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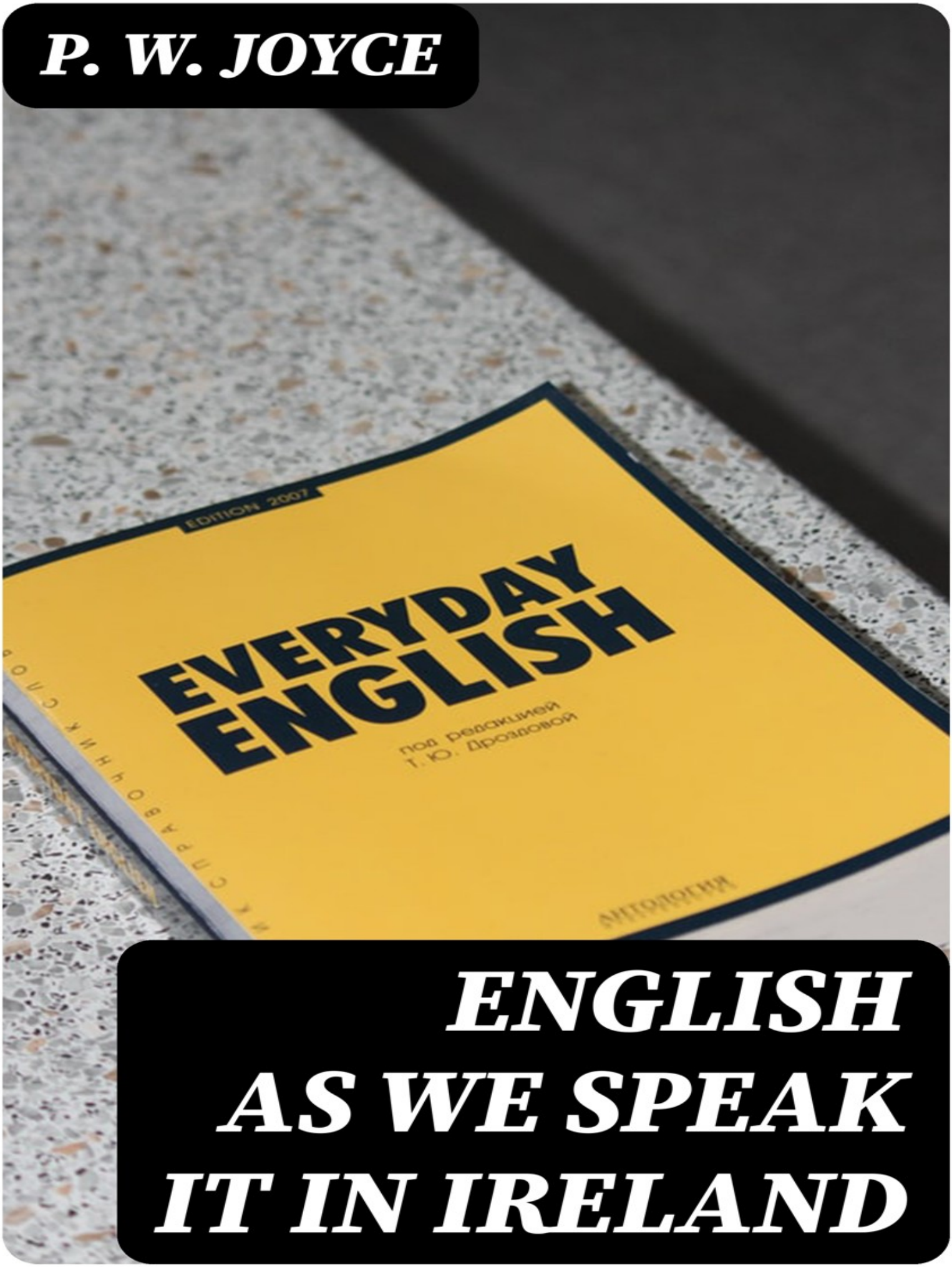

