



FOREWORD

The publication of the first volume of the Irish Folklore Commission's series of booklets is a pleasure. It is the first of a series of booklets which will be issued by the Commission in the course of the year. The booklets are intended to provide information for Managers and Teachers of National Schools. The Commission is grateful to the Department of Education for the facilities which have been afforded it in the preparation of these booklets.

IRISH FOLKLORE AND TRADITION

THIS booklet, prepared by the Irish Folklore Commission, is being issued by the Department of Education for the information of Managers and Teachers of National Schools.

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS,
Meán Fogmhair, 1937.

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FOREWORD

The collection of the oral traditions of the Irish people is a work of national importance. It is but fitting that in our Primary Schools the senior pupils should be invited to participate in the task of rescuing from oblivion the traditions which, in spite of the vicissitudes of the historic Irish nation, have, century in, century out, been preserved with loving care by their ancestors. The task is an urgent one for in our time most of this important national oral heritage will have passed away for ever.

In every rural school in Ireland the children will vie with one another in collecting from their parents and friends these traditions, and with the friendly help and encouragement of the teachers there is no doubt that a huge body of very valuable information will be recorded from every part of the country.

First of all it must be stressed that very great importance is attached to the recording of variants of the same story, tradition, belief, custom, etc., from every district in the country. From this huge mass of variant material it will be possible for scholars to show geographical distribution of certain aspects of our oral traditions. For example, it may be discovered that a custom, belief, or story is confined to a certain area, or again, it may be found from a study of hundreds of variants of the same story, that a certain international folk-tale which is known to have three distinct types, a Central European type, an Eastern European type, and a type mainly associated with Western Europe, occurs in one or more of these types in Ireland, associated according to type with different regions of the country. Then the question will arise as to why a story which is found perhaps in Kerry and certain districts of Cork and Limerick is only known to science elsewhere from South-Eastern Europe.

In the same way, customs and beliefs, which in a conservative country like ours come down from the

Bronze Age as well as from the Early Christian Period, will throw light on our relations with the outside world during these two periods of our history.

There is also in Ireland a rich amount of material which is medieval in origin. Take, for example, the stories which, it is thought, were introduced from the East of Europe through the influence of the preachers of the Contemplative Orders from the twelfth century onwards. A study of these stories, known as *exempla*, will be of great importance to students of Medieval Irish Literature.

But apart from all this, the social life of the country people—the historic Irish nation—is mirrored in what is known in Irish-speaking districts as *seanchas* and but little attention has been paid to this type of oral tradition in the past. Due to the lack of documentary evidence the story of the Irish countryman will never be known unless all this *seanchas*, in English and in Irish, in all its variants, is recorded from every townland in Ireland.

When this urgent task of collecting is over a vast store of immensely important material will be available to research. We appeal to the children of the Primary Schools and to their teachers to help in this great work.

In writing down these traditions the standpoint should be taken that this is the first time, and perhaps the last time, that they will be recorded.

The children should remember that very little is known about the traditions of their district and they should record everything which throws a light on these traditions. It does not matter for the carrying out of this scheme whether similar traditions have been written down already. Even if it is believed that certain people have recorded them before, the only safe standpoint for teachers and pupils to take is to proceed as if nothing had been recorded in the district, and to remember that if they do not record the material it will die and be forgotten as if it had never been.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The pupil should enter at the end of each composition, story, etc., his (or her) name and address and the name and address of the person (or persons) from whom the material in the composition, etc., was obtained.
2. A margin of about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch is to be left blank on each page.
3. Practically every composition subject here suggested offers matter for several single compositions, e.g., "Old Crafts": one pupil may write down an account of the making of candles in the district in former times; another may describe how soap was made locally; a third, basket-making; a fourth, dyeing; a fifth, rope-making; a sixth, leather-tanning, and so on. Similarly with "The Potato Crop": some children may describe in detail the preparation of the soil prior to the planting of the seed; others the choice and preparation of the seed; others the actual planting; others the care of the growing crop; others the lifting (digging) of the crop out of the soil; yet others the storage of the potatoes, and so on.
4. Every composition irrespective of its length is valuable, provided the matter has been obtained locally.
5. The exact location of each place (rock, road, lake, etc.) mentioned in the composition must be given: townland, parish, and county being stated.

SUBJECTS FOR COMPOSITIONS

HIDDEN TREASURE

There is scarcely a district in Ireland in which stories of hidden treasure are not current. The wealth may have been hidden for many years or may date from quite recent times.

Where is the treasure supposed to have been hidden? By whom placed there? Why? Have attempts ever been made to unearth it? By whom? With what result?

What does the buried treasure consist of? Gold or silver or valuable vessels? What is the supposed value?

Has buried gold or such treasure ever been discovered in your district? Give an account of this.

What traditions are connected with the Danes in regard to secret hoards, or with the "fairypeople"? Have people ever been enabled to see this hidden wealth by eating certain food? With what result?

Are animals or supernatural guardians supposed to safeguard this hidden treasure? Give an account.

Have lights been seen where treasure is hidden?

Any other treasure stories?

Many tales of this character current in Ireland are of great antiquity, and when many hundreds of such narratives are recorded (and their *exact location* given) an important source of scientific investigation will be made available.

A FUNNY STORY

Write down a funny story you have heard told locally. It may deal with some local happening or may be a very old story which is told in other countries also.

A COLLECTION OF RIDDLES

Write down as many riddles as you can remember. They must be ones which you have heard *locally*.

Give the answers if you know them.

WEATHER LORE

Give a list of the local beliefs with regard to the weather. Signs of the weather as observed in the sky (sun, moon, stars, clouds, rainbow).

