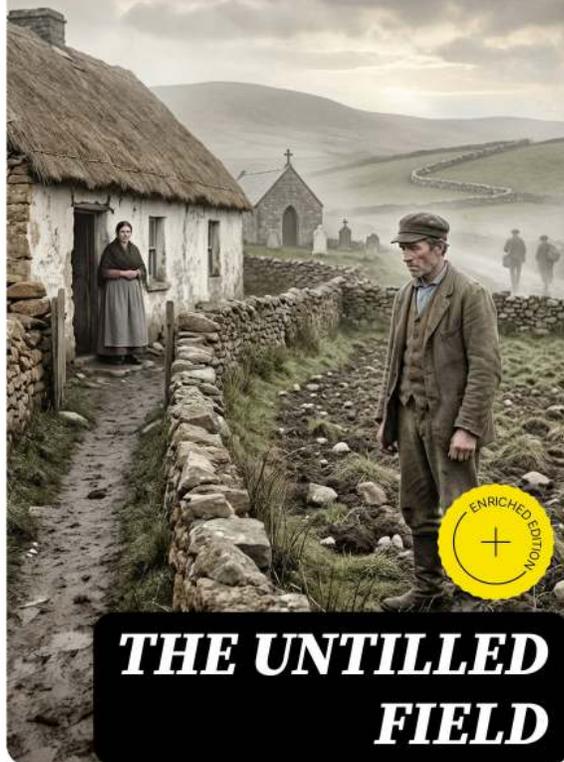


GEORGE MOORE



**THE UNTILLED
FIELD**

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George Moore

The Untilled Field

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Bryce Emerson

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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Historical Context](#)

[The Untilled Field](#)

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

Introduction

[Table of Contents](#)

Balanced between the claims of home and the pull of departure, *The Untilled Field* traces how lives rooted in rural habit strain toward change, while the soil of custom, faith, and kinship both nourishes and binds, so that every hope for escape bears the weight of loyalty, every return carries the ache of distance, and the ordinary gestures of work, worship, and talk become charged with the quiet drama of choosing between survival and selfhood in a landscape whose beauty intensifies the costs of staying, leaving, or simply learning to endure the seasons that measure loss, compromise, and the stubborn will to go on.

George Moore's *The Untilled Field* is a collection of short stories rooted in the realist tradition and set chiefly in rural Ireland, appearing in the early twentieth century amid the energies of the Irish Literary Revival. The book's villages, farms, and parish rooms form an intimate stage where social pressures reveal themselves in everyday choices. Without relying on overt melodrama, Moore frames private conflicts against a backdrop of land, labor, and local authority. The publication belongs to a moment when questions of culture, language, and national identity sharpened, and its settings reflect communities negotiating change without abandoning the rhythms of their fields.

Readers encounter a mosaic rather than a single plot: discrete tales linked by atmosphere, recurring concerns, and the sense of an unwritten map connecting one household to

the next. The voice is measured and attentive, with close but restrained narration that allows motives to unfold in small gestures and modest revelations. Dialogue carries regional inflections without heavy dialect, and description favors clarity over ornament. The tone remains compassionate yet unsentimental, so the collection invites slow reading, where the space between events matters. Moore's style lends dignity to ordinary speech and patience to moral quandaries, producing a quietly cumulative emotional power.

The central themes are enduring and immediately legible: emigration and return, the pressure of communal expectation, the moral authority associated with church and family, and the uneasy bargain between personal freedom and social belonging. Economic constraint frames many choices, yet the stories rarely reduce lives to hardship alone; they explore pride, stubbornness, tenderness, and the practical intelligence required to keep a household. Ideas of inheritance and responsibility weigh on younger generations, while older characters reckon with time, memory, and change. Across these tensions, the collection asks what it means to keep faith with one's place without surrendering the inner claim of desire.

Formally, *The Untilled Field* exemplifies the short story collection as a coherent field of observation, where each piece stands complete yet gains resonance beside its neighbors. Motifs of roads, gates, and boundaries repeat without becoming schematic, underscoring how thresholds shape choices. Moore often favors a close third-person perspective that keeps judgment at bay, so readers

assemble meanings from implication and pause. Endings tend toward openness, honoring the way real decisions rarely settle cleanly. The craft's quietness is deliberate, asking attention not for stylistic fireworks but for fidelity to experience, and in that steadiness the book builds its abiding authority.

