

## Memoirs of Jeremiah Curtin

### *A Quiet Interval*

1887

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I left an overcoat, and all the clothing I could spare, with Norel-putis. The poor old fellow was scantily clothed, and the rainy season was at hand. We crossed the Sierra Nevada mountains and September 12th were in Reno. The scenery in the Weber and the Echo river country interested me. Bluffs of naked limestone stand out like gigantic sentinels. Weber river, as it winds in and out around deep bluffs, is very picturesque. Devil's slide disappointed me ; Moran's painting had created in my mind a much greater slide than the real one. At Green river the train was delayed for four hours. There were two young men, musicians. in our Pullman ; one had a banjo, the other a jew's-harp. ' To shorten time' they played for us. We listened to the music while we watched the beautiful sunset and the shadows creeping over the Wyoming plains. I stopped a day in Buffalo to rest and to see old friends, especially Dr. Tremaine, and my classmate, Wheeler.

On my arrival in Washington, I found that all the force of the bureau of ethnology were at work on Filling's catalogues of Indian pamphlets and books. The work mapped out for me was Alaskan tribes. We settled in pleasant rooms on Capitol hill. Almost the first friend I met was Andrew G. Curtin, and right away we had a long heart to heart talk. He asked me to write his biography, promising to give me every detail of his life, especially of that part connected with the Civil war. ' Many men,' said he, ' have wanted to write up my war history. Some of them have been so persistent that my wife has had to aid me in getting rid of them. They wanted to make money and reputation; they were not interested in me or in anything I have accomplished. My wife said : " Let Jeremiah do it, who is an honest and capable man."

I felt that this was a great compliment, especially as the governor added that for several years he had had me in mind as ' the right man.' But, greatly as I valued Governor Curtin's friendship and confidence, and fully as I realized how much the work would mean for me, I felt that I could not give a year or more of my life to it ; I had still many languages to learn, and journeys to make.

Our life for a few months was quiet. In the bureau I was occupied with the Alaskan work but I found time to read Hebrew and Persian, and with the assistance of Smith, a Cherokee Indian, I learned the Cherokee language. Evening hours were given to study. When I was too weary to work longer, Mrs. Curtin read aloud from the *Mahabharata*. The translator had sent me a complete set of that remarkable book. Later I wrote to Pratapa Chandra Ray : ' I have read carefully from beginning to end twenty-four volumes of your translation of the *Mahabharata* and can honestly say that I have never obtained more pleasure from reading any book. The *Mahabharata* should open the eyes of the world to the true character and intellectual rank of the Aryans of India. You are doing a great work, not only for Hindustan, but for the Aryan race in other countries. The *Mahabharata* is a mine of wealth, not entirely known, I suppose, at present, to any man outside of your country, but which will be known in time and valued in all civilized lands, for the reason that it contains information of the highest import to all men who seek to know in singleness of heart the history of our race upon the earth, and the relations of man with that Infinite Power above us, around us, and in us. Before reading your translation I had studied Sanskrit to the extent of having read in the original the *Hitopadesa*, *Nala*, the *Code of Manu*, and the *Rigveda*. Now, having read your translation, I

have resolved to study all the great poems of India in the original. I have learned Bengalee, which is a very interesting language to a philologist, and is not difficult to read. In a few years I intend to visit India, become personally acquainted with your people, and study the Aryan religion and philosophy in the place of their birth and development.'

I once remarked to a far-traveled man and philosopher that for me the conquest of India was justified by the opening up to the world the wealth of thought in the literature, and that if England had done nothing more than make Sanskrit accessible to us, the fruits of the conquest would have been rich. He replied that perhaps at the end of the story that would be the chief result.

The idea that the colossal nature has dwarfed men is not true. Not greatness dwarfs men, but littleness, petty surroundings, petty associates, petty interests dwarf. Nowhere has the imagination of man been so active, mirrored in itself such colossal pictures and many of them so true as in Hindustan.

That Thanksgiving was a particularly happy one. I was free of care ; I was in a beautiful city and among friends. We spent Christmas in Vermont with Mrs. Curtin's parents. New Year's day we were back in Washington. We were now a family of three for my wife's sister was with us. Leisure hours I spent in reading the *Koran* in Arabic. In June we journeyed to Warren again, called there by the death of my wife's grandmother, a woman whom I admired and loved. I worked diligently all the year of 1887 [1886]. I rose before five o'clock, took a short walk, ate breakfast by gas light, then studied till nine o'clock—I was at work on Oriental languages. From 9:00 a.m. till 4:00 p.m. I was occupied at the bureau. Toward the end of March, 1888 [1887], I went to Versailles, New York, to work with the Seneca Indians. A week later I visited Buffalo to consult Dr. Tremaine, who told me, most emphatically, that mental rest was necessary. Nevertheless, I went back to Versailles and continued my work.