The wind at certain points. Local sayings in this regard. Which wind brings most rain to your district? Signs of coming storm and rain.

Birds and animals as weather omens. Birds flying high, low, inland, etc. Behaviour of cat, dog, and farm animals as an indication of the weather to be expected.

Natural features: colour of the sky, sheen on rocks, apparent nearness of hills as weather signs. "Fog on Muisire and Clárach clear is the surest sign of good weather." Dust on roadway. The sea, lakes, waterfalls as weather-indicators.

Insects and other winged creatures as weather prophets.

Direction and line-of-ascent of smoke from chimney.

Weather signs as seen in the fire and chimney.

LOCAL HEROES

Accounts of local men who in former times or even recently won fame in some field of activity.

Strong men: name and address; accounts of their prowess at weight-throwing or lifting of stones, sacks of grain or potatoes, weights, etc. How they did these feats; their opponents; onlookers; scene of the contest. Was there a challenge? Great stone-throwers.

Swift runners. Feats they accomplished. Distances run. Time taken to do it. Men who challenged one another at running. Races between human beings and horses. Men who could catch hares and rabbits by running after them. (Such stories are current in many districts.)

Great walkers. Distances travelled by people on foot in olden times, to fairs or for some other purpose. Accounts of such feats of endurance and speed.

Great jumpers. Distance jumped. Rivers, chasms, etc., crossed at a jump. Names of places where these feats were accomplished. Opponents. Onlookers. High jumpers.

Powerful swimmers or oarsmen.

Great mowers. Space covered in a day's mowing? Challenges. Challenge-stories are often connected with mythological people like an Chailleach Bhéara, or historical persons, or local strong men.

Noted dancers. Steps used. How learned and by whom taught? Victories won.

Singers and storytellers. What were their favourite songs or stories? Give as much detail as possible about those old people so that their names may not be forgotten. Give any traditions or stories about local people who were well known as singers or storytellers.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Shipwrecks or drownings: were ships or boats lost in the neighbourhood at any time? Give the local version of what happened. How did the disaster occur? Were many lives lost? Attempts at rescue? Warnings of disaster given beforehand? Places named as a result of the disaster?

Houseburnings and conflagrations. Accounts of great fires which occurred in the district at any time. Cause of the burning, its course, damage caused, lives endangered or lost?

Plagues or epidemics which visited the district? Accounts of their causes, course and harm done. Any other local happening of interest or importance.

In each case the account, though short, should be as detailed as possible. Dates should be given. The more local the account is the greater its value.

SEVERE WEATHER

Accounts of great storms of former times given by old people.

Time of year at which the storm occurred (date, month and year if possible); portents of the coming storm; its advance and intensity. Duration. Damage caused to houses, stock, boats, woods, etc. Were any lives lost?

Are any accounts available locally of the Big Wind of 1839? If so tell how it affected your district.

Severe thunderstorms as above.

Great rainstorms and floods. Duration and intensity. Damage caused. Land flooded. Houses invaded. Lives lost.

Heavy snowfalls. Portents. Piling up of the snow. Depth of fall. Duration. Sufferings of the people, animals and birds. Losses incurred.

Great drought-periods.

OLD SCHOOLS

Did hedge-schools exist in your district at any time? What was the local name for them? Where exactly was each hedge-school (house, field, townland, *etc.*)? Indoors or in the open?

Who taught in these schools? Names of the teachers? Were they strangers? Was school carried on in the farmers' houses? Did the teachers lodge in the houses? How were they paid for the instruction they gave?

What subjects were taught in the hedge-schools? Was Irish spoken by master and pupils and used in teaching other subjects? Was Irish taught? What was the teacher's attitude towards Irish and Irish culture?

What books were used? Was writing done? With pen or pencil or slate? How were the children arranged or seated in the school? Was there a blackboard?

Did the teachers remain long in each district?

Almost all the above questions apply equally to the early days of the National Schools.

OLD CRAFTS

Give an account of any type of industry carried on in the district in former times and now perhaps discontinued. If any of these trades or occupations are still carried on in your district please describe them.

Examples: candle-making; soap-manufacture; basket-making; forge work such as the manufacture of spades, gates, ploughs, fire-cranes; spinning and weaving; dyeing; thatching; rope-making; tanning of leather;

woodwork of certain kinds such as barrel- or churn-making; wheel-making; nail-making; whip-making; pottery work; burning of lime in kilns; fishing or fowling of certain types.

Accounts of at least one of the above crafts may be gleaned in every district. A description of the methods and implements used will be very valuable, especially if the craft in question has ceased to be carried on in the district.

LOCAL MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

At what period of the year do marriages most frequently take place locally? During Shrove? On Shrove Tuesday? What months and days are thought unlucky for marriage?

Are any local customs or beliefs connected with Shrove?

Are matches made in your district? Is money given as dowry? Are stock or goods ever given?

Do people remember marriages taking place in the houses? How recently was this?

What customs are observed on the wedding-day? Is a wedding-feast held? Where? Do "straw-boys" visit the house? Give an account of their dress, reception, and behaviour.

Is a wedding-procession or "hauling-home" held? Describe this.

Did those attending the wedding race against each other on horses on the way home? Did wives sit on the horses with their husbands?

IN THE PENAL TIMES

Write down any story or tradition connected with your district in the Penal Days, which has not come from a book or newspaper.

Are there place names in your district which have reference to the Penal Times, such as "The Mass Rock," "Mass Path," "Old Church," "Priest's Leap," *etc.*? What story is told about place-names such as these?

