

# DEAR HARP of MY COUNTRY

By THOMAS MOORE



DEAR Harp of my Country! In darkness  
 Thou dost sit,  
 And cold chain of silence had hung  
 About thee.  
 When bravely, in our Island Heart,  
 They pass'd thee,  
 And gave all thy chords to light, freedom  
 And courage.  
 The waves of love and the light note of sadness  
 Have wak'd thee, the bravest, the liveliest thrill:  
 And so art thou, dear Harp, the dearest part of sadness,  
 That when in thy music it will steal from thee still.

Dear Harp of my Country! (Turn) to thy numbers,  
 This sweet breath of song is the last we shall breathe!  
 Go, sleep with the slumber of those on the slumbers,  
 Till touch'd by some hand less unworthy than mine:  
 If the pulse of the harp be ever a lover  
 Have throbb'd at our harp, in thy story alone,  
 It was but as the wind blowing heedlessly over,  
 And all the wild sweetness that was thy own.

glimpse of Finn and his warriors in hell, but even then his conversion was unsatisfactory at first. In Ossian's vision Finn and his men were seen fighting the devils for lack of better foes. Finn's weapon was a flail, and with it he was doing great execution, but always just as victory was within his grasp the thong of his flail would break and he would be beaten back. "Kneel down and pray," said Patrick to Ossian. And to his joy, Ossian knelt, but not for forgiveness or salvation did he pray. "Great God," he said, "Patrick's God, give Finn a thong of iron for his flail." The saint remonstrated with him for his irreverence, but Ossian said: "Leave me alone. Sure, Finn would never send any one to a place like that." But in the end Patrick prevailed, and Ossian became a good Christian.

## The Poets Of Ireland

By PATRICK SULLIVAN

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 THOSE who have not acquired a certain facility in the use of the Gaelic can never appreciate fully the characteristic singing quality of ancient Irish verse. Those who know the language even superficially are familiar with this rare distinction and can understand readily how impossible it is to translate its melodious rhythm into the barbarous Sasunnach.

The Gaelic is a language which needs no accompaniment of lute or harp to convert it into song. Like many of the dialects of the North American Indians, it was poetry before it was written and sang itself into the hearts of the people long ages before it was reduced to grammatical exactness. The most ancient Gaelic manuscripts in existence are distinctively poetic in construction. It has been asserted that the entire Druidic system was poetical in its inception and development, and there are manuscripts in the continental museums dating from the period immediately preceding the arrival of the Christian missionaries which seem to give character to the theory. This hypothesis has led some eminent Gaelic investigators to believe that this language, like the Romance dialects of the continent, was poetry first and was converted into prose only when the exigencies of the times demanded the mutilation.

Be all this as it may, it is certain that Irish writers of all ages, from the time of the evolution of the Ossianic cycle down to the middle of the last century, have preferred to express themselves in verse. When the last vestiges of disappearing heathendom were still contending with triumphant Christianity, both cults found their champions among the poets. No subject was too abstruse or too theoretical to be discussed in verse. The Ossianic legends are for the most part recitals in glowing verse of deeds which in any other country and by any other people would have been told in prose. The best early history of St. Patrick, and the one frequently referred to for corroborative evidence, is the metrical composition of St. Fiech. The adventures of Ossian, Druidic poet and warrior, may be as mythical as are those of Arthur, but the long succession of poets who have handed down those exquisite legends, if they be so, have done their work admirably. The middle and modern periods of Irish literature are replete with metrical performances that would do credit to the poets of any age, and the revival of Gaelic study which has sprung up in Ireland will make their superiority apparent.

It is characteristic of the modesty of Irish poets that throughout the older periods almost all the greatest works are anonymous. When the island's literature began to decline, poetry manifested no falling off. The singers continued to evolve their characteristic melodies, and the quality was as admirable as was the quantity. The seventeenth century witnessed a marked change in the form of Irish verse. The metrical system of the old bardic schools gave way to a new verse form in which the rhyme was primarily vocalic. The use of vowel rhymes was extended, and in the course of time a strangely melodious verse form resulted. Entire poems were constructed with the same accented vowels recurring throughout in orderly sequence. The old classic style persisted until the beginning of the eighteenth century, and then it practically disappeared. Some of its leading representatives were Teig Mac Daire and Lughaidh O'Clery, the famous principals in "The Contention of the Bards," Teig Dall O'Higin and

Eochaidh O'Hussey. Among the most gifted of the poets who adopted the new versification may be numbered Torlough O'Carolan, Brian Mac Giolla Meidhre, whose "Midnight Court" is one of the most remarkable works in any language; John O'Neaghtan, Timothy O'Sullivan and Egan O'Rahilly. During the nineteenth century the Gaelic fell into practical disuse for literary purposes. In recent years a movement has been made to restore the language and to revive Irish literature. The Gaelic league has become a very powerful organization, and it is waging a popular and most successful campaign in behalf of the ancient tongue. The Society For Preservation of the Irish Language is also doing a mighty work toward the restoration of the elegant and mellifluous Gaelic.

