

## OUR LAST BOW

With this edition, after 118 years of continuous publication, the "Ballina Herald" comes to the end of its separate career. As and from next week it will be incorporated in its sister paper, the "Western People," and the familiar four-page format will be replaced by the bulkier and newsier local edition of the "Western." It is no light decision to end a publication whose files chronicle the Famine Years, the Parnell era, the Land League, the 1916 Rising, the growth of modern Ireland, the very stuff of history, but nobody regrets the passing of the existing "Herald" more than the men who produced it weekly, some of whom followed the "Herald" into employment with the "Western People" when the latter purchased the former many years ago. The "Herald" always had a strong Ballina flavour and for all practical purposes was bought for its coverage, in handy form, of the local news, while its permanent features had their own loyal followers. With a settled readership, only the most pressing reasons could have compelled the decision to discontinue the paper in its present form, but those reasons, perhaps not quite so apparent to the public, unfamiliar with the difficulties of a complex printing schedule, do exist. Unlike other instances in recent times, however, when long-established papers have gone out of circulation, nobody will be thrown out of employment with the closure of the "Herald" files, and local people will be able to get their local news on Friday with the publication of the Ballina edition of the "Western People." The "Herald" does not leave a legacy of despair but is bowing out in a cheerful, progressive atmosphere to make way for bigger and better things. It is this thought that predominates as we go about the production of this last issue of the familiar "Herald" in its own right, yet a tinge of regret lingers at the passing of an old and valued friend. To pretend otherwise would not be to admit that the "Herald" served Ballina well, and has a host of friends and well-wishers.

Nevertheless, sentiment is the only argument that can be advanced against the re-organisation of our printing programme demanded by expansion plans. When the "Western People" was printed on a Wednesday night and the "Herald" on a Friday both papers suffered from certain defects. The Ballina news necessary for the life of the "Herald" had to be held over en masse for the junior paper each week, and the "Western People" could not, therefore, carry the detailed Ballina coverage demanded by its sale and circulation in the town. Once the decision was taken to enlarge the size of the "Western People" the extra getting-up and printing time had to be found, and the change-over to a Thursday printing for the "Western" which comes into force next week, inevitably meant that there would not be time to publish a Friday "Herald." Consequently, in the interests of better coverage all round, it was decided to amalgamate both papers and provide readers with a comprehensive local and provincial coverage in the "Western People."

The "Western" gains in news value as far as the change is concerned, for up to now local court cases, Council meetings and functions had to be held over for the "Herald," but will now be published fresh in the "Western." Another defect of the old system was that the "Western" published rather early in the week for the convenience of advertisers, and a Wednesday night printing often meant the loss of news which can now be carried in a Thursday edition. The adoption of a five-day week by the firm also contributed heavily towards the final decision to amalgamate, and while there will be a temporary regret at the passing of the old "Herald" we do feel that the new service to be provided will be superior in every way. The "Herald" was never an economic proposition in these days of high printing costs, but it was maintained out of sentiment that must finally yield to realism and the demands of progress. Because the "Herald" was an old and established journal while so many of us were growing up, it has personal associations for us all. But growth is a continuous process of change, and changing times have finally caught up with the extremely limited service that the "Herald" could render. This service can be provided much more efficiently and satisfactorily by the bigger "Western People" it is helping to provide, and most of the original "Herald" features will be incorporated in its new existence.

This is our professional consolation as the presses turn for the last time to churn out this final edition of the "Herald." As the shades of over a century close in upon the last of a long line of "Herald" publications, it is fitting as we end this valedictory editorial by paying a tribute to the journalists of the past who used it as an instrument to right wrongs and to foster the common weal. Their heritage of free speech and championship of truth will not end with the last edition of the paper they served, but will be passed on with even greater effect into the keeping of the "Western People."