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In the autobiography of General Sir William Butler, G.C.B., there is a passing mention of Colonel Cotter, of whom Sir William writes as follows:—"During my absence on the prairies an old veteran, Colonel Cotter, who had been in the 69th Regiment sixty-five years earlier, visited the regiment in Brantford, Western Canada. He lived now on the shore of Lake Erie, forty miles away. He had fought as a Captain at Quatre Bras and at Waterloo, and had served in the short war in Travancore. At eighty years of age the sand is running out of life's hour-glass very quickly. I found the old veteran 69th officer in a very dreary domicile at Lake Erie. Although he had been so long away from home and was so far removed from those early years of service, his mind was clear and his memory of the campaign of Waterloo was most retentive. As we sat that night over the fire, he told me of many episodes in those famous distant days. He described the rush of the Cuirassiers in the ryefield at Quatre Bras; the retreat next day upon Waterloo, and the night of rain and mud. "It was cold," he said, "and as the ground was ancle deep, I preferred to stand and walk about rather than to lie down. Soon after daybreak I was ordered to take my company to the village of Waterloo to mount guard at the inn occupied by the Duke of Wellington. As we marched along the front of the line the soldiers were very busy drying, cleaning, and snapping off their firelocks, which had rusted during the night. Arrived at the inn, I drew up in front and stood at ease. Presently an A.D.C. came out and told me to return to the regiment as the Duke was about to leave his quarters for the Field. Shortly after I got back the first gun was fired from the French position."

It was strange to hear on the shore of Lake Erie, in Canada, from the lips of this veteran these old stories. He described at length an encounter forced upon him on his return to Cork after Waterloo. Some local hero of duelling celebrity determined to try his mettle, at twenty paces, near Mallow. The challenge was, of course, accepted, shots were exchanged, no one was hit, and honour was satisfied. Colonel Cotter had entered the 69th Regiment in 1804. Like many other officers, he settled in Western Canada after the close of the war, and died in 1869.

Folklore Collecting in Ireland.

IN reminding the readers of this "Journal" of the urgent necessity of bestirring themselves to collect what remains of the Old Wisdom of the Folk, before modern life and modern scepticisms drive it out of its last strongholds, it is not in that hard spirit of enquiry which considers that the work is done when a certain number of stories of swan-maidens, or fairy changelings, or cruel step-mothers, have been gathered together and analysed; so many *dramatis personae,* so many similar incidents, so many variants, all set down neatly in a tabulated form, as belonging to the "Swan-maiden type," the "Cinderella type," the "Hercules type," the "White-cat type," the "William Tell type," and so on. Nor yet do I think that our work is done when we have

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discovered about some particular custom dating back to immemorial antiquity exactly in what locality it is found, who related or recorded it, and what similarity it bears to customs in ancient Greece, in Persia or India, in Russia or Roumania, or in Central Africa. All these things are of the greatest importance; they must be noted and recorded—they must, too, be *accurately* noted, because no true theory can be built up out of inaccurate data. But they are important only by the way, and just in the same way as the facts of history are important to the historian. Out of a vast mass of details and isolated facts the historian of a bygone period builds up his history of external society; and out of the vast mass of old and half-forgotten customs, of which the original meaning has often been partially lost, the folk-lorist builds up his history of human thought. "Folk-custom," says Mr. Tylor, one of the earliest and greatest of living folk-lorists, "is the lingering remains and testimony to an earlier stage of thought; folktales are often all we have to remind us of an ancient philosophy of life." The folklore of to-day is the last surviving remnant of the beliefs of an earlier age or a more primitive condition. When we sneeze and our friend says "God bless you," we are acting precisely like the Zulu, who says, "I am now blessed," because he believes that the ancestral spirit of his tribe or family is passing by him; when we con over to our children the curious rune of "The House that Jack built," we are unconsciously repeating an imitation of an ancient Passover formula still in use among the Jews in their solemn Pascal service, a formula which is probably itself a corruption of some earlier use; when we churlishly refuse to give our best friend a light from our pipes on New Year's Eve, we are half-consciously condoning the beliefs of our ancestors in the sacredness of fire as one of the deified elements which could not be safely transferred or parted with except under special conditions.

There is a disposition in the literary man to be a little jealous and uneasy in view of the folklorist; he looks upon him as a profane person spoiling in an unscrupulous manner a rich field from which he can draw picturesque materials. "Heaven only knows," suggests Mr. Yeats, "what the folk-lorist is on the gad after!" What we are on the gad after is a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge which can only be true when it is brought into connection with the older knowledge and beliefs of our ancestors. We want to build up a true history of thought, just as the historian seeks to build up a true history of the outward aspects of life.