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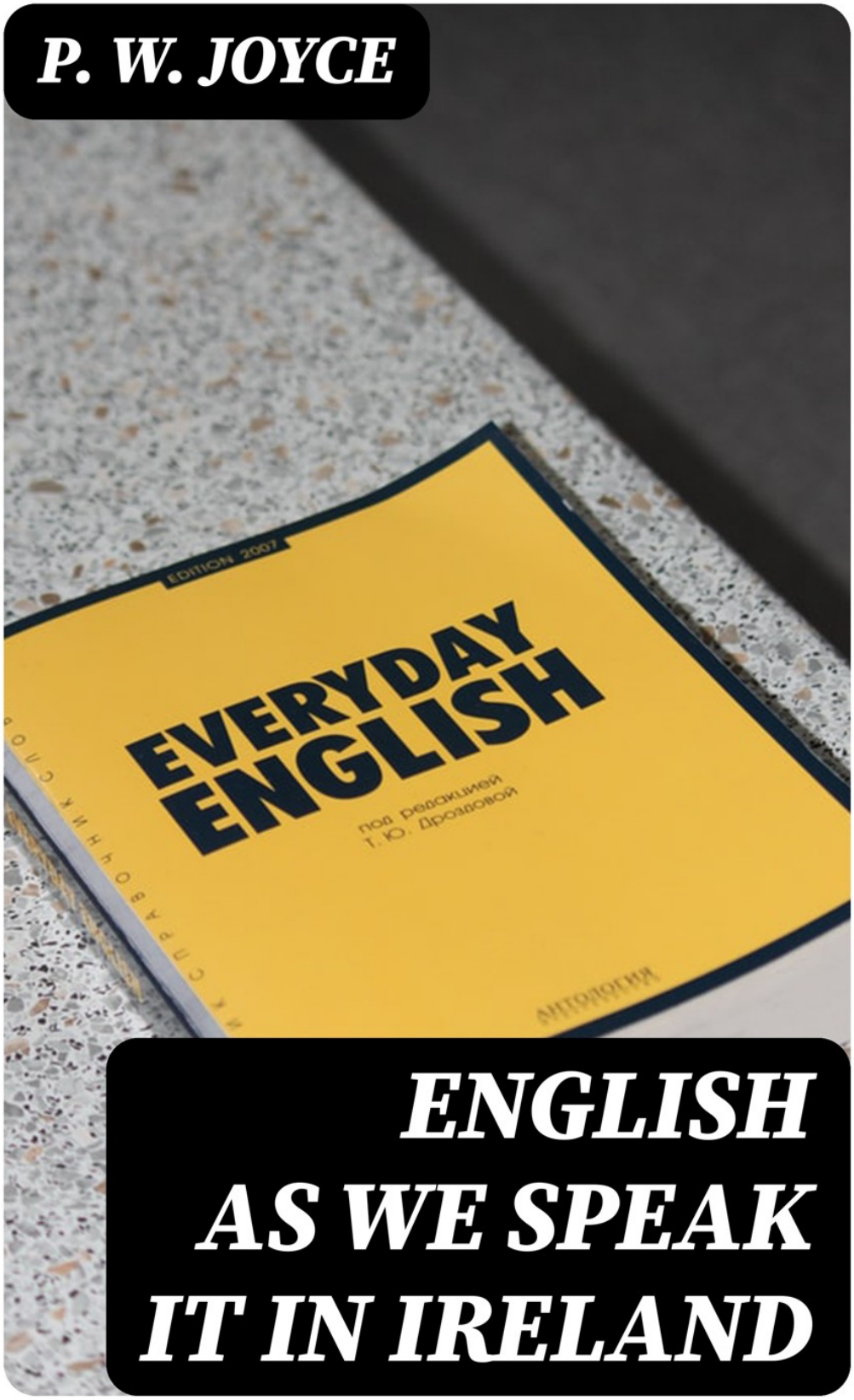

ENGLISH AS WE SPEAK IT IN IRELAND

P. W. Joyce

English As We Speak It in Ireland

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A CONCISE HISTORY OF IRELAND

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF IRISH NAMES OF PLACES.

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OLD CELTIC ROMANCES.

A GRAMMAR OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE.

A READING BOOK IN IRISH HISTORY.

ANCIENT IRISH MUSIC,

IRISH MUSIC AND SONG.

IRISH PEASANT SONGS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

A HAND-BOOK OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND METHODS OF TEACHING.

BALLADS OF IRISH CHIVALRY

OLD IRISH FOLK MUSIC AND SONGS.

LONDON: LONGMANS, GREEN, & CO.
DUBLIN: M. H. GILL & SON, LTD.
1910

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PREFACE.

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This book deals with the Dialect of the English Language that is spoken in Ireland.

As the Life of a people—according to our motto—is pictured in their speech, our picture ought to be a good one, for two languages were concerned in it—Irish and English. The part played by each will be found specially set forth in Chapters IV and VII; and in farther detail throughout the whole book.

The articles and pamphlets that have already appeared on this interesting subject—which are described below—are all short. Some are full of keen observation; but very many are mere lists of dialectical words with their meanings. Here for the first time—in this little volume of mine—our Anglo-Irish Dialect is subjected to detailed analysis and systematic classification.

I have been collecting materials for this book for more than twenty years; not indeed by way of constant work, but off and on as detailed below. The sources from which these materials were directly derived are mainly the following.

First.—My own memory is a storehouse both of idiom and vocabulary; for the good reason that from childhood to early manhood I spoke—like those among whom I lived—the rich dialect of Limerick and Cork—and indeed to some extent speak it still in the colloquial language of everyday life.

I have also drawn pretty largely on our Anglo-Irish Folk Songs of which I have a great collection, partly in my memory and partly on printed sheets; for they often faithfully reflect our Dialect.

Second.—Eighteen years ago (1892) I wrote a short letter which was inserted in nearly all the Irish newspapers and in very many of those published outside Ireland, announcing my intention to write a book on Anglo-Irish Dialect, and asking for collections of dialectical words and phrases. In response to this I received a very large number of communications from all parts of Ireland, as well as from outside Ireland, even from America, Australia, and New Zealand—all more or less to the point, showing the great and widespread interest taken in the subject. Their importance of course greatly varied; but many were very valuable. I give at the end of the book an alphabetical list of those contributors: and I acknowledge the most important of them throughout the book.

