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## Téacsúil Fionnachtain

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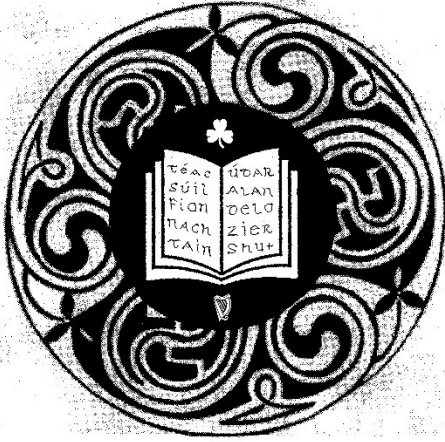


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# Téacsúil Fionnachtain

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*“Textual Discovery” is presented to pique interest in the obscure, yet unique works in Irish language, literature, and history that have been largely forgotten over time. Articles will cover different subject areas, authors, themes, and eras related to the depth and consequence of the Gaeilge experience in its varied forms. The inspiration comes from selections found*

*within the affiliated Irish Rare Book and Special Collections Library at Seton Hall University, but on a deeper level this piece serves to honor works that can be found listed in bibliographical compilations and on the shelves of libraries across the world.*

**Alice Stopford Green. *The Making of Ireland and Its Undoing, 1200-1600.* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1908)**

This particular volume has been praised as a seminal work in the field of Irish history. This text was written from a nationalist perspective rather than the more commonplace English Unionist-themed works of the early twentieth century (Johnston). The author, Alice Stopford Green, focused on two major themes: Financial Progress and Educational Opportunities in relation to the development of Ireland prior to the English occupation of the land. This volume broke new ground, as the Irish people served as the muse for Stopford Green and has marked most of her output in addition to *The Making of Ireland*. Her life has been well-documented not only as a prominent historian, but also as a fervent nationalist and heir to a family of Anglo-Irish ministers, while making her own name in literary, historical, and even military circles as subsequent generations discover her writings.

## Biographical Sketch

A native of Kells, Alice Sophia Amelia Stopford entered the world on May 30, 1847, the seventh of ninth children born to Edward Adderley Stopford, who three years earlier was appointed the Archdeacon of Meath under the authority of her grandfather Edward (d. 1850), who was a former Bishop of Meath (1842-50), as part of the Church of Ireland (Anglican) hierarchy. (Johnston; Wikipedia). The Stopford family proper were long standing residents of Éire as contemporaries and acknowledged scholars who traveled with Oliver Cromwell and his adherents during their conquest of Ireland.

The male children in the Stopford clan enlisted in the armed forces on behalf of the United Kingdom, its government and their British Colonies within Africa in particular. Alice herself stayed with her core family which moved from Meath to Dublin and later Chester at various times between 1850-74. (Johnston; Wikipedia)

The migratory history of the Stopford clan also included ties to various family members residing in London. Periodic visits made by Alice to the largest city in Great Britain led to her meeting John Richard Green (1837-83), a combination cleric and scholar who would eventually become a noted historian in his own right with the publication of *Short History of the English People* (London: Macmillan, 1874). Green also penned additional works on the early development of British society especially during the Anglo-Saxon period of history, pre-1066 in particular (Johnston). Reviewers of the nineteenth century treated the contributions to the literature made by Green as revolutionary: “This seminal work set a new standard in historical writing, bringing in social and cultural factors suggestive of causalities . . .” (Johnston). This book correlated with the most important formative moments in Alice Stopford’s development.

Alice and John married in 1877 and she assisted her husband in his research and writing as a documenter of Irish heritage and she adopted his methodology in the process. Although John passed away in 1883, Alice rallied from this loss to become an active presence in the publishing world and began sharing her own work with the public (R.B. McDowell). The first approach and contribution to the literary field made by Stopford Green came about when she worked upon a new addition to the *Short History* volume written by her late husband. Various individuals have noted that her first solo work, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, was greatly influenced by the original *Short History* volume (Johnston). Even with her strong ties to Great Britain early on in her publishing career, Stopford Green adopted a deep and lasting interest in the historical evolution of her native Ireland.

After repeated sojourns across the Irish Sea during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in 1918 Stopford Green permanently moved back to Ireland. This shift in locale was made in part through a friendship with Dublin barrister, John Francis Taylor (1850-1902). Taylor would also propose marriage and although Stopford Green declined, they remained close friends for the remainder of their respective lives and he became another influence on her writing craft. Taylor wrote the tome, *Owen Roe O’Neill* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1896), and was a regular correspondent with the *Manchester Guardian* prior to his death during the early twentieth century (R.B. McDowell).

Another figure of note, John O’Leary, a prominent member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood would become a major influence in the life of Stepford Green, as she passionately supported the Gaelic Revival and its goals for the preservation and proliferation of Irish language, scholarship, and political independence. As a result of her passion and persuasive nature Stepford Green helped to create and maintain a Celtic Studies program located in Dublin (Johnston).

