-sixth speak Gaelic.