Third.—The works of Irish writers of novels, stories, and essays depicting Irish peasant life in which the people are made to speak in dialect. Some of these are mentioned in Chapter I., and others are quoted throughout the book as occasion requires.

Fourth.—Printed articles and pamphlets on the special subject of Anglo-Irish Dialect. Of these the principal that I

have come across are the following:—

'The Provincialisms of Belfast and Surrounding District pointed out and corrected,' by David Patterson. (1860.)

'Remarks on the Irish Dialect of the English Language,' by A. Hume, D.C.L. and LL.D. (1878.)

'A Glossary of Words in use in the Counties of Antrim and Down,' by Wm. Hugh Patterson, M.R.I.A. (1880)—a large pamphlet—might indeed be called a book.

'Don't, Pat,' by 'Colonel O'Critical': a very good and useful little pamphlet, marred by a silly title which turns up perpetually through the whole pamphlet till the reader gets sick of it. (1885.)

'A List of Peculiar Words and Phrases at one time in use in Armagh and South Donegal': by D. A. Simmons. (1890.) This List was annotated by me, at the request of Mr. Simmons, who was, at or about that time, President of the Irish National Teachers' Association.

A Series of Six Articles on *The English in Ireland* by myself, printed in 'The Educational Gazette'; Dublin. (1890.)

'The Anglo-Irish Dialect,' by the Rev. William Burke (an Irish priest residing in Liverpool); published in 'The Irish Ecclesiastical Record' for 1896. A judicious and scholarly essay, which I have very often used.

'The Irish Dialect of English; its Origins and Vocabulary.' By Mary Hayden, M.A., and Prof. Marcus Hartog (jointly): published in 'The Fortnightly Review' (1909: April and May). A thoughtful and valuable essay. Miss Hayden knows Irish well, and has made full use of her knowledge to illustrate her subject. Of this article I have made much use.

Besides these there were a number of short articles by various writers published in Irish newspapers within the last twenty years or so, nearly all of them lists of dialectical words used in the North of Ireland.

In the Introduction to the 'Biglow Papers,' Second Series, James Russell Lowell has some valuable observations on modern English dialectical words and phrases derived from Old English forms, to which I am indebted for much information, and which will be found acknowledged through this book: for it touches my subject in many places. In this Introduction Mr. Lowell remarks truly:—'It is always worth while to note down the erratic words or phrases one meets with in any dialect. They may throw light on the meaning of other words, on the relationship of languages, or even history itself.'

Of all the above I have made use so far as served my purpose—always with acknowledgment.

Fifth. For twenty years or more I have kept a large note-book lying just at my hand; and whenever any peculiar Irish-English expression, or anything bearing on the subject, came before me—from memory, or from reading, or from hearing it in conversation—down it went in the manuscript. In this way an immense mass of materials was accumulated almost imperceptibly.

The vast collection derived from all the above sources lay by till early last year, when I went seriously to work at the book. But all the materials were mixed up—*three-na-haila* —'through-other'—and before a line of the book was written they had to be perused, selected, classified, and alphabetised, which was a very heavy piece of work.

A number of the Irish items in the great 'Dialect Dictionary' edited for the English Dialect Society by Dr. Joseph Wright were contributed by me and are generally printed with my initials. I have neither copied nor avoided these—in fact I did not refer to them at all while working at my book—and naturally many—perhaps most—of them reappear here, probably in different words. But this is quite proper; for the Dialect Dictionary is a book of reference—six large volumes, very expensive—and not within reach of the general public.

Many of the words given in this book as dialectical are also used by the people in the ordinary sense they bear in standard English; such as *break*:—'Poor Tom was broke yesterday' (dialect: dismissed from employment): 'the bowl fell on the flags and was broken in pieces' (correct English): and *dark*: 'a poor dark man' (dialect: blind): 'a dark night' (correct English).

This is essentially a subject for popular treatment; and accordingly I have avoided technical and scientific details and technical terms: they are not needed.

When a place is named in connexion with a dialectical expression, it is not meant that the expression is confined to that place, but merely that it is, or was, in use there.

P. W. J.

Dublin: *March, 1910*.

ENGLISH AS WE SPEAK IT IN IRELAND.

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CHAPTER I.

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SOURCES OF ANGLO-IRISH DIALECT.

Our Anglo-Irish dialectical words and phrases are derived from three main sources:—

First: the Irish language.

Second: Old English and the dialect of Scotland.

Third: independently of these two sources, dialectical expressions have gradually grown up among our English-speaking people, as dialects arise everywhere.

In the following pages whenever a word or a phrase is not assigned to any origin it is to be understood as belonging to this third class:—that is so far as is known at present; for I have no doubt that many of these will be found, after further research, to be either Irish-Gaelic or Old English. It is to be also observed that a good many of the dialectical expressions given in this book as belonging to Ireland may possibly be found current in England or in Scotland or in both. But that is no reason why they should not be included here.

Influence of Irish.

