

A RECENT IRISH LITERATURE

By William Rooney.

I.

From The United Irishman, February 9, 1901.

That there is a recent Irish literature in the language of the foreigner is a matter which this paper accepts as a truism, for with all the talk of the impossibility of delineating Irish spirit and sentiment in English, we think that “Knocknagow” is a very fair portrait of Tipperary, or “Little Mary Cassidy” quite a realistic picture of a Galwayman’s love. But I do not ask you to consider any of the productions of the English-writing Irish poets or romanticists. I am about to ask your attention for quite a different style of writing – an Irish literature absolutely of our own time, produced in Ireland, written for Ireland, and exclusively in Irish. It is one of the features of the last few years that we have begun to acknowledge that all the possibilities of our people’s intellect, all the flights of their genius, all the power of their imaginations need not necessarily seek expression in English. We have all of us an idea of the past of Gaelic literature. Mangan, Walsh, Ferguson, Callanan, and others have familiarised us with the Gaelic writers of the 17th and 18th centuries. From the first day when English gained any sort of a hold in Ireland even the enemies of the Gael have admitted the rhythmic beauty of Irish poetry, and Spenser, narrow-minded as he certainly was, and good critic likewise, has paid a tribute to the originality and beauty of idea of the “rhymers” of his time. Swift, with all his indifference to the native population, was attracted to their literature, and even went so far as to translate one at least of the poems, the famous “Feast of O’Rourke,” into English. Henry Brooke, a man unjustly forgotten nowadays, went to the trouble of mastering the Irish language preparatory to writing a “History of Ireland,” which design, however, he never realised. To his daughter, Charlotte, we are indebted for the earliest attempt to give the world an idea, in a concise form, of the older literature of Ireland. Joseph Cooper Walker

had preceded her by a few years, but both of them dealt in their work almost exclusively with the very earliest of extant Irish poetry, coming down only in an instance or two to modern days. Curran, as we know, was a born speaker of Gaelic, and most of the country members of Volunteer Days were also at least able to speak it. Flood was evidently impressed by its importance, as his gift to Trinity proves, and Grattan, as know, was favourable to it. The United Irishmen, so far as the rank and file went, were mostly Irish speakers, and the leaders in many cases, notably Russell and Drennan, took pains to acquire it. Lysaght wrote equally well in Irish and English, his "Kate of Garnavilla," in Gaelic, being out of all comparison superior to the English version. Much of the inspiration of Moore's earlier melodies was due to the existence of the Gaelic Society which met in Fishamble-Street, under the guidance of Theophilus O'Flanagan and William Halliday, and to the historical labours, oftentimes apocryphal, of Sylvester O'Halloran. The reader of the generally rubbishy magazines of the Irish capital of the half-century stretching from 1770 to 1820 will be struck by the quantity of translated matter from the Irish which finds a place in their pages. Worthless as the work generally is, it goes to prove how very general Irish was all over Ireland up to Emancipation days. Sometime about 1810 a country schoolmaster named William Farmer came to Dublin from Cavan and settled in Harold's-Cross. There he came into contact with one Edward O'Reilly. A similarity of tastes led to closer friendship, and eventually they started a school for the teaching of Irish. At that time books printed in the Irish language were very scarce and very dear, more especially text books of the nature required for a primary class. Of grammars and dictionaries there was an especial dearth, and as the course of the lessons grew it became necessary to make vocabularies for the students. These accumulated until at length they became quite voluminous, and were gathered into folios by the scholars. They were the germ of a great work, and became in after years the famous Irish-English Dictionary of Edward O'Reilly, which, with a supplement by O'Donovan, is familiar to all students of Gaelic. This was not the only service these two humble men did for Ireland. Like all countrymen, the old airs and songs of their land had

a charm for them, and in the intervals of their labours they amused each other singing or playing those old tunes, and writing them down for preservation. Unlike the glossary, they never blossomed into publicity, but as the Farmer-O'Reilly collection they have been drawn upon for many a fine old air by numerous collectors since. Of Farmer the subsequent life is not known. O'Reilly became secretary of the Hiberno-Celtic Society, edited for them several tracts, and compiled his Dictionary of Irish (Gaelic) Authors, which was published in 1820, a very incomplete volume, but still, as Dr. Hyde says, a wonderful compilation for one man working singlehanded. In 1817 one of the periodical famines which have marked the English occupation of Ireland took place. The terrible famine of '47-'48 has eclipsed the memory of all others, but, as in our own time, lessons of actual starvation have never been wanting in Ireland. This famine of 1817 seems to have been of exceptional violence, whole districts were left devoid of the commonest food, and the proselytiser, ever seeing in these periods of distress the dispensing hand of Providence, charitably undertook to fill the mouth of the starving Papist, only asking in return that he should allow himself to become acquainted with the Protestant Bible. At that time no parish was short of good Gaelic readers. The hedge schoolmasters, whatever their other faults, never forgot the old tongue, and accordingly the Hibernian Bible Society looked for a fine harvest from the famine, reckoning that Faith, however firm, is not invariably proof against Hunger, particularly when a string of young children have got to be considered. Many were induced, owing to the painful state of affairs, to go amongst their neighbours and read to them the Irish Bible of Bedell, and in fact so many accepted the terms of the Bible-mongers that an order was issued by the Catholic clergy forbidding the further teaching of Irish lest the whole population might, by reason of their poverty, be thus drawn away from the faith of their forefathers. This short-sighted policy, more than anything else, save, of course, the national schools, has brought Gaelic to the position it occupied until lately. Most of the Bible-readers returned to their allegiance when the distress passed off, but a few still hung on to the skirts of the missionaries. Of these the most notable was Tadhg O'Connellan, a hedge schoolmaster, whose

knowledge of Irish was certainly profound, and, who, with all the pedantry of his class, has still left some excellent little books, more especially an English-Irish dictionary, behind him. A reader of the "Introduction" of this little dictionary can form an idea of the grip which Irish had in Ireland then. Undoubtedly the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Irish did a world of damage to Gaelic, a damage which still has its effect in Gaelic places, but the Catholic bishops, in preventing the reading and writing of the old tongue, actually played into the hands of the enemy, since they left their flocks open to the more wholesale demoralisation which has fallen on them by the flooding of their towns and villages with the gutter literature of England.

