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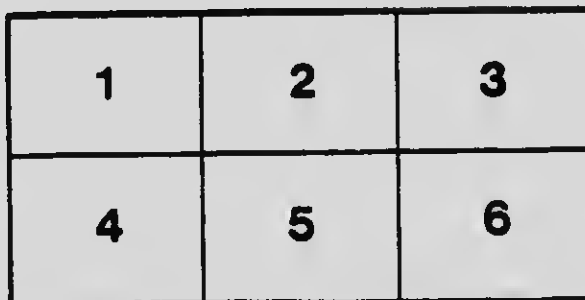
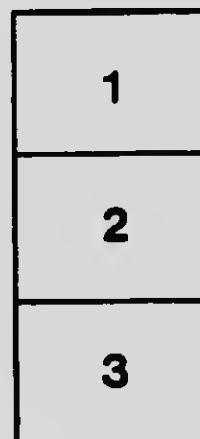
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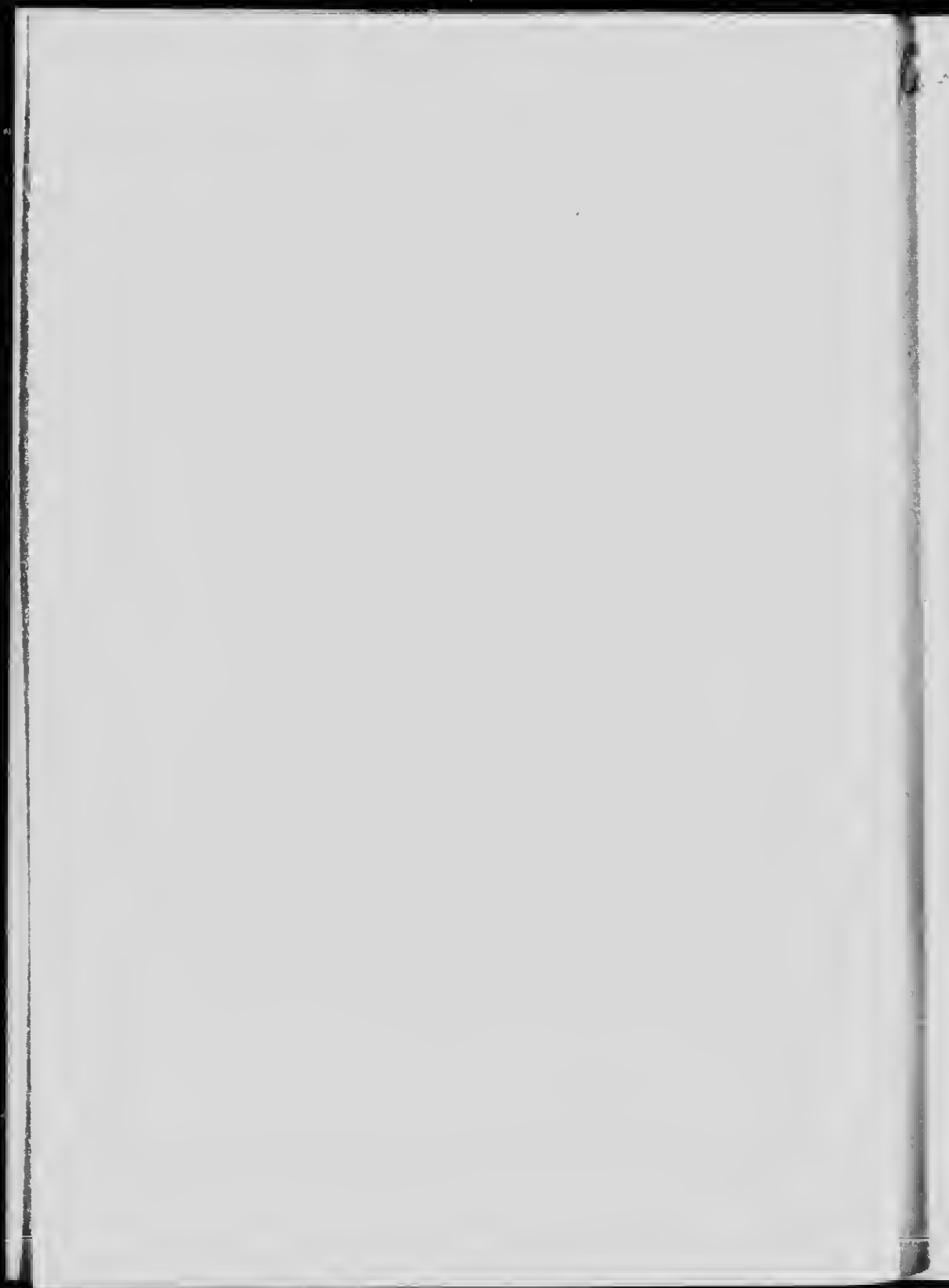
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CHARACTERISTIC  
CONVERSATIONS