May 2<sup>nd</sup> I was present at an Indian funeral feast given by George White for his wife, ten days after her death. It was the last time that her spirit would enter the house and eat. A large quantity of cooked food was placed on tables in the living room of the house. An old man rose and eulogized the dead woman. Then he divided her clothing among her intimate friends. The relatives retained nothing ; every article was given away. Then came the division of the food ; none of it was used in the house. The Indians who participated in this funeral ceremony were all pagans. I like the pagan Indians better than the so-called Christian Indians ; they were more truthful, faithful, and intelligent.

A week after this event I gave a ' pot feast ' to the Indians of New Town, the pagan Indians who still adhered to their old customs. It was their usual spring festival after planting was over. I simply paid for the uncooked food. They assembled at the Long house. Three fires were built outside and over each fire a huge kettle was hung. In one kettle hulled corn was heated ; in the second beef soup was made ; and in the third pork soup with brown beans. When each man and woman had partaken abundantly of the corn and soup, dancing began. The dances that afternoon were all of a religious nature : the ' Feather dance,' ' False face dance,' and other dances in honor of the Great Spirit, who gave the blessed springtime to man.

#### First Visit to Ireland (1887)

June 1<sup>st</sup> [1887] I went to Washington, and on the 4<sup>th</sup> we sailed for Ireland. For many years I had been possessed with the idea that there was a great stock of myths current among the people of Ireland, as well as many of that class of facts which throw light on the history of

the human mind. Facts of value to the scientific world. I hoped that there might still remain in the minds of the people of the remote districts of Ireland many idioms useful in explaining the language of the manuscripts preserved in the Irish academy, and myths that would supplement and strengthen recorded mythology. I was going to Ireland to settle that question.

I wanted to cross the ocean on the *City of Chicago*, of the Inman line. On inquiry I found that every stateroom was taken. But determination won the day. By paying seventy-five dollars extra I got the captain's room. The steamer must have carried a thousand passengers that trip. The clearing was interesting. I enjoy looking at unknown faces. At four o'clock all persons not passengers were ordered ashore. Then came the last hurried words and embraces. The immense iron doors, which shut off the pier, were lowered, and the journey began.

In the dining room that evening a lady with two daughters, one a vivacious, joyous girl of eighteen, the other an attractive child of five, had seats opposite us. Could we have looked into the future, we should have known that the three had come into our lives to remain during all the years given to us. I recall the names of only a few of our traveling companions : Father Cronin of Buffalo, a newspaper editor and well known educator ; Father O'Meara; Father Doyle ; Ex-minister to Sweden, Thomas, on his way to Europe as correspondent for *Harper's Magazine* ; Darwin, a gentleman from Australia, who had many interesting facts to tell us about his country ; Mrs. Dougan and her daughters ; and Mrs. Lynch, a typical Irish woman.

During the voyage Mrs. Lynch told me several fairy stories, all ' true.' I remember two : A woman had a beautiful child just learning to talk. One day the child began to fret and soon it became a poor, wizened thing that cried all the time. Once, when the child demanded bread, the mother had to go a mile or more to get it. The moment she was outside the door the boy got pipes out of his cradle somewhere and began to play. He played long and loud till it was time for the woman to come, then he hid the pipes and began to cry. A neighbor was watching him through a crevice in the wall. When the woman came, she said : ' Faith, and that is not your boy at all, but a villain of an old man that the fairies have brought.'

The next day the mother said she was going to a neighbor's. As soon as she was outside, the boy began to play, as before. She opened the door quickly and caught him. Then she knew that the creature in the cradle was a fairy. With the help of her neighbors she gathered hay and sticks to burn him. But he knew her intention. He flew up, out of the chimney, and off. In the cradle lay the woman's beautiful boy.

The second story was about a woman, who had much to do with fairies. Still she always went to mass. In chapel one Sunday the priest told the people to give her neither food nor shelter. She was present when he gave this command. She spoke up and said : ' Faith ye'll not be here yerself today week.'

' Why, what will ye do with me ?' asked the priest.

' Nothing, but ye'll not be here yerself to celebrate mass again.'

And sure he was dead and buried before the week was over. The woman came when they were saying mass for his soul. ' Sure,' said she, ' ye needn't be crying, for this moment he is saying mass in the fairy fort [naming the fort].'

The second or third day of the voyage, Mrs. Lynch and Mr. Thomas became declared enemies. By mistake they bought the same steamer chair, and neither would give it up. A heated controversy ensued. At last Mr. Thomas, speaking to a third person, made a remark

about the ignorance and arrogance of the ‘ newly rich.’ Mrs. Lynch overheard the remark. Her Irish blood boiled up. Good manners were ignored, and Mr. Thomas was informed that he was ‘ no gentleman’ as anybody could see by his face. Mrs. Lynch kept the chair, and thenceforth Mr. Thomas avoided that side of the steamer. The concert for the benefit of sailors was amusing. Father Cronin recited ‘ Lord Ullin’s Daughter’ ; Dr. Powell described his friend Buffalo Bill ; another gentleman told us ‘ the *real* Enoch Arden story’ ; and I related the story of Pan Tverdovski. There was considerable music, and a good deal of mirth.