An important addition to then existing Gaelic books was the publication, in 1834, of James Hardiman's "Irish Minstrelsy." This, like Miss Brooke's "Reliques of Ancient Irish Poetry," dealt principally with old Gaelic; but a valuable addition was a number of songs by O'Carolan, Seaghan O'Neachtain, and Seaghan MacDomhnaill Clarach. The compiler was exceedingly unfortunate in his versifiers. Save Thomas Furlong, none of them – John Dalton, Henry Grattan Curran, and Edward Lawson – can be said to have been remarkably gifted with poetic genius. This will become especially evident on comparison with renderings of the same poems by Ferguson, and we may trace a good deal of the critical opinion of English writers on Gaelic poetry to their acceptance of these versions as spirited or faithful. In the *Dublin* and *Irish Penny Journals* the first beginnings of O'Donovan were made, and there, in Mangan, Irish Gaelic poetry first found a man who, feeling the spirit of the old land, gave to the English dress of his renderings something of the figure, majesty and beauty of the originals. In the *Citizen*, under the editorial care of Torrens McCullagh and W. Eliot Hudson, Gaelic was not forgotten; and the *Nation*, under Davis, as we all know, lost no opportunity of advancing its claims. Two volumes of Edward Walsh, "The Popular Poetry of Ireland" and "The Jacobite Reliques," were amongst the most important additions made during the Forties, are, perhaps, the most faithful of all early renderings, and in some few cases the best English versions in existence. The two volumes of John O'Daly dealing with

the “Poets and Poetry of Munster,” the first versified by Mangan, the second by Dr. Sigerson, are worthy of all praise, but the translations too often look forced, and consequently are displeasing. The labours of men like Dr. Reeves, Henthorn Todd, Petrie, O’Donovan, and, above all, O’Curry, need no remark from me. Their work was generally confined to an Irish literature as yet an unknown land to most of our scholars, an Irish literature which we shall refer to later on. Of Dr. MacHale’s renderings of Moore and Homer I need say little either, save that while some few of his melodies have become popular, the vast majority of them never can – firstly, because they are rather stiff, and, secondly, because they are too closely an imitation of the form of the original, and, lastly and principally, because they are in a style of versification almost entirely foreign to Irish literature and unusual to Gaelic ears. The vowel sounds get little or no scope in them, and an Irish ear reveres the full swing of those letters, even in English. The continuity of Gaelic is preserved by the illustrious name of John O’Mahony, whose whole-souled sympathy with the tongue of his race inspired the name which defines the movement of ’67 for ever in history. John O’Mahony, to my mind, fulfils all the essentials of an Irish National leader. To a thorough desire for entire Irish independence he united an enthusiastic reverence for the past of his nation, and added to his genius as an organiser the culture and knowledge of a scholar. Proud of his nation, his greatest pride was that he spoke her language, and was able to leave for those less fortunate the best translation ever made of Keating’s marvellous “History.” The *Nation* and the *Irishman* did their part by the language, and the *Shamrock* in its earlier days did likewise, but it was reserved for our generation to begin the completion of the work which proselytiser, Catholic bishop and national school had each, after a different fashion, formed and fostered. From the proselytiser, with alien sympathies, from the national schools, with thinly-masked ideas of the same type, we could expect little interest in Irish; but from those to whom a whole century of ignorance, emigration, and absence of civil rights had been suffered we were entitled to look for help. We did not get it, and to its absence year by year, aided undoubtedly to an enormous extent by the horrors of ’48, we may attribute *all* the waning which has marked the

latter half of the century. Some little semblance of interest in the tongue of the Gael marked all the generations before ours; but we, with our backs turned to everything native, with our eyes perpetually on the Parliament of the foreigner, dazzled by the prospect of a "Union of Hearts," forgot everything but the hour, and were gradually drifting, drifting into mere automata, till the crash came, and in the rending of the veil we saw at last what was before us, and paused.

I have endeavoured to trace the continuity of interest in matters Gaelic, from the siege of Limerick to our times, amongst the English-speaking part of our population. Through all that period of two hundred years the Gaelic tongue has never ceased to produce, at least, poets; but until recently they have mostly sung unnoticed. John O'Cullane, the author of the "Lament for Timoleague," is, possibly, the latest Gaelic writer of whom one will find any account in books; but of such men as Raftery, or Barrett, or MacSweeney, one must depend for information on the traditions preserved in their native regions. They all existed within the present century, but little of their work has yet found its way into print, although Dr. Hyde considers Raftery the greatest of all modern Gaelic poets. I would point out that while we have had many translations from Irish into English during the century the amount of original or translated work in Irish has been comparatively small, and only in these immediate days of noticeable importance or voluminousness. Outside of Father O'Sullivan's translation of "The Imitation of Christ," and O'Fianachty's Irish rendering of Maria Edgeworth, the amount of modern Irish prose had been very scant until within the last few years, and the poetry, though most abundant, was still not particularly in evidence either. Like its various predecessors, the Ossianic Society had concerned itself only with the past, the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, in its initial stages, made some attempt to get in touch with Irish-speaking Ireland, but the internal broils that ensued stayed the work. The Gaelic Union did rather better, for besides providing text books, it initiated the *Gaelic Journal*, which undoubtedly laid the foundation of the literature, to which I invite your attention.

II.

From The United Irishman, February 16, 1901.

This Recent Irish Literature of which I desire to speak is the growth of the last ten or fifteen years. Begun at a time when all attention was centred in latter-day politics, it has outlived the cold weather and contempt invariably awarded it by political leaders. It has grown mainly through the labours of a few men whom Ireland will one day delight to honour, and with the awakened spirit which is every day becoming more apparent, it will yet, with God's good help, redeem the follies of the years gone by, and give Ireland a literature that no assimilating Saxon or enlightened foreigner can make or mistake for anything but what it is.

This literature I shall divide into two classes, original and collected, for I hold myself justified in treating as recent all the stories, songs, and poems hitherto speeding to forgetfulness with the passing generations, which have been collected and printed within our time. The prose is, of course, almost wholly folk-lore, and from the folklorist's point invaluable, but of course considered as literature of quite a different value. One does not expect intricate plot or continued power in a folk-tale, but many of the plots, if we may so call them, of our Gaelic folk-tales are interesting, and occasionally most original. I would direct you to one of these tales translated, almost word by word, from the original, and I would ask your attention to as beautiful a bit of descriptive writing as I am acquainted with. It is taken from the longest story in Douglas Hyde's First Book, "Leabhar Sgeulaigheachta." The story is entitled, "Giolla na gCor nDubh," or "The Black-Footed Fellow," and retails his adventures in many lands. In this particular extract we get a picture of a peasant waiting for the approach of midnight and the consequent advent of the fairies. I think the picture a real gem of word painting: -