Are places still pointed out where Mass was said in the

Penal Days, or where a priest hid himself? Stories of soldiers in pursuit of priests. Priest hunters, betrayal of priests.

Did priests say Mass in the houses at that time? Were special houses built in secret places in which Mass was said? What name was given locally to such temporary or moveable houses?

LOCAL PLACE-NAMES

Names of fields, streams, hollows and heights, rocks, old bushes, on your farm at home. How were these names given?

From their natural characteristics, e.g., "The Long Field," "Heather Hill," "Ínse Liath"?

From former owners or people otherwise connected with them: "Paddy Mór's Rock," "Tom's Meadow," "Sheehan's Bog"?

From some accident or important happening which occurred there: a murder ("The Cliff of the Killing"); a dead body discovered there ("The Hollow of the Dead Man"); games played there ("The Field of the Game"); some historical occurrence such as Mass being said there in Penal Times ("Cnoc an Aifrinn": the Hill of the Mass), or ("Léim an tSagairt": The Priest's Leap); and so on.

Any story, however common locally, should be written down, the exact location of the place mentioned being given in every case (townland, parish, barony, county).

The more detailed and local the story or account is the more valuable it becomes.

BIRD LORE

Which wild birds are commonly found in your district? Do they migrate? Give an account of this as noticed in your district.

Where in your district does each bird build its nest? In bushes or house-caves or holes in walls and fences, on tree-tops, etc.?

Describe the nest and eggs. How long does the bird sit on the eggs? What are boys told will happen if they rob birds' nests?

Can the weather be judged by the behaviour of certain birds; their early or late appearance, peculiarity of their flight (high or low, inland or towards the sea), loudness of their cries, etc.?

Are there any traditions or stories connecting any of these birds with the life of the Saviour or with any of the saints or historical characters?

Is there any tradition explaining the peculiarities of certain birds: the red breast of the robin, the coloured bill of the blackbird, the pursuit of the cuckoo by certain small birds, etc.?

The speech of birds. What are they supposed to say to one another when calling?

LOCAL CURES

In what ways did people seek remedies for their ailments in former times? Take each ailment as it occurs and note down the remedy applied: e.g., to cure toothache use was made in a certain way of a frog; of a goose or gander to cure thrush; of food left behind by a ferret to cure other complaints, etc.

Holy wells were visited to obtain relief from certain ailments; e.g., in Tobar na Súil in a certain district, sore eyes were washed.

Remedies for other diseases were sought by crawling through an opening; under a rock, through a window, under a briar, through a cleft in a tree, between an animal's legs, etc.

Herbs and poultices were applied under certain conditions on other occasions.

Certain people, too, were looked upon as having healing powers: the seventh son or daughter, a posthumous child, a child born on a certain day, etc.

The more local and detailed the account is, the more valuable it is.

HOME-MADE TOYS

Every boy, and many girls, find amusement in spare time in making toys.

Girls string flowers together into a chain or girdle or else make dolls.

Boys make tops ("dancers") from thread-spools, guns from eider branches, cradle-birds with which to trap birds, snares for catching hares or rabbits, models from turnips etc.

A description of these amusements, whether carried on now or gone out of fashion is of very great importance. The name of the article made, an account of its manufacture, its purpose, when made, its efficiency and such details are necessary.

Elderly people can give accounts of such toys or others now forgotten, with which they amused themselves when young.

A simple drawing of the toy, if well done, will add to the value of the account.

THE LORE OF CERTAIN DAYS

In every district certain days are looked upon as being lucky or unlucky. Some days of the week are the only ones on which certain remedies for ailments are applied. People are loth to begin work such as ploughing, house-building, changing from one house to another on certain days. Which days are these and what types of work are deferred until later?

Is the "Cross-day of the Year" known in your district? When does it occur and what local customs attach to it?

Certain days and dates are also looked upon as being the correct ones for planting certain crops. For example, in a certain district potatoes should be planted before a certain day of a certain month and not later than another date.

Tradition offers explanations, too, for weather or other peculiarities of certain times of the year: e.g., the cold days of early April are referred to as the "Days of the

Old Cow," borrowed by March from April to get even with a mythical boastful cow; certain weeks of the year are called the "Harvest of the Geese," etc.

TRAVELLING FOLK

Do "travelling people" still call to your home? Have the same people been doing so for many years? Are they very poor?

Do they sell small articles? Do people buy from them? Where do they obtain their supplies?

Are these "travellers" generally welcome? Do they remain for longer than a night at a time? Where do they sleep? Do they have food with them? What alms do they accept?

Do they travel on foot? If not, how do they go about? Do they travel singly, in families or in bands?

Give the names of the best known of them. What family of "travellers" most frequently visits your district? Do they come at any special time? For the local "pattern" day (feast-day) or fair-day?

Do they tell stories and bring news from distant parts? Do the local people gather around to hear them?

The above questions apply equally to "travellers" who visited the district in former times.

"FAIRY FORTS"

Are there "fairy forts" in the school district? By what name are they called (liss, fort, cathair, ring, rath, etc.)? In what town-land is each one? Are they within view of one another?

Are they all circular in shape? Is there a fence of earth or stone or trees around each? Is there an entrance-hole in the centre or elsewhere? Has anybody ever gone down through the hole and explored the interior? What was the result?

Is there any story attached to these forts? Who are

supposed to have built them? For what purpose? Were the "Danes" connected with them in any way? Were fairy-people supposed to live in them? Are there any stories of cats or other animals having been seen in or in the neighbourhood of these forts?

Did the owners of the land where these forts are ever interfere with them when ploughing or planting crops? Are any stories told in this connection? Have lights ever been seen in them, or has music or the sound of churning been heard there?