The Irish language has influenced our Irish-English speech in several ways. To begin with: it has determined the popular pronunciation, in certain combinations, of three English consonants, *t*, *d*, and *th*, but in a way (so far as *t* and *d* are concerned) that would not now be followed by anyone even moderately well educated. The sounds of *English t* and *d* are not the same as those of the *Irish t* and *d*; and when

the people began to exchange the Irish language for English, they did not quite abandon the Irish sounds of these two letters, but imported them into their English, especially *when they came before r*. That is why we hear among the people in every part of Ireland such vulgarisms as (for *t*) *bitther*, *butther*, *thrue*; and (for *d*) *laddher* (ladder), *cidher* (cider), *foddher*, &c. Yet in other positions we sound these letters correctly, as in *fat*, *football*, *white*; *bad*, *hide*, *wild*, &c. No one, however uneducated, will mispronounce the *t* and *d* in such words as these. Why it is that the *Irish* sound is retained before *r* and not in other combinations—why for instance the Irish people sound the *t* and *d* incorrectly in *platter* and *drive* [platther, dhrive] and correctly in *plate* and *dive*—is a thing I cannot account for.

As for the English *th*, it may be said that the general run of the Irish people never sound it at all; for it is a very difficult sound to anyone excepting a born Englishman, and also excepting a small proportion of those born and reared on the east coast of Ireland. It has two varieties of sound, heard in *bath* and *bathe*: and for these two our people use the Irish *t* and *d*, as heard in the words given above.

A couple of centuries ago or more the people had another substitute for this *th* (in *bathe*) namely *d*, which held its place for a considerable time, and this sound was then considered almost a national characteristic; so that in the song of 'Lillibulero' the English author of the song puts this pronunciation all through in the mouth of the Irishman:—'*Dere* was an ould prophecy found in a bog.' It is still sometimes heard, but merely as a defect of speech of individuals:—'*De* books are here: *dat* one is yours and *dis* is

mine.' Danny Mann speaks this way all through Gerald Griffin's 'Collegians.'

There was, and to a small extent still is, a similar tendency—though not so decided—for the other sound of *th* (as in *bath*):—'I had a hot *bat* this morning; and I remained in it for *tirty* minutes': 'I *tink* it would be well for you to go home to-day.'

Another influence of the Irish language is on the letter *s*. In Irish, this letter in certain combinations is sounded the same as the English *sh*; and the people often—though not always—in similar combinations, bring this sound into their English:—'He gave me a blow of his *fisht*'; 'he was *whishling* St. Patrick's Day'; 'Kilkenny is *sickshty* miles from this.' You hear this sound very often among the more uneducated of our people.

In imitation of this vulgar sound of *s*, the letter *z* often comes in for a similar change (though there is no such sound in the Irish language). Here the *z* gets the sound heard in the English words *glazier*, *brazier*:—'He bought a *dozhen* eggs'; ''tis *drizzhling* rain'; 'that is *dizhmal* news.'

The second way in which our English is influenced by Irish is in vocabulary. When our Irish forefathers began to adopt English, they brought with them from their native language many single Irish words and used them—as best suited to express what they meant—among their newly acquired English words; and these words remain to this day in the current English of their descendants, and will I suppose remain for ever. And the process still goes on—though slowly—for as time passes, Irish words are being adopted even in the English of the best educated people.

There is no need to give many examples here, for they will be found all through this book, especially in the Vocabulary. I will instance the single word *galore* (plentiful) which you will now often see in English newspapers and periodicals. The adoption of Irish words and phrases into English nowadays is in great measure due to the influence of Irishmen resident in England, who write a large proportion—indeed I think the largest proportion—of the articles in English periodicals of every kind. Other Irish words such as *shamrock*, *whiskey*, *bother*, *blarney*, are now to be found in every English Dictionary. *Smithereens* too (broken bits after a smash) is a grand word, and is gaining ground every day. Not very long ago I found it used in a public speech in London by a Parliamentary candidate—an Englishman; and he would hardly have used it unless he believed that it was fairly intelligible to his audience.

The third way in which Irish influences our English is in idiom: that is, idiom borrowed from the Irish language. Of course the idioms were transferred about the same time as the single words of the vocabulary. This is by far the most interesting and important feature. Its importance was pointed out by me in a paper printed twenty years ago, and it has been properly dwelt upon by Miss Hayden and Professor Hartog in their recently written joint paper mentioned in the Preface. Most of these idiomatic phrases are simply translations from Irish; and when the translations are literal, Englishmen often find it hard or impossible to understand them. For a phrase may be correct in Irish, but incorrect, or even unintelligible, in English when translated word for word. Gerald Griffin has preserved more of these

idioms (in 'The Collegians,' 'The Coiner,' 'Tales of a Jury-room,' &c.) than any other writer; and very near him come Charles Kickham (in 'Knocknagow'), Crofton Croker (in 'Fairy Legends') and Edward Walsh. These four writers almost exhaust the dialect of the South of Ireland.

On the other hand Carleton gives us the Northern dialect very fully, especially that of Tyrone and eastern Ulster; but he has very little idiom, the peculiarities he has preserved being chiefly in vocabulary and pronunciation.

Mr. Seumas MacManus has in his books faithfully pictured the dialect of Donegal (of which he is a native) and of all north-west Ulster.

In the importation of Irish idiom into English, Irish writers of the present day are also making their influence felt, for I often come across a startling Irish expression (in English words of course) in some English magazine article, obviously written by one of my fellow-countrymen. Here I ought to remark that they do this with discretion and common sense, for they always make sure that the Irish idiom they use is such as that any Englishman can understand it.