"Giolla went accordingly to the old rath when the night was fallen, and he stood with his elbow leaning on an old grey stone waiting until the midnight came. The moon rose up slowly, and it was like a ball of fire behind him, and there was a white mist rising from the meadows and the bottoms through the

coolness of the night after the very great heat of the day. The night was as quiet as a lake when not a gust of wind is about to stir a wave upon it, and there wasn't a sound to be heard but the humming of the chafers, as they flew by from time to time, or the sharp sudden cry of the wild geese going from lake to lake, half a mile up in the air over his head, or the shrill whistle of the *feadog* or the *fillbin* rising and descending, descending and rising, as is usual with them of a quiet night. There were thousands of bright stars shining above, and there was a little frost about that left the earth under the foot white and brittle. He stood there for an hour, for two hours, for three hours, and the frost grew in intensity, so much so that he heard the breaking of the short blades of grass under his feet as often as he stirred it. He was thinking in his own mind that the fairies would not come that night, and he had almost determined to return home when he heard a noise approaching, and he knew on the moment what it was. It grew and grew; at first it was like the breaking of the waves on a stony strand, then like the falling of a great waterfall, and at last like a heavy storm in the tops of the trees, then in one great whirling blast the fairy breeze swept into the rath towards him, and the fairy host were all around."

This will give you an idea of what description in Irish is like. Of course one cannot apply to folk-lore the same criticism as to the literature evolved from centuries of practice and polish. One needs to be a great believer to take any of those tales literally, but one point stands out pre-eminently in them, their singular purity of tone and idea. I do not claim for them an immaculate freedom from taint. There is not lacking in some few of them traces of the lower senses and sentiments, but where these lapses occur they are faults of the individual of the tale, rather than of the tale itself. One does not reckon Shakespeare outside the pale because many of his characters are, to say the least, men and women of the world. So, also, in some of these folk-tales one comes across items and individuals somewhat free. One gets away from the hum and hurry of these later times in those old tales into a world full of the free life and fresh air of far-off days, green fields, high mountains, dark caverns, deep rivers, much magic, mystery, and exaggeration, but never a breath of the insidiousness which flavours so much of the later literature of the world. Coarseness to modern minds and plain speech one certainly does find, often just a trifle too plain for our highly-polished veneer of decency. We meet the primitive Irish peasant who sees nothing wrong in calling things by their proper names, because that fungus called civilisation has not rotted his heart

or warped his imagination. To the book I have already referred to, the “Leabhar Sgeulaigheachta,” we are indebted for the tale called “Tadhg O’Cathain agus an Corpan” in Mr. Yeats’ “Fairy and Folk-Tales,” of which I have spoken above.

Folklorists we have always had with us – Croker and Lover, Carleton and Kennedy, Lady Wilde, and in these days McNally and Yeats, but they have confined their work to English. Little attempt was made to gather the great treasure of Gaelic lore until the starting of the *Gaelic Journal*, when the work was begun by Mr. R. J. O’Mulrenin in his fine tale, “The Fellow Who Shook with Fear.” This was in the first volume, and since then the field has been occupied by many diligent workers, of whom, beyond all question An Craoibhin Aoibhinn (Dr. Douglas Hyde), is by far the greatest worker. He represents Connacht in the work, and represents her ably. Poor Patrick O’Leary was just starting to do for Munster what the Craoibhin did for the West when death struck him down. His book, “Sgeulaigheacht Cuige Mumhan,” though written in a dialect peculiar to South-West Cork, is so well annotated in classic Gaelic that one has little difficulty in following the trend of each tale. The stories are, of course, all Munster tales, and “Paidin O’Dalaigh” in particular will repay any trouble one unaccustomed to the dialect may meet in its reading. It is a pity that the author’s religious observance of every little peculiarity of dialect has made him stick rigidly to the accents of his own neighbourhood, for the fact may prevent the book from becoming as popular as it might in districts where the language has, perhaps, not preserved all the copiousness claimed for Beara and Bantry. Let us not be taken as suggesting any wide variety of Irish dialects, but one can readily understand how little the language of Dorset would appeal to one accustomed to the English of any other part of Britain. For Ulster the principal workers have been Mr. Joseph H. Lloyd, who has garnered in Armagh, Monaghan, Meath, and Donegal, and Messrs. John C. Ward and Peter Toner McGinley, whose work has lain principally in Donegal. No collected volume of any of their work has yet appeared, but to the pages of the *Gaelic Journal* many folk tales, songs, &c, have been contributed. Ulster Irish, as a rule, differs very little from that of Connacht, and consequently

the student finds it no difficulty to glide through the many excellent tales which have been furnished to us from the firesides of the North. Many of them, of course, are family relatives, if not exactly the same as those one finds in the various books of the Craoibhin, but some little change in incident makes them different. In fact, the reader of Irish folk-lore, as told by the writers in English, will find most of his old acquaintances turning up in those salvages from the wreck of what must have been a great freight, before the waves of fortune shattered the barque that bore it.

The "Leabhar Sgeulaigheachta" represents but a portion of Dr. Hyde's labours to preserve the literature of the people from eternal night. His "Cois na Teineadh," or "Beside the Fire," and more recently, "An Sgeulaidhe Gaodhaolach," contains stories even worthier of attention than his previous efforts. Such tales as "Liam O'Ruanaigh," "The Tailor and the Three Beasts," "The Eagle of the Golden Feathers," "The Ghost of the Tree," or "The Priest and the Bishop," though they may not appeal to the fastidiousness founded on decadence, ought at least to win favour from those who see in the Brothers Grimm or Hans Andersen subjects for admiration. But even the Craoibhin has not exhausted this fireside literature. Away in the hills of Connemara lives, to quote his own words, "*Domhnall MacMhiohil, mhic Dhomhnaill O'Fotharta, do chlannaibh Bhaoiscne, oide scoile 'san gCaladh in Iar gConnactha,*" or "Donal O'Foharty, of the clanna Baoiscne, school teacher in Calow in West Connaught." Donal is an old man now, but all his life has been spent beneath the sky and amid the Twelve Pins which through all the ages have mirrored themselves in that land of lakes. There still the Gaelic rings melodious in fair and harvest fields; there on the Sundays and holidays the congregations yet yield up their hearts in the fashion of their fathers; there the foreign song or the music of the Gall has not yet pierced, and the audiences round the winter hearths still shudder at the tales of the phooka, marvel at the might of the giants, revel in the splendours of the slaugh sidhe, and, possibly, hope some day to catch a leprechaun. Amongst them Domhnall O'Foharty has moved, and filled his soul with their songs and stories, noted their beliefs, and made a little book

of all that delighted them. Even though his neighbourhood has preserved much of its olden characteristics, he notes a change.