Monday the 13<sup>th</sup> land was sighted and, at six o’clock that afternoon, together with the priests, Mrs. Lynch, and a number of other passengers, among whom was our friend with her two daughters, we were landed at Queenstown. The view from that magnificent bay could never be finer. The glow of a brilliant sunset was over the entire city. It was a glorious picture ! Father Cronin, returning to his birthplace after an absence of thirty years, was carried away with enthusiasm. Speaking of the size of the bay he declared that all the shipping of the world could find room there.

At the landing we were greeted by beggars. One of Dickens’ characters was there, a dwarf who took a Saratoga trunk on his shoulders and pushed through the crowd. Americans have a distrust of railroad officials. Hence, there was general consternation when we found that no checks were given for our baggage. Only a few of us expected to see it again. While waiting for the train, Mrs. Lynch asked a man to bring her a glass of water, for she felt ill. This he did with the remark : ‘ You are a strong woman to be so weak, but wait till ye have three blue duck eggs to eat. Faith they will cure ye.’

Fourteen of our traveling companions went with us to the Royal Victoria hotel in Cork, and for a number of days we made excursions together, up the Lee, to Blarney castle, and other places of interest. One day, when at the station to see a friend off, I witnessed a pathetic parting. An old, ragged, careworn woman was taking leave of her grandson, who had been ordered to the army. She made no effort to control her grief. She wrung her hands, cried aloud, and screamed with despair. At last her two daughters dragged her away screaming and cursing the queen. Tears were in the eyes and wrath in the heart of many of the onlookers. Not a few of us felt like joining the old woman in her curses.

At Blarney castle attempts to kiss the Blarney stone caused much mirth. It was agreed that we would hold a certain young lady of the party by the feet while she reached down and kissed the stone, then each man would kiss her. She reached the stone, or professed to, then we drew her back, but, with female craft she kissed Father Cronin, then declared that after kissing a priest it would be sacrilege to kiss an ordinary man.

Near the castle are Druidic places of worship which greatly interested me. Rock altars facing east and west ; on the east morning worship ; on the west evening worship—pure sun adoration. While in Cork, I spent the greater part of three days with Dr. Sullivan, president of Queen’s college, one of Ireland’s celebrated Gaelic scholars, an intensely patriotic man. We talked about the political condition of the country. And he told of his career, and the obstacles that had been maliciously placed in his path. A grandchild, four years old, was making ‘ grandpa a visit.’ Kathleen was a remarkably bright and intelligent little creature. When I asked where her home was, she answered : ‘ I am from County Mayo, God help me !’

Queen’s college, built on a low hill, overlooks the city. The grounds around it are extensive and beautiful. It is an ideal home for a scholar, but Dr. Sullivan was old, and his strength was failing under the burdens he bore.

At this time William O'Brien and his friend Kilbride returned from Canada. Crowds welcomed them with enthusiastic demonstrations of joy. While in Canada, O'Brien narrowly escaped death, but he succeeded in thoroughly exposing Lord Landsdown and his treatment of his Irish tenants. A reception was held for the patriot, and there was a banquet in the hall of commerce. The banquet began at eight in the evening and ended at two o'clock in the morning. There was a brilliant assembly. The leaders of O'Brien's party were present, and many of the important citizens of Cork and Dublin. There was speech making ; wit and repartee sent telling shafts here and there ; good feeling and patriotism prevailed. Toward the end patriotic songs were sung. I was glad to make the acquaintance of so many of Ireland's patriots.

From Cork to Tralee the country looks like a gigantic checkerboard. The blocks are of all sizes and shapes ; the dividing lines are stone walls and earth ridges covered with moss. The land is mainly uncultivated. It is impossible for poor people to pay the exorbitant rent demanded by the landlords ; hence, they go to America, or stay at home and, in many cases, die from lack of sufficient nourishment. At Mallow there was a delay of several hours' duration. I walked around the village and went into two or three houses. In each house I met a pleasant welcome. In the first was an elderly woman, her married daughter, and her daughter's seven young children. The house consisted of one small room with an earth floor, a ladder led to the loft. In the room was a wooden cradle, a board bed, and two or three benches. The family had relatives in America and were interested in the politics of our country. In the second house was a feeble, old woman, who was petting a blind chicken. When I asked her if she knew anything about the fairies, she said : ' No, but my father, who lived when fairies and witches were in Ireland, once saw a firkin of butter walking along the road. When it was near a witch's house, a squad of soldiers met it, and one of the soldiers ran a bayonet through the butter. That stopped the firkin.

' Faith, and my father saw this with his own eyes : One morning a neighbor came to our house, picked up a firebrand, and ran out with it. A man was sitting there who knew what that meant. He took a piece of burning peat and threw it into our butter firkin. If he hadn't done that, we would have been a whole year without butter. It would have been stolen from us, for it was May morning.'