Any story or portion of a story associated in any way with these forts should be carefully recorded. In each case the townland in which the fort is situated should be mentioned.

LOCAL POETS

Give the names of any poets who lived in your district formerly. Where exactly did they live? When were they born and how old were they when they died? Where are they buried?

Are any stories told as to how they got the gift of poetry? Were there poets among their ancestors, or did the power of versemaking come suddenly?

Give the names of any songs they made. Is there any story told as to why they made any song? Did they compose in Irish or English or in both? Did poets compete with one another in song-making, or did they attack one another?

Were these poets farmers or tradesmen? When did they compose their songs? Could they read and write? How did the local people look upon them?

Were great powers attributed to poets? Did they ever try to banish rats from a house? How did they attempt this? Did they succeed?

Are their songs still sung locally?

Any scrap of information, especially any story or tradition connected with the local poets, should be recorded.

FAMINE TIMES

Have the old people stories about the Great Famine of 1846-47? Did it affect the district very much?

Was the district very thickly populated before that time? Do people still point out sites of houses then occupied and now in ruins?

How did the blight come and the potato-crop fail? Did the potatoes decay in the ground or afterwards in the pits?

Are there any accounts of the seed-potatoes for the following year? Were they sown broadcast like grain?

What food had the people instead? Did Government relief reach the district?

Did people die in great numbers there? Did great sickness follow the hunger?

Do people talk about other periods of famine and distress due to the failure of the potato-crop?

Great importance is attached to the writing down by the children of events which occurred locally during the Famine Years, as in these short and apparently trivial stories the background to this National Disaster is most clearly pictured.

GAMES I PLAY

What games do you play? Give a list.

Do you amuse yourself in a special way at certain times of the year? (nut-cracking and blackberry-picking in Autumn), making bird-traps (cradlebirds) in winter.

An account of children's games as played locally and in the children's own words would be invaluable. Such games as hurling and football are general and need not be described in detail.

Children amuse themselves in certain ways while sitting around the fire in winter, and in other ways out of doors.

Girls play games different from those practised by boys.

Even the simplest forms of amusement should be noted down.

THE LOCAL ROADS

By what names are the local roads known? From where do they lead, and to where? When were they made? Are there any very old roads in the district? Are they still used? Are there any local accounts as to when they were made? Were roads made there as relief work during the Famine period? Is there any knowledge as to the conditions of work, rates of pay, people who worked at the road-making, etc.? Are there any old paths or by-ways in the school district? Mountain passes?

Before bridges were made in the district were the rivers crossed by means of fords at shallow places? Give the names and location of these fords and write down any traditions or stories told about them.

Is there any local custom connected with crossroads?

Are there heaps of stones or monuments to the dead along any of the roads in the district?

Are there any Mass-paths?

MY HOME DISTRICT

Its name (Townland, Parish and Barony). Number of families in the townland. Approximate number of people. Family name most common. Types of houses—thatched or slated. How townland got its name. Any old people (say over seventy) living there? Do they know Irish? Can they tell stories in Irish or English? Give their names and addresses.

Were houses more numerous locally in former times? Are there many now in ruins? Did people emigrate from there to America or elsewhere in former years? Is the townland mentioned in any song or saying? If so, quote.

Is the land hilly or boggy or good? Any wood growing there? Name and size? Rivers? Lakes? Streams? Stories connected with them.

OUR HOLY WELLS

How many holy wells are in the parish? Tell where they are (townland, name of field, if any). Do people

still visit them on certain days? When? Are "rounds" performed there and prayers said? Give an account of these.

Is there any story told about any of these wells? Origin? What saints are mentioned in connection with them?

Have people been cured at the well? Give an account. Is the well specially recommended for the cure of any disease?

Do invalids and people generally drink the well-water, or bathe in it or rub it to the affected part?

Are relics left behind at the well? What are these? Is any kind of offering made at the well (food, money, etc.)?

Is there a fish in the well? Are stories told about people who tried to drain or to pollute the well, or who tried to use the water for household purposes? What happened?

Is there a bush or tree at the well?

HERBS

Which are the most harmful weeds growing on your farm at home? Give their names in Irish or English. Are they harmful because they spread rapidly or because they impoverish the soil?

Are any herbs or plants looked upon as growing only where land is good? Which are found only in poor land?

Have certain herbs medicinal properties? Give their *local* names. For what diseases or complaints is each one efficacious? How is the herb used?

Are there any traditions connected with any herb or plant, explaining *e.g.* why its flower has a certain colour, why its root is shaped as it is, why it is so small, etc.?

Are any of those herbs or plants used for food for people or animals? Describe this.

Are any of them used for dyeing purposes or for poison?

Were herbs used extensively in the cure or alleviation of disease in former times? Who used them? Were sufferers relieved or cured by this means?

THE POTATO-CROP

Are potatoes grown on your farm? How much land is sown under potatoes each year? Does the amount ever vary?

Who prepares the ground? Is the ground manured in any way before being turned up? Are the potatoes sown in ridges or in drills? Describe the making of these. Is a plough used or a spade? Were wooden ploughs ever used? Are there any left? Are the spades made locally or bought in a shop? Describe the preparation of potatoes for sowing. Make a drawing of the local spade.

Do the local people help one another in sowing the potatoes? In what way?

Describe the treatment given to the growing crop during the summer months ending with a description of the method of digging (raising) the potatoes in Autumn. Who picks the potatoes from the earth? How is it done? How are the potatoes stored? In lofts or in pits? Give a description of this.

What local names are given to the various kinds of potatoes? What types of potatoes grow best in the district?

Were potatoes ever used instead of starch? Give an account.

