
Homespun Yarns

Fitzgerald Thomas A

Title: Homespun Yarns

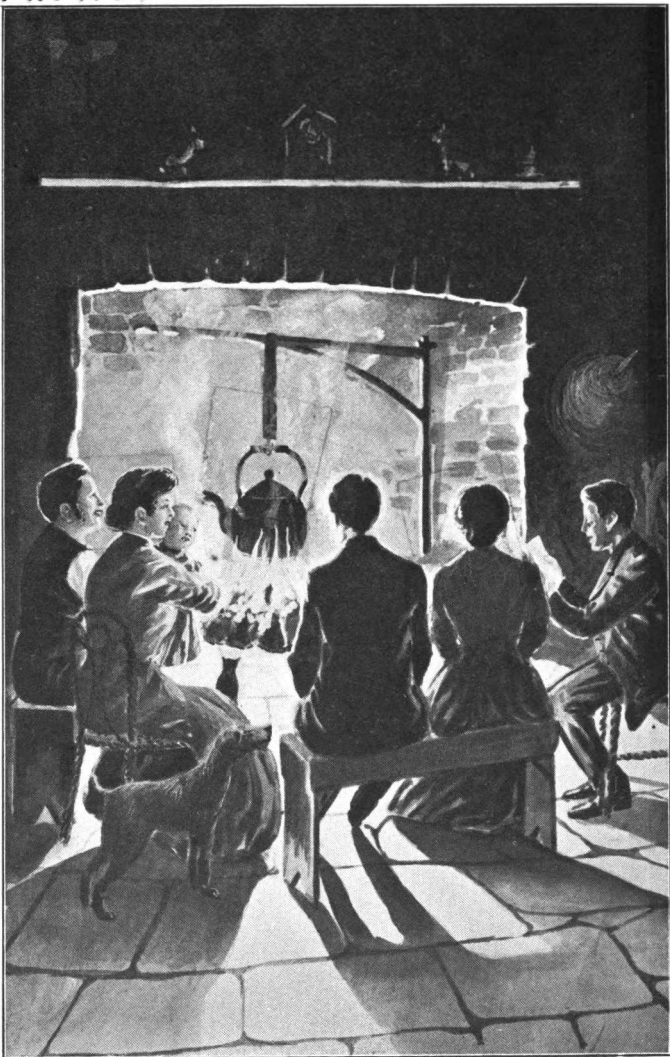
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TO THE
ANTHROPOLOGICAL



**“While the Kettle and
the Cricket Sing.”**

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

HOMESPUN YARNS

While the Kettle and
the Cricket Sing . . .

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

BY
REV. T. A. FITZGERALD, O.F.M.



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A Lament for the Fairies



IT is a dark lowering day towards the end of December. The bleak leaden clouds obscure the whole sky, and lie like a pall over the earth. The lordly Shannon, swollen by the winter rain, rolls sulkily along not many yards from my window. It pours its roaring volume over the great eel-weir for which Athlone is famous, but the rushing waters are met by a raging storm which is tearing up from Clonmacnoise, and so the river under the weir is an angry battlefield where wind and flood foam and strive and writhe for supremacy. The dark water is scarred by frothy furrows which flash like tigers' teeth, and sea-like breakers roll and tumble, tossed by wind and tide. The Shannon, King of Irish rivers, and Scotch and English too, has risen in his might and invades the far-reaching plains which resemble the watery main. Here and there on patches of green are a few hardy Connacht cattle, hornless and fluffy-headed, heedless of the biting blast. The wind shrieks at the lattices and under doors and through key-holes, and now and then rushes down the chimney in fitful gusts sending clouds of turf smoke about the room. But for all

TO MY
MOTHER

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that, one feels cosy beside an Irish fireside especially on such a day as this. Yes, and you can wear a big top-coat, too, and not feel warm even before a blazing hearth. One is too comfortable to move except when the fire burns low and then you pile



on the sods again—for this is the great turf land of the west. It is a day for meditation, and as I sit before the dancing flames I ask myself: What is to become of our Irish fairies if things go on as they're going—if so-called civilisation keeps edging them out from their erstwhile realms—if dirty black coal takes the place of turf, if the smellful gas-stove

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drives out the fragrant peat, if the cold electric light drives out the tallow candle which had to be snuffed and then told strange tidings of the dead, and, again, if the creamery drives out the dear old churn from the kitchen floor? Yes, I repeat it: What is to become of the fairies if this vandalism goes on? How can they stay and tolerate these innovations—these desecrations of their ancient realms? The dear old fairies are doomed and I have it on good authority—for I frequent old raths—that the Irish fairies have made up their minds with many a sigh which the birds have heard to depart to the lonely hills and silent backwoods of Ireland, there to think in sadness and sorrow on the days that were.

Now how could any self-respecting fairy live in a trim slate house, for fairies love the comfortable thatched farmhouse where swallows build and darling little mice gambol and sometimes fall into a bowl of whey that your sick grandmother is taking sitting up in bed, with her nightcap on, and the white strings hanging down each shoulder, for she's too feeble to tie them, poor thing!

Do not, I implore you, kind reader, except you're very ignorant, try to associate fairies with a coal fire. It is too dirty with its black smoke for those airy beings who love dancing flames and glowing sods that send sparks like tiny armies of red soldiers up the chimneys. Have we not often and often as little children seen wonderful things and wonderful faces in the broad heart of the burning turf fire? You can't see into a coal fire, but between the big sods on a turf fire you can discern regions of