OF

Curly Kate



BY

E. M. GARDNER

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TORONTO  
WILLIAM BRIGGS  
1907

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1907

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## TO THE PUBLIC

**T**HE following "incidents" and "conversations" are not fictitious; they are literally true, although the names of the individuals mentioned have been changed, for obvious reasons, as they are all (so far as the narrator knows) still living on "this 'arth," with the exception of poor "Tim," who has "crossed the Bar"—not, however, the "bar" he was so familiar with at the time our narrative begins!

E. M. G.

P.S.—The narrator does not hold herself responsible for the opinions and conclusions of "Curly Kate," as herein set forth.



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## CHARACTERISTIC CONVERSATIONS OF CURLY KATE

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**I**S "Curly Kate" dead?

Not at all; she is only "laid up for repairs" after her latest accident! She is recovering, as usual, and we hope may live for many a long day to entertain her "eustomers," as she calls those for whom she wields the soap and washboard periodically.

### BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Our first impressions were not such as to inspire us with reverence or admiration, but the circumstances were exceptional, and I must, in justice to her better self, say, that in the seven years acquaintance which have passed since that memorable sixth of September, when

## Characteristic Conversations of

we first "clapped eyes on t'll her" (as she would say). I have never seen or heard so extraordinary a display of her physical and linguistic capabilities as was then vouchsafed. On that occasion she was like an aerobatic volcano in violent eruption—from the vanishing points of her crinkly carrotty-gray hair, which surrounded her crimson face like a halo of smoke and flame, down to her feet, which are nearly as broad as they are long, encased in leather boots which were much too large, and slashed here and there to accommodate the various undulations caused by corns and bunions (as I afterwards learned).

She was never still a moment, while she poured forth "fire and brimstone" with a volubility that Vesuvius itself might envy! Yet this one occasion showed us a phase of her many-sided character which, it may easily be imagined, is more in evidence when unrestrained by the presence of "the quality"—by which title she dignifies some of her "customers."

## Curly Kate

### THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

We were moving into the city; the house taken had been occupied for several years by an elderly maiden lady, and her pretty niece, who were to have vacated it week sooner, but who, for some reason best known to themselves, were still standing about in an utterly helpless and despairing manner when we arrived. Men were carrying their worldly possessions out to a big van, at the front door; while at the back door "dhrunken Tim," with his dilapidated cart and equally dilapidated horse, awaited orders. The chief director, exhorter, reprover and commander was "Curly Kate," who, I learned later, had been the faithful "right-hand-man" of the ladies referred to ever since the younger was an infant. The arrival of two loads of our "household stuff" followed in a few minutes by ourselves, had evidently added to the paralysis of the ladies, while it had intensified the situation for the commander-in-chief, who, with bared arms and

## Characteristic Conversations of

kilted skirt, was with violent vociferations and interjections tearing madly from one end of the house to the other, in her endeavors to clear the place of men and "things" quite regardless of appearances, and evidently under the impression that the louder she shouted and the more she expostulated the sooner would this be accomplished! After an hour or so of the wildest confusion—of which I was only an interested spectator—the men, and the van, and the ladies, had all disappeared; the half-dazed old carter at the back-door had loaded up with rubbish for "the dump," and on the top of the load were a few articles which the ladies had bestowed on Mrs. Taters (*alias* Curly Kate). A filthy old coat which had been used as the dog's bed for years was picked up by Tim, and carefully tucked in one corner of the cart—Mrs. Taters told me afterwards that he had brushed it up a bit and sold it for fifty cents, with which he went on a big spree. The driver climbed to his seat and started out of the lane.