In Tralee I stopped at Blennerhassett Arms. Mrs. Lynch had told me so much about her three old aunts and their experience with fairies that the first move I made was to go to their home. Strand street is a street of straw-thatched houses, and in one of those houses I found Mrs. Lynch and her aunts. The eldest aunt, when a child, had a fairy stroke. Running after cows she got so thirsty that she drank from a spring near a fairy fort. This angered the fairies, ' and from that day out she was blind.' I spent several days in Tralee. I was interested in the quaint, old town. I had met in America a good number of persons who had mentioned it as their birthplace and I found that nearly every family there had relatives in the United States.

From Tralee to Ballybunnion was a pleasant trip by train and jaunting car. Ballybunnion was a dreary place then ; one street with a few shops and two or three business houses ; a row of straw-thatched cottages, the roofs so near the ground that a man while walking along could pull straw from them. On a cliff of the seashore are the ruins of an ancient castle or stronghold ; only one wall is standing, but it is the attraction of the town.

The mouth of the Shannon is around a bluff not far from the old castle. The bluffs along the seashore are honey-combed with caves. At low tide it is possible to row from one into another. About one cave there is a story to which the inhabitants of Ballybunnion give full credence. An Irish king had nine daughters. He found that one of those daughters was in love with a man whom he hated, an enemy, and that she had given him the keys of the fortress.

Unable to discover which one of the nine daughters it was, he had all nine pushed from the edge of the opening into the ocean below, and drowned.

I spent several hours rowing through the caves with Father Cronin and Father Godley. Father Godley told many amusing incidents that had come within his own experience. One was about a couple who came to him to be married. The groom in putting the ring on the bride's finger dropped it, and the accident made her so angry that she struck him a heavy blow on the side of his head, saying, meanwhile, 'Take that, ye fool!'

The man did not retaliate. 'But,' said Father Godley, 'I was very angry and I deeply regretted that I had already spoken the words which made them man and wife.'

He told of a woman a hundred and five years old whom he had 'prepared' The previous Sunday she had walked eight miles to mass and two weeks later she walked the same distance. She lived till she was a hundred and seven years old.

We had been in Ballybunnion a few days when Mrs. Lynch arrived with her little daughter and her maid. Then there was excitement. She hired pipers and invited the young people of the village to a dance. They gathered on the cliff, near the wall of the old castle, and had a merry time. The hotels of Ballybunnion were wretchedly kept. The servants received no pay, they simply 'took their chances,' that is, had what guests gave them.

Ireland in 1887 was in a deplorable condition. Many laborers received for a long day's work only 'one and three pence' (about thirty-one cents), and with this pittance supported a family of eight or ten children. The poor lived almost wholly on what they called gruel, corn meal boiled in water. When they worked for landlords, they were not given food. They got thirty-one cents and 'found' their own sustenance. Mill girls received twenty-five cents a day. It was only fortunate people who could get plenty of potatoes and salt to eat. Walking one day with Father O'Conner, a priest who had twenty parochial schools under his care, we came upon a family of beggars sitting by the roadside—a man, his wife, and five children. When questioned, the man said he could find no work to do. To get enough to keep his family from starving he was forced to travel around and beg from house to house. 'This,' said Father O'Conner, 'is not an unusual case. I am heartsick over the condition of my people.' A priest afterward told me that out of a parish of 27,000 people 10,000 were so poor as to be reduced to begging on the streets of Cork.

I was in search of men who knew myths and could speak Gaelic. I found these men in Ballybunnion. In most cases they were Limerick farmers, who, not well, had come to the sea-shore to rest. The weather was too warm for pleasure out-of-doors, so I assembled the old men in a large room of the hotel, and each day they talked with me in Gaelic, told me of strange adventures, told their 'beliefs' (superstitions), and their myths. One of my myth tellers was O'Conner, a Limerick man. He knew the story of the battle fought at Bantry bay, 'a battle which lasted a year and a day and ended when only seven men of all the great forces were left.'

O'Conner was a believer in fairies. He had many incidents to relate which had come under his own observation. One was of a Protestant clergyman who bought land on which there was a fairy fort. [1] The clergyman had the fort leveled to the ground. 'But if he did, he was never well from that day out, and died inside of twelve months.'

A feeble, old man told me a few myths which he knew. When his daughter came to help him home, I had food brought for her. She refused to eat, but I insisted, and she yielded.

Though forty years old, it was the first time she had ever sat at a table covered with a cloth. Among other eatables there was fruit jam. The woman said she had not seen any since she was six years old when, for doing an errand, the landlord's wife gave her a slice of bread spread with jam. Not knowing ' what the dark stun was,' she laid the bread down, she was afraid to eat it. The woman was so angry that she caught hold of her and gave her a shaking that she had never forgotten.

One bright afternoon I went with Father Godley to a mountain two miles from Ballybunnion. The mountain is 880 feet above sea level, but the land slopes up gradually. On the mountain side were several vacant huts. Poor people built those huts and dug up peat till they had land enough to plant a few potatoes in. No sooner was that done than a landlord claimed the mountain and put such rent on the hitherto worthless land that the poor people were unable to pay it. They were driven from their huts to the road to beg or starve. One old woman lived for weeks in a ditch, without shelter of any kind.