PROVERBS

Write down as many proverbs as you can remember having heard *used locally*. Write them down as they occur to you without placing them in any special order.

Question the grown-up people at home and obtain from them all the sayings and proverbs you can. The more local they are the better.

If a story is told to illustrate a proverb which has a purely local origin write down the story. Example: In a certain part of Munster a man called Tadhg na Spréach got a sound tooth extracted by mistake while the offending tooth beside it remained untouched. When the mistake was discovered the person who extracted the tooth defended himself by saying that he was merely making preparations

for the major operation. This lame excuse gave rise to the saying: "Making preparations as Tadhg na Spréach was with the tooth." This tale is also told in other European countries.

In almost every district such sayings have local origin and application, and a small number of these will have far more interest and value than a long list of proverbs which have ultimately been derived from printed sources, most of them imported.

FESTIVAL CUSTOMS

In most districts many feasts are observed in a special manner as they occur each year.

To cite one: On St. Stephen's Day boys, and in some places grown-up men, gather together and go in procession from house to house with decorated bushes, singing the Wren-song. A detailed account of this, with the actual words sung should be given. Is money gathered? How is it divided and how spent?

Important festivals are: St. Brigid's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Shrove, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, "Chalk" Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Sunday, Whit Sunday and Whit Monday, May Day, St. John's Day, Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, Feast of the Assumption (August 15th), Michaelmas, St. Martin's Day, St. Thomas' Day, Hallowe'en, the Twelve Days of Christmas, St. Stephen's Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, the Epiphany ("Little Christmas"), etc.

All local customs and observances connected with these feasts, commonplace though they may be in the district, may be quite unknown in other portions of the country and ought, therefore, to be noted down.

Any expressions, proverbs, or traditional stories connected with any of the feasts should be recorded.

THE CARE OF OUR FARM ANIMALS

Give a list of the farm and domestic animals at home. Have the cows got names? What are these names

(e.g. Bawny, etc.)? What do you say when driving the cows in or out of a field (How! How! etc.)? Similarly with calves.

Describe the cowhouse. What is it called? How are the cows tied? To stakes? Are cows ever tied by the neck or horns or legs? Of what material are the tyings made? Are they home-made? Give the local names for the various forms of tying.

Is a branch or emblem hung in the cowhouse at any time to bring luck on the stock?

Are there any customs or stories connected with milking?

Similar questions to be asked about horses. The stable, fodder, shoeing, hair-clipping, etc. Are there any traditional stories told locally of famous horses in olden times (e.g. a horse kept in a stable for seven years)?

Stories or customs connected with pigs, goats or sheep. Stories telling how these animals first came into being.

What are the calls for the various kinds of animals (e.g. Tuk! tuk! for hens)? Some of these calls are very ancient.

Stories and traditions about hens and chickens, ducks and geese and other fowl. Accounts and customs of the setting of eggs for hatching. Is a mark of any kind put on the hatching eggs?

Many such simple stories have a widespread distribution in Europe and elsewhere, and from a literary and cultural standpoint are of great importance.

CHURNING

Have you a churn at home? How tall is it? How wide at the top and bottom? Are the sides round or straight? How old is it? What are the various parts called? Is there any mark on the side or bottom of the churn?

How often is butter made each week in winter and summer?

Who does the churning? Do strangers who come in during churning help at the work? Why? How long does the churning take? Is the churning done by hand

or foot? If by hand, is the churn-dash always moved upwards and downwards or is it given a rolling motion from side to side at any time?

How do people know when the butter is made? Is water ever poured in during the process? Why? Describe the lifting out of the butter and its subsequent treatment.

Are there any local sayings, proverbs or stories connected with churning and butter-making?

How is the buttermilk used?

THE CARE OF THE FEET

At what age did people begin to wear boots in former times? Are there accounts of people who never wore boots or shoes? Do children at present go barefoot in summer, or all the year round?

What is done with the water used for washing the feet? Are there any customs or beliefs connected with it?

Are boots made or repaired locally? How many shoemakers are there in the district? Has this been a tradition in their families? For how long back? Compare the number of shoemakers at the present day with that in former times. Why the change?

Were clogs (wooden soles) ever worn or made locally? When? Are they worn now?

Was leather made in the district at any time? Where?

Were foot coverings of any special kind of leather (sheepskin, untanned hide, etc.) ever worn?

Any sayings or proverbs connected with the above?

THE LOCAL FORGE

How many forges are there in the parish? Who are the smiths? Have their people been smiths for many years? Where are the forges situated? Are they near a cross-roads, roadside or stream?

Describe the forge. What kind of roof has it? Is the door of any special shape? How many fireplaces are

within? Describe the bellows. Were they made locally? What implements does the smith use in his work?

Does the smith shoe horses? Asses? Cattle?

Does he make farm implements, such as ploughs, harrows, spades, shovels, pikes, axes, etc.? Describe in detail this special type of work.

Is any part of the forge-work done in the open air? Where? Give any local names and terms used in this connection.

Is there any local belief with regard to forge-water or to the sparks which fly from the red iron?

Had the local smiths any special privileges at any time? Did people send them gifts? Had smiths any special powers (e.g. to banish rats, etc.)? Were they always looked upon as being very strong?

Are there any traditions or stories connected with the local forges? Were they centres for storytelling? Has the forge figured in any historical or national event?

These questions apply equally to disused or derelict forges.

CLOTHES MADE LOCALLY

How many tailors are there now in the district? Do they work at their homes or do they travel as formerly from house to house when required?

Does the tailor stock cloth? Is cloth spun and woven locally? Do local people wear clothes made of such cloth? What types of cloth are used?

