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## IRISH FAIRY AND FOLK

## TALES ARE DISCUSSED

BY DEAN MOORHEAD

### Fairies, Banshees and Wakes—Referred to False Impressions Regarding Ireland

In an eloquent and interesting address before the Rotary Club here yesterday Very Reverend Dr. W. H. Moorhead, Dean of Christchurch cathedral, dealt with Irish Fairy Tales and Folk Lore. After describing the Irish ideas of banshees, wakes and fairies, Dean Moorhead spoke of the false impressions regarding Ireland held by many of those who did not understand the Irish people and their customs. The Very Reverend Dean who is a native Irishman, born near Dublin, has made friends amongst all classes during the few weeks which he has been in this city. He is doing an excellent social work at Christchurch Cathedral.

I appreciate very much the opportunity of addressing Rotary today. This is my first appearance in Fredericton before any gathering, excepting of course, the Cathedral congregation.

Today I am going to speak to you about the land that gave me birth, Ireland the "Rock whence I am hewn." First I shall deal with Irish Fairy Tales. Then I shall go on to say something about Irish wit and humor, and at the end if I have time I shall attempt to correct some delusions about Ireland.

Any consideration of Irish Literature must inevitably lead one to say something about Irish Fairy and Folk Tales. I have already pointed out that the history of Ireland and of the Irish people dates from a very remote antiquity; indeed, its beginnings are lost in the twilight of fable but its language has left the clearest most luminous, and most consecutive literary track behind it or any of the vernacular tongues, excepting Greek. The Irish fairy tales and folk stories are among the oldest of those of any of the European countries; and although they have many counterparts in other languages, which would seem to indicate a common origin in the far off past, notably in Oriental folk lore, the spirit of the race is enshrined in them in a more characteristic and striking degree, perhaps, than in the fairy tales and folk lore of any other country. This is doubtless due to their preservation in the ancient Gaelic, and to the fact that the wandering bard has lingered longer in Ireland than elsewhere, and to the fact that the professional story

teller, although fast disappearing, is not yet entirely extinct in my country.

Story-telling has always been a favourite amusement of the Celtic race. In ancient times the professional story tellers were classified, and were called, according to their rank, ollaves, shannachies, and bards. Their duty was to recite old tales, poems, and descriptions of historical events in prose or verse at the festive gatherings of the people. They were especially educated and trained for this profession, which was looked upon as a dignified and important one.

While Irish fairy tales and folk tales are among the oldest in the world they are also the most numerous and diversified. The following will give an idea of the main groupings of the Irish Fairies.

#### Sociable Fairies

1. There are the Sociable Fairies, who go about in troops, and quarrel and make love much as men and women do. The Sociable Fairies are divided into land fairies, or Sheeques, and water fairies, or Merrows. The Sheeques haunt the thorn bushes. Many a mortal they have said to have enticed into their mysterious world. Many have listened to their fairy music, till human cares and joys drifted from them and they became great seers, or "fairy doctors" or musicians, or poets, or else they died in a year and a day, to live ever after among the fairies. These Sheeques occasionally steal a child and leave a withered fairy, a thousand or maybe two thousand years old, instead.

The Merrows sometimes come out of the sea in the shape of little hornless cows. So much for the Sociable Fairies. Then there are

2. The Solitary Fairies. Among the solitary fairies is the Leprecaun (Leith bhrogan) the shoemaker. He is seen sitting under a hedge, with a red cap, mending shoes, and whose catches him can make him deliver up his crooks of gold, for the Leprecaun is a miser of great wealth; but if you take your eyes off him he vanishes like smoke. He wears a red coat to match his red hat.

3. The Cluricaun (Clobhair cean) spends his time robbing wine cellars and chasing sheep the livelong night until the morning finds them panting and mud-covered.

4. The Gconcor is a creature of the Leprecaun type, but a great idler. He appears in lonely valleys, pipe in mouth, and spends his time making love to shepherdesses.

5. The Far Darrid (Fear dearg) the red man, is the practical joker of the other world. He presides over evil dreams.

6. The Pooka, derived from poc, a goat, also is of the family of the nightmare. His shape is that of a goat. His delight is to get a rider, with whom he rushes through ditches and rivers and over mountains, and whom he shakes off in the grey of the morning. The saying "riding the goat" has come from this gentleman fairy.