There is a special chapter (iv) in this book devoted to Anglo-Irish phrases imported direct from Irish; but instances will be found all through the book.

It is safe to state that by far the greatest number of our Anglo-Irish idioms come from the Irish language.

Influence of Old English and of Scotch.

From the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion, in the twelfth century, colonies of English and of Welsh-English people were settled in Ireland—chiefly in the eastern part—

and they became particularly numerous in the time of Elizabeth, three or four centuries ago, when they were spread all over the country. When these Elizabethan colonists, who were nearly all English, settled down and made friends with the natives and intermarried with them, great numbers of them learned to use the Irish language; while the natives on their part learned English from the newcomers. There was give and take in every place where the two peoples and the two languages mixed. And so the native Irish people learned to speak Elizabethan English—the very language used by Shakespeare; and in a very considerable degree the old Gaelic people and those of English descent retain it to this day. For our people are very conservative in retaining old customs and forms of speech. Many words accordingly that are discarded as old-fashioned—or dead and gone—in England, are still flourishing—alive and well—in Ireland. They are now regarded as vulgarisms by the educated—which no doubt they are—but they are vulgarisms of respectable origin, representing as they do the classical English of Shakespeare's time.

Instances of this will be found all through the book; but I may here give a passing glance at such pronunciations as *tay* for *tea*, *sevare* for *severe*, *desaive* for *deceive*; and such words as *sliver*, *lief*, *afeard*, &c.—all of which will be found mentioned farther on in this book. It may be said that hardly any of those incorrect forms of speech, now called vulgarisms, used by our people, were invented by them; they are nearly all survivals of usages that in former times were correct—in either English or Irish.

In the reign of James I.—three centuries ago—a large part of Ulster—nearly all the fertile land of six of the nine counties—was handed over to new settlers, chiefly Presbyterians from Scotland, the old Catholic owners being turned off. These settlers of course brought with them their Scotch dialect, which remains almost in its purity among their descendants to this day. This dialect, it must be observed, is confined to Ulster, while the remnants of the Elizabethan English are spread all over Ireland.

As to the third main source—the gradual growth of dialect among our English-speaking people—it is not necessary to make any special observations about it here; as it will be found illustrated all through the book.

Owing to these three influences, we speak in Ireland a very distinct dialect of English, which every educated and observant Englishman perceives the moment he sets foot in this country. It is most marked among our peasantry; but in fact none of us are free from it, no matter how well educated. This does not mean that we speak bad English; for it is generally admitted that our people on the whole, including the peasantry, speak better English—nearer to the literary standard—than the corresponding classes of England. This arises mainly—so far as we are concerned—from the fact that for the last four or five generations we have learned our English in a large degree from books, chiefly through the schools.

So far as our dialectical expressions are vulgar or unintelligible, those who are educated among us ought of course to avoid them. But outside this a large proportion of our peculiar words and phrases are vivid and picturesque,

and when used with discretion and at the right time, give a sparkle to our conversation; so that I see no reason why we should wipe them out completely from our speech so as to hide our nationality. To be hypercritical here is often absurd and sometimes silly.

I well remember on one occasion when I was young in literature perpetrating a pretty strong Hibernicism in one of my books. It was not forbidding, but rather bright and expressive: and it passed off, and still passes off very well, for the book is still to the fore. Some days after the publication, a lady friend who was somewhat of a pedant and purist in the English language, came to me with a look of grave concern—so solemn indeed that it somewhat disconcerted me—to direct my attention to the error. Her manner was absurdly exaggerated considering the occasion. Judging from the serious face and the voice of bated breath, you might almost imagine that I had committed a secret murder and that she had come to inform me that the corpse had just been found.

CHAPTER II.

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AFFIRMING, ASSENTING, AND SALUTING.

The various Irish modes of affirming, denying, &c., will be understood from the examples given in this short chapter better than from any general observations.

The Irish *ní'l lá fós é* [neel law fo-say: it isn't day yet] is often used for emphasis in asseveration, even when persons

are speaking English; but in this case the saying is often turned into English. 'If the master didn't give Tim a tongue-dressing, *'tisn't day yet*' (which would be said either by day or by night): meaning he gave him a very severe scolding. 'When I saw the mad dog running at me, if I didn't get a fright, *neel-law-fo-say*.'

'I went to town yesterday in all the rain, and if I didn't get a wetting *there isn't a cottoner in Cork*': meaning I got a very great wetting. This saying is very common in Munster; and workers in cotton were numerous in Cork when it was invented.

A very usual emphatic ending to an assertion is seen in the following:—'That horse is a splendid animal *and no mistake*.'

'*I'll engage* you visited Peggy when you were in town': i.e. I assert it without much fear of contradiction: I warrant. Much in the same sense we use *I'll go bail*:—'I'll go bail you never got that money you lent to Tom': 'An illigant song he could sing I'll go bail' (Lever): 'You didn't meet your linnet (i.e. your girl—your sweetheart) this evening I'll go bail' (Robert Dwyer Joyce in 'The Beauty of the Blossom Gate').