Are there any sayings or traditions connected with tailors or tailoring?

What gear or implements does the tailor use in his work?

Are shirts made in the homes? What type of cloth is used? Are there any accounts of shirts of cloth made from flax grown locally?

Are socks and stockings knitted locally? Is the thread spun in the homes? How many spinning-wheels are in the district?

Are special types of clothes worn on any occasion, such as local feast-days, at the death of a relative, at weddings, etc.? Describe them.

STORIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Stories dealing with the life of Christ and the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph are common all over the country, and are very interesting. They do not occur in the New Testament but are, nevertheless, of very great antiquity.

An example will best illustrate the type of story in question:

When Mary and Joseph were fleeing with the Saviour from Herod's soldiers, some sowers by the wayside gave them food and immediately the grain they were planting grew up and ripened. Next day the men set about cutting it down. The soldiers came and asked if they had seen a man, woman and infant pass along that way. The workmen answered truly that such people had passed by the day they were sowing the crop they were now reaping. The soldiers thought that this was a long time previously and that they were on the wrong track. When they were on the point of turning back a chafer in its peculiar creaking noise spoke from the grass saying: "Indé! Indé!" thereby informing the soldiers that the fugitives had travelled that way the previous day. The soldiers then set off in hot pursuit.

That is why people do not like the chafer.

Similar stories are associated with domestic fowl, animals, insects, birds and fish. Many of these are widespread in Europe and elsewhere. All are worthy of being recorded.

THE LOCAL PATRON SAINT

What saint is traditionally connected with the district? Does a church, ruined or in use, built by the saint or under his patronage exist there?

Are there any stories or legends told locally about the saint? Write these down.

What connection had the saint with this district? Had he a monastery there? Did he work any miracles there? Where is he buried?

Have any places in the district been called after the

saint? Is there a holy well dedicated to his honour? Are any special prayers said to him?

Are people in the district called after the saint?

Is the local saint's day observed as a holiday in the parish? If so, are any stories told about the punishment meted out to those who neglected to observe it?

THE LOCAL FAIRS

Where are the local fairs held? Are they always held in towns? Did buyers ever transact business in the country (at crossroads or at farmers' houses)? Is this still done?

Were fairs held formerly which have now been discontinued? Why? Are there any local traditions of fairs held on hills, in the neighbourhood of cemeteries or castles, forts, etc.?

Is the town fair held in the streets or in a special fair-place? Is toll paid on cattle sold? To whom, and how much?

When an animal is sold is luck-money given? What is it called? How is it calculated?

When a bargain has been made how do the parties concerned show their agreement (by striking hands, by spitting, etc.)?

How are animals marked when sold? With mud on the flank, by clipping the hair at the side or how? Give details.

When an animal is sold, is the halter or rope given away or retained?

Which are the great fairs of the year locally? Are special fairs held for the sale of sheep or bonhams or horses?

Many Irish fairs are held on sites which were in ancient times the scenes of aonachs or political assemblies. It is of great importance to have recorded every scrap of tradition relating to fairs no longer held.

THE LANDLORD

Who was the local landlord? How long had the family been settled in the district?

Were they looked upon as good or as bad landlords? Have evictions or plantings been carried out in the district? Where did the evicted people go to?

How did the landlord or his ancestors first come into possession of the land? Was the land divided into farms under their guidance? Were farms sub-divided among members of families on marriage?

Did the landlord exercise any special powers over his tenants? Were they punished for trivial acts?

Were tithes collected in the district in former times? By whom and for whom? Were they collected in money or in kind? Are there any stories about them? Did people resent their collection? Were battles fought on account of them?

Any story or tradition illustrative of the dealings of landlords with their tenants should be recorded carefully.

FOOD IN OLDEN TIMES

How many meals a day did people have in olden times? What meals were they? At what time were they eaten? Did people work in the morning before having food?

Of what did each meal consist? Were potatoes eaten at every meal? Was milk drunk? What kind of milk? Did people sit around the table in the centre of the floor or was the table placed near the wall? Was the table ever hung up against the wall when not in use?

What kind of bread was eaten? How was it made? Was meat eaten often? Fresh or salt? What kind of meat was generally eaten? Was fish eaten? Vegetables? Anything else, now more or less gone out of fashion?

Did people eat late at night?

Were certain kinds of food eaten on special occasions? On what occasions? Describe these special foods.

Did certain customs attach to some feastdays (egg-eating on Easter Sunday, etc.)?

When was tea first used in the district?

What vessels were used before cups became common?

HURLING AND FOOTBALL MATCHES

Write down an account of a match played locally in olden times.

What teams played? How many men were on either side? How were the teams picked? Where was the match played? Was it a parish *versus* parish game or simply between townlands? Who won? Which players won fame on the field? What was the score?

Was the ball ever kicked across country from one townland to another? If so give a description. How were the players dressed?

How was the refereeing done?

What type of ball was used? Its size, make, etc.? Were goal-posts used? If not, how was the goal-space marked?

Was hurling played in your district in former times? What kind of hurleys were used? Their shape, size, material used, where made, etc.? Describe the ball.

Who were famous on the local hurling field in years gone by?

What other outdoor amusements were in vogue: handball, bowling, weight-throwing, etc.? Where were these games played? Exact location to be given.

AN OLD STORY

Write down an old story as told by the elderly people while sitting round the fire on winter nights.

It may be about a king or a queen or their children, or perhaps a widow's son or a poor boy who set out from home to seek his fortune. It may be about a cruel step-mother who was very strict with her stepson or step-daughter.