7. The Banshee is a fairy woman. She is a sociable fairy grown solitary through much sorrow. She wails, as most people know, over the death of a member of some old Irish family.

Irish folk lore is most fascinating (Will o the wisp). One reason perhaps why the Irish people are as a rule so gifted with the power of poetical expression, why they are endowed with so rich a fancy is because for centuries they have been nourished on such a wealth of fairy tales and wonder stories as is exceeded by no other literature in the world. I would recommend to mothers that together with giving to their children the English Mother Goose rhymes, that they also open up to them the vast treasures that exist in Irish Fairy Literature, and Folk Lore.

#### Irish Wit and Humour

You will expect me, I know, to say something about Irish wit and humour. The reputation of the Irish people for wit and humour is one of the things upon which there is universal agreement. It is theirs by the best of all rights—the right of having well earned it. The colloquial drollery of the Irish has been the source from which many generations of English-speaking peoples of the globe have drawn such wholesome and hearty laughter. The element in it that excites laughter is hard to define. It is difficult to say what is the national characteristic of this humour of the Irish people. It cannot, perhaps, be exactly and precisely defined. Indeed, the attempts which have been made by several acute literary critics to define the nature and the composition

of Irish Humour have been to little advantage. We hear a good story and enjoy it; but if we were asked what it was exactly in the story, in any story, that excited in us the emotion of surprise, that made us shout with laughter, we would often be at a loss to explain.

However this much I may say as a generalization on the subject of Irish Humour. Everything, no matter how sober, serious, or solemn, Irish or otherwise, has its comic, or its ludicrous side—if we could only see it and it seems to me that the source of Irish humour lies in the extraordinary intuition of the people in discovering this not always obvious, side of the situation. The native humour of Ireland is like the national character—it is impulsive, sympathetic and mellow. It is not dry and caustic like the Scottish humour; unlike the English it is rarely sententious or sarcastic. Of the good-natured drollery of the Irish people, a happy illustration comes to my mind. The incident occurred in a Dublin infirmary. "Well, my man," said the visiting physician to a patient, "how do you feel this morning?" "Furty well, sur," was the reply. "I hope you like the place."

"Indeed I do, sur," said the man. "There's only one thing wrong in this establishment, and that is I only get as much to eat as would feed a sparrow." "Oh then you are getting your appetite," said the doctor, "then I'll order an egg to be sent to you." "Arrah, docter," rejoined the patient, "would you be so kind as to tell him at the same time to send me up the hin that laid it."

Let me tell you just one more Irish story. An English tourist met in the west of Ireland a farmer driving some cattle to a local fair, and encountering him again in the evening asked him how much he had got for his stock. "Four pounds a head," replied Pat. "Only four pounds a head?" said the Englishman, "why, if you brought them to my country you would have got at least six pounds each for them." "Och, maybe so, yer honner," rejoined the farmer, "and if I cud bring the lakes of Killarney to Purgatory, I'd get a pound a drop for the water." Pat is never at a loss for an answer.

This humour is no recent growth, as may be seen by the folk lore, the proverbs, and the other traditional matter of the country. The curious twelfth century story of the vision of McConiglinne is a sample of this early Celtic humour—imaginative and good-natured. Chief themes of Irish humourists have been courting, and drinking, with the occasional relief of a fight.

Not a small portion of the humour of Ireland is the unconscious variety of the half-educated local poets. Sometimes real humour struggles for adequate expression. A goodly number of street ballads are very comic in description and phraseology. "Nell Flarharthy's Drake" may be taken as a fair specimen. Sometimes there is coarseness in the street ballads, usually absent from genuine Irish songs.

Sometimes street ballads are rather ghastly as in "The night before Larry was stretched." In Lover we have the cream of Irish humour, and it would be difficult to exaggerate the excellence of his love songs. Few nations could have produced such a harvest of humour under such depressing conditions as Ireland has experienced. And it may be asserted that many countries with far more reason for interrupted good humour, with much less cause for sadness, would be hard put to it to show an equally valuable contribution to the world's lighter literature.