The poverty of the people of Ireland and the oppression they endure is beyond belief. Father Godley told me that often when a man was at work for a landlord who had cows, his wife went with him in the morning ; she milked eight or ten cows and helped to skim milk and wash milk pails and pans. For this she received one quart of skimmed milk for her children. She did the same at night and got the same reward ; giving from three to four hours' hard work for milk worth less than one cent—fresh milk was five cents a quart. He said that with the laborers of Ireland it was a question of living on the verge of starvation, or going to America if they could find some one to pay their passage. If a tenant had children in America, the landlord was still more demanding. Most of the money sent found its way into landlords' pockets.

One day when O'Conner and I were walking around a bluff, I looked down and saw several small, straw-covered hovels built as though out of the bluff among the rocks of the seashore. I asked why they were vacant and was told that poor people, unable to pay rent, got enough together, after a long struggle, to build those wretched homes. No sooner were they built than a landlord appeared who said he owned the bluff. He demanded rent. They could not pay. O'Conner himself saw their few household articles thrown out onto the sand. Another landlord said he owned the sand of the seashore. Whoever took a load of sand must pay for it. At last the priest brought a lawsuit against the landlord and won the suit, for he proved that the sand washed up by the sea could not be private property. If a tenant improves land, builds a thatched cottage, puts up out buildings, or in any way increases the value of the place he has rented, the landlord at once advances the rent. If the tenant does not pay the advanced rent, he is thrown out, and his labor benefits the landlord only.

O'Conner told me that once when the old Duke of Sutherland was coming to visit his Irish estates, his tenants hired an old tinker to pretend to be a tenant. They dug a grave, made a coffin, put the old man into it. and formed a long procession. When the duke was on his estate and near home, the procession met him. As it was passing he asked : ' Who is dead ?'

' No one. Your Honor,' answered a tenant.

' Whom have you in that coffin ?'

' One of our old men.'

' What are you going to do with him ?'

‘ Bury him. Your Honor.’

‘ What ! bury him alive ?’

‘ Yes, Your Honor.’

‘ Stop ! instantly ! What inhuman brutes you are !’

‘ We can’t help it. Your Honor. He is useless. He can’t work, and we can’t support old folks ; we have nothing for them to eat. It is better to bury them.’

‘ How is it that you haven’t enough to eat ?’

‘ Your Honor, it takes all we can raise to pay the rent.’

‘ This shall not be ! Go home. Let the old man live. I will see that you have plenty to eat.’

The duke at once reduced the rent ten shillings on an acre. He was a ‘ soft.’ old man and believed everything that was told him. His son was no such man. He would have said : ‘ Bury your old men but pay me my rent.’

From Ballybunnion I went to Listowel by side-car and then to Newcastle West. A river, which can be crossed on stepstones, runs through that town, and there are many trees along either bank. The river and the trees make the place attractive. I was fortunate in arriving on the day of a cattle show, for I had a chance to talk with men from adjoining towns. It was a pleasure to go around among the cattle. Reared on small farms and petted when young, they were tame and affectionate. It was also butter market day. The farmers brought their butter in small, hooped firkins, on a donkey-cart. They paid a penny a firkin to enter the market enclosure and ‘ take chances’ of selling the butter. While I was talking with a farmer who had a donkey load of hay to sell, he called out to a boy who was teasing the animal : ‘ Git away from that donkey or he’ll ate ye.’ I asked if the donkey wouldn’t prefer to eat hay. ‘ Indeed not, he’d rather the boy for he is cross,’ said the farmer. In the crowd I met my Ballybunnion myth teller O’Conner and the following day I went to look at the farm he rented. I had never been in an Irish farmhouse and it interested me. The kitchen was a large, low room with rafters overhead. It had an earth floor and a huge fireplace where the cooking for the family was done. In a second, but much smaller room, there was a board floor, a homemade couch, several chairs, and a bed.

O’Conner had asked an old man, an ex-schoolmaster, to meet me. He brought with him a manuscript a hundred and twenty years old. After patiently listening to a long story about the manuscript, I asked the old man if he could tell me a Gaelic myth. His answer was : ‘ I don’t care to be telling lies that have been handed down from father to son. I care only for things that have been recorded and are authentic.’ I told him that the manuscript contained myths which had been handed down for a thousand years or more but I couldn’t reason with him. What was written was true. I went from Newcastle West to Knockaderry to look over the parish records. The old records were written in Latin, the ink was faded from age. I found only one item that interested me : the birth of a child to Diemetria Curtin and Joanna Curtin, born Cronen. My grandfather’s name was Jeremiah, but Diemetria is used in Latin for Jeremiah : my grandmother’s maiden name was Joanna Cronen.

A few days later I was in Dublin at the Imperial hotel, one of the worst kept houses I have ever stopped at. I wished to meet the Gaelic scholars of Dublin : Professor O’Looney, Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Fleming, Canon O’Hanlon, and others, and to examine the Gaelic manuscripts.

