LAST MARCH, at the close of his great lecture on the "Social Life of the Ancient Irish," the Very Rev. John Ryan, S.J., reminded us that County Kilkenny presented one of the most interesting fields for archaeological and historical inquiry in Ireland.

Objects of great interest from prehistoric times and the pagan period are still to be seen in that area and memorials of our early Christian civilisation reminding us of the days of St. Ciaran, St. Columba, St. Canice and St. Fiacre.

We gratefully remember the Sunday we spent in "Ireland’s Golden Age" under the guidance of Mlle. Henry in South Kilkenny, when with new insight we examined several beautifully carved early Celtic crosses.

From our distant past, growing with the centuries, have come our Gaelic place-names, sign-posts on history's highway.

From the Danish Invasion we have many round towers which were erected during those centuries of plunder and destruction.

Later the coming of the Cistercians and the Friars and their many foundations from Rosbercon to Callan left us a legacy of great historic interest and architectural beauty. Likewise the Anglo-Norman invasion with the surge and shock of Celt and Norman, the Parliament of the Pale with the "Statute of Kilkenny" opens a new chapter.

The Normans have left us their motes, castles and "donjon towers" and in the ruins of abbeys, friaries and churches, which they generously founded and endowed, they, leaders and legions, now rest in peace.

After three centuries of great religious, military and political movements came the dissolution of monasteries and friaries, the dispersal of their communities and the division of their estates.
Then follow the religious struggles, the risings, confiscations and "plantations" so frequent during this period; all presenting incidents that could arouse the whole range of human passions and emotions; inspiration for ballad, song and story.

The rise, hopes and failure of the Confederation of Kilkenny and later Cromwell's siege of the city and his "settlements" brought a time of gloom. The frustration of an oppressed but spirited people led to many a flash of violent upheaval in the "hidden Ireland" of which Mr. Francis McManus has written so vividly and Banim has given us glimpses.

Later we have the cultural and industrial developments under the influence of Grattan's Parliament and their gradual fade-out during the decades following the Union.

Kilkenny—city and county—presented subjects enough for a noble lifetime study such as Canon Carrigan's "History of Ossory," or John Hogan's "St. Ciaran" and his story of "Kilkenny," also for "The History and Antiquities of Kilkenny," by Father Wm. Healy, P.P., of Johnstown. In his preface Father Healy says: "Ancient feudal castles and battle-grounds, ruined monasteries and decayed churches, holy wells, raths, cromleachs, cairns, etc., are scattered plentifully enough over the length and width of the county; but their history is largely neglected and the story of their significance mostly lost."

Yet, we come and go on our daily rounds, apparently unmindful of the PAST that surrounds our PRESENT here in "Ye Faire Citie" and on the broad and pleasant plains of the County Kilkenny.

Mr. John Prim has told us of what a few young men were able to do a hundred years ago. With the loving help of Canon Philip Moore, P.P., of Rosbercon, and Rev. Jas. Graves, Rector of Ennisnag, they founded the old Kilkenny Archaeological Society. With the passing of years that society has developed into "The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland" with ALL Ireland for its field.

It would be a heartening thing to see our young men and young women taking an interest in the history and traditions of their own countryside, town or village. It would open their minds to wholesome influences of which perhaps they were previously unaware. It would broaden their views and would add new charms and interests to rural life. It would make them feel with Davis when he sang:

"She's not a dull or cold land.  
No! She's a warm and bold land.  
Oh! She's a true and old land—  
This native land of mine."
It would make them feel that they are not mere squatters on the prairie—while they live and labour, play and pray, in their own County of Kilkenny.

In our city and county there are many well equipped for the work of our society, who would find a pleasant interest in it.

We would gladly welcome their co-operation as members, for we could all help one another in a pursuit, a study, which need not be exacting or continuous, which could become a healthy and absorbing hobby, an abiding interest for a lifetime—and in the end—would be "something attempted, something done" for the Glory of God and the honour of Ireland.

JOHN O'LEARY.