'I'll hold you' introduces an assertion with some emphasis: it is really elliptical: I'll hold you [a wager: but always a fictitious wager]. I'll hold you I'll finish that job by one o'clock, i.e. I'll warrant I will—you may take it from me that I will.

The phrase 'if you go to that of it' is often added on to a statement to give great emphasis, amounting almost to a sort of defiance of contradiction or opposition. 'I don't believe you could walk four miles an hour': 'Oh don't you: I

could then, or five if you go to that of it': 'I don't believe that Joe Lee is half as good a hurler as his brother Phil.' 'I can tell you he is then, and a great deal better if you go to that of it.' Lowry Looby, speaking of St. Swithin, says:—'He was then, buried more than once if you go to that of it.' (Gerald Griffin: 'Collegians': Munster.)

'Is it cold outside doors?' Reply, 'Aye is it,' meaning 'it is certainly.' An emphatic assertion (after the Gaelic construction) frequently heard is 'Ah then, 'tis I that wouldn't like to be in that fight.' 'Ah 'tis my mother that will be delighted.'

'What did he do to you?' 'He hit me with his stick, *so he did*, and it is a great shame, so it is.' 'I like a cup of tea at night, so I do.' In the South an expression of this kind is very often added on as a sort of clincher to give emphasis. Similar are the very usual endings as seen in these assertions:—'He is a great old schemer, *that's what he is*': 'I spoke up to the master and showed him he was wrong—*I did begob*.'

I asked a man one day: 'Well, how is the young doctor going on in his new place?' and he replied 'Ah, how but well'; which he meant to be very emphatic: and then he went on to give particulars.

A strong denial is often expressed in the following way: 'This day will surely be wet, so don't forget your umbrella': 'What a fool I am': as much as to say, 'I should be a fool indeed to go without an umbrella to-day, and I think there's no mark of a fool about me.' 'Now Mary don't wait for the last train [from Howth] for there will be an awful crush.' 'What a fool I'd be ma'am.' 'Oh Mr. Lory I thought you were

gone home [from the dance] two hours ago': 'What a fool I am,' replies Lory ('Knocknagow'), equivalent to 'I hadn't the least notion of making such a fool of myself while there's such fun here.' This is heard everywhere in Ireland, 'from the centre all round to the sea.'

Much akin to this is Nelly Donovan's reply to Billy Heffernan who had made some flattering remark to her:—'Arrah now Billy what sign of a fool do you see on me?' ('Knocknagow.')

An emphatic assertion or assent: 'Yesterday was very wet.' Reply:—'You may say it was,' or 'you may well say that.'

'I'm greatly afeard he'll try to injure me.' Answer:—''Tis fear *for* you' (emphasis on *for*), meaning 'you have good reason to be afeard': merely a translation of the Irish *is eagal duitse*.

'Oh I'll pay you what I owe you.' ''Tis a pity you wouldn't indeed,' says the other, a satirical reply, meaning 'of course you will and no thanks to you for that; who'd expect otherwise?'

'I am going to the fair to-morrow, as I want to buy a couple of cows.' Reply, 'I know,' as much as to say 'I see,' 'I understand.' This is one of our commonest terms of assent.

An assertion or statement introduced by the words 'to tell God's truth' is always understood to be weighty and somewhat unexpected, the introductory words being given as a guarantee of its truth:—'Have you the rest of the money you owe me ready now James?' 'Well to tell God's truth I was not able to make it all up, but I can give you £5.'

Another guarantee of the same kind, though not quite so solemn, is 'my hand to you,' or 'I give you my hand and word.' 'My hand to you I'll never rest till the job is finished.' 'Come and hunt with me in the wood, and my hand to you we shall soon have enough of victuals for both of us.' (Clarence Mangan in Ir. Pen. Journ.)

'I've seen—and here's my hand to you I only say what's true —
A many a one with twice your stock not half so proud as you.'
(Clarence Mangan.)

'Do you know your Catechism?' Answer, 'What would ail me not to know it?' meaning 'of course I do—'twould be a strange thing if I didn't.' 'Do you think you can make that lock all right?' 'Ah what would ail me,' i.e., 'no doubt I can—of course I can; if I couldn't do that it would be a sure sign that something was amiss with me—that something ailed me.'

'Believe Tom and who'll believe you': a way of saying that Tom is not telling truth.

An emphatic 'yes' to a statement is often expressed in the following way:—'This is a real wet day.' Answer, 'I believe you.' 'I think you made a good bargain with Tim about that field.' 'I believe you I did.'

A person who is offered anything he is very willing to take, or asked to do anything he is anxious to do, often answers in this way:—'James, would you take a glass of punch?' or 'Tom, will you dance with my sister in the next round?' In either case the answer is, 'Would a duck swim?'

A weak sort of assent is often expressed in this way:—'Will you bring Nelly's book to her when you are going home, Dan?' Answer, 'I don't mind,' or 'I don't mind if I do.'

To express unbelief in a statement or disbelief in the usefulness or effectiveness of any particular line of action, a person says 'that's all in my eye,' or ''Tis all in my eye, Betty Martin—O'; but this last is regarded as slang.