Those manuscripts fill about 2,000 volumes and are kept in the Royal Irish academy and the University of Dublin. This is the largest collection of myths in Europe. Neither in ancient nor modern times had any nation on the mainland such a collection.

During my stay in Dublin, I frequently visited Professor O'Looney at his Krumlin home. He was a man who loved his own Gaelic language, and the preservation of it was the subject ever uppermost in his mind. The 17th of July, our anniversary, was spent with O'Niel, the sculptor, and we passed a delightful evening listening to Gaelic melodies of the old time. Mrs. O'Niel was a fine harpist. She not only had a magnificent modern harp, but one of the finest of the ancient harps of Ireland, an heirloom.

I again met William O'Brien and had long talks with him regarding the condition of the country.

July 25 all Ireland, except one county, was proclaimed under the Crimes act. It was an interesting time politically, but I was in Ireland to study Gaelic and collect myths and I avoided politics in as far as possible. I spent several hours each day in the Irish academy, or with old men who came to tell me myths. Evenings Mr. Fleming came to read Gaelic with me.

I visited Professor Joyce at Bray, a delightful summer resort on Dublin bay. A few days later I went, with Wakeman, the artist, to see the house where Tom Moore was born. In the lower part was a dramshop. Perhaps, there has always been one there, for the father of our world-renowned poet kept a dramshop. I saw the room where the poet was born and the room where convivial feasts were given by his mother when he was advancing toward manhood. I climbed the worn staircase to the room where he wrote his first poems and read them to his comrades. I looked out of the same window that he looked from and I saw a bright-eyed little child, the first one born in the house since Moore's birth. That same day I went to Howth hill. In the evening I was at a banquet given by the lord mayor. At that banquet I made the acquaintance of Patrick Collins, then our consul to England, later mayor of Boston, a man of most remarkable mentality.

Before leaving Dublin, I visited Burke's birthplace, and the spot where Emmet, the martyr, was hung, drawn and quartered by the humane!! English, who try now to rouse the world against the Russians, professedly because they send Polish ' patriots' to Siberia.

I spent a few pleasant hours with Canon O'Hanlon, who was writing the *Lives of the Irish Saints* ; and I dined with one of the most interesting women in Ireland. Miss O'Connor, a descendant of the kings of Ireland, a cousin of our renowned advocate, Charles O'Connor. Though old, Miss O'Connor was still a skillful musician. She entertained as by playing on the piano and also on the harp, music of her own composition.

From Dublin we went to Belfast. In our compartment was an insane man. We watched him constantly, ready to defend ourselves should he attack us. Our relief was great when, after an hour's run, the train drew into a large station and stopped. I signaled to the conductor and changed compartments.

From Belfast I set out to visit remote places in the West. On the way to Strabane I met an old gentleman well acquainted with every part of the island, except the extreme West. When I told him what I was in search of, he said : ' I am afraid you will be unsuccessful. When I was young, I heard many a fine story of Fin Mac Cool and the kings of Erin. But the men who knew those stories are dead and gone—dead from hunger, old age, or drowning in the sea—gone to America, Australia, or elsewhere. You remember that we had a population of

over 8,000,000. at the end of 1846, and at the end of 1848 but 5,000,000—3,000,000 of souls gone in two short years. Of the 3,000,000, 2,000,000 died of hunger. After 1848 came a systematic extermination of the Gaelic language and, when the language is gone, the stories are gone. The people are changed too, and I am afraid you will travel far and find but little of what you seek.' Reference to the persecution of the language brought to mind what was told me by one of the members of the Gaelic society in Dublin. He said that when a schoolboy he was obliged to wear a sort of wooden collar around his neck ; any person who heard him speak a word of Gaelic had the right to cut a nick in the collar and when he appeared at school the master gave him a flogging for each new nick. In spite of discouraging words I continued my journey. At Strabane we encountered what I called a rainstorm, but for the inhabitants of the place it was simply 'soft weather.' Every person I met had the same greeting for me : ' A soft day, Sir, a soft day !'

On an eminence in the town of Donegal are the ruins of an old monastery. Here and there walls are still standing which show that the structure occupied a large extent of ground. Among the broken walls are the graves of many of the O'Donnell family. The monastery was destroyed by a desperate battle fought on the eminence. After the battle the monks crept back, built cottages among the ruins, and wrote *The Annals of the Four Masters*, one of the great books of the world.