For contemporary readers, the book's concerns echo across borders: migration's promise and cost, the friction between communal norms and self-determination, and the lingering influence of institutions over intimate life. Rural depopulation and the reshaping of local economies remain current, as do debates about tradition's value and its limits. Moore's patient realism models how literature can scrutinize power without cruelty and witness suffering without spectacle. The characters' dilemmas resist easy judgment, offering instead an education in sympathy guided by concrete detail. In an age of quick takes, the collection rewards attention to context, reminding us how moral choices ripen over time.

Approached as a cycle of interrelated meditations, *The Untilled Field* offers an entry into Irish rural life at a moment of historical urgency while speaking beyond its moment. Its pages give companionship to readers who prefer the clarities of daylight to the thunderclap of plot, as modest incidents disclose their stakes through patient observation. The collection matters now because it articulates how people live inside institutions and landscapes they neither fully choose nor fully escape. To read it is to practice steadiness: to notice voices at the edge of change, to hold competing loyalties in mind, and to accept complexity.

Synopsis

[Table of Contents](#)

The Untilled Field is a 1903 collection of short stories by George Moore, set largely in rural Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century. Through discrete yet thematically linked sketches, Moore observes how small farmers, laborers, priests, and emigrants navigate a landscape of scarcity and obligation. The book's title evokes possibilities left uncultivated: minds, affections, and social energies constrained by custom. Rather than a single plot, the collection moves from village to village, following crises—a proposed marriage, a decision to leave, a change in vocation—whose ripples extend beyond one household. Throughout, the tone remains steady and observational, allowing competing claims to be heard.

Early stories center on departures. Youths measure dwindling prospects against tales from across the Atlantic, while parents confront the cost of losing help on the land. Farewell rituals mingle pride and dread; letters home promise opportunity yet expose distance that widens with each season. Moore tracks the practical arithmetic—passage money, remittances, the mortgage—alongside the inward calculation of what must be relinquished. The decisions rarely hinge on a single cause; economic pressure, family duty, and personal longing intersect. In tracing these dilemmas, the book establishes migration as both an escape and a wound, shaping those who go and those who must stay.

Another current follows the reach of the Church in daily affairs. Priests appear as confidants, arbiters, and sometimes obstacles, guiding confessions, approving marriages, and policing instruction. Moore's portraits note both the pastoral intent and the social power embedded in the collar. Parishioners seek counsel yet chafe when conscience meets regulation; the lay community closes ranks around shared beliefs even as individuals strain for air. The stories do not reduce conflict to a single villain, but show how spiritual authority can shape livelihoods and intimate choices, particularly for the young and for women, whose reputations, futures, and means of survival are acutely vulnerable.

The collection also considers returns and arrivals. Emigrants come back with savings, altered manners, or new convictions, hoping to reclaim land, open a business, or revive a courtship. Outsiders, including teachers or professionals, try to introduce practices they take for progressive. Such figures test the permeability of the village's boundaries. Moore traces the negotiations that follow: bargains over property, questions of status, the recalibration of kinship ties. Aspirations collide with economies of reputation and habit; what money can purchase and what custom withholds rarely align. The resulting friction is often quiet rather than sensational, yet it leaves lasting marks.

Domestic economies and marriage arrangements form another axis. Daughters weigh suitors against dowry expectations and the need to keep a household running; sons calculate inheritance, celibacy, or the sale of land.

Moore shows how affection, prudence, and fear weave together, and how a single misstep can threaten a family's standing. Women, in particular, face narrow paths: work in service, a marriage of convenience, or a hope that risks censure. In these negotiations, tenderness and self-interest coexist, and small kindnesses matter. The stories track how choices made under pressure reverberate, shaping futures without announcing themselves as dramatic turning points.

Cultural aspiration enters in modest ways: songs, reading, local entertainments, or plans for schooling that would broaden horizons. Such efforts prompt debate about what kinds of knowledge and diversion belong in the parish, and who gets to decide. Moore's method is cumulative rather than climactic, linking episodes by recurring images of fields, roads, and shorelines, and by a patient attention to speech and gesture. The separateness of the tales allows multiple angles on the same pressures, while the shared setting gives them a slow-building resonance. By the end, the landscape itself feels like a ledger of choices made.