Sometimes an unusual or unexpected statement is introduced in the following manner, the introductory words being usually spoken quickly:—'*Now do you know what I'm going to tell you*—that ragged old chap has £200 in the bank.' In Derry they make it—'Now listen to what I'm going to say.'

In some parts of the South and West and Northwest, servants and others have a way of replying to directions that at first sounds strange or even disrespectful:—'Biddy, go up please to the drawing-room and bring me down the needle and thread and stocking you will find on the table.' 'That will do ma'am,' replies Biddy, and off she goes and brings them. But this is their way of saying 'yes ma'am,' or 'Very well ma'am.'

So also you say to the hotel-keeper:—'Can I have breakfast please to-morrow morning at 7 o'clock?' 'That will do sir.' This reply in fact expresses the greatest respect, as much as to say, 'A word from you is quite enough.'

'I caught the thief at my potatoes.' 'No, but did you?' i.e., is it possible you did so? A very common exclamation, especially in Ulster.

'Oh man' is a common exclamation to render an assertion more emphatic, and sometimes to express

surprise:—'Oh man, you never saw such a fine race as we had.' In Ulster they duplicate it, with still the same application:—'Oh man-o-man that's great rain.' 'Well John you'd hardly believe it, but I got £50 for my horse to-day at the fair.' Reply, 'Oh man that's a fine price.'

'Never fear' is heard constantly in many parts of Ireland as an expression of assurance:—'Now James don't forget the sugar.' 'Never fear ma'am.' 'Ah never fear there will be plenty flowers in that garden this year.' 'You will remember to have breakfast ready at 7 o'clock.' 'Never fear sir,' meaning 'making your mind easy on the point—it will be all right.' *Never fear* is merely a translation of the equally common Irish phrase, *ná bí heagal ort*.

Most of our ordinary salutations are translations from Irish. *Go m-beannuighe Dia dhuit* is literally 'May God bless you,' or 'God bless you' which is a usual salutation in English. The commonest of all our salutes is 'God save you,' or (for a person entering a house) 'God save all here'; and the response is 'God save you kindly' ('Knocknagow'); where *kindly* means 'of a like kind,' 'in like manner,' 'similarly.' Another but less usual response to the same salutation is, 'And you too,' which is appropriate. ('Knocknagow.') 'God save all here' is used all over Ireland except in the extreme North, where it is hardly understood.

To the ordinary salutation, 'Good-morrow,' which is heard everywhere, the usual response is 'Good-morrow kindly.' 'Morrow Wat,' said Mr. Lloyd. 'Morrow kindly,' replied Wat. ('Knocknagow.') 'The top of the morning to you' is used everywhere, North and South.

In some places if a woman throws out water at night at the kitchen door, she says first, 'Beware of the water,' lest the 'good people' might happen to be passing at the time, and one or more of them might get splashed.

A visitor coming in and finding the family at dinner:—'Much good may it do you.'

In very old times it was a custom for workmen on completing any work and delivering it finished to give it their blessing. This blessing was called *abarta* (an old word, not used in modern Irish), and if it was omitted the workman was subject to a fine to be deducted from his hire equal to the seventh part of the cost of his feeding. (*Senchus Mór* and 'Cormac's Glossary.') It was especially incumbent on women to bless the work of other women. This custom, which is more than a thousand years old, has descended to our day; for the people on coming up to persons engaged in work of any kind always say 'God bless your work,' or its equivalent original in Irish, *Go m-beannuighe Dia air bhur n-obair*. (See my 'Social History of Ancient Ireland,' II., page 324.)

In modern times tradesmen have perverted this pleasing custom into a new channel not so praise-worthy. On the completion of any work, such as a building, they fix a pole with a flag on the highest point to ask the employer for his *blessing*, which means money for a drink.

CHAPTER III.

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ASSERTION BY NEGATIVE OF OPPOSITE.

Assertions are often made by using the negative of the opposite assertion. 'You must be hungry now Tom, and this little rasher will do you no harm,' meaning it will do you good. An old man has tired himself dancing and says:—'A glass of whiskey will do us no harm after that.' (Carleton.) A lady occupying a furnished house at the seaside near Dublin said to the boy who had charge of the premises:—'There may be burglars about here; wouldn't it be well for you to come and close the basement shutters at night?' 'Why then begob ma'am *'twould be no har-um*.' Here is a bit of rustic information (from Limerick) that might be useful to food experts:—

'Rye bread will do you good,
Barley bread *will do you no harm*,
Wheaten bread will sweeten your blood,
Oaten bread will strengthen your arm.'

This curious way of speaking, which is very general among all classes of people in Ireland and in every part of the country, is often used in the Irish language, from which we have imported it into our English. Here are a few Irish examples; but they might be multiplied indefinitely, and some others will be found through this chapter. In the Irish tale called 'The Battle of Gavra,' the narrator says:—[The enemy slew a large company of our army] 'and that was no great help to us.' In 'The Colloquy,' a piece much older than 'The Battle of Gavra,' Kylta, wishing to tell his audience that when the circumstance he is relating occurred he was very

young, expresses it by saying [at that time] 'I myself was not old.'

One night a poet was grossly insulted: 'On the morrow he rose and he was not thankful.' (From the very old Irish tale called 'The Second Battle of Moytura': Rev. Celt.)

