

## ON ATTENDING A FEIS

I suppose it is possible not to go at all. But.... everyone goes.

Naturally, by divine right, you arrive late. If the poster says "Starts at 12 noon", you present yourself at the gate somewhere between 2:30 and 3:00. You buy a ticket from the committee member who has been sitting there in the hot sun since 11 am, being sure to remark loudly to anyone who happens to be standing next to you at the moment, "Good heavens! \$1.50 this year - that's 25¢ more than last year. It's no wonder the Irish in this city are poor, overcharged as they are for a little entertainment." Through this speech you look darkly at the man who was about to ask you if you wanted to buy a program for a quarter until he shrinks away. Then you argue with the man who wants to stamp "Feis" on your hand in blue ink, making him explain for the thousandth time why you have to have it, all the time waving your ticket under his nose, and asking him why you got tickets as well, if you were going to be stamped like cattle. As soon as you are two feet inside the gate, take your handkerchief out and let him watch you rub the mark off.

Gaze around. Assure yourself that this is indeed a Feis by taking notice of all the little children in all manner of pseudo-Irish apparel (not one with a mack) in all shades of green, white and orange, sporting the most improbable number and shapes of shamrocks - all the little children dragging one or more harassed parent over to the ice-cream, hot dog and soda stand for the tenth time that day. Search casually for the person in your family - the third step-cousin by marriage on your mother's side, say - who is entered in a dance competition. "There is a real Irish costume." You can congratulate yourself for your wisdom and perspicuity in being related to one of the few people present who are advancing the true Irish culture, and not the stage and shanty, shillelagh-waving, shamrock-strewn, jig-stepping Irish mumblety-peg that passes for it.