“How different,” he says, “the world from what it was long ago, when we would be satisfied with simple fun among the neighbours when they gathered together when the night drew night. There they amused each other, and the youngsters heard the tales of the olden days. It’s many a night I’ve spent in such a fashion myself, and I like to go back in my own mind and think of the people who used to gather and of the talk and the tales that circled round us then. To-day the people are gone, and the old customs they followed are fast going after them, but here I will set down a little of what is left.”

This little is his book, “Siamsa an Gheimridh,” or “Amusements of the Winter,” which was given to the Irish public in 1892. It includes folk-tales, folk-songs, riddles, charms, and proverbs. Of the songs I shall speak later, the stories are in some cases replicas of ones with which we are familiar, such as “An Bheirt Dhearbh Rathar,” or the “Two Brothers,” which is our friend, “Little Fairly,” of Samuel Lover, and “Owney and Owney na Peek,” of Griffin. Others, however, like that entitled, “Deirdre” (not the famous classic), are quite distinct tales. Of course the majority of them are concerned with the *daoine maithe*, or good people, and as an example I would direct you to “Diarmuid Sugach an chaoi ar cuir se ar na Daoinibh Maithe,” or “Merry Dermot, and the way He Played with the Good People.” These stories will be translated and published in our columns later on. Other fine stories, but much longer, are “Leaidhe na Luaithe,” or “The Lazy Fellow,” and “The Leprechaun.”

These tales some may say are too simple to go before the world as a nation’s literature, but as I hope to show later on, they possess all the essentials of a literature – love of Nature, a high ideal of manliness, a noble ideal of women, and a thorough appreciation of the beautiful in sound and vision. If these are not underlying fundamentals of literature in its highest sense, I know not on what it should be built. One will never find brute force triumphing, or vice victorious in those tales, and though real life does not always give the goal to the right, the underlying belief in truth and justice, evident from all these tales,

argues a temperament capable of the highest flights of romance or poetry.

III.

From The United Irishman, February 23, 1901.

So much for the prose. The poetry is far more satisfying to the ordinary reader. It includes every class of verse, from the rollicking drinking song to the tenderest love lyric. To Dr. Hyde we are indebted for the greater part of this branch of our literature, but others worthy of all praise are J. H. Lloyd, Tadhg O'Donoghue, Domhnal O'Foharty, J. C. Ward, Michael Martin, James Fenton, &c. Writing as far back as 1885 of these "Songs of the People," Dr Hyde in the *Dublin University Review* paid a tribute to their beauty and delicacy.

"As to the verses themselves," he says,

"... they are generally full of naivete, and as such they form the most extreme contrast to the poems of the regular bards, which are refined and polished away to a ruinous extent, making in too many instances the sense subservient to the sound... It has always been the bane of Irish song that the bards lavished upon the poem that attention which ought to have been bestowed upon the matter, and while the structure of their verse in melody and smoothness, as well as variety of rhythmic measure, exceeds anything of which an Englishman could form a conception, surpassing by far what we meet with in most modern literature, the poverty of the matter is unhappily too often such as to render pitiable any attempt at translation, which, if at all literal, must only produce a smile of contempt. In this respect they resemble a good deal the collections which we meet in any Italian *canzoniere*, delicious to sing, and haunting the brain with their melody, but if in pursuit you go deeper,

'Allured by the light that shone,'

...you generally find that as in Moore's Lagenian mines, the sparkle has been merely on the surface. But with the Arcadian verses that live amongst the peasantry, verses generated from the locality and the issue of direct emotions and natural spontaneous feeling, it is quite otherwise. They are melodious, it is true, and rhythmical enough, but still there is a directness and force about them which we miss in the more educated productions of the last century... Of all the verses in which the peasantry delight, the love songs are by far the best. Many of them are genuinely pathetic, and speak the very excess of passion in nearly all its phases, generally its most despairing ones... Here is a song in which a lover, having opened all his mind to his mistress for the first time, and

apparently meeting with a favourable answer, becomes suddenly enraptured with the beauty of everything round him and exclaims twice:

‘Ta na ba ag geimnig, agus na gamhna da ndiuil,
Agus a chuisle gheal mo chleibhe ‘s leat aleig me mo run.’

‘Oh! the kine they are lowing, and the calves are at play,
And you, white pulse of my bosom, you have had my secret to-day.’

In another poem the lover seems to have been less successful, for he cries in agony:

‘Is mar sin ata mo chroidhe sa deunadh piosaidhe ann mo lar,
Mar bheith crainn ilar sleibhe a’s e gan freamha no croidhe slan.’

‘Oh! my heart is breaking slowly, breaking in the midst of me
As the roots on some wild mountain give beneath the lonely tree.’

Another song sings the beauty of some ‘Ainnir na naoi n-orfholt,’ or ‘Girl of the Nine Gold Tresses,’ of whom her admirer cries with more than Celtic hyperbole:

‘Nac raibh a solus sgeimhe
I ngleann na Reultan,
Agus lasadh ceud i mbarr gach dlaoigh.’

‘In the valley of starlight
Such splendour of beauty,
There shines light for a hundred from each gold hair.’”

The title of the article from which I have taken these extracts is “The Unpublished Songs of Ireland.” Since then in various places, but more especially in the *Gaelic Journal*, in Dr. Hyde’s own book, “The Love Songs of Connacht,” in his articles, “Song of the Connacht Bards,” in the old *Nation*, and “Religious Songs of Connacht” in the *New Ireland Review*, in O’Foharty’s “Siamsa an Gheimhridh,” in *United Ireland*, the *Cork Weekly Examiner*, *Fainne an Lae*, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the *Independent*, *St. Patrick’s*, quite a host of pieces have at least been preserved from extinction, so most of them are “unpublished” no longer.

The Connaught love songs are, of course, the most accessible of these collections, and even the mere English reader will be charmed with them. All the lyrical swing and rhythm peculiar to Irish song are here linked with a tenderness and pathos, or oftentimes a note of

joyous triumph that one seeks for vainly in all the overwrought and sound-laden verse of English-writing poets. Listen to this little song by a Mayo peasant:

“Did I stand on the bald top of Nefin
And my hundred-times loved one with me,
We should nestle together as safe in
Its shades as the birds on a tree.
From your lips such a music is shaken,
When you speak it awakens my pain,
And my eyelids by sleep are forsaken,
And I seek for my slumber in vain.

But were I on the fields of the ocean
I should sport on its infinite room,
I should plough through the billows’ commotion
Though my friends should look dark at my doom.
For the flower of all maidens of magic
Is beside me where’er I may be,
And my heart like a coal is extinguished,
Not a woman takes pity on me.