Without resolving every conflict, the collection positions private longing and communal order in sustained conversation. Its restraint, clarity, and focus on ordinary predicaments give the stories a durable poise, and its themes of migration, authority, and the uses of land remain current. Readers encounter not a thesis but a mosaic of lived situations, where sympathy and critique coexist. The *Untilled Field* endures for the questions it poses: what gets cultivated, who decides, and at what cost. In leaving outcomes partly open, Moore preserves the work's

aftertaste of possibility and loss, inviting reflection beyond the final page.

Historical Context

[Table of Contents](#)

George Moore's *The Untilled Field* emerged in the early twentieth century, when Ireland remained under British administration and rural life dominated the west. Written at the turn of the century and published in 1903, the collection draws on Moore's native County Mayo and nearby districts. Moore, an Irish novelist shaped by years in Paris and London, conceived several stories for translation into Irish as part of a language-revival project. Modeled in part on Ivan Turgenev's rural sketches, the book uses realist observation to examine social forces that framed daily existence, setting its portraits within parishes, farms, and small towns overseen by church and state.

Founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill, the Gaelic League sought to revive the Irish language through classes, publications, and cultural activism. It promoted Irish as a vernacular of everyday life and encouraged writers to supply readable prose for learners. Moore offered stories that could be rendered into Irish, and several were translated under League auspices before the English collection appeared. This context matters: the revival reframed literature as an instrument of national renewal, even as many participants differed over tone and subject. Moore's engagement aligned craft with a movement that valued rural settings, oral idioms, and local speech.

By the late nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church wielded decisive influence in rural Ireland. Parish

networks, devotional missions, and the National School system—initiated in 1831 but largely denominational in practice—gave clergy wide sway over education and morality. Maynooth College, founded in 1795 to train priests, supplied a disciplined clergy whose authority reached into politics and family life. Many parish priests supported constitutional nationalism, and their standing at fairs, markets, and election meetings was formidable. Against this backdrop, Moore's stories register how clerical power could shape choices about work, marriage, reading, and migration, without relying on exceptional cases to make the point.

Rural conditions were also defined by the Land Question. After the Land War of 1879–1882 and subsequent agitation, successive British governments enacted measures to transfer holdings from landlords to tenants. The Wyndham Land Purchase Act of 1903 accelerated this shift, while the Congested Districts Board, created in 1891, tried to relieve poverty in the western seaboard by reorganizing small farms and funding industry. Yet insecurity, debt, and subdivision persisted in many districts. Moore's west-of-Ireland settings arise from this landscape of partial reform, portraying tenants and smallholders whose prospects were improving in law but often constrained by economics, custom, and community expectations.

In the decades after the Great Famine, emigration became a structural feature of Irish life, especially in the west. Between the 1870s and the First World War, hundreds of thousands departed for Britain and North America, while others engaged in seasonal migration for agricultural or

industrial work. Remittances sustained households and influenced marriage patterns, land transfers, and local status. Steamship lines and railways made departures routine, even as each loss reshaped parish demography. Moore's characters inhabit this transatlantic economy: choices about staying, leaving, or returning are informed by the lure of wages abroad and the pressure of limited opportunities at home.

At the turn of the century, Ireland was administered through Dublin Castle and the Royal Irish Constabulary, with county and rural district councils created by the Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1898. These elected bodies gave nationalists significant control over local affairs, even as ultimate authority remained imperial. Elections, public houses, and fairs served as nodes where politics, patronage, and moral authority met. In such arenas, alliances between clergy, shopkeepers, and activists shaped reputations and livelihoods. Moore situates his rural milieus within this administrative tapestry, where formal law and informal sanction operated together to influence opportunity, respectability, and the boundaries of dissent.

Moore's artistic approach drew on continental realism and naturalism, especially Gustave Flaubert and Émile Zola, as well as the social sketch tradition associated with Turgenev. Returning to Ireland after years abroad, he entered the Irish Literary Revival then gathering momentum. He collaborated with W. B. Yeats on *Diarmuid and Grania* in 1901 for the Irish Literary Theatre, a precursor to the Abbey Theatre founded in 1904. *The Untilled Field* thus occupies a nexus where international techniques met a

national program for cultural renewal, using clear prose and disciplined observation to render speech, habit, and belief without the heroic mythologizing common in revival pageantry.