It is seventeen miles from Donegal, over the hills and along the bay, to Killybegs. In any other conveyance than a side-car, it would be a pleasant ride, but a side-car is not adapted for easy riding over rough roads. Not successful in finding men in Killybegs who spoke Gaelic and knew myths. I went to Carrick. As I traveled east the land grew poorer and poorer, and very rocky. Near Carrick is Slieve League, one of the highest mountains in Ireland. The morning after my arrival in Carrick, I went to Teelin point to see the people and get an idea of their knowledge regarding myths. I had, as usual, to listen to tales of oppression. The proprietor of the hotel in Carrick ' claimed the ocean' and allowed no one to fish near the coast where fish were. He forced them to starve or go out in the sea where there was danger, and almost no catch. He kept men to guard the coast and drive the inhabitants away. I found later that these statements were true. Teelin point is two miles from Carrick. In the first house I entered I found a man, his wife, and seven children. The oldest child was fifteen years of age. The children, from five years up, were knitting socks and undershirts. For a pair of socks, two days' steady knitting, they received twelve cents ! It was a house of two rooms, and a room for the pig. For the use of two acres of wretchedly poor land the man paid a rent of ten dollars. Until the previous year he and his family had lived in a hovel. At that time the woman's brother died in America, and she inherited a share of his property. They built the house and then had what they considered a fine home. The roof of the house was made of straw and turf fastened down with straw ropes ; the floors were of mother earth. In the living room, which was also the kitchen, there were two long benches, a deal table, and a cradle of home manufacture ; in the cradle was straw, and on the straw a child of six months was sleeping. I found that the owner of this house, Donald McBreearty, knew a good number of fine myths and later I spent many hours with him each day bringing my luncheon from the hotel. When dinner time came for the family, the mother hung a kettleful of potatoes over a turf fire. When the potatoes were boiled sufficiently, she turned them into a basket pan and put the pan on one of the benches. The family gathered around as best they could, and, with the addition of a bit of boiled salt fish, made their meal. Then the mother swept the potato skins in for the pig.

From a point not far from the house, two men were always on the side of a hill watching the bay so that no man, save the men employed by the rich owner of Carriek hotel could fish near the shore.

Where there is little food to cook in a peasant's house, there is not much work to do. Donald's wife neglected everything in order to earn a few pennies by knitting. Oppression is not an incentive to work. Donald was lazy and unkempt. It was a trial to sit near him ; often both my head and stomach rebelled. One day when he was too indolent to work, I went to Carrigan head and there, among the hills and rocks, found a house. In the living room hung the carcass of a calf. It was to be sold to pay rent. In one corner of the room a live calf was eating from a pile of grass. When I hung up my ulster, I disturbed a hen that was roosting on a beam. The owner of this house, Barror, an old man, told me a very good myth.

One morning when we were walking to Teelin, it began to rain heavily. A man driving a donkey-cart overtook us and, whether he invited us or we insinuated that ' a lift' would be acceptable, we were made welcome and, seating ourselves in the end of the cart with our feet hanging over, we rode to Teelin. The man, Mike Byrne by name, was very talkative ; he was a fish dealer. He said that he made just money enough to furnish food for himself, his wife, and his donkey. He had a son in America, who helped him with the rent. That afternoon I went up the hill to Barror's to have the old man tell me another myth. On the way I rested for a few moments in a house where a pig that weighed at least 200 pounds lay in the kitchen, stretched on his side in front of the peat fire. When I congratulated the woman on having such a fine, fat pig, her answer was : ' God be blessed, that's our rent.' While I was talking with Barror, two women English tourists who had been at Bunglass, halted at the door and stared at the family, much as though they were some new species of monkey.

One day I went to the top of Slieve League. High up on the side of the mountain men and women were digging turf. They were going to carry it, in baskets, to their homes : a wearisome task to walk so far, dig the turf, and carry down the heavy baskets.

From the summit of Slieve League, which is 1,900 feet high, there is a grand view of the ocean. We looked at the 'one-man path' around one of the highest peaks, but did not care to travel it.

In a small house near the foot of the mountain I found a man, James McLaughlin, who told me a good myth, and I spent the following day at his house taking down what myths he knew. Work in a small, dark room where a peat fire is burning and hens are roosting is very wearisome for one accustomed to fresh air and light. Donald thought there were old men in Glen Columbkille who knew about fairies, so I went there. I found no accommodations at the Public house ; but was directed to ' The Lodge,' the landlord's house, which was used only in the hunting season. At other times the caretaker was permitted to rent it by the day or week. We were soon established with the caretaker to cook for us. A turf fire was lighted, and candles were brought. We were satisfied and cheerful till my wife discovered that we were to be alone in the house, and there were no locks or bolts on the doors. When I arranged for the caretaker to sleep in the house, she was less nervous. But he was a stranger, and she was uneasy till a heavy table had been moved against one door of our sleeping room, and a pencil put into the other in such a way that it would fall if anyone touched the door.

During the week we spent in Glen Columhkille I talked with most of the old men living there and obtained a few excellent myths. I visited the celebrated holy well and got a good photograph of it. The trip was interesting, and I returned to Carrick satisfied with its results. The next day I went to Kilcar to examine a bog where turf had been cut down many feet deep, and a forest of tree stumps uncovered. Unquestionable proof that a thousand years ago, or more, there was a dense forest in that section.

We left Carrick the last day of August. The country was green and beautiful. It was the harvest season. Along the road and off in the fields were huge ricks of hay, thatched over as a protection from rain. Mowing was done with a sickle, the grass turned mostly by hand. Not even a fork was used or a rake. I spent two days at Enniskillen on Loch Erne where the scenery is very beautiful, but the old people knew no myths, so I went to Dundalk bay, the place where Bruce was crowned and lived in royal splendor for two years. There with his Scotch and Irish followers, he fought against the English. There he was killed and was buried. Later I visited Drogheda where Cromwell massacred people, for five days. The scenery along the eastern coast of Ireland is different from that of the western coast which is striking and in places grand. The scenery of the eastern coast is only beautiful.