#### Some Delusions About Ireland

People of other countries have very many strange delusions about Ireland. There is a story of an Englishman who, after spending a week in Dublin returned home and said to his friends "I assure you I did not meet or see a real Irishman the whole time I was in Ireland." What sort of an Irishman had this visitor expected to see in Ireland as plentifully as blackberries in the country's hedges? Why, of course, the Irishman with which English comic papers, English novels, and the English stage had made him so familiar.

In the English comic journals—especially those which lift their pictures from New York and Chicago papers—the Irishman is usually represented as an uncouth-looking fellow, arrayed in a tattered, freeze, swallow-tailed coat, a broad face, relieved only by a latent expression of mingled foolishness and fun, on his head a battered caubeen, or hat, in the band of which the enviable clay pipe is fixed, and in his hand a shillelagh. That type of Irishman, or anything approaching to a resemblance of his, is not—as the English visitor of my story discovered—to be met with in Ireland. I never yet met a countryman of mine who, even in his most frolicsome moments, carried his pipe in the band of his hat. The Irish like the English, carry their pipes in their pockets, and as for the average Irish face, it is, by common consent, well formed, cheerful, and animated. Of course every race is made a butt for goodnatured ridicule by other races. Look at the picture of John Bull! And so we must all be ready to take a joke.

The Irish, I will admit, are to other nationalities a strange and incomprehensible race. John Bull has lived quite close to Paddy for centuries and he does not understand him yet. Indeed it is a question whether John will ever make Paddy out. The manners, customs and ideas of the people of Ireland have always been, and probably ever will be, the source of wonder and bewilderment to the Anglo-Saxon people. This is shown in the invented stories supposed to be illustrative of Irish life and character, current in American journals. Most of them are silly, stupid. Some of them are humorous in their way, but invariably they lack the Irish attitude of mind, the Irish idiom, and the Irish turn of phrase, and they are to an Irishman mere humbug.

The attempts of the average Canadian or Englishman to reproduce the Irish dialect in writing, or the Irish brogue in conversation, jar terribly on the nerves of an Irishman. He seems to think that all he has to do to render the Irish dialect or brogue in perfect form is to turn the long "e" sounds into broad "a"—to say kape for keep; praste for priest; swape for sweep; belave for believe. The Irish never pronounce these words in that fashion. It is another delusion about Ireland. The Irish never err in the pronunciation of the "ee" and "je" sounds in such words as street, indeed and priest. This statement may astonish you but it is nevertheless true. What the Irish stumble over in pronunciation are the "ea" and "ei" sounds, saying lave for leave; and mate for meat; and also over 'e' saying plinty for plenty; gintlemín for gentlemen. They give a double syllable rendering to such words as 'harm' and 'arm' calling them 'har-um' and 'ar-um'. The Irishman trills his r's, starr, warr. All this should be remembered before our brothers from Canada, or England, or the U.S.A. attempt to convey the Irish dialect into print. But he must not forget that the complete mastery of this list will not give the Irish brogue, the lack of which make anyone who attempts to produce the brogue, and who is not an Irishman, appear so foolish. The brogue is not really a peculiarity of pronunciation, it is an accent, an intonation—an index, in fact, of the Irish character. It is the softest, the mellowest the most musical thing in the way of accents outside Paradise.

The great mistake made by some Irishmen is that they try to electroplate their Irish brogue with an affected English accent. How pathetic. The charm of the Irish people is due not so much to what they say as to the way they say it—in a word to their brogue.

The Irish Wake There are many Irish customs I should like to speak about, but I must pass over them. I do want, however, to say a word about the Irish Wake. The old Irish custom of waking the dead has given rise to much misrepresentation of Irish character. And yet in its intention and practice it is a kindly and humane custom. To

those who do not understand the Irish nature, the smoking and conversation which go on at wakes appear incongruous and perhaps repulsive.