Upon publication, *The Untilled Field* drew notice for its plain style and its scrutiny of social authority. The collection attracted clerical criticism in Ireland, while language revivalists welcomed its rural focus and suitability for translation. It has since been widely regarded as a landmark of the Irish short story, anticipating aspects of the realism found in James Joyce's *Dubliners*. By depicting emigration, landholding, and parish discipline without melodrama, Moore reflects and critiques an Ireland poised between reform and tradition. The book's measured portraits record structural change and moral regulation that characterized the decades immediately before the political upheavals of the 1910s.

THE UNTILLED FIELD

Main Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

IN THE CLAY

CHAPTER II

SOME PARISHIONERS

CHAPTER III

THE EXILE

CHAPTER IV

HOME SICKNESS

CHAPTER V

A LETTER TO ROME

CHAPTER VI

JULIA CAHILL'S CURSE

CHAPTER VII

A PLAYHOUSE IN THE WASTE

CHAPTER VIII

THE WEDDING-GOWN

CHAPTER IX

THE CLERK'S QUEST

CHAPTER X

"ALMS-GIVING"

CHAPTER XI

SO ON HE FARES

CHAPTER XII

THE WILD GOOSE

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAY BACK

CHAPTER I

IN THE CLAY

Table of Contents

It was a beautiful summer morning, and Rodney was out of his bed at six o'clock[1q]. He usually went for a walk before going to his studio, and this morning his walk had been a very pleasant one, for yesterday's work had gone well with him. But as he turned into the mews[1] in which his studio was situated he saw the woman whom he employed to light his fire standing in the middle of the roadway. He had never seen her standing in the middle of the roadway before and his doors wide open, and he instantly divined a misfortune, and thought of the Virgin and Child he had just finished. There was nothing else in his studio that he, cared much about. A few busts, done long ago, and a few sketches; no work of importance, nothing that he cared about or that could not be replaced if it were broken.

He hastened his steps and he would have run if he had not been ashamed to betray his fears to the char-woman[2].

"I'm afraid someone has been into the studio last night. The hasp was off the door when I came this morning. Some of the things are broken."

Rodney heard no more. He stood on the threshold looking round the wrecked studio. Three or four casts had been smashed, the floor was covered with broken plaster, and the lay figure[3] was overthrown, Rodney saw none of these

things, he only saw that his Virgin and Child was not on the modelling stool, and not seeing it there, he hoped that the group had been stolen, anything were better than that it should have been destroyed. But this is what had happened: the group, now a mere lump of clay, lay on the floor, and the modelling stand lay beside it.

"I cannot think," said the charwoman, "who has done this. It was a wicked thing to do. Oh, sir, they have broken this beautiful statue that you had in the Exhibition last year," and she picked up the broken fragments of a sleeping girl.

"That doesn't matter," said Rodney. "My group is gone[2q]."

"But that, sir, was only in the clay. May I be helping you to pick it up, sir? It is not broken altogether perhaps."

Rodney waved her aside. He was pale and he could not speak, and was trembling. He had not the courage to untie the cloths, for he knew there was nothing underneath but clay, and his manner was so strange that the charwoman was frightened. He stood like one dazed by a dream. He could not believe in reality, it was too mad, too discordant, too much like a nightmare. He had only finished the group yesterday!

He still called it his Virgin and Child, but it had never been a Virgin and Child in the sense suggested by the capital letters, for he had not yet put on the drapery that would convert a naked girl and her baby into the Virgin and Child. He had of course modelled his group in the nude first, and Harding, who had been with him the night before last, had liked it much better than anything he had done, Harding

had said that he must not cover it with draperies, that he must keep it for himself, a naked girl playing with a baby, a piece of paganism. The girl's head was not modelled when Harding had seen it. It was the conventional Virgin's head, but Harding had said that he must send for his model and put his model's head upon it. He had taken Harding's advice and had sent for Lucy, and had put her pretty, quaint little head upon it. He had done a portrait of Lucy. If this terrible accident had not happened last night, the caster would have come to cast it to-morrow, and then, following Harding's advice always, he would have taken a "squeeze," and when he got it back to the clay again he was going to put on a conventional head, and add the conventional draperies, and make the group into the conventional Virgin and Child, suitable to Father McCabe's cathedral.