But the Irish do not owe their unique talent for versification to the superiority of the Gaelic as a vehicle and to nothing else. The Irishman is a poet in whatever language he is constrained to employ. Some of the best Latin verses of the scholastic ages were penned by Irish poets. There are numerous sermons and dogmatic treatises, in faultless Latin verse which made



THOMAS MOORE.  
 their appearance during those blessed days of Christian ascendancy when the culture and scholarship of the country were centered at Armagh. Those were the days when the scholastics spoke

and wrote in almost classical Latin and theses and disputations were put into flowing verse. Under the influence of the true Gaelic temperament the unresponsive and unmusical English has been made to yield marvelous results. Burns' polyglot medium won on account of its quaintness and the genuine minstrelsy behind it all, and Scott almost caught the trick of the ancient story telling bards and wandering minstrels, but Tom Moore was the wizard who transformed gutturals into harmony and sibilants into songs. His Irish lyrics are the self singing melodies of the old Gaelic harpists reproduced in an alien tongue. Since the time of Elizabeth the lyric had been dissociating itself from music. Moore united them so perfectly and so intelligently that the whole world broke into melody.

Scarcely less admirable in its literary workmanship and not a whit less patriotic is the poem by John Kells Ingram, entitled "The Memory of the Dead," which begins thus:

Who fears to speak of ninety-eight?  
 Who blushes at the name?  
 When cowards mock the patriot's fate,  
 Who hangs his head for shame?  
 He's all a knave or half a slave  
 Who slights his country thus,  
 But a true man like you, man,  
 Will fill his glass with us.

Mr. Ingram's "A History of Political Economy" has been translated into nine European languages and into Japanese. His "Sonnets and Other Poems" was published in 1900. Few men know more about Irish history than he.

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## Home Life In Ireland

By MICHAEL O'HARA

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 THE "lowly thatched cottage" of John Howard Payne is no poet's conceit in the Emerald Isle. In such a home many of Ireland's great men were born. In such a home the Irish farmer of today lives his humble but clean and wholesome life.

One storied, with walls of turf, thatched with oaten straw over a layer of peat, the Irish cottage is a worthy exemplar of the simple life. With but three apartments, a kitchen between two other rooms, the average dwelling of the better class of peasants is neat and cozy, more homelike than many a palace. The roomy kitchen, with its hardened and clean clay floor, the inside of the roof showing above, its rough rafters of fir and bog oak exposed, is the living room. On one side of the wall hangs a ladder which gives access to the loft. A dresser, on which are ranged the bowls mugs and platters or wooden noggins, peggins and turned beechen dishes, stands by the



COLLEEN PEELING POTATOES.

door of one of the side rooms. Under the big, wide chimney, with its crane blackened by the fumes of many years of cooking, burns a fire of mixed peat and fir. In all likelihood an oaten cake is leaning against a griddle, hardening by the fireside. Ranged around the room are four-legged stools, seats of plaited straw and a few chairs. Outside the house, to the left, runs a little row of cattle byres and fowl houses. On the right stands the turf stack, fifteen or twenty tons of peat. Attached to the cottage are four or five acres of arable land. The cottager owns two milk cows, a calf or two, a few pigs, perhaps a donkey, ducks, geese and hens and on the hill some two-score sheep. These, with the simple furnishings of his house, comprise his worldly goods. He raises meat for market. It is only on high days that he tastes fesh himself. Potatoes and "strabont" (oatmeal porridge) constitute his daily diet. Yet with all his relative poverty the Irish peasant is a sturdy citizen, and his boys and girls are strong limbed and ruddy, no "muddled oafs" or "danneed fools." The Irish lad and the colleen, too, in their bare feet travel the stony roads and stubbled fields with unconcern and climb the hills as nimbly as the herds they tend. Most of the girls are good looking. Many of them are beautiful. Work is the portion of every Irishman. In the fields, in the peat bogs, with the flocks, at the loom or at the

spinning wheel every one has his or her task. In the planting season the women work in the fields with the men, and at the hay harvest they do everything but mow.

