

**THE FIRESIDE  
STORIES  
OF IRELAND**

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The fireside stories of Ireland by Patrick Kennedy

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**PATRICK KENNEDY**

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# THE FIRESIDE STORIES

OF

## IRELAND.

BY

PATRICK KENNEDY,

Author of "Legends of Manus Lennox," "Legendary Fictions of the Irish  
Celtic," "The Banks of the Urry," and "Evenings in the Duffrey."

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TO  
EDWARD BARRINGTON, ESQ., J.P.,  
*Passmore, Bray.*

Dear Sir,

I venture to dedicate to you this little volume, without permission indeed, for I was doubtful of obtaining it if formally asked. I have no other means at command of expressing my gratitude for nearly forty years of uninterrupted and active kindness on your part. I would very willingly bear testimony to your worth as a merchant and a landed proprietor, and to the amount of public good you have done by many beneficent acts, and by furnishing employment to so many hundreds of industrious families during your lifetime ; but, since the days of John Dryden, the language of dedications, however sincere, is not received with undoubted trust. With best wishes for your well-being here and hereafter,

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your faithful servant and friend,

PATRICK KENNEDY.

March 10. My first impression on  
reading this was that the proper  
title would be "Stories

" orally collected in various  
" countries, and published in  
" English books; read in  
" Ireland; and now told  
" there, so that the books  
" can be identified from  
" within the stories were  
" taken by this author,  
" or by the people who told  
" him the stories, in Irish  
" English.

I have not the least doubt that  
the stories exist in Ireland. I  
know it in some cases, for I  
have heard the stories told by  
Irish Car men. But from the  
wording of these versions I think  
that they smell of the camp



## P R E F A C E .

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A more correct title for the present collection would be "The Fireside Stories of the Aryan peoples, as related in Ireland," for nearly every one of them is told in some shape at the social gatherings of Hindoos, Persians, Slavonians, or Teutons. Their skillful framework and the rapid succession of their incidents may in fact account for their popularity, which has endured from a period ages before the commencement of the Christian era. They enjoy a vitality unknown to fictions invented within historic times.

Country folk of the small-farmer and peasant class resort to their neighbours' houses during the long winter evenings, urged by the same want which sends the shopkeepers and mechanics of a city to the reading or tap-room, or the theatre. They soon exhaust the local topics, but are unwilling to withdraw to the comparative loneliness of their own homes ; and if one of the company possesses the faculties of a good memory and a good utterance, and condescends to tell a story, he or she is a social benefactor for the time. In this way the great body of fireside lore has been preserved, notwithstanding the small number of good story-tellers in any neighbourhood. Where the office devolves on an incompetent narrator, a change for the worse ensues. Having gone on correctly for a time, he finds his memory at fault, and is obliged to fall back on the sequel

of a remembered tale. In this way stories, once popular in this or that locality, come to be remembered no more.

Taking into account the fewness of story-tellers, and the odds against a regular succession of good ones in any given district, the preservation of so many household fictions is not easily accounted for, especially as they have lost the poetic form in which they could be easily retained in the memory. The easy access to cheap books, and the diffusion of the penny literature of our times, have given a death-blow to the oral literature of the fireside. Regret at the passing away of an institution from which my childhood and boyhood derived such pleasure, has set me on to preserve in print the naive, and in many cases, excellent narratives which once delighted the unlettered folk of half the world.

*Corrected*

I have endeavoured to present them in a form suitable for the perusal of both sexes and of all ages. Some ludicrous obnoxiousness of no great harm occur, indeed, in some places; for the narrative, as given by a Wexford or Kerry man of the people, would be destitute of local colour without them.

I have only hinted, as it were, at the ordinary pronunciation, giving the words at times as the story-tellers uttered them, and in the correct form at others. A matter-of-fact reader may, if it gives him any pleasure, suppose *beast* to be always pronounced *baste*, though that faulty *spell* may be used only in a few instances. He must also bring himself to forgive Irish idioms and incorrect orthography in the colloquial parts of a story, while the more narrative records tolerably well with rules laid down in Lindley Murray's grammar. This is an ordinary feature of oral recitation. An intelligent though unlettered Bantry or Duffry peasant or peasantess would recite the troubles of the heroine, the labours and travels of the hero, the evil deeds of giant, giantess, and stepmother in tolerably correct lan-

guage; but the moment the narrative merged into the colloquial, the native idiom and pronunciation took the upper hand. *Had*, as an auxiliary in the pluperfect tense, will not be met here, as it is not patronised by the Irish people.

Writers born in Hants, or Notts, or Herts will kindly receive a hint or two which may be of use to them, when they venture on the pronunciation of natives of Ireland. Neither Paddy nor Winny ever pronounces Peter *Pather*, nor priest *praste*, nor thief *thafe*, nor read *rade*. He or she will certainly sound *beat* as if it was spelled *bate*, but neither will ever make a mistake about a word in which occurs either of the diphthongs *ie*, *ea*. They simply abuse *ea*, and indulge in aspirations—faults which are owing to their retaining the pronunciation of the native Gaelic after the meanings of most of its words have escaped their memory. The diphthong *ea* is never pronounced in Irish as it is heard in *weat*. It is sounded sometimes as *ay* in *day*, and sometimes as *a* in *caly*.

I intended that the present volume should contain some Ossianic and saintly legends, and short historic romances from our ancient annals; but circumstances in which I cannot expect my readers to take any interest have altered the design. These pieces only wait a favourable season to make their appearance. "The Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts" (Macmillan, 1865), the present, and the projected volume will complete "The Fireside and Bardic Stories of Ireland."

The greater number of the stories appeared in the DUBLIN UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE, while that periodical was the property of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Esq., and while it was enriched by the publication of his best novels. To him and the present proprietor I beg to express my grateful sense of their kind permission to issue a separate edition.