From this point of view even the wildest folktale has a double interest; it is not merely a fanciful creation of the imagination, it is an expression of what, in the old days, or in primitive conditions to-day, the folk thought about life. The very familiar Irish folk-story, of which Mr. Lloyd and Dr. Hyde have given us examples, of the three youths setting forth in life, two of them with the big loaf and the mother's curse, and the third with the little loaf and the mother's blessing, contains a whole peasant's philosophy of young manhood. The story relates that the lads have not travelled far before they arrive at a well, of which the bottom is filled with blood and the top covered with honey. A dog sits by the well, and begs for a share of the provision brought with them by the lads; the two who have brought the big loaf refuse to give him even the crumbs, and the dog thereupon stirs up the well with its tail, until the blood comes to the top, and it is horrible to behold. The third lad, who

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has the small loaf, but his mother's blessing with it, on the contrary, shares his portion, whereupon the well becomes fair and sweet again, the honey coming to the top. The mingling of the honey and the blood in the well of life is evidently a type of the mingled good and ill that everyone setting forth on the journey of existence must expect to meet, the aspect which life takes to each being determined, to a great extent, by the character of the man who faces it. Such at least seems to be the parable of the story.

To many people the study of folklore appears to be an almost frivolous waste of time. "What," they think, "is the use of recording the foolish beliefs and customs belonging to a bygone age, and to people more ignorant than ourselves?" Yet there is, on the one hand, no subject which, more than folklore, helps us to feel, as the Italian proverb puts it, that "All the world is one country"; while, on the other side, we learn to realise that the thought of all ages is but a series of steps, linking the highest with the lowest, and carrying us on by methods almost imperceptible to ourselves, from the observation and record of isolated tales, customs and incidents, into wide fields, in which the study of philosophy, of ethics and of religon, all find their place. Our leading sociologists and students of ethics are found among the ranks of the folklorists, and Dr. Hastings' great "Dictionary of Religion and Ethics" is being largely contributed to by members of the Folklore Societies; and this quite naturally, because our conceptions of morals and religion are, on their human side, grown out of, and deeply rooted in, the primitive instincts and beliefs of mankind. "The folklorist," says Mr. Yeats, "thinks that by putting things down on tables he is becoming scientific." I do not imagine that any of us are anxious to gain the name of being scientific in such a sense as that, and I am quite sure that it is not for the sake of being called scientific that we marshal our facts on tables. If we put things down on tables, it is because in doing so we notice strange and curious matters which otherwise we might not have observed at all—the likenesses and the differences between peoples and races all the world over at the same stages of development, and the similarity in their methods of self-expression. We note the wide spread of certain stories, tales which, like the legend of William Tell, or of Mr. Andrew Lang's "Far-travelled Tale," are found, with slight local variations, in almost every part of the globe; or tales that, like the Irish story of the death of Conla by the hand of his father, Cuchulain, seems to find its nearest analogy in a story popular in Persia; or, again, a tale like Crofton Croker's incident of the sea-merrow, the little red-capped personage who lives under the sea and catches the souls of dead fishermen and wrecked passengers in lobster-nets, which finds its parallel in the Zulu medicine-man's attempt to capture the souls of his patients in cocoa-nut rings.

On the other hand, while some beliefs and customs can be traced and understood as part of the history of connected human thought, others elude us altogether. Why, for instance, is a dying person laid on straw and not allowed to die on a feather-bed? Why, in the Claddagh of Galway, does the fisherman refuse to go out to fish if he sees a fox? Why, on St. Martin's Day, is it so important to kill an animal, that the disobedience to this custom is visted with terrible penalties from which no one but St. Martin himself can free the offender?

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In this latter case it is evident that the killing of an animal points to some ancient pagan sacrifice performed on St. Martin's Day, but with which the saint himself probably had no more to do than other Christian saints have with the pulling of apples out of a tub, or the burning of nuts in the fire on All Hallows Eve; or St. John the Baptist with the fires lighted on the mountains on his festival. Some earlier sacrificial ceremony seems certainly to be retained here belonging to the day which St. Martin's festival replaced. In the same way, many of the legends connecting St. Brigit with fire and the hearth, of which she is the special patron, seem to belong to that more ancient pagan Brigit who was a mighty figure in Irish primitive belief, a triad goddess presiding over handicrafts, poetry and medicine. So famous was she and so widespread her powers, that we learn from one old source that among Irishmen any goddess might be called a Brigit. There is no exact line of demarcation between Christian and pagan beliefs in the mind of the peasant, nor are most of us entirely removed from the ideas that guided the daily lives of our ancestors. The same things happen to-day that happened centuries ago before ever St. Patrick brought to Ireland Christian books and Christian teaching. At wayside wells, often dedicated to some Christian saint, we find fluttering the rags which are believed to contain the ills of those who have prayed beside the well and have been cured of their sicknesses. In Burren, Co. Clare, where a piece of pasture-land was recently brought for a time under cultivation, a bit of grass was left unploughed in the middle of the field, lest the fairies should inflict condign punishment upon the farmer. In many places pipes are left on graves, because the spirit of the dead man is felt to need his pipe just as much after death as when he was alive; and Jeremiah Curtin has a story of a man who was particularly fond of nuts begging that a dish of his favourite food might be buried with him or laid on his grave, because he might be wanting the taste of them in the other world. There is, indeed, no real separation between this world and the next in the mind of the Celtic peasant. "I am dead in this world, but I am not dead in the next," said the ghost of Pat Doyle of Castlemaine to a living man who saw him crossing a field after he had been killed by another ghost. Indeed, I doubt whether a distinction exists in the mind of the peasant anywhere. It was an English farmer's wife who asked to be buried close to the chicken-run, because she would not know what time it was in the morning if she didn't hear the cock crow.