In the early days of May, shouldering his turf spade and accompanied by a handful of helping neighbors, the Irishman goes to the peat bog to cut his winter fuel. The turf is cut twelve inches deep and four square out of the soft black peat, layer after layer, each blacker, denser and containing more carbon than the one before, to a depth of eight, twelve and in the best bogs even twenty feet. With one stroke of his double spade, the blades of which are set at right angles, the digger cuts a clean turf and throws it over his shoulder to the bank above. There a man with a barrow gathers the turfs and wheels them away to dry ground, where they are spread out and left until the sun has drawn the water from them. Then they are piled up and later carted home to build the turf stack by the cottage door, quite like an American wood pile.

The women and girls at all seasons have plenty to do indoors, spinning and weaving the Irish linens and home-spuns which are famous round the world and working on their wonderful embroideries. This work the girls turn into play at their "sprigging camps," where all the lasses from one hillside or valley gather, bringing with them their embroidering materials and their stools. They meet in the home of each girl in turn, forming a circle in the center of the kitchen, while the boys of the district sit around the walls, jesting with the girls and telling stories. At about 11 o'clock the camp breaks up, and the boys, shouldering the stools, convoy the girls home.

In other cottages women sit knitting around the enormous fireplace, the men smoking their black clay pipes and swapping stories which keep the children wide awake long after they should be in bed. At these sessions the shanachy, or traveling story teller, always meets with a hospitable reception. In olden times, before the spread of newspapers and printed books, story telling was a regular profession. Nowadays the best story teller is frequently the beggar man who, traveling over great areas, meets the shamachies of many parts and acquires a vast fund of tales, true and otherwise. Most exciting are his narratives of the doings of Finn Macoul and his warriors, of giants, fairies and banshees. In more than one of his romances the hero is the good St. Patrick himself, of whom he tells such tales as that of his conversion of Ossian, son of Finn.

Ossian met a beautiful maiden, riding on an enchanted white horse, near the lakes of Killarney. She told him she was Niam of the Golden Hair, daughter of the king of Tir-an-og, and that she had come to Erin to see him, whose great renown had reached her own country. He fell promptly in love with Niam, of course, and went back with her to Tir-an-og, where they were married. He remained with Niam for 200 years. Then he longed to see Erin again and his old friends, and Niam said he might go if he would promise to come back, and she let him take the enchanted white horse to ride on. Great was Ossian's sorrow when he reached Erin to find that the Fenians were all dead and that the race of men was small and weak. He sought to show the pygmies what feats of strength a man of the old time could do when the girth of his saddle broke and the enchanted horse ran away, leaving Ossian behind, small and weak, like the others, and old. Ossian heard of St. Patrick, who was introducing a new worship into Ireland, and he blamed him for the sad state of the country. He went to see the saint and remonstrated with him and stayed with him four years, each trying during that time to bring the other to his way of thinking. At last the heathen was converted, after he had been given a

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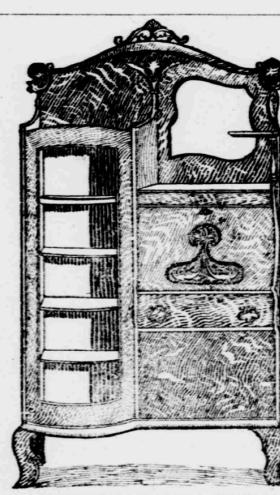
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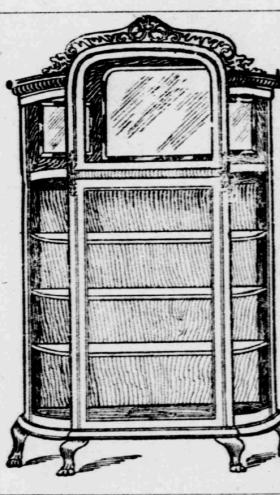
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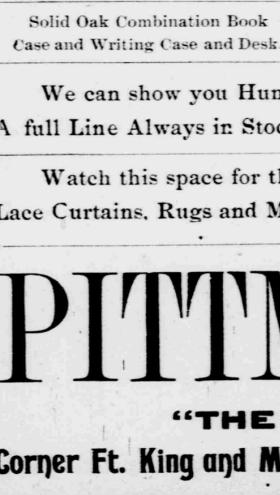
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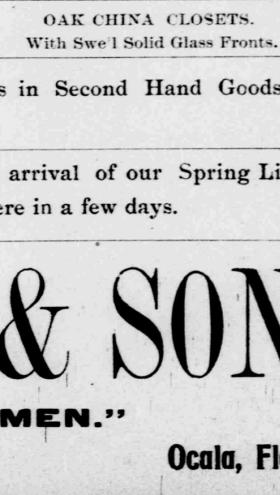
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