Another old Irish writer, telling us that a certain company of soldiers is well out of view, expresses it in this way:—*Ní fhuil in cuire gan chleith*, literally, 'the company is not without concealment.'

How closely these and other old models are imitated in our English will be seen from the following examples from every part of Ireland:—

'I can tell you Paddy Walsh is no chicken now,' meaning he is very old. The same would be said of an old maid:—'She's no chicken,' meaning that she is old for a girl.

'How are your potato gardens going on this year?' 'Why then they're not too good'; i.e. only middling or bad.

A usual remark among us conveying mild approval is 'that's not bad.' A Dublin boy asked me one day:—'Maybe you wouldn't have e'er a penny that you'd give me, sir?' i.e., 'Have you a penny to give me?' 'You wouldn't like to have a cup of tea, would you?' An invitation, but not a cordial one. This is a case of '*will you* was never a good fellow' (for which see Vocabulary).

'No joke' is often used in the sense of 'very serious.' 'It was no joke to be caught in our boat in such a storm as that.' 'The loss of £10 is no joke for that poor widow.'

'As for Sandy he worked like a downright demolisher—
Bare as he is, yet *his lick is no polisher*.'

(Thomas Moore in the early part of his career.)

You remark that a certain person has some fault, he is miserly, or extravagant, or dishonest, &c.: and a bystander replies, 'Yes indeed, and 'tisn't to-day or yesterday it happened him'—meaning that it is a fault of long standing.

A tyrannical or unpopular person goes away or dies:—'There's many a dry eye after him.' (Kildare.)

'Did Tom do your work as satisfactorily as Davy?' 'Oh, it isn't alike': to imply that Tom did the work very much better than Davy.

'Here is the newspaper; and 'tisn't much you'll find in it.'

'Is Mr. O'Mahony good to his people?' 'Oh, indeed he is no great things': or another way of saying it:—'He's no great shakes.' 'How do you like your new horse?' 'Oh then he's no great shakes'—or 'he's not much to boast of.' Lever has this in a song:—'You think the Blakes are no great shakes.' But I think it is also used in England.

A consequential man who carries his head rather higher than he ought:—'He thinks no small beer of himself.'

Mrs. Slattery gets a harmless fall off the form she is sitting on, and is so frightened that she asks of the person who helps her up, 'Am I killed?' To which he replies ironically—'Oh there's great fear of you.' ('Knocknagow.')

[Alice Ryan is a very purty girl] 'and she doesn't want to be reminded of that same either.' ('Knocknagow.')

A man has got a heavy cold from a wetting and says: 'That wetting did me no good,' meaning 'it did me great harm.'

'There's a man outside wants to see you, sir,' says Charlie, our office attendant, a typical southern Irishman.

'What kind is he Charlie? does he look like a fellow wanting money?' Instead of a direct affirmative, Charlie answers, 'Why then sir I don't think he'll give you much anyway.'

'Are people buried there now?' I asked of a man regarding an old graveyard near Blessington in Wicklow. Instead of answering 'very few,' he replied: 'Why then not too many sir.'

When the roads are dirty—deep in mire—'there's fine walking overhead.'

In the Irish Life of St. Brigit we are told of a certain chief:—'It was not his will to sell the bondmaid,' by which is meant, it was his will *not* to sell her.

So in our modern speech the father says to the son:—'It is not my wish that you should go to America at all,' by which he means the positive assertion:—'It is my wish that you should not go.'

Tommy says, 'Oh, mother, I forgot to bring you the sugar.' 'I wouldn't doubt you,' answers the mother, as much as to say, 'It is just what I'd expect from you.'

When a message came to Rory from absent friends, that they were true to Ireland:—

'"My *sowl*, I never doubted them" said Rory of the hill.' (Charles Kickham.)

'It wouldn't be wishing you a pound note to do so and so': i.e. 'it would be as bad as the loss of a pound,' or 'it might cost you a pound.' Often used as a sort of threat to deter a person from doing it.

'Where do you keep all your money?' 'Oh, indeed, *it's not much I have*': merely translated from the Gaelic, *Ní mórán atâ agum*.

To a silly foolish fellow:—'There's a great deal of sense outside your head.'

'The only sure way to conceal evil is not to do it.'

'I don't think very much of these horses,' meaning 'I have a low opinion of them.'

'I didn't pretend to understand what he said,' appears a negative statement; but it is really one of our ways of making a positive one:—'I pretended not to understand him.' To the same class belongs the common expression 'I don't think':—'I don't think you bought that horse too dear,' meaning 'I think you did not buy him too dear'; 'I don't think this day will be wet,' equivalent to 'I think it will not be wet.'

Lowry Looby is telling how a lot of fellows attacked Hardress Cregan, who defends himself successfully:—'Ah, it isn't a goose or a duck they had to do with when they came across Mr. Cregan.' (Gerald Griffin.) Another way of expressing the same idea often heard:—'He's no sop (wisp) in the road'; i.e. 'he's a strong brave fellow.'

'It was not too wise of you to buy those cows as the market stands at present,' i.e. it was rather foolish.

'I wouldn't be sorry to get a glass of wine, meaning, 'I would be glad.'

An unpopular person is going away:—