And this brings us at once to speak of ghosts and fairies, those "good people" who are never far from the Irish peasant's thoughts. "Have you ever seen a fairy or such like?" Mr. Yeats tells us he once asked of a Sligo man. "Amn't I annoyed with them?" was the reply.[1] Now, to be actually incommoded by fairy folk interfering with you is a curious thing, but all the tales among the people show that this is the case. In the lonely places, where human beings are scarce, the good people crowd the paths, playing pranks, carrying off healthy children and putting others in their places, lean and wretched changelings, whose wizened countenances and weakly ways easily show that they are not of mortal birth;

[1] "Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry," W. B. Yeats, Introduction, p. ix. (Camelot Classics, 1888).

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calling away mortal women to nurse fairy-infants, afflicting healthy and robust men and women with sickness, overturning milk-pails, hindering the butter from "coming" in the churn or the cows from giving milk, and in every way interfering with the course of daily life. When Jeremiah Curtin was collecting his fairy and folk-tales in Kerry some thirty years ago, he tells us that another twenty years before that (that is, half a century from us to-day), nine men out of every ten in some parts of the country believed in fairies. In his time, he adds, perhaps one in ten might do so, and probably that one would not confess to believing in them himself, but would tell you in confidence that though, of course, he does not hold with such things himself, so and so will do so. Yet from all that one hears, these believers are not so rare as this sceptic would have us imagine them to be. In many a cottage the dirty water is still thrown out on the doorstep at night, and the kitchen is swept before going to bed, and the fresh sod of turf thrown on the fire, that the hosts of ghostly visitants who may choose to pass the night there, may find all ready for their coming. In so Englished a part of the country as Queen's County, a writer in the "National Review," a few months ago, related that in the year 1874-75 a fairy christening was held one night in a house unexpectedly to the owners, who had left no clean water ready for the event, so that the fairy child had to be christened in water from the churn. The fairies were naturally angry; so angry that they took revenge on the girl of the house by laming her for life. Is it not picturesque? The fairy baby being christened like a Christian child; the gathering of the fairy family at dead of night in a human dweller's cottage, and their just anger that their great family event had not been thought of or prepared for by selfish and unseeing human folk?

Though the fairies in Ireland are usually known as the "good people," they are easily angered and often vindictive. The theory which attempts to explain this apparent incongruity is that the troublesome or bad fairies are the angels who fell with Lucifer, and were on their way to hell when our Lord held up his hand and stopped them; wherever they happened to be at that moment they remained. This is the story told by Curtin, and it seems to be the generally accepted explanation why the "good people" sometimes behave so badly. On the whole, seeing that things are as they are, it is just as comfortable to know that a ghost cannot follow you through water, and that you are fairly safe from fairy injury when you stand with one foot inside and one outside the front door; also that you are quite safe if you have an iron implement of labour, such as a hatchet or saw or plough-chain about you, or even a steel knife in your pocket; for "there is great virtue in steel, and, above all, in steel made in Ireland." Linen thread is, however, the best safeguard of all. "A man might travel all the fairy forts in the world if he had a skein of flax thread around his neck, and you may go into a fairy fort itself and face all the fairies safely if you have a stick of green rowan-wood in your hand." (See J. Curtin, "Tales of the Fairies," pp. 32-33).

I would have you notice that there is a distinct fairy morality. A well-swept kitchen and clean chairs and tables are pleasing to the good people, and a foul kitchen or dirty water left about at night will be visited with condign punishment. A child has even been known to be carried off by the fairies if its mother fails to wash it properly; and they look

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to find a cheerful fire and well-swept hearth whenever they chance to drop in of a night. The man going to and fro from his work with his implements of labour, or the soldier on duty with his sword in his hand, is safe from the most malignant spirit, while the idler has no safeguard and is exposed to danger. All this is suggestive of a certain outside influence regulating fairy acts; but still it is pleasing and useful to believe that they hate dirt and act as sanitary inspectors given to paying surprise vists.