## Curly Kate

“Mind now, Tim, ye dhrunken ould villain, an’ lave the t’ings on the top at me house afore ye go to the dump,” shouted “Curly Kate,” as she clenched her fist and shook it at him by way of emphasizing her orders. Then she turned with a great sigh of relief and prepared for retreat; she pulled down her sleeves, unpinned her skirt, smoothed out her wavy rebellious locks and put on her hat—still flushed with the excitement of the hour. With the burden of responsibility off and her “business eye” open, she asked me, in a most subdued and respectful way, if I would need help next day, at the same time offering her services. I knew of no one else I could get, so I said, “Yes, come if you can.” At that moment she chanced to glance out of the window, and spied the cart turning a wrong corner. In a twinkling she was up in arms again, and seizing a big stick, hurried after the offending Tim—calling back to me as she went, “All roight, mem, by the help av God, Oi’ll be back in the mornin’!” Then, “Tim! Tim! ye dhrunken edjoit! where

## Characteristic Conversations of

on this 'arth are yo goin'?" followed by a volume of denunciatory epithets better left unwritten.

We saw her seize the bridle and wheel the horse about, and constituting herself a special body-guard, she marched beside the cart, waving the stick and scolding at Tim till all were lost to sight.

Next morning she appeared sharp on time. The storm and tempest of the previous day had passed and left her calm and serene, with unruffled brow, ready for work. There she stood. Her crinkly, curly hair, wavy from the very roots, was drawn back into a tidy knot at the back of her head. Her shaggy eyebrows overhung a pair of shrewd, calculating, yet merry twinkling eyes, one of which she had a curious trick of closing up tight when she was confiding anything of special interest. That tongue, which had achieved so much the day before, was now resting innocently within a mouth which gave no evidence of its extensive expressional accomplishments. Altogether she

## Curly Kate

was not an unpleasing, nor to me an uninteresting, personality.

I had made a few odd discoveries about the house, which was an old one, since the previous day, and one which puzzled me not a little was a stove-pipe hole in the wall half way up the back stair, which appeared to be perfectly un-get-at-able from any direction, and therefore utterly useless. As "Curly Kate" had worked for years for the late occupants, I thought she might be able to explain the mystery, so I said:

"Mrs. Taters, can you tell me what that hole is there for?"

She looked at me so seriously that I thought for a moment I must have trespassed on some ghostly secret. Then, raising her forefinger and screwing up her eye, she said almost in a whisper and with great solemnity:

"It's the truth Oi'm tellin' ye, mem, when Oi say that Oi doubt if the Almighty Hissself could tell thet, fer it's more thin Oi can do."

Later I remarked that the back stairway



## Characteristic Conversations of

(which was very steep, and the top and bottom steps of which were a full inch, and more, deeper than all the rest) was very queer. "Quare, indade!" she burst forth. "The Lord knows the furst toime Oi came down thim stairs, Oi came down head furst, wid wan pail av water fornenst me, an' anither upsot all over me."

"Is it possible!" I exclaimed. "It is a wonder you were not killed."

"A won'er, indade, mem, but Oi've come nigher bein' kilt meny a toime since; but it's me that's sayin', that since iver Oi came on this 'arth Oi've niver seen sich a stair, afore nor sence."

I found her such a good worker, and so entertaining, that I engaged her to come and work for me the following week, and from that time on she and her wash-tub orations became a regular institution in the family, and were looked forward to with a degree of pleasurable anticipation quite unusual, for she invariably had something entertaining to relate about

## Curly Kate

her own doings, or those of some of her  
“customers.”



Circumstances necessitated my being fre-

## Characteristic Conversations of

quently in the kitchen those days, and I was obliged to listen to much I should have preferred not hearing. However, I could not help being amused with her stories, and I soon learned that Mrs. Taters did not hold all her "customers" in equal esteem. One she informed me was "a perfect she-divil," adding, "an' it's no loi Oi'm tellin' ye," while another she affirmed was "the very best woman on 'arth, present company always excepted"—(she added apologetically)—"an' that's a throe sayin', if iver there was wan; if she is a Protestant, an' Oi don't care a het what Father Flaherty, or any other Father says, I know well there's a cozy corner waitin' fer her in hiven, but plase God, it'll have to wait a whoie yit, fer she always gives me an illigent pot av presarves at Christmas, the foinest iver ye seen."