It may be about Gobán Saor or the Bárrscológ or Conall Gulban or Céatach or some such person about whom tales are told beside the fire.

It may deal with magical helpers (The Man with His Ear to the Ground; the Man with His Leg tied under His Belt, etc.) or with helpful horses or cats or with boats which go over land and sea. Or with soldiers who were

killed in battle each day and were alive again next morning.

Such tales were common to most parts of Europe in the Middle Ages. Many of them have passed into literature. We should endeavour to preserve them, and to record them in all their variants from every parish in Ireland. If you know (or hear locally) a story which you know, or are told, has been "in print already" do not be deterred by this, but *write it down*, giving storyteller's name, age, and address. Even incomplete stories should be recorded. Try to discover from the storyteller where he (or she) got the story and when.

OLD IRISH TALES

Write down any tale you have heard locally about any of the Fianna. It may deal with one or several of the following people: Fionn Mac Cool, Oisín, Oscar, Conán Maol, Diarmuid Ó Duibhne, Goll Mac Morna, Caoilte, Gráinne, Niamh of the Golden Head, etc.

A local tradition connecting some place in the parish with the Fianna is of great importance. For instance a rock may be said to have been thrown by Fionn to where it now lies; a cave may be referred to as the Cave of Diarmuid and Gráinne, etc.

Are any tales told locally dealing with Oisín's meeting with St. Patrick?

Tales about King Conor Mac Nessa, Cú Chulainn, Conall Ceárnach, Déirdre, etc.

Do you know of any place in the district which is called "folach fiadh" or some such name?

A SONG

Write down the verses of some local song.

Tell, if you can, by whom it was composed, and why and when it was made.

On no account write down as a local song anything which has come from a book or newspaper.

LOCAL MONUMENTS

Are there ancient crosses or standing stones in the parish? Where are they to be found? In the churchyard or elsewhere? Give the exact location if possible.

Crosses erected within living memory need not be mentioned.

Are there ornamented stones in the parish? Where are they? Have they carving or letters or ornamental designs?

Is there a local tradition connected with any of these stones? Who is buried there? Why was the stone erected?

Are there any stones in the district with peculiar markings or strokes or hollows on them? Give their location and an account of them.

Are there any stone circles or "Druids' altars" or capped-pillars in the parish?

Are there cairns of stones in memory of the dead?

What other ancient monuments are found in your district?

Please record any oral tradition you can find about these local field-monuments, giving in each case the exact location of such remains.

BREAD

Accounts from the grown-up people with regard to the kind of bread made in the district in olden times.

Was bread made from wheat or corn or oats grown locally? Was the flour made locally? Do people remember querns (grind-stones) being used, or did they hear that such were in use in the district?

What different kinds of bread were made (Potato-cake, Boxty-bread, Stampy, Oaten-meal bread, etc.)? Give an account of each. What ingredients were used? Was milk or water added in kneading? Was bread baked every day or was enough for a week made at one time?

What marks were cut on top of the cake when made? Why was this done? What name was given to the vessel in which the bread was baked (oven, bastable, pot-oven, *báicís*)?

Was bread ever baked in front of the fire standing against a support? What was the support called, and of what was it made? Was griddle-bread made?

Was a special kind of bread made on any occasion?

BUYING AND SELLING

Were shops common in olden times? Had people to go to the nearest town to make purchases? Was buying and selling carried on after Mass? Is this still practised? What articles were sold in this way?

Was money always given for goods? Were goods ever bartered in the district? Was labour given in exchange for goods?

What words were connected with buying and selling, such as "boot," "tick," "change," "cant," etc.?

Was it considered unlucky or totally prohibited to transact business on certain days? Which days were these?

Where were the markets held in former times? Are they still held there?

Are there any accounts of hucksters, pedlars, and dealers in feathers and rags who visited districts in former times? Do they still come?

By what names are the various coins referred to? Have some coins and types of money gone out of use?

Stories of coins which always returned to the owner.

OLD HOUSES

Accounts given by the old people with regard to the kinds of houses which existed in the district in former times?

Were these houses thatched or slated or had they roofs of another kind? From where was the thatch or slate procured?

Had the old houses a bed in the kitchen? If so where was it placed and what was it called? Was the fireplace always at the gable-wall? Was it ever in the corner or against the side-wall? Was the front of the chimney made of mortar and stones or of clay and wattles? Did the old people ever hear of houses having no chimney, or of houses having the fire in the centre of the house on the floor?

Are there any accounts of houses which had no glass for the windows? What else was used?

Of what were the old floors made?

Are half-doors common in the district or were they common formerly?

What was used for the fire—turf or coal or wood or anything else?

What old methods were employed for giving light at night? Bog-deal splinters, candles, dips, rushlights, etc.? Were candles made locally?

STORIES OF GIANTS AND WARRIORS

Write down any story you have heard locally in which a giant played a part.

Are there accounts of giants or great warriors who had any connection with your district in olden times? Where did they live? Are any places (mountains, rivers, lakes, rocks, ruins, etc.) still mentioned in connection with them?

Did they fight against one another or against opposing armies? Are the scenes of such encounters still pointed out?

Are stories told of giants who hurled rocks from place to place?

Do people tell how huge giants were outwitted by puny opponents?

Did old hags live in caves or houses in your district in former times? What stories are told in connection with them? The Old Hag of Béara, of Nephin, and of Dingle, are examples.

Any information, no matter how short or incomplete it may be, should be written down. Such information is of scientific value.

THE LEIPREACHAN OR MERMAID.

By what name or names is the little leip eachán known locally (lutharagan? geanncanach?)? How tall is he? How is he dressed? Where does he live?

What is his usual occupation? Shoemaking? What else?