How well for the birds in all weather,
They rise up on high in the air
And then sleep on one bough together
Without sorrow or trouble or care;
But so it is not in this world
For myself and my thousand-times fair,
For away, far apart from each other,
Each day rises barren and bare.

Say, what dost thou think of the heavens
When the heat overmasters the day,
Or what when the steam of the tide
Rises up in the face of the bay?
Even so is the man who has given
An inordinate love-gift away

Like a tree on a mountain all riven
Without blossom or leaflet or spray.”

And this song of a Connemara girl is delightful in its intensity of love and sorrow – it is wedded to a splendid air, but even in a cold reading the magical swing of its numbers cannot fail to attract:

“Ringleted youth of my love,
With thy locks bound loosely behind thee;
You passed by the road above,
But you never came in to find me.
Where were the harm for you
If you came for a little to see me?
Your kiss is a wakening jew
Were I ever so ill or so dreamy.

If I had golden store
I would make a nice little boreen
To lead straight up to his door,
The door of the house of my storeen;
Hoping to God not to miss
The sound of his footfall in it,
I have waited so long for his kiss
That for days I have slept not a minute.

I thought, O my love! You were so -
As the moon is, or sun on a fountain,
And I thought after that you were snow,
The cold snow on top of the mountain;
And I thought after that, you were more
Like God’s lamp shining to find me,
Or the bright star of knowledge before,
And the star of knowledge behind me.

You promised me high-heeled shoes,
And satin and silk, my storeen,
And to follow me, never to lose,
Though the ocean were round us roaring;
Like a bush in a gap in a wall

I am now left lonely without thee,
And this house I grow dead of, is all
That I see around or about me.”

So, too, is that almost equally fine piece, entitled “An Bhrigdeach.” But possibly the queen of Irish love songs is that entitled “Cailin Beag an Ghleanna:”

“O youth whom I have kissed, like a star through the mist,
I have given thee this heart altogether;
And you promised me to be at the greenwood for me,
Until we took counsel together;
But know my love, though late, that no sin is so great,
For which angels hate the deceiver,
As first to steal the bliss of a maiden with a kiss,
To deceive after this and to leave her.

And do you now repent for leaving me down bent
With the trouble of the world going through me,
Preferring sheep and kine and the silver of the mine
And the black mountain heifers to me?
I would sooner win a youth to love me in his truth
Than the riches that you, love, have chosen,
Who would come to me and play by my side every day
With a young heart gay and unfrozen.

And when the sun goes round I sink upon the ground,
I feel my bitter wound at that hour;
All pallid, full of gloom, like one from out a tomb,
O Mary’s Son, without power.
And all my friends not dead are casting at my head
Reproaches at my own sad undoing,
And this is what they say, ‘Since yourself went astray
Go and suffer so to-day in your ruin.’”

That image of the star through the mist is a favourite one with our poets; and that warning which the maiden breathes in the first stanza appears also in a very favourite Ulster song, “Coillte Glas Tricuha” (The Green Woods of Truagh”), printed by Mr. Lloyd in the

Gaelic Journal a few years ago, the only difference being that in this latter song it is the man upbraids the maiden. All the songs, however, are not in praise of women. In O'Foharty's book such pieces as "An Chiomach," or "The Slattern," giving versions from Connacht, Beara, and Donegal, are included. This poem is a terribly sarcastic diatribe on the enormity of marrying for the sake of a few had of cattle or a "bit o' land," and in fact, to some extent, on the folly of marrying at all. Such pieces, however, are not very numerous, for evidently the poet takes greater pleasure in idealising life than in painting its grim realities. The sorrow of unrequited affection, the misery of blighted affection, or the uncertainty that is at once a pain and pleasure, these are generally his themes; but the prosaic miseries of matrimony, as a rule, seldom win his attention. The last four Oireachtasa brought out many fine pieces hitherto unknown outside their immediate districts. Michael Martin, of Dingle, was the greatest contributor, and his "Bolg Dana" contains examples of almost all kinds of verse, including love songs, dirges, and pathetic pieces. It is a remarkable fact that the political strife of the last hundred and fifty years has affected Gaelic poetry very little. Very few songs in Gaelic deal with '98, songs about O'Connell are not very numerous either, and of later days there are no political songs. The only lays at all approaching that style of composition are the Ribbon songs, of which examples will be found in O'Daly and in this collection of Michael Martin. These, of course, narrow in their views, in no way represent the general political feeling of the people. That there were songs of a strongly National character in the political sense I am convinced, but the early collectors having little or no sympathy with the strong feelings of the poets looked on them with contempt, and neglected to take them down. A song extolling the Stuarts was a safe thing; but one inculcating an Irish policy for Irishmen was quite a different matter; hence we have but few songs that can be called political, for the generations that preserved them have been gone for many years. Of this class of song the most famous is one yet remembered in Tipperary, with the refrain, "Taim-se i mo chodladh no's for mo sgenl," or, "I'm Asleep or the Truth I Declare." The air is a very fine one, not to be confounded with the great air "Taim-se I mo chodladh 's na duisigh me."

IV.

From The United Irishman, March 2, 1901.

Of other collections of verse, the pieces which have secured most popularity are those collected by Mr. Lloyd, "An Buinnean Buidhe," "Siobhan Nig Uidhir," and "Coillte Glasa Triucha," mentioned above, which two former have become especially well known through their insertion in "Ceol Sidhe." "The Buinnean Buidhe" is one of the finest additions to our store of folk-songs, and is in many respects one of the best songs we possess. It is known all over the North-West and West, but the version given by Mr. Lloyd comes from Donegal. The poet, rejected by his sweetheart for imbibing rather freely, comes on a wintry night to a frozen pool, where he finds a bittern, lying stiff and dead. He proceeds to lament the bird, and moralising on its fate, reflects on the fallacy of teetotalism, pointing out that death must come if thirst be not appeased. There is a touch of grim humour in his conclusions which is absent from most of our folk songs. We know that the ancient bards were credited with mighty powers of sarcasm and invective, and traces of this faculty are not unknown in later days, Aodhagain O'Rathallaigh and Eoghan Ruadh especially, were dowered with no small share of it. Irony and satire are not absent either, Mangan's glorious version of "Bean na tri mBo" is a good example, and Dr. Hyde in the "Roman Earl" has recovered a specimen of a grimmer kind. Of humour proper there are many examples in our poetry, but the poems otherwise are not remarkable. In the prose one often meets real humour. Dr. Hyde's story "An Piobaire agus an Puca," will repay a reading even in English, but for the general merit of the lot the little tale in "Leabhar Sgeulaigheachta" may well stand: -

"There was a man once and he had a beautiful daughter, and every man was in love with her. There used to be two youths coming to court her. One of them she liked, and the other she did not. The man she didn't like used to often come to her father's house to be in her company, but the other whom she liked used to come but seldom. Her father preferred her to marry him who came often, and he prepared a great dinner, one day, to which he invited everybody. When all were gathered he says to the girl 'Drink now,' says he, 'to the man you prefer best in this company,' for he thought that she would toast him whom he liked

himself. She raised the glass in her hand and she stood up and looked around, and then gave this quartrain: -

I drink to the health of Often Who Came,
Who Often Came Not I also must name,
Who Often Came Not I often must blame,
That he came not as often as Often Who Came.