This was the last statue he would do in Ireland. He was leaving Ireland. On this point his mind was made up, and the money he was going to receive for this statue was the money that was going to take him away. He had had enough of a country where there had never been any sculpture or any painting, nor any architecture to signify. They were talking about reviving the Gothic, but Rodney did not believe in their resurrections or in their renaissance or in their anything. "The Gael has had his day. The Gael is passing." Only the night before he and Harding had had a long talk about the Gael, and he had told Harding that he had given up the School of Art, that he was leaving Ireland, and Harding had thought that this was an extreme step, but Rodney had said that he did not want to die, that no one wanted to die less than he did, but he thought he would

sooner die than go on teaching. He had made some reputation and had orders that would carry him on for some years, and he was going where he could execute them, to where there were models, to where there was art, to where there was the joy of life, out of a damp religious atmosphere in which nothing flourished but the religious vocation.

"Good Heavens! How happy I was yesterday, full of hope and happiness, my statue finished, and I had arranged to meet Harding in Rome. The blow had fallen in the night. Who had done this? Who had destroyed it?"

He fell into a chair, and sat helpless like his own lay figure. He sat there like one on whom some stupor had fallen, and he was as white as one of the casts; the charwoman had never seen anyone give way like that before, and she withdrew very quietly.

In a little while he got up and mechanically kicked the broken pieces of plaster aside. The charwoman was right, they had broken his sleeping girl: that did not matter much, but the beautiful slenderness, the grace he had caught from Lucy's figure—those slendernesses, those flowing rhythms, all these were gone; the lovely knees were ugly clay. Yes, there was the ruin, the ignoble ruin, and he could not believe in it; he still hoped he would wake and find he had been dreaming, so difficult is it to believe that the living have turned to clay.

In front of him there was the cheval glass[4], and overcome though he was by misfortune he noticed that he was a small, pale, wiry, and very dark little man, with a large bony forehead. He had seen, strangely enough, such a bumpy forehead, and such narrow eyes in a Florentine bust,

and it was some satisfaction to him to see that he was the typical Italian.

"If I had lived three hundred years ago," he said, "I should have been one of Cellini[5]'s apprentices."

And yet he was the son of a Dublin builder! His father had never himself thought to draw, but he had always taken an interest in sculpture and painting, and he had said before Rodney was born that he would like to have a son a sculptor. And he waited for the little boy to show some signs of artistic aptitude. He pondered every scribble the boy made, and scribbles that any child at the same age could have done filled him with admiration. But when Rodney was fourteen he remodelled some leaves that had failed to please an important customer; and his father was overcome with joy, and felt that his hopes were about to be realised. For the customer, who professed a certain artistic knowledge, praised the leaves that Rodney had designed, and soon after Rodney gave a still further proof of his desire for art by telling his mother he did not care to go to Mass, that Mass depressed him and made him feel unhappy, and he had begged to be allowed to stay at home and do some modelling. His father excused his son's want of religious feeling on the ground that no one can think of two things at once, and John was now bent on doing sculpture. He had converted a little loft into a studio, and was at work there from dusk to dusk, and his father used to steal up the ladder from time to time to watch his son's progress. He used to say there was no doubt that he had been forewarned, and his wife had to admit that it did seem as if he had had some pre-vision of his son's genius: how else explain the fact that

he had said he would like to have a son a sculptor three months before the child was born?

Rodney said he would like to go to the School of Art, and his father kept him there for two years, though he sorely wanted him to help in the business. There was no sacrifice that the elder Rodney would not have made for his son. But Rodney knew that he could not always count upon his father's help, and one day he realised quite clearly that the only way for him to become a sculptor was by winning scholarships. There were two waiting to be won by him, and he felt that he would have no difficulty in winning them. That year there was a scholarship for twenty-five pounds, and there was another scholarship that he might win in the following year, and he thought of nothing else but these scholarships until he had won them; then he started for Paris with fifty pounds in his pocket, and a resolve in his heart that he would live for a year and pay his fees out of this sum of money. Those were hard days, but they were likewise great days. He had been talking to Harding about those days in Paris the night before last, and he had told him of the room at the top of the house for which he paid thirty francs a month. There was a policeman on one side and there was a footman on the other. It was a bare little room, and he lived principally on bread. In those days his only regret was that he had not the necessary threepence to go to the cafe. "One can't go to the cafe without threepence to pay for the harmless bock, and if one has threepence one can sit in the cafe discussing Carpeaux, Rodin, and the mysteries, until two in the morning, when one is at last

ejected by an exhausted proprietor at the head of numerous waiters."