Along with her bonds to Taylor and O’Leary, Stopford Green was also in contact with other noted Irish figures of the period such as Eoin MacNeill, a Minister for Education, antiquarian Francis Joseph Bigger, revolutionary Roger Casement, and Arthur Griffith who would later become the President of Dáil Éireann during the 1920s, along with such famous figures as Arthur Conan Doyle, author of *Sherlock Holmes*, and American Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes to name a few (Johnston; Mitchell 15).

Stepford Green also became involved with international movements in Africa, studied the colonial policies toward that continent, and advocated justice for the indigenous populations in relation to the quest for Irish independence. Within this orbit of advocacy, she supported the

Congo Reform movement of the late nineteenth-twentieth century in particular (Johnston; Wikipedia). Through critiquing colonialism, Stopford Green went on to become a serious critic of British Liberalism, Ulster Unionism, and all aspects of English rule throughout the whole of the Empire, and Éire in particular, which she made manifest in her writings of note (Johnston; O'Brien 9).

***The Making of Ireland and Its Undoing, 1200-1600***

These influences combined to inspire Stopford Green into writing and publishing the *Making of Ireland and her Undoing*, along with subsequent volumes resulting from her research into obscure and seldom utilized resources combined with her adopted pro-Irish Nationalism commentary. It was oft-stated that the work of Stopford-Green was revolutionary in that it did not conform to previous histories written by “Unionist” trained historians, while her book was cited for its: “sophistication,” “richness,” and being an “admirable” effort among other positive assessments (Johnston; “Mrs. Green’s History of Ireland” 18).

This 511-page volume published in the English language (with some focused Irish text) includes an exploration of dualistic main themes, “Trade and Industries” coupled with “Education and Learning”. When looking at the bibliographic citation, according to the United States Library of Congress classification code, this work covers the following subject areas along with Ireland proper, including: *Economic History; Intellectual Life; Ireland History, 1172-1603; Ireland Intellectual Life to 1500; Ireland Intellectual Life, 16<sup>th</sup> Century; Ireland Economic Conditions; Ireland History to 1603* (SetonCat Entry; Ricorso.Net).

Specific sections of the book include contents based on the two aforementioned subject areas of business and education. These divisions include: “Trade and Industries” (Part I) which includes the sub-headings of: “Irish Commerce,” “Irish Industries,” “Country Life,” “The War on Irish Trade,” “The Towns and the Clans,” and “The Ruin of the Towns.” The second part includes: “Education and Learning” (Part II) and included the following sections: “Irish Learning,” “The Irish at Oxford,” “The National Education,” “Destruction of Irish Learning,” “The New Learning,” “Foreign Universities,” “The Political Myth and Its Consequences.” (Alice Stopford Green, *Making of Ireland*, xv-xvii)

As a prefix to her mission statement and interpretation of historic texts, Stopford Green opens with the following axioms in Irish:

MOL MADROIS ANOIR SAOINE CÉRCAIRLE, 7 AN NAIRNE DO GEIN RINN.  
 DO OIBRIG AN CIGEARRA GLÓIR MÓR MAILLE RÚ CÉ NA MÓRCEMACH  
 ÓN CTOGACH.

“Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through his great power from the beginning.” (Stopford Green, *Making of Ireland*, xviii)

Stepford Green's Preface illustrates her motivation to publish this manuscript and expresses her nationalism and regard for the Irish citizenry:

“Many reasons have prevented the writing of Irish history. The invading people effaced the monuments of a society they had determined to extirpate, and so effectively extinguished the memory of that civilization that it will need a generation of students to recover and interpret its records. The people of the soil have been in their subjugation debarred from the very sources of learning, and from the opportunities of study and association which are necessary from the historical scholar. The subject too has transcended the courage of the Irish patriot . . . the history of the Irish people has been left unrecorded, as though it had never been; as though indeed, according to some, the history were one of dishonour and rebuke.” (Stepford Green, *Making of Ireland*, ix)

Stepford Green went on to describe in further detail the Irish character and how the Irish should build up their self-esteem, offering historical examples to show the spirit and resilience of the people past, present, and even future:

“It is the object of these studies to gather together some records of the civilisation of Ireland before the immense destruction of the Tudor wars; to trace her progress in industry, in wealth, and in learning; and to discover the forces that ruined the national life . . . There is no more pious duty to all of Ireland birth than to help in recovering from centuries of obloquy the memory of noble men, Irish and Anglo-Irish, who built up the civilisation that once adorned their country. To them has been meted out the second death, - the lot feared beyond all else by men of honour. They have been buried by the false hands of strangers in the deep pit of contempt, reproach, and forgetfulness an unmerited grave of silence and of shame. The Irish of today have themselves suffered by the calumny of their dead. The Irish of today have themselves suffered by the calumny of their dead. They, alone among the nations, . . . have been taunted with ancestors sunk in primitive disorders, incapable of development in the land they wasted. A picture of unrelieved barbarism ‘hateful to God’ served to justify to strangers the English extirpation of Irish society; and has been used to depress the hearts of the Irish themselves. For their birthright they have been told – they have inherited the failings of their race, and by the verdict of the ages have been proclaimed incapable of success in their own land, or of building up there an ordered society, trade, or culture . . . Thus, their energy has been lowered, and some natural pride abated. It is in the study of their history alone that Irishmen will find just pride restored, and their courage assured.” (Stepford Green, *Making of Ireland*, ix-xi)

The allusions Stepford Green made to religious symbols, along with her references to creating a fair society, provided another level of connecting the Irish with positive symbols and points of pride to build upon as they strove for independence.