She sat down when she had given the lines and spoke no more that evening. But 'Often Who Came' came not after that, for he knew he was not wanted, and she married the man of her choice, with her father's permission."

All this literature has been committed to print within our days. In Mr. P. O'Brien's "Blaithfhleasg de Mhulseanna na Gaedhilge" we get a specimen of the tales written by the Irish writers of the last century, and existing in great part still in MS. This book contains three stories, "The Adventures of Torlogh MacStairn," "The Adventures of his Three Sons," and a tale entitled "The Bruighean Bo." They are all remarkable for great imaginative power, and though of course highly improbable, still as romantic tales are entitled to rank with any of the adventures of knight or cavalier which have made the Romance languages famous. As a type of what lies unread, and in great measure unknown in our literature, they are extremely valuable.

So much for the traditional or MS. literature of the Gael. It has not been the only product of our times. As I observed earlier, Irish poetry has never ceased to be written, but Irish prose probably has. Of original prose work in Irish in these later days the only examples are those afforded by the various journals here and in America devoted to Gaelic. These articles, written largely for the hour, are consequently not of permanent interest. Of workers in the cause, one of the veterans is certainly Mr O'Neill Russell, whose labours here and among our kindred in the United States can never be forgotten. His book, "Teanga Tioramhail na h-Eireann," is an endeavour to give to modern Irishmen a book in classic Irish that is in the tongue which all our people, acquainted with the written language, can understand and appreciate. The style is vigorous, and based as it is on the best models, must certainly become popular. It occupies the place of the "Essay" in Irish, and is a book that one can turn to with pleasure as a fount of encouragement when the outlook for the old cause is dim and

cheerless. Dr. Hyde's Gaelic articles dealing with the "Love Songs" and "Religious Songs of Connacht" are excellent examples of what Irish is capable of in criticism. They are written in the simplest fashion, and contain no word that would elude the intelligence of any peasant.

The advent of *Fainne an Lae*, and later on of *Claidheamh Soluis*, introduced to the public writers of whom little had previously been heard. Of them, by far the best was Donnchadh Fleming, whose death last year deprived Irish literature of its most promising writer. His "Eactra na n-Argonantac" will be found to be one of the best additions which Irish literature has received in our time, and a prime service, too, would be the gathering of the various articles contributed by John Fleming to the early numbers of the *Gaelic Journal*.

The greatest glory of our recent literature is, however, its poetry. Here also Dr. Hyde is pre-eminent, but it is regretted by those best able to judge that the Craoibhin has not written less in the metres of the foreigner. The English reader can scarcely appreciate the difference that lies between Irish and English systems of rhyming. This is not the place to enter into a disquisition on them, but anyone acquainted with the street ballads of a half century since will have little difficulty in understanding in what the styles differ. Dr. Hyde's poems have been gathered to an extent in two little volumes, "Duanaire na Nuadh Ghaedhilge," and more recently in "Ubhla de'n Chraobh." Of them possibly the finest is his "Smuainte Broin," or "Sorrowful Thoughts," included in the first book, which has been translated by O'Donovan Rossa, and ought to be better favoured by our reciters than it has been. It is unfortunately too long to quote, but it may be recommended as absolutely the most National of recent Irish poems. Here, however, is one that tells its own story: -

"O'er the sounding sea many wild waves flee,
Till they burst in glee on the shell-strewn shore;
Many blithe birds sing in the shining spring,
Or, on sun-tipped wing, through the ether soar;
In the blossomed trees on the light-flecked leas,
The flower-fed bees swarm day by day;

But the sweets they miss of my honeyed bliss
In your echoed kiss, my young 'Queen of May!'

"Many grains of sand make that sea-swept strand,
Many grass-stalks stand in yon meadow green;
Many sweet songs float from the wren's small throat -
But the whole to note 'twere less hard, I ween,
Than of kisses count the combined amount
Which our hearts' love-fount yield myself and bride;
When the lilting lay of the skylark gay
Hails the blush of day o'er the green hillside.

"Ere the sun's first ray tinged the mountain gray,
Love-tranced we lay, dear – yourself and I;
With no one near us, to see or hear us,
What spell could bear us to earth or sky?
While above and 'round swelled a joyous sound
(God's praise profound – from the woods and air),
We listened dreaming – but, to my seeming -
To music teeming we gave no care.

"The birds in chorus sang – 'Night is o'er us,
And Day's before us with radiant smile;
But little heeding how time was speeding,
Our thoughts were reading our hearts the while.
My 'Sunburst streaming!' 'My Pole-Star gleaming!'
On me you're beaming, my mild 'May-dawn!'
My sweetest pleasure! my joy's full measure!
Through life to treasure, mo mhuirnin ban!"¹

The constant recurrence of rhyme here is an attempt to follow the original, but English is a bad medium for such exercises. The Craobhin is very fond of the past. Here is a dramatic little poem which tells its own tale. It is entitled "A Day in Eirinn": -

¹ The translation appeared originally in *United Ireland*; I am unaware of the identity of the translator.

“Four gleaming scythes in the sunshine swaying,
Thro’ the deep hush of a summer’s day,
Before their edges four stout men sweeping
In tuneful measure the fragrant hay,
Myself the fourt of them, strong and happy,
My keen blue steel moving fast and free,
Oh! little then was the broadest meadow
And light the heaviest scythe to me.

O King of Glory! what a charge is o’er me,
Since the young blood thrilled me long, long ago,
When each day found me, with the sunshine round me,
And the tall grass falling to my every blow,
O’er the dewy meadows came the *cailins’* voices,
Ringing glad and merry as they raked the hay,
Oh! the hours pass quickly as a beam of sunshine
When the years are rosy and the heart is gay.