The folklore of Ireland, the last lingering tradition of an ancient form of native thought, is fast dying out; much of it is gone beyond recovery, and every year is lessening the amount that still remains to us. It has, therefore, been determined, during the next three or four years, to make a simultaneous effort over the whole country, by an organised body of collectors, to collect and record whatever matter may be of interest from their own part of the country. Such knowledge of the beliefs and old customs, stories and legends cannot be easily obtained by visitors from other places, it can only be elicited by persons familiar with the traditions of a special district and in constant friendly communication with its inhabitants.

The best material is that which is communicated in the course of ordinary conversation; any attempt to go about officially as a collector will probably result either in the invention of incidents by the obliging narrator, or in shutting him up altogether. Friendly conversation, both in Irish and English, especially with the more aged people, and an intelligent interest in their reminiscences, is more likely to elicit the right kind of information than direct inquiry. At the same time, knowledge of folk-lore generally, and especially of Irish folk-lore, will often enable the collector to ask questions or make such suggestions as will bring forth the information wanted. Tact and experience are needed to sift the information given, and to discriminate truth from invention. In order to aid new collectors, the Folklore Society of London has drawn up a list of headings of the sort of material wanted, which will also serve as a guide to collectors in arranging the material they have collected. Ordinary copybook paper is to be used by collectors for the final arrangement of their material, which is to be arranged, as far as possible, under the headings suggested on the Folklore list. These lists and all information can be obtained from the Hon. Sec., Mr. Thomas J. Westropp, M.R.I.A., or from the Assistant Secretary, Miss Ferguson, 22 Dartmouth Square, Dublin.

About forty collectors in different parts of the country have already promised their assistance, but we hope to hear of many more. In some places small committees are being formed to work a special district and keep in touch with one another. This seems a useful method of working. In every case it is requested that the exact district in which the collector has found the items of information sent in should be stated, with the name of the person from whom the item is obtained, and his or her position in life, as well as the name and address of the collector himself. In some cases the collector may only have a few items to communicate; in others a large number on different subjects; it is to be understood that even one item of information, or one story, will be welcomed, so long as it is accurately given. There are few Irish people who cannot tell numberless interesting facts regarding beliefs and customs about their own neigh-

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bourhood; but the difficulty is to get these things written down. We appeal to all who feel an interest in such subjects to help us.

"The Irish Folk Lore Association" has already commenced collecting material. A strong committee, consisting of Dr. Douglas Hyde, Dr. Marstrander, Prof. John McNeill, Prof. Macalister, Mr. J. H. Lloyd, Mrs. Arthur Hutton, Mr. J. G. O'Keeffe, and others, has been formed, and Mr. T. J. Westropp has undertaken the duties of Secretary. It is hoped, eventually, to publish by subscription volumes on the folk-lore of various districts in Ireland.

It is suggested that the material collected should be sent in twice a year, in April and October, and it is hoped that during the three or four years to be given to this simultaneous attempt to rescue our folk-lore, a good harvest may be gathered in. It will add much to the interest and pleasure of a summer holiday to have an object of this kind in view. Helpers are especially needed in outlying and Irish-speaking districts, and if means are forthcoming, it is hoped to send special Irish-speaking collectors into some of these isolated places, which are likely to contain the richest deposits of folk-lore material. It is hoped that every collector will endeavour to send a small annual subscription, from half a crown upwards, towards the expenses of printing and postage; and larger donations for the purpose of sending special collectors into Irish-speaking districts and other necessary outlay will be gratefully received and carefully expended.

The question of publication of the material will largely depend upon the amount sent in. We look to the production of a volume or volumes of Irish folk-lore, which will form the basis of all future investigations into the subject; and the publication will be undertaken in whatever manner seems likely best to fulfil the object we have in view.

Any stories in Irish and English that are sent to us will be handed to Dr. Douglas Hyde and Mr. J. H. Lloyd to add to their already large collection, which it is hoped they will before long find time to prepare for press. It is hoped that all interested in local Feiseanna where prizes are offered for story-telling will aid us by carefully preserving the stories sent in or recited. Great numbers of these have already, unfortunately, been lost, from the want of any organisation to guard them. Persons who cannot collect in the country can also help by indexing the folk-lore items in the various archæological journals and other papers for reference, but it would be advisable to let the Secretary know if such work is undertaken, to prevent duplicating. We shall welcome the names of helpers for any of these departments.

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