For a Catholic she held very unorthodox views regarding Protestants, perhaps because her husband, who had departed this life years ago, had, she said, been a Presbyterian. "His

## Curly Kate

family was wan av the most iminently respectable in the north av ould Oireland," she added, "but Oi wasn't to their taste; Oi wasn't good enough fer thim, but Oi was good enough fer him, an' so we run away. Oi tell ye, mem, Oi don't take no stoek in any av thim fancy religions ye hear tell ou, there's none o' thim any good, ony the Roman Catholics an' the Prisbytayrians to my thinkin'.

"Well, well, Oi'm jist thinkin' that there's quare religions on this 'arth, an' that's gospel truth. Ye remember Mrs. Bradfort, her as Oi was tellin' ye about wan toime. Well Oi'm afeared she's asthray in her hed entoirely, but she calls it Christian Science. Oi was there washin' wan day an' she was axin' me about some folks av moine she knowed about, an' says Oi t'll her, 'Oeh, but it's awful thruble Oi've had wid thim same since last Oi see'd ye. They've took to dhrink agin an' was makin' sieh a row that the neighbors had him locked up fer distarbin' the pacc, an' there was no one to bail him out ony me, so fer the childer's sake

## Characteristic Conversations of

Oi done it, but it's terrible thruble Oi've had over the whule business, an' me heart is broke entoirely.' 'Oh,' says she, 'Mrs. Taters, ye should turn Christian Seicnee, an' ye wouldn't have no more thruble.' 'How's thot?' says Oi. 'Because it's all a dhrame,' says she; 'ye ony think it's somethin' to worry about.' 'Indade,' says Oi t'll her, 'dhrame or no dhrame, it cost me sivin good dollars, an' there's no dhrame about that.'

"Since thin Oi've heard that her man has had amonia of the heart. Oi won'er did he think that a dhrame. An' thin she wint away t'll New York, an' whoile she was gone wan av the childers got her arm broke, an' fer two days the family belaved it was a dhrame. At last they got scared, an' got a docther to set it; an' it was no dhrame fer the poor choild, who has mortal failin's; an' it'll be no dhrame t'll the parents whin he docther's bill comes in. Poor sowl, she'll hev many quare dhrames afore she wakes up, Oi'm thinkin'.

"Wan day she thried washin' her man's

## Curly Kate

shirts wid this new fangled 'nap soap,' an', as thrue as ye're s'handin' thar, the goods all fell out nner the arms where he had expoired. Sich a soight Oi niver seen since iver Oi come on this 'arth."

On one occasion between wash-days, a well-known and greatly beloved physician in the city had died suddenly. He was neither a Presbyterian nor a Roman Catholic, yet she was heart-broken over the news, and with great tears in her eyes she said, "An' shure it's me that knows jist how good he was t'll the poor, fer many's the day Oi've met him in the sick-room, an' he'd say t'll me, so cheery loike, 'She'll be all roight now wid you, Mrs. Taters, for you're a won'erful woman fer doin' the roight thing; an' Oi know wid you to nurse her, she'll pull through, dead or alive.' Oi till ye, mem, he was as foine a man as ye'd see on this 'arth, an' if there's an imminent position in hiven for a Protestant, Dochter Writon's got it."

One morning she did not come when due, and

## Characteristic Conversations of

I saw by the evening paper that she had fallen on the slippery sidewalk and broken her arm in two places, so next morning I hastened over to inquire for her at her son's house. I knew she was there, as he had been taken to the hospital a few days before, having been nearly killed, while excavating for the main sewer, by the premature explosion of dynamite, which had killed his companion instantly; and (as his mother explained) "his two eyes was either blown out av his head, or blown in t'll it, for his face was that swole ye couldn't tell which."

I found her sitting in state, her left arm in a sling. I asked her how and when it happened.

"Shure, mem, Oi was goin' round the corner to give the landlord a piece av me moind, when me two feet slips up, an' the rist av me slips down, an' sthrange to say, by a merciful Providence, Oi wasn't broke into splinters. That was Friday night."

"Why," I interrupted, "I only saw it in last night's paper."

## Curly Kate

"Oh, well, ye see, mem, deur, it didn't happen in toime to git int'll the Saturday papers."

"Where is it broken?" I asked.

"Jist here," she said, laying the forefinger of her right hand on the injured arm above the wrist.

"Oh, but the paper said it was broken in two places," I remarked.