Like fairy minstrels, the bees a-humming
Went honey-sucking from flower to flower,
Like golden berries in the distance gleaming,
I’ve watched and listened to them hour by hour.
And the butterflies on the sunbeams riding,
With wings surpassing e’en the blush of dawn,
Or like fairy jewels, full of light and splendour,
On the golden crown of the *bouchalan*.

The blackbird’s lay in the woods rang clearly,
The thrush’s note echoed far and high,
While the lark’s full song, like a bell’s vibration,
Came floating down from the midmost sky,
From his leafy station the linnet lifted
His little voice in the hazel glen,
And oh, God of Grace! was not life a pleasure
In our green and beautiful Eirinn then!”

This also is taken from “Duanair na Nuadh Ghaedhilge.” Beside them in the book are a number of pieces signed “Padraic,” the work of

Patrick O'Byrne, now of Killybegs, who more than anyone else has contributed to keep alive interest in Gaelic amongst our people in America. He, too, writes in modern modes, but his pieces are exceedingly melodious, especially such of them as "Bas an Fhilidh," "An t-Am Fad O," "Smuainte ar Eirinn," "Cuireadh," "Tog suas an Chlairseach," &c. Then our friend Mr. Russell is also in the ranks of the bards, and many of his lays are very singable, which is a very rare quality in most songs I would especially refer to "An Fhuiseog," "An Fhuiseogin Dearg," and "An Cuaichin Binn."

These men represent the van of the movement. Long before any of the prominent men of the day were heard of, and in fact when most of them were still at school, these three men were working in silence, day in and day out, to waken the people from the lethargy in which the last agitation steeped them. To-day, thanks to their efforts, the signs of a new literature, full of every characteristic of the past, are becoming plainer. Among poets who have been working consistently for years, Domhnall O'Loingsigh holds a high place. Most of his work is in the modern mode, but he has written songs in the old style, and his "Ta an la ag Teach," "Ar nGaedhilge Binn," and "A Dhia Saor Eire" have been long and bid fair to remain long popular. Robert MacSharry Gordon (An Gabhar Donn) has also given us some melodious pieces, and is one of the few Gaelic poets who have attempted the sonnet. Patrick Staunton, of Cork; Captain Norris, of New York; Father O'Reilly, of Kerry, Father O'Growney, have been all more or less successful as versifiers. Among even more recent men, striking pieces have come from Tadhg O'Donnchadha, who would be much more popular if he favoured the faults of the Munster school to a less degree than he does. His verse is often archaic in its vocabulary, and a popular poet needs to be simple in his diction. Mr. J. H. Lloyd in his fine song, "Leathadh an Ghaedhilg," Michael O'Sullivan in his "Cailin Deas Cruidhte na mBo," Dermot Foley in his "Rallying Song," Seamus O'Seaghda in quite a number of songs, notably "An Cailin Donn," Osborn Bergin in a few very musical little lyrics, Tadhg MacSuibhne in some two or three swinging songs like "Slainte na nGaedheal," and Daniel O'Connor, of Mill-street, a poet of great promise, have all contributed to the growing literature of the nation. They are all young

men, and may confidently be looked to, to maintain the high standard handed down by such writers as "Liam Dall," Seaghan O'Cullane, Andrias MacCraith, Seaghan O'Tuama, &c.

I have yet to refer to another branch of our literature which is the growth of the last two or three years, and which one may say to have never had a previous existence. Hero and romantic tales we have had, but the story in the modern acceptance of the term has only come to us since the Oireachtas started. A few men have distinguished themselves in this line. Father O'Leary, of Castlelyons, practically began it with his "Seadhna," which ran for some months in the *Gaelic Journal*, but the short story or sketch in Irish has been begun by such writers as P. T. MacGinley of Donegal, James Doyle, now of Derry, Father Hynes of Sligo, but above and beyond all, by Patrick O'Shea of the Belfast Gaelic League. It is not deprecating the others to say that such tales of Mr. O'Shea's as "Eachtra Risteaird" and "Laeteanna Sgola" have never been surpassed in modern Irish. I know of few figures more calculated to stir the heart than that of Nora Ni Fhailbhe in this latter story. Dickens, with all that we hear of his mastery of the heart, never created a more lovable character. She is an ideal Irish girl, and it is to be hoped that the promised volume of Mr. O'Shea's stories will soon be given to us that our girls may be introduced to Nora and taught to know their duty to Ireland as well as she. To Father O'Leary we owe likewise the initiation of another phase of our literature – the dramatic. Years ago Father O'Carroll in the *Gaelic Journal* gave us a few historic dramatic episodes in Irish, but the play as a play has been initiated by "Tadhg Soar," and that very fine tragedy, "Bas Dallain," which has passages worthy of the drama of any country, more especially the speech of Seanchan Torpeist in the last act. Mr. MacGinley in "An Bhean Deirce" has essayed this style, too, rather successfully, and Dr. Hyde's "Casadh an t-Sugain" is said to be excellent. It needs but a few public performances to test whether or not these pieces, which read excellently, possess the cardinal quality of a drama, suitability for stage purposes.

V.

From The United Irishman, March 9, 1901.

I have thus endeavoured to give you an idea of a literature which has grown up around us, almost without the knowledge of the majority of us. About 1891 a few enthusiasts conceived the idea of again attempting the work begun and left unfinished by Young Ireland. Around them they gathered what has become a yearly increasing circle. Some few books of value have been the result, but the greater result was one not looked for by the *renaissants*. The idea of making an Irish literature in English stirred some few to the thought of an Irish literature in Irish, to continue the chain which links us with a history whose beginning is lost in the depths of time. The great gap embracing the Penal Days and all the years between them and ours was, as far as the world was aware, a vast blank in Irish literature. These collections with which I have dealt cover part of the chasm, further labours will completely bridge it, and where the traditional lays and stories end, the continuance is taken up by the men to-day endeavouring to produce still a literature for Ireland. There are many people professing an interest in the Irish language who tell you they would learn it if there were anything to be read in it at the end of their labour. To such as these I trust this little effort of mine may be some proof that their doubts are, to say the least, not on the best foundations. There are others who sneer at the poverty of Gaelic literature – to such I would quote the words of Dr. Hyde: “If anyone is still found,” he writes,

“... to repeat Macaulay’s hackneyed taunt about our race never having produced a great poem, let him ask himself if it is likely that a country where, for one hundred years after Aughrim and the Boyne, teachers, who for long before that had been in great danger, were systematically knocked on the head or sent to a jail for teaching; where children were seen learning their letters with chalk on their father’s tombstones, other means being denied them; where the possession of a manuscript might lead to the owner’s death or imprisonment, so that many valuable books were buried in the ground or hidden to rot in the walls; whether such a country were a soil on which an epic or anything else could flourish. How in the face of all this the men of the eighteenth century preserved

in manuscript so much of the Ossianic poetry as they did, and even rewrote or redacted portions of it, as Michael Comyn is said to have done to 'Ossian in the Land of the Young,' is to me nothing short of amazing."