Are stories told of local people who caught him and endeavoured to get him to give up his gold? Did they succeed?

Are leipreacháns looked upon as friendly beings? Have they on occasions helped human beings? How? Have they ever taken revenge on those who interfered with them?

The mermaid. Are stories told about the mermaid in your district? What description is given of her? Has she human faculties such as speech, etc.?

Has one ever been brought ashore? What happened to her?

Are any local families connected in any way with mermaids?

Tales and traditions associated with the above and similar "supernatural" beings have a great antiquity behind them; and it is very important to record them in all their detail.

LOCAL RUINS

Is there any ruined castle in the school district? Who built it? How old is it? How long has it been derelict? Where is it? (Give name of townland, parish, barony, county.)

Was it besieged or attacked at any time? Give an account.

Is there any local tradition attached to the castle? Had it a dungeon? Were people foully done to death in it?

Is there a ruined church or monastery in the neighbourhood? What traditions are given about it? When was it abandoned? Was it plundered or burned?

Does it contain any carvings on the doorways? Are there any inscribed or ornamented stones in the vicinity?

Are there any towers in the district? When and by whom were they built? Any stories told about them?

Have you heard a story about a church or other building having been built in the course of a night; or of a wall of a church in the course of erection being knocked down each night by a bull or other animal?

RELIGIOUS STORIES

Are tales told in your district about the Mass? People who ceased attending Mass for some reason and who were taught the error of their ways by a stranger ("water flowing through the carcase of a dog may taste sweet"). Many such medieval *exempla* (from sermons) exist in Ireland.

Is there any other story about the Mass: the person who placed a stone in a box for each Mass heard and found only one stone in the box at last; being in time for Mass; asking the priest (or St. Patrick) a question during Mass; Mass-bells being heard in places where Mass was formerly said?

Religious people who lived in the district. Stories illustrative of their piety.

Wrong deeds and their just punishment.

Stories connected with the Sacraments.

Stories about bishops, priests, monks, poor scholars, etc.

Valuable contributions can be made in this section of great importance to students of Irish medieval history and literature. Every scrap of information to be found locally should be written down.

THE OLD GRAVEYARDS

How many churchyards are in the parish? Give their names and tell in what townlands they are situated.

Are all still in use? Are any of the churchyards round in shape? Is there still a church, ruined or otherwise, in any of them?

Is the churchyard level, or in what direction does it slope? Are there trees growing in it?

Does the churchyard contain any very old tombs or monuments or crosses? What are the dates, if any, on these? Are the crosses, etc. ornamented? Describe them, if possible. Are there crosses made of wood or iron?

Are people buried within the ruin in the churchyard?

Are there disused graveyards in the parish? In what townlands are these graveyards? Do people remember burials having taken place there?

Where were unbaptised children buried? What were such graveyards called? Are they still used?

Is there any story or tradition connected with the local graveyard? Tell it.

Do local families still use certain graveyards though they may be much further distant than the parish graveyard?

A COLLECTION OF PRAYERS

Write down all the prayers you have learned at home and which you have not been taught in school or learned from a book.

Old people have many beautiful prayers which have never appeared in print. Among them may be mentioned prayers said when awakening in the morning, when getting up out of bed, when starting work, when going on a journey, when kindling the fire, when going into the church, when going to bed, etc.

Even one of these prayers written down correctly is very valuable. Tell always, if possible, which is the proper time to say the prayer.

These old prayers go back in many cases to the Middle Ages. They should be preserved and recorded in all their variations in every part of Ireland.

EMBLEMS AND OBJECTS OF VALUE

In almost every part of Ireland certain articles are

placed in position in the houses in honour of a Saint or feast.

Accounts of this custom as applied locally will be of great interest and importance.

Crosses: St. Patrick's or St. Brigid's Crosses. How made (size, material, etc.), by whom? When made? What is done with them when made? Where are they finally placed? Any traditions connected with them?

Branches and herbs: e.g., holly at Christmas; certain branches on May Day; palm on Palm Sunday, etc. Are these ever hung in the outhouses?

Objects made by weaving and plaiting: of straw, of ribbon material, etc.

Pieces of cloth or garments, such as St. Brigid's Cloak.

Holy water. Water from a certain well.

Clay or stones from certain places.

Any other such articles by which special store is set.

HISTORICAL TRADITION

Your district has been connected in some way with one movement or another in Irish history. Local accounts of this are invaluable. It may be an account of a battle, a local chieftain, an incident of the Penal Days or the Famine or Land War.

To give an example: Do the local people tell any story of Cromwell? Write it down.

Was Cromwell supposed to have been a shoemaker at one time? Is there any story told locally in that connection?

Did his visit to Ireland affect your district directly or otherwise? How? Did Cromwell's army pass through your district?

Are any stories told of prophecies with regard to Cromwell's death? According to tradition how did he die, and where was he buried?

STRANGE ANIMALS

Traditions in this connection should be gathered in

all their variety: archæological research on the Continent has derived much help from such material.

Is there a story told in your district of a serpent or large animal which lives in a certain lake or river there? Give the name of the lake or river concerned.

What shape does this animal have? Has it been seen very often? Does it appear at rare intervals or frequently? Who saw it? What happened? Have attempts been made to capture it?

Is treasure supposed to be guarded by this animal? If not, what story is told of its origin?

Are water-horses or water-bulls spoken of in the district? What stories are told about them? Where have they been seen?

Are stories told of strange animals met by night on roads? What shape did such animals have? What happened at the encounter?

Is there any local tradition of a fairy horse or cow which came into a farmer's possession and remained for a certain time? Give the story.