"Well, mem, ye see, deur" (dropping her voice to a whisper and screwing up her eye), "that was n loi, if iver there was wan. It's the two bones as is broke in the wan place."

Of course, this accident incapacitated her for work for a few weeks, so I was obliged to find another woman to take her place.

When "Curly Kate" came back to work, she asked with some curiosity who had washed for me during the interval. I replied, "A woman named Mrs. Satchell. I couldn't find out much about her, but she was the only one I could get at the time. Do you know her?"

"Mrs. Satchell," she repeated, half to herself, as if searching the recesses of her mem-



## Characteristic Conversations of

ory for the name, which search was successful, for she said, more emphatically: "Mary Satchell, Oi won'er now! Tell me, was she little an' snub-nosed, wid a red face, an' smellin' av whusky?"

"Well," I answered, "I didn't notice any smell of liquor about her, but she was little and snub-nosed, and had a high color certainly."

"High color, indade, men!—it's the same ould sinner."

Then she went off into a great fit of laughter, evidently at some recollection. The washing came to a standstill for a little, while she held forth in this wise: "Mary Satchell! Well, Oi niver! Jist to think av Mary Satchell washin' in my tubs. Do Oi know her? Well Oi did know her wanst, an' she knowed me for shure. Tho last toime Oi seen her, sho couldn't see me fer the dhrink that was in her, but she felt me all the same. It was about two years ago come winter, an' ye see we was neighbors, an' she was dhrinkin' sometlin' awful at the toime. There was another neighbor who had a

## Curly Kate

foine choild die, an' there was goin' to be a wake, an' the parents they wanted a dacent, respectable woman to sit by the corpse. So they axed me would Oi be so koind, an' av course Oi said, 'Wid pleasure.' They were in such grief, pore sows, Oi hadn't the heart to refuse. Well, the people began to come in, an' by-an-bye, who should come in but Mary Satchell, an' Oi soon seen wid me nose, as well as wid me eyes, that she'd been 'arinkin'. So says Oi t'll meself, 'Mo lady'll need watchin' to-night.' An' shure enough, in a few minutes she began to get noisy, an' Oi says t'll her, quite gintle loike, 'Mrs. Satchell, will ye be so koind as to kape quoit?' She looked at me an' said some words which Oi'll not soil yer ears by repatin'. So Oi niver said a word, ony this, 'We'll all be obleeged to ye, Mrs. Satchell, if ye'll kape quoit while ye're here, or else would ye be so good as to t'ere yersel' outside where ye'll not disturb the dead, to say nothin' av the livin'?' Ye see," she explained, "Oi was afeared av makin' her angry, so Oi

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spoke very gintle at furst, but she got worse an' worse an' begun to dance an' sing an' shout an' swear. Thin Oi got mad, an' Oi jumped up, an' sazed a carvin' knife that lay handy, an' Oi grabbed her by the neck-band, unner her chin—jist to scare her, av course— an' Oi says t'll her, 'Mary Satchell, ye dhrunkin varmint! if ye'll not go fer the askin' Oi'll jist put ye out. Have ye no respect for the occasion? Sich goins on is most unsamely in the prisence av a corpse.' Someone opened the dure an Oi jist backed her out int'll the dark, an' Oi niver cared a het, but jest sot her down in a shnow-dhrift, an' Oi niver seen her sence, for she was picked up by the police an' run in, an' afore she was out agin Oi had moved to a more respectable neighborhood. Ha! ha! jist to think av Mary Satchell slatherin' her dirty dhrunken fingers in my wash-tubs!!'

And she resumed her work with such vigor I could easily imagine how gentle her mood and manner must have been on the occasion she had

## Curly Kate

just been telling about, when the incorrigible "Mary" was in her clutches.