To the Irish people, on the other hand, there is something very cold, unfeeling, and repellent in the English custom of the dead body shut in a room all alone. In Ireland we keep close company with our dead to the very last moment. Waking means "Watching." We watch affectionately by the body of a dead relative or friend until the time arrives to depart to the burial ground. The Irish people never like to be alone, and this feeling for companionship is strong when death has visited them closely. A family deprived of a member by death seeks consolation from the neighbours, and the neighbours are quick to respond. There are wakes at which stories are told, forfeits played, and a little drollery indulged in, but as a rule while every effort is made by the watchers to blunt the edge of sorrow, perfect decorum is preserved, and not an unseemly word spoken. I have been to many wakes as a young lad and I have never seen any conduct that was out of harmony with the solemnity of the occasion. There are many superstitions associated with death in Ireland. One most curious superstition is that the dead of one parish graveyard play the old Irish game of hurling against the dead of another parish graveyard. They meet at night when the moon is full in one or other of the graveyards. The dead of each churchyard has a living man out of its parish to keep goal. When a man gets a call to act in this capacity he must go. This service is supposed to last seven years, and it is said that if a man survive that period he has power to cure incurable diseases. The man who has to discharge this awful duty keeps his dread secret to himself. If he were to make it known he would be shunned by his neighbours. Any man of a morose or gloomy disposition who lives apart is always suspected to be the goal keeper for the dead hurlers. Ireland is noted for its big funerals. It is the rule also in rural districts for persons who meet a funeral, to turn back and accompany it for some distance at least.

I do not want to dwell further on this matter of death in Ireland, but I did want to correct a wrong impression about Irish wakes. They are tender, affectionate and altogether lovely expressions of sympathy and companionship on the part of neighbours and friends of the bereaved. Had I time I might tell you something about faction-fighting in Ireland, I might lead you into the secrets of love-making in Ireland, I might picture to you the Irish beggar, or make you acquainted with the most famous of all Irish personages,

the Dublin Jarvey, or jaunting car driver, but in what I have said I hope I have given you some little picture of Irish life and character. I hope it will lead you to a better understanding of the characteristics of the Irish face, to a wider appreciation of their many good qualities, to a kinder tolerance of their faults and follies, which are mainly due to the chequered history of a race in which comedy and tragedy are to be found to a greater degree than is recorded in the history of any other people.

## SHERIFF'S SALE

The following property will be sold at Public Auction in front of the County Court House, Fredericton, N.B. at twelve o'clock noon SATURDAY, 5th day of September, 1936, for assessed taxes and costs, property of Alfred Veysey, North Lake, York Co., N.B.

"All that certain lot, piece or parcel of land situated lying and being in the Parish of North Lake, in the County of York, bounded as follows: Beginning at a post standing in the easterly bank or shore of Grand Scoodic Lake at a point where the southern line of Lot A. in Block B. strikes the same, thence running by the magnet of the year 1854 east fifty chains, thence south twenty chains, thence west fifty chains or to the easterly bank or shore of Grand Scoodic Lake above mentioned and thence following the various courses of the same in a northerly direction to the place of beginning. Containing one hundred acres more or less. Being a lot granted to Richard Cropley by grant bearing date the 18th day of October, A.D. 1858. Also all that certain lot, piece or parcel of land situated lying and being in the Parish of North Lake, in the County of York, bounded as follows: Beginning at a post standing at the southeast angle of the lot granted to Richard Cropley at North Bay in the Grand Chipmunk-Lake in Block B. and South of the thoroughfare running by magnet north two degrees and twenty minutes east twenty chains to another post, thence south eighty-seven degrees and forty minutes east ten chains to another post, thence south two degrees and twenty minutes west twenty-five chains to another post, thence north eighty-seven degrees and forty minutes west sixty chains or to the eastern bank or shore of the aforesaid said North Bay in the Grand Chipmunk-Lake, thence along the same following the various courses thereof in a northerly direction with a rectangular distance of five chains and thence south eighty-seven degrees and forty minutes east fifty-one chains to the place of beginning. Containing fifty acres more or less and being the lot of land situated to David Cropley by grant dated the twentieth day of Aug. A. D. 1880."

Del. Parish & County Tax, 1937	\$6.21
" " " " " " " " " "	1938 5.77
" " " " " " " " " "	1939 6.35
" " " " " " " " " "	1940 7.33
" " " " " " " " " "	1941 8.32
" " " " " " " " " "	1942 7.72
" " " " " " " " " "	1943 7.95
" " " " " " " " " "	1944 8.89
" " " " " " " " " "	1945 8.14
" " " " " " " " " "	1946 8.20

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