Rodney's resolutions were not broken; he had managed to live for nearly a year in Paris upon fifty pounds, and when he came to the end of his money he went to London in search of work. He found himself in London with two pounds, but he had got work from a sculptor, a pupil of Dalous[7]: "a clever man," Rodney said, "a good sculptor; it is a pity he died." At this time Garvier was in fairly good health and had plenty of orders, and besides Rodney he employed three Italian carvers, and from these Italians Rodney learned Italian, and he spent two years in London earning three pounds a week. But the time came when the sculptor had no more work for Rodney, and one day he told him that he would not require him that week, there was no work for him, nor was there the next week or the next, and Rodney kicked his heels and pondered Elgin marbles[6] for a month. Then he got a letter from the sculptor saying he had some work for him to do; and it was a good job of work, and Rodney remained with Garvier for two months, knowing very well that his three pounds a week was precarious fortune. Some time after, the sculptor's health began to fail him and he had to leave London. Rodney received news of his death two years afterwards. He was then teaching sculpture in the art schools of Northampton, and he wondered whether, if Garvier had lived, he would have succeeded in doing better work than he had done.

From Northampton he went to Edinburgh, he wandered even as far as Inverness. From Inverness he had been called back to Dublin, and for seven years he had taught in the

School of Art, saving money every year, putting by a small sum of money out of the two hundred pounds that he received from the Government, and all the money he got for commissions. He accepted any commission, he had executed bas-reliefs from photographs. He was determined to purchase his freedom, and a sculptor requires money more than any other artist.

Rodney had always looked upon Dublin as a place to escape from. He had always desired a country where there was sunshine and sculpture. The day his father took him to the School of Art he had left his father talking to the headmaster, and had wandered away to look at a Florentine bust, and this first glimpse of Italy had convinced him that he must go to Italy and study Michael Angelo and Donatello. Only twice had he relaxed the severity of his rule of life and spent his holidays in Italy. He had gone there with forty pounds in his pocket, and had studied art where art had grown up naturally, independent of Government grants and mechanical instruction, in a mountain town like Perugia; and his natural home had seemed to him those narrow, white streets streaked with blue shadows. "Oh, how blue the shadows are there in the morning," he had said the other night to Harding, "and the magnificent sculpture and painting! In the afternoon the sun is too hot, but at evening one stands at the walls of the town and sees sunsets folding and unfolding over Italy. I am at home amid those Southern people, and a splendid pagan life is always before one's eyes, ready to one's hand. Beautiful girls and boys are always knocking at one's doors. Beautiful nakedness

abounds. Sculpture is native to the orange zone—the embers of the renaissance smoulder under orange-trees."

He had never believed in any Celtic renaissance, and all the talk he had heard about stained glass and the revivals did not deceive him. "Let the Gael disappear," he said. "He is doing it very nicely. Do not interfere with his instinct. His instinct is to disappear in America. Since Cormac's Chapel he has built nothing but mud cabins. Since the Cross of Cong he has imported Virgins from Germany. However, if they want sculpture in this last hour I will do some for them."

And Rodney had designed several altars and had done some religious sculpture, or, as he put it to himself, he had done some sculpture on religious themes. There was no such thing as religious sculpture, and could not be. The moment art, especially sculpture, passes out of the domain of the folk tale it becomes pagan.

One of Rodney's principal patrons was a certain Father McCabe, who had begun life by making an ancient abbey ridiculous by adding a modern steeple. He had ruined two parishes by putting up churches so large that his parishioners could not afford to keep them in repair. All this was many years ago, and the current story was that a great deal of difficulty had been experienced in settling Father McCabe's debts, and that the Bishop had threatened to suspend him if he built any more. However this may be, nothing was heard of Father McCabe for fifteen years. He retired entirely into private life, but at his Bishop's death he was heard of in the newspapers as the propounder of a scheme for the revival of Irish Romanesque. He had been to

23 A banknote denominated five pounds sterling (British/Irish currency); in the late 19th-early 20th century this represented a substantial sum for rural labourers, far more than a typical day's wage.

24 An institutional workhouse provided under 19th-century Poor Laws where destitute people could live and work for basic relief; conditions were often harsh and it was a social stigma to enter one.

25 Peat (turf) is cut from bogs, dried and burned as domestic fuel in Ireland; a peat fire refers to this common rural hearth used for heating and cooking.

26 A local term for the landlord's country house or estate residence in Ireland, typically belonging to the Anglo-Irish or gentry class and serving as a social and economic centre of the locality.