I shall not stop to discuss the suitability of Irish for all the purposes of fiction. Until a few years ago an erroneous idea existed that Irish was an impossible tongue for the teaching of science. That error has been dispelled. It would be outside our province to suggest what might be utilised by future Gaelic writers for material – their own tastes more than anything else will suggest subjects. There exists in manuscript historical tales sufficient to fill, according to O'Curry, 4,000 pages of the size of the "Annals of the Four Masters." Of tales about Finn, Ossian, and the Fenians, material exists sufficient to fill 3,000 pages, and in addition there exists a number of imaginative stories, neither historical nor Fenian, computed at around 5,000 pages, not to speak of the romances of the last three centuries. All these certainly point to a mine of wealth that, rewritten to suit the changes of the language, would place ours on a level with the literature of any language. Something of this nature has been done by the publication by David Comyn of "MacGnionantha Finn," and, within the last few days, of Mr. T. O'Neill Russell's "Boromha Laighean." Your own minds will conjure up for you what these old tales and stories might become treated by some Gaelic Scott or Victor Hugo. The everyday life of Ireland can, at least, furnish the same material to the Irish writer as to him who endeavours to paint our people properly in English. Of the nature of these old and locked-up treasures an idea may be gleaned from the "Silva Gaedilica" of S. Hayes O'Grady, or from the various extracts in Dr. Hyde's splendid little book, "The Story of Early Gaelic Literature," to which I am indebted for much of the basis of these papers, and in his great work, "The Literary History of Ireland."

It is rather labouring the question to point out how much we should gain by a general adoption of Gaelic. Firstly, we should emancipate ourselves from the servitude and soullessness which an entire dependence on a foreign literature entails. However national one may remain, the presence of a shoal of magazine literature in our midst must have an effect. We can only counteract it by producing something ourselves; and a magazine in Gaelic, with modern themes

and studies of the everyday life of Ireland, in Irish, would be the greatest barrier we could possibly raise against the tide of threepenny monthlies which threatens to turn the tastes of our youth into insipid and colourless channels, with no higher ideals than the study of criminals' skulls or the relative size of the British Empire and some particular journal's circulation. Besides, a Gaelic market at home would provide a field for our writers, who are forced away, to become the drudges of the Saxon, to write against their convictions, and sink, in the struggle for bread, the abilities that, directed in some proper channels, might produce a masterpiece. By the adoption of Gaelic we will gradually wean ourselves from fashions and habits that have grown on us unknowingly, we will become what we claim to be, and strengthen to an almost incalculable extent our claim to individual nationhood.

But this change is not to be wrought in a day or a year, nor in a lifetime possibly, and what shall we do in the meantime? As I observed in the beginning of this series, I think "Knocknagow" an exact and faithful transcript of Irish life, and I will go so far as to say that some of Frank Fahy's poems could be written by no one but an Irishman. Are we to kill off the people capable of producing work like this? Are we to discourage an attempt to give the English-speaking portion of our race something representative of themselves? Let us say what we will, no man's ideal of Irish nationhood will be lowered by reading Davis or Mitchel. No man will be the less an Irishman because the lines of Mangan and Williams and Casey and O'Donnell surge through his memory. No man can be false to Ireland if he follows their teaching. They have not, perhaps, given us distinctly national literature, but they have given us a Nationalist one, and the horizon of a free Ireland was before their eyes as they wrote. Let us look around to-day and weigh the position of affairs – two millions at least of our population can never hope to be able to appreciate a Gaelic literature. Are we going to deprive them of a substitute, even though a bad one, in English? If we do, their children will not be even as Irish as themselves. For a generation or two yet we must have Irish writers in English, just as till we are independent we shall have to use English in our daily life. It is a narrow view, considering the circumstances, to

say that all effort must be concentrated in purely Gaelic channels. It means that men who otherwise might do good, men with sympathies wholly Irish, are to be shut off from all participation in the uprise of the nation because fortune did not favour them with a Gaelic mother, and consequently cannot reach above mediocrity in the language of their own land. Mr. John MacNeill, writing in the *New Ireland Review* in 1894, altogether discounts the idea of an Anglo-Irish literature, and looks down on "third-rate efforts in English," but to my mind we provide something for those who, through no fault of theirs, are unable to grasp the beauties of Gaelic literature. I shall not here discuss the existence of such an Anglo-Irish school, but it will be manifest from the few extracts I have given that anything ambitioning the title of "Irish style" in English must be simple and direct. No mystification, no introspective or metaphysical ramblings can pass current for Celtic style or spirit. The Celt to-day is as great a believer as ever. He, no doubt, has lost much of the simplicity, most of the superstition, and a great measure of the optimism of old times, but, in the main, he is the same individual who has been contesting the supremacy of this island for centuries. This is true of the Irishman who has come within the influence of English ideas; it is a million times truer of the men beyond the Shannon and the Galtees, the clansmen of Erris and Innisowen. For them, looking westward over the tumbling waves of the Atlantic, Hy Brasil still comes up upon the sunset, for them still the raths and duns are musicful, the banshee wails and the phooka sweeps through the lonely, leafy valleys. For them still the Sluagh Sidhe come in eddying circles up the dusty roads in the summertime, and fairy hands still shake the reeds beside the rivers. Amongst these people and in their thoughts is the real heart of Ireland, the Ireland untouched by time, still fresh and verdant. The key to the heart is the Irish language. It will open to the writer all the manifold charms that have won the commendation even of bitter enemies. Something of its glow and glamour can be represented in English, but only by men whose knowledge has been won by personal contact with them. Through no translation can that soul or spirit be infused. I do not seek to claim as an end an Anglo-Irish literature. I only point it out as one of the roads, and the surest road that can be

travelled by those long disassociated from Gaelic thought and treasure. Its presence and popularity can in no wise injure the fair demesne to which it leads. It will induce many to know more of the real material, where the study incidental to the knowledge might at first deter them. I have endeavoured by Anglo-Irish means to give you some idea of the value of this literature. You may take it that, charming as some of those things have been even in English, the best of them conveys but a very slight idea of the melodiousness and merit of the original. It should be the glory of our time that we have seen the spring of a new Irish literature, let it be our boast also we have done all that we might to secure for it a full and abundant harvest.

WM. ROONEY.

(AN CRIOCH.)