It was pleasant to be back in Dublin to talk over my adventures with Professor O'Looney, and the condition of Ireland with Major McHenry, who was a member of the Land league that had just been proclaimed illegal, and its meetings forbidden.

After a few days I went to Galway. The interesting part of the town for me is the Claddagh. Till recent times the Claddagh fishermen governed themselves. In the old time they had their own king. I found an assemblage of small stone huts in all stages of decay. They were near together and built, without regularity, wherever there was a sufficiently large plot of land.

The second man I met was a sailor. I asked if he knew an old man who could tell stories. He said that he did and he conducted me to one of the houses where I found an aged couple sitting by a turf fire, their morning meal, on a chair, in front of them. The meal consisted of a bowl of tea and some bread the woman had baked on the coals. They welcomed me pleasantly, and the old man told me a long myth. The following day there was a horsefair. It was held on the strand of the sea, but the streets of Galway were crowded till a late hour of the night. People had come from villages forty or even sixty miles away. I had a good opportunity to see the different types of Irish in County Galway. Among the people were men dressed as was usual a hundred years ago, in knee pants, and tail coats trimmed with brass buttons ; the women wore immense cloaks made of long wool.

I spent a week in Galway working each day, from morning till evening, with old men at the Claddagh. The trials of myth collecting were intensified by the misery of the people and the terrible condition in which they lived. Each house was, from necessity, a pigpen. If a pig was kept at all, it had to live with the family. In the house where I got the best myths, two pigs lived under the bed which was a high box affair, with something on top which answered for bedding. When the pigs were hungry, there was a fierce squealing. The woman tried to quiet them, but evidently they were not accustomed to confinement. They got desperate, broke into the room, and began to lick the pots and kettles which stood around the fireplace.

I spent only three days in Athenry, for the Public-house was dirty—almost beyond endurance. A sheep-fair was in full blast when I arrived, and I had a chance to get acquainted with some of the old farmers. There had been a heavy rain, and mud was nearly ankle deep in the streets. I drove to Ballinacrag and brought back an old man who knew myths. Under most unpleasant circumstances, for there was tumult and drunkenness in the rooms adjoining mine, I took down all he knew. Then I went to Limerick. I called on the mayor and found him a man fully alive to the condition and needs of the country.

I went again to Newcastle West and to Knockaderry and out to the townland of Grange on the river Deel. In that township, I think, my grandfather was living when he decided to come to America. I visited an old cemetery below Knockaderry. Though there were many stones, I

found but one legible inscription, that bore the date 1783. From Newcastle West I went to the Lakes of Killarney. I enjoyed the beautiful scenery but I found no myths. Each boatman knew stories, but as a rule they were stories made to amuse travelers. In Mallow I collected a few myths, one or two from a man who lived in the dirtiest house I have ever been in. Four pigs were eating in the kitchen. I could not stay in-doors, so I went with the old man beyond a pile of manure which was just at the back door, to a little garden, and wrote down his myths. In Fermoy I visited a family of Furlongs, distant relatives of mine. Their beautiful home is on elevated ground and commands a splendid view of hills and old castles.

September 21 [1887] we sailed from Queenstown for New York, on the steamship Ohio. When we were three days out, a child died. The burial service was read, the steamer stopped for two minutes, and the body was lowered to the ocean. Sept. 26th the fog bell rang from morning till evening and then all night. Waves washed over the deck, and the steamer groaned as it rocked from side to side. But gradually the storm abated, and the last days of the voyage were pleasant. On the morning of the 30th the glad words went from passenger to passenger, 'The pilot is on board !'

[1] 'Fairy forts' are circular earthworks found here and there through-out Ireland. Probably they are of Druidic origin.

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'The Curtin Memoirs came to the State historical society of Wisconsin from the hand of Mr. Curtin's niece, Mrs. Walter J. Seifert, who is a daughter of Curtin's younger brother and, with one exception, the only living relative of the great linguist. Mrs. Seifert lives at Evanston, Illinois. She brought the box of manuscript to the library personally and in conversation with the editor explained how it had been produced.'

'The manuscript is not in Curtin's handwriting but in that of his wife, Alma Cardell Curtin, who outlived her husband more than thirty-one years, passing away at Bristol, Vermont, April 14, 1938. But Mrs. Seifert assured us that both matter and form are to be credited to Curtin because it was his uniform practice to dictate all of his composition to his wife who wrote it out for him. That fact also comes out clearly in the manuscript itself at various points where he speaks of working on his books and translations. Always Mrs. Curtin wrote at his dictation as rapidly as possible and later prepared a fair copy from those notes. Sometimes she rewrote his matter several times.'

Joseph Schafer  
Madison, March, 1939.

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