

By **PATRICIA FEEHILY**

SOMETHING of a literary renaissance has hit East Limerick this Christmas season with the publication of no less than three important works by local authors.

One of them, Glenstal monk, Sean O Duinn, who has produced a translation from medieval Irish of the ancient epic, *The Siege of Knocklong*, from the *Book of Lismore*, has described East Limerick as "an unexploited source of literary tourism".

"All that area from Knocklong to Emly and back to Lough Gur is full of the most interesting place-names and legends. County Limerick in general has been widely underestimated," he claimed.

Many of those curious traditions come to light in his own book which is written in both English and modern Irish.

It recalls a world of magic and fantasy, and strange military encounters, ruled by the whims and powers of druids, and, wait for it, druidesses.

Essentially it is the story of King Cormac MacAirt's march into Munster to exact his taxes from the local chief Fiacha. His only mistake, in those pre PAYE days, was to leave the great Munster druid Mogh Roith out of the reckoning.

Would that reality could still be suspended so easily!

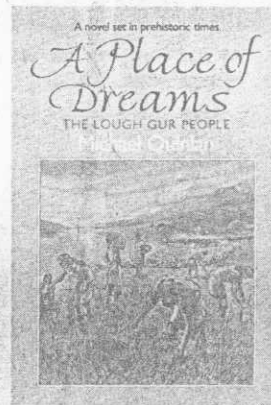
The *Book of Lismore*, an invaluable collection of manuscripts dating from about the 15th century, was discovered in a secret recess in Lismore castle, Co Waterford in 1814.

Translating the sometimes obscure text, which incidentally has also been translated into French by

# New chapter for local writers

Celtic scholar, Marie Louise Sjoestedt, was an arduous but loving task for the Glenstal monk.

It provides a fascinating insight into the creative world of the Celts and the ease with which they mingled fantasy and reality, even as political intrigue, war and vengeance raged on the ground. It is also a welcome addition to a literature which is an essential part of our identity and cul-



ture, and which has far more to recommend it than the mediocrity we have since come to recognise as Irish literature.

But if Sean O'Duinn believes that the legends and history of East Limerick have been neglected by writers, Lough Gur School teacher, Michael Quinlan has moved to make amends.

His first novel, *A Place of Dreams*, set in prehistoric times, records the lives of the first people in Lough Gur, the neolithic farmers, drawn mysteriously to the County Limerick countryside.

"It's a book about destiny," said Mr Quinlan this week.

Written in a totally authentic style, and based on archeological evidence of early stone age settlement, one of the most impressive features of the

book, is the terrible poignancy it evokes in the portrayal of early inhabitants grappling heroically with the hardships of climate and environment and confronting their fear of the unknown with an unshakable belief in their destiny.

Finally, from the East Limerick literary surge this week, comes *Create Your Own Health Patterns*, by Brazilian Missionary, Fr John L Fitzpatrick, who hails from Knocklong.

Far from being a the usual practical guide to good health, this is probably one of the most unusual health advice books ever produced, and is totally in keeping with the otherworld theme of the first two East Limerick books.

It is said to have "enriched the literature of paranormal healing", and Fr Fitzpatrick asks why so little attention has been given to the needs of the spirit in Western medicine and why the Christian churches have practically ignored the phenomenon of healing.

Fr Fitzpatrick, who is currently practising as a clinical psychologist in Sao Paulo became acquainted with the world of spiritism in Brazil, where healing forms an important part.

Among his instances of extraordinary psychic healing emanating from Brazil, he cites Jose Arigo, who won fame internationally as a psychic surgeon, and who removed tumours, cysts and cataracts, on a wooden bench with an unsterilised knife. He was uneducated and never qualified as a surgeon.

"I lived in Brazil while he was still alive and I had ample opportunity to see him, but I never did, because I was a more biased Catholic at that time than I am now, and Arigo was a Catholic turned spiri-



tist," the Author explains.

The Knocklong priest, who deals with things as varied as haunted houses and the miracle cures at Lourdes, believes that every human being has an innate ability to cure both himself and others. People who are capable of creating their own illnesses, must also be capable of recreating their own health, he argues.

"I see good health," he says, "as the natural consequence of harmonious living, where mind, body and spirit work together in an integrated manner for the good of the whole."

Sickness, he says, is neither sent by God nor willed by God, but is a direct consequence of man acting contrary "to the inherent laws of nature".

*Forbhas Droma Damhghaire - The siege of Knocklong* by Sean O Duinn is published by the Mercier Press, and costs £6.99.

*A Place of Dreams* by Michael Quinlan is published by the O'Brien press at £6.95.

*Create Your Own Health Patterns*, by John L Fitzpatrick, CSSP, is published by the Mercier Press and costs £6.99

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