27 A reel is a traditional Irish social dance (a fast, lively folk dance); being "in the reels" means participating in that style of dance at communal gatherings.

28 Refers to the Church law requiring celibacy of clergy in the Latin (Western) Catholic Church; the phrase here discusses revoking that rule as a proposed remedy for emigration and demographic decline.

29 A Latin liturgical greeting used in Catholic worship meaning "Peace be with you," traditionally said by a priest to the congregation during Mass.

30 The parish priest in this chapter who oversees a poor rural Irish district; a fictional character representing the local Catholic clergyman responsible for relief works, schools and pastoral care.

31 A formal religious ceremony in which a church or cathedral is solemnly dedicated for worship; in Catholic usage it marks the building's official liturgical opening.

32 A famous 12th–13th-century Irish processional cross, richly decorated and traditionally associated with Cong Abbey; it is a well-known medieval Irish ecclesiastical artifact conserved in national collections.

33 A Romanesque chapel on the Rock of Cashel in County Tipperary, Ireland, built in the 12th century (attributed to King Cormac); it is an important monument of medieval Irish architecture.

34 A village in Bavaria, Germany, famed for its long-running Passion Play first performed in the 17th century and staged at irregular multi-year intervals (notably every ten years in many periods).

35 A traditional Irish porridge made from meal (often oatmeal or maize/cornmeal); here 'yellow meal stirabout' refers to a cornmeal porridge commonly eaten by poor rural families.

36 In Irish usage a 'wake' is a funeral vigil or associated social gathering often including late-night music and dancing; the quoted phrase indicates the girl was returning from such an evening event.

37 The Shannon (River Shannon) is the longest river in Ireland, flowing roughly north–south for about 360 km (\approx 224 miles) to the Shannon Estuary; it has long been an important inland waterway for transport and navigation.

38 A lock-keeper is the person who operates and watches over a canal lock — the gated chamber used to raise or lower boats between stretches of water of different

levels — and often managed nearby towpaths and lock gates in the 18th–19th century.

39 A barge is a flat-bottomed boat commonly used on canals and rivers for carrying goods (and sometimes passengers); on inland canals of the period barges were often towed by horses walking along a towpath.

40 A 'rath' is an earthen ringfort or enclosure from early medieval Ireland; the 'Rath of Kings' near Tara refers to one of the ancient earthworks in the royal complex traditionally associated with high-kingship and ceremonial sites.

41 Cuchulain (often spelled Cú Chulainn) is a central hero of the Ulster Cycle in Irish mythology, famed as a warrior with supernatural feats and a key figure in many early Irish legends.

42 Cromlechs is a term used for prehistoric megalithic monuments — commonly dolmens or large stone-table tombs — found across Ireland and Britain and traditionally associated with ancient burial or ritual sites.

43 In the passage 'bonhams' is presented as meaning a sucking pig (a young pig roasted whole); this reflects a dialectal or anglicized culinary term in the text rather than a standard modern Irish-language word.

44 A Catholic priest in the story whom Ellen consults; in Catholic practice a parish priest commonly hears confessions and gives spiritual or practical advice to parishioners.

45 A local Catholic priest mentioned as the man who baptised Ellen's baby; baptism is the sacrament by which infants are formally received into the Church.

46 A newspaper headline in the text; 'profession' here means the religious ceremony in which women take final vows as nuns, and 19th-century press often reported such professions, including those occurring in continental convents.

47 An industrial city in England; in the 19th century Birmingham was a major manufacturing centre and a notable source of stained glass and other ecclesiastical fittings imported around the British Isles.

48 A late-19th-century term for philosophical or political positions that reject established authorities, moral values or religious beliefs; in this period it was often used to describe radical, anti-religious ideas.

49 A large public hall in Dublin historically used for meetings, concerts and public gatherings (often called the Rotunda Rooms or Rotunda), which served as a venue for speeches and civic events.

50 A 19th-century Irish nationalist and journalist (1815–1875) associated with the Young Ireland movement, known for his radical political writings and advocacy for Irish independence.

51 An allusion to a large prehistoric standing stone or megalith associated in popular imagination with the ancient Celtic priesthood called Druids; such stones in Ireland and Britain are usually prehistoric (Neolithic or Bronze Age), though direct Druidic connections are uncertain and debated by scholars.

52 Refers to the Dutch-descended settler population in southern Africa; in late 19th–early 20th-century British writing it commonly alludes to the Boer Wars (notably the