Within the last portion of her introductory text, Stopford Green articulated where she found her mission and even obligation to write about the Irish and their hidden history:

“In no other country in the world has it been supposed the historian’s business to seek out every element of political instability, every trace of private disorder, every act of personal violence, every foreign slander, and out of these alone, neglecting all indications of industry or virtue, to depict a national life. Irish annals are still in our down days quoted by historians as telling merely the tale of a corrupted land feuds and battles, murderings and plunderings; with no town or church or monastery founded, no law enacted, no controversy healed by any judgment of the courts . . . no human society could endure in fact if these made up in any nation the sole history the people . . . Ireland indeed not only shared in the sufferings and confusions of the whole mediaeval world . . . to centre all the affections of our souls on the land that gave us birth. In solitude it engrosses all our thoughts; in society it is our favourite topic; and even when the clouds of woe have closed over it it still commands our sympathies.” (Stopford Green, *Making of Ireland*, xii-xiii)

Praising unique factors related to Irish accomplishment was often prefaced with criticism of the negative impact the English had on the native Irish. Thus, Stopford Green’s nationalism became a hallmark of her literary output and explains why those who read her works often reacted strongly to her approach; however, even from an English Protestant view her works became an opportunity to learn about Irish history from a new perspective.

When it came to reception of the book, the press in Éire was almost always favorable. *Irish Times* entries (including the “Literary Reviews and Notes” and “The Bookshelf” columns of August 1, 1908 and December 18, 1909 respectively) highlighted the following broad-based analysis in relation to the volume and its substances. The 1908 article features the following analysis:

“Under the very attractive title Mrs. Alice Stopford Green gives a most interesting and illuminating survey of the social, industrial, and educational history of this country between the years 1200 and 1600. Most people will agree with her contention that many reasons have prevented the writing of Irish history . . . in her present work she evinces a rare penchant for real and original research, and discriminating power of arrangement, for which she is entitled to the highest praise . . . Mrs. Green possesses very decided opinions about Ireland, and she expresses them in forcible language. . . . tells an exceedingly bright story of Irish education and learning in the second portion of her volume, and is to be heartily congratulated on a conspicuously successful construction on this important topic . . . From every point of view the book is a remarkable one. It is a brilliant attempt to elucidate an obscure period in Ireland’s chequered past, not altogether free perhaps from partisanship, but still possessing that valuable quality which makes the dry bones of quality which makes the dry bones of history live again. No

more engrossing work on Ireland has been published in recent years. (“Literary Reviews and Notes” *Irish Times*, 14)

The success led to positive reviews the next year as well: “Alice Stopford Green – has reason to congratulate herself upon the success of her work for it has been found necessary to publish a second edition” (“The Bookshelf” 9). The second edition was published by MacMillan Publishers of London in 1913, including a reprint version released by the Books for Libraries Press in New York City in 1972 (Ricorso.Net).

### **Post-Making of Ireland and Final Years**

After the initial publication of *Making of Ireland*, Stopford Green wrote two subsequent patriotic-themed books entitled: *Irish Nationality* (1911) and *The Old Irish World* (1912). These works written pre-Easter Rising continued in the nationalistic, yet scholarly vein (Wikipedia). Ironically, Stopford Green served as the first female president of the British Historical Association (1915-18), turning her pen towards producing essays and articles attempting to heal the escalating divisions in Irish society (Wikipedia).

Stopford Green was celebrated for her hopes for a distinctive Irish constitution, a parliament controlled by Sinn Fein, and for re-examining the “Dominion Status” model found in Canada prior to their own independence (Wikipedia). She was also a confidant of Michael Collins and others in the Home Rule movement, along with being an occasional gun runner for the underground (Wikipedia). After the partition and Civil War (she was pro-Treaty) during the early 1920s, Stopford Green lived adjacent to St. Stephen’s Green in Dublin and kept up a busy social schedule, including frequent visits to the North of Ireland to keep in contact with friends across these counties and the Free State alike (Johnston).

In addition to her attention to intellectual and social affairs, Stopford Green was a co-founder of the *Cumman na Saoirse* (The League for Freedom) a female Irish Republican organization, along with becoming one of the first individuals nominated to serve in the newly formed Senate of Ireland (*Seanad Éireann*), and in the process she became one of the first four women elected or appointed to this chamber in 1922 and served as a member of this body until 1929 (Wikipedia; Mitchell 15). Stopford Green passed away on May 28, 1929 and was buried at Deansgrange Cemetery in Dublin. Her grave marker reads: “Historian of the Irish People” (Mitchell 15).

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