One day she asked me if I would give her some old tapestry carpet, which had been cast aside. She said she had some "foine hins," which she fed well, but somehow they wouldn't lay, "leastways not at home," but she thought if she nailed the old carpet over the cracks in the sides of her henhouse to keep out the cold, and got a new lock for the door to keep out the thieves, "by the help o' God they moight lay me some eggs agin Christmas. If not," she added with a laugh, "Oi'll not be able to pay back me own fresh eggs, as Oi borrowed from her as sthole thim." Then apparently thinking her last remark needed some explanation she went on, "Ye see, mem, Oi had sthrong suspects that her as lives fornenst me was coaxin' mo hins t'll her placo when Oi was away at work. Oi knowed she had no hins av her own, an' eggs was very dear, so Oi hit on this plan to foind out. This mornin' Oi wint over, an' Oi says t'll her, says Oi: 'Mrs,

## Characteristic Conversations of

O'Brian, dear, could ye be so koind as to give me the loan av two frish eggs? Oi'm expectin' company, an' Oi'm needin' thim most particklar' (that was a loi, av course, may God



forgive me; but no matter). 'Certainly, Mrs. Taters,' says she, 'Oi ken ohlige a good neighbor loike you. Eggs is very searce, but Oi happen to have a few this mornin', so you're entoirely weelcome.' So Oi took the two eggs

## Curly Kate

home, an' we'll see if she happens to git a few to-morrow mornin'."

She took the carpet and got a new lock, and she told me the next week that she "couldn't jist say whither it was the lock or the carpet that done it, but she'd been gittin' eggs ivery day sence, an' jist for a bit av a lark she had got a neighbor friend to try to borrow some fresh eggs off Mrs. O'Brian," but that amiable and obliging lady had assured her friend that she was "very sorry, indade, but that eggs was very scarce, an' very dear," and she "hadn't been able to git any lately."

Notwithstanding her tricks and her trials, "Curly Kate" had a kindly heart. One evening I saw by the papers that "a little three-year old child of Mr. John Taters had died after a brief illness," I knew it must be her little grandson, who had been called "Samson John," after his Presbyterian grandfather. I knew, too, that she would feel very badly, as she was very fond of her three grandchildren; therefore, I was not surprised, when on the fol-

## Characteristic Conversations of

lowing Monday she came in with her eyes red and swollen with weeping, and beforo I had a ehance to ask any question or express any sympathy, she began:

“Oh, Mrs. Garner, dear, did ye see that our littlo Samson John is gone. Me heart is broke entoirely afther the little darlint. Tho purtiest iver ye seen, wid his curly head! Oi says t’ll me son, says Oi: ‘Yo should have had him christened a Presbytarian, an’ maybe the Lord would havo spared him,’ tho, to tell ye the truth, mem, Oi belavo it was the work av thim sugar-coated pills throwed in at the dour, that dhrunken ould Mary (her that was sarvant wanst in this very house)—gave him for candy, that killed him, an’ it wasn’t the Lord’s doin’ at all. Oi told me son that he had no call to tako ‘the dirt off av the sthrato’ int’ll his house even if she was dhrunk an’ freezin’, an’ now the ould villain has rewarded his kindness by murderin’ his little choild, an’ there she is in his house yit, as bould as ye boike, but she’ll not be there long, for Oi’ll run her in meself if

## Curly Kate

Jack don't do it, lest she poison any more swate innicent little childer."

"But, Mrs. Taters," I ventured to say, "you must be careful how you talk. It may not have been the pills at all that caused the child's death, and you may be doing old Mary a grave injustice, besides you know the Almighty could have spared the little life if He had seen fit to do so."

"Maybe, maybe; but Oi'm not so shure about that same. Thim quack medicines throwed in at the dour are poison for shure, an' powerful sthrong, but Oi hope Oi may be forgiven if it wasn't thim pills that killed him, though in moi heart av hearts Oi belave it was nothin' else, unless it was the liquor in ould Mary for she'd niver 'ave given thim to the choild if she'd been her sober self. But if iver herself is sober, the Lord Himself only knows, for Oi niver seen her so."

"Did Father Flaherty conduct the funeral?"  
I asked.

"O, no, dear, sartainly not; ye're forgettin'



### Characteristic Conversations of

that the choild's grandfather was a Protestant, and besides," she added in a confidential tone, with her right eye shut tight, "ye know whin a person has an eye to business, it's much chaper to die a Protestant, for ye don't have to pay the minister fer the job av burryin' the corpse, an' ye don't have to pay fer masses fer the repose of the sowl, because, ye see, Protestants have a sthraight ticket to heaven, but we Catholics have to put in toime half way, an' if there's no money in the family to pay for masses, it's a quare long toime the loikes av me would have to put in. But we all git to the wan place at last," she added, with confidence, "an' swate little Samson John has gone by the short cut, which is a savin' fer me, as his father's out av work, an' Oi had to pay all the funeral expenses, an' me wid \$160 yit to pay on me two houses. But, thanks be to goodness, the taxes, an' the snow elanin', an' the wather rates is all paid up to date."

