

well. The original exaggeration of color, ornament, or wild war and love would have to be partly retained. The supernatural world which in all the tales is the comrade of the natural, the primal union of man's heart with nature, the vivid sympathy of the great creatures of nature, like the sea and the air with the fates of Ireland and her sons; the tragic sorrows of love and death—these, with their high keen cry of emotion, would have to be represented in the English poems, and the difficulty of doing that without offending the genius of the English tongue, would be very great; but difficulties please a poet; and it can be done. There is no better instance of a great success in one of these—with a full preservation of a Celtic spirit and melody—than *The Voyage of Maeldune*, by Tennyson.

Irishmen have, and with varying success, done work of this kind. Those have done the best who have invented new English rhythms for the Irish stories, somewhat in harmony with the extraordinary subtlety and variety of the Irish metres. Well known English metres, like that used by Sir Walter Scott in the *Minstrel*, or like blank verse—that specially English strain—carry with their sound too much of the special turn of the English imagination. They bring us, while we read the Irish stories in their movement, out of Ireland into England, and the Celtic ring is lost. The nearest approach in the past to good work of this kind was made by Sir Samuel Ferguson, in his treatment of epic episodes, and by Clarence Maugan, in his treatment of the later Irish lyrics. Many others have also done well. Callanan, Hennessey, Aubrey de Vere, Lady Wilde, Robert Joyce, Catherine Tynan, and our chairman, Alfred Percival Graves; but no better form has yet been given to Irish tales in English than that into which Dr. Todhunter has cast *The Children of Lir*, and Mr. Yates *The Wanderings of Oisín*.

A fourth kind of work on old Irish literature lies ready to hand, and it has a clear relation to these ancient tales. It is the collection of the folk stories of Ireland. Many of them are handed down from the earliest times, and they bear everywhere traces of their origin. I mean, of course, the stories which may be gathered from the lips of the old people at this very hour

in Ireland. Hidden away in these tales there is lying unused a mass of poetic material, and of such historic interest as belongs to the Science of Folk-Lore, which is rapidly perishing. To collect and edit all these tales would be pleasant and proper work for members of Irish literary societies, and an excellent contribution to the literature of their country. It is a patriot's duty to manifest the beautiful things which his country has done, that they may be loved and honored, and by that he glorifies his nation far more than by increasing her commerce. The greatest wealth of a people is the wealth of their imagination.

When we have got them into fine prose and verse, I believe we shall open out to English poetry a new and exciting world, an immense range of subjects, entirely fresh and full of inspiration. Therefore, as I said, get them out in English.

Had I another half hour, I might speak of the second period of literature in the Irish tongue, which began when the great bardic associations were broken up, which continued during the English conquest of Ireland, and which may be said to have ended with Carolan, "the last of the Irish bards," who died in the eighteenth century, 1737. Had I more time I might write of the third period of literature in the Irish tongue, which lasted, roughly speaking, from 1737 to about 1830, and which was chiefly written under the desperate sorrows of the penal laws, and amidst the wofullest poverty and misery of Ireland; a literature, like that of the second period, full of lyric love and lyric sorrow. There ought to be a golden treasury of its best songs in every house in Ireland. Yet another lecture might be delivered on the poetry of all the later movements towards an independent Ireland, the results of which are being worked out at this present moment. Such inquiry would, I think, be itself an impulse towards the new poetry which I trust will arise in Ireland, of a larger method, of a wider range, and of a better form. We need for that, in my opinion, Home Rule, and peace from internecine quarrels within our own borders. We need the careful selection of the very best of the English poetry as yet written in Ireland; because fine poetry of a new