When I went into the kitchen the next wash day, I guessed by the twinkle in "Curly

## Curly Kate

Kate's" eye that she had something which she considered interesting to tell; nor was I mistaken, for soon she began:

"Well, mem, Oi belave Oi'm not goin' to have a lawsuit afther all—leastways, not over the hroken arm—but Oi do fale loike sarvin' that she-divil av a Mrs. MacCullough wid an' action fer desecration av charackter. Just think, afther me puttin' up wid her impudence all these years, an' washin' her siven young uns' filthy, dirty clothes (as the Good Shepherd's laundry wouldn't tackle), what did she do, but accuse me av stalin' her soap, an' hidin' it in the wood pile, so Oi could take it whin Oi'd be goin' home. Didn't she belave what that dirt av a Tancock girl said afore me. An' the Almighty knows roight well, Oi niver tell a loi, ony whin Oi can't help it; an' by the help o' God Oi'll niver darken her dirty dure agin. But that's not what Oi was goin' to say at all. Jack says t'll me one day, 'Why don't ye sue the city fer damages fer your broken arm?' 'What's the use?' says Oi, 'Oi'd niver git a

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cent fer it.' 'Maybe you moight,' says he; 'anyway Oi'll eall round on L'yar (Lawyer) Hennesy, an' see what he says about it.' So, Hennesy, he come to see me wan day, an' Oi tould him all about it, an' afther listenin' a bit he urged me sthrong to sue. He said Oi had a good case, an' he'd do the best he could fer me, but he seemed so terrible anxious to g't the case, that Oi begun to have suspects that he had his eye on the costs. So, afther a lot av talk, Oi says t'll him, 'Mr. Hennesy?' says Oi, 'whether the city's to blame fer me two feet's goin' from un'er me or not, Oi can't say, but Oi'm feared that ye could hardly prove that same, since Oi knowed the sidewalks was icy, an' the Lord, who makes the weather, is en-toirely responsible, to my thinkin'; still, if ye'll write it down in black an' white, on a bit av paper, that ye'll win the case, an' git enough to pay yer own costs, an' give me the bit av paper to kape t'll it's settled, why, thin you may go ahead wid your sue; but, mark my words, if it's moi two houses, that Oi've worked

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so hard to pay fer wid me two hands, that ye've got yer eye on fer costs, ye'd best give it roight up; for Oi'll tell ye throe, sur, it's no blatherin' P'yar in this town'll iver git hould av thim houses while Oi'm on this 'arth.' That's ivery word Oi said, an' he went away, an' Oi've niver clapped eyes ont'll him since. Ye see, mem, he knowed that Oi was a woman av property as couldn't read nor write (but Oi ken use me eyes an' me jidgement, thank God), an' Oi seen plain enough that he had his bnsiness eye on thim two houses: for so he had, an' that's gospel truth; but he met his match that day fer shure, though it's me that's sayin' it, as shouldn't."

The winter passed away and spring came once more. The golden sunshine flooded the earth, and all nature seemed to be rejoicing, but when Mrs. Taters appeared she looked sad and depressed, and quite out of harmony with what on other occasions she would have called "an illigent day fer the clothes." Of course, I asked what was troubling her this beautiful

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day, and in reply she poured forth the following:

“Och, Mrs. Garner, dear, it was a sorrowful business Oi had on hand yisterday, an’ it cost me a lot, too. Ye see, Jack’s been out av work agin, an’ had no money, an’ when a post-card came from the cimitery, sayin’ as how poor little Samson John’s body would have to be taken out av the vault \* an’ burried, there was no one ony me to see about it, an’ the sight av’ the little coffin jist brought me throuble all up agin. An’, would ye belave it, mem, the man as runs the vault had the odiosity (audacity) to charge me siven dollars! Now, don’t ye think, mem, that siven dollars was most extravagant high board fer a corpse, as gives no throuble, fer the winter? Oi jist looked at the man, an’ Oi told him he was an old excrutioner” (extortioner), “an’ Oi hoped when his toime came there wouldn’t be a

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\* It is the custom in our northern country, when a death occurs in winter, to place the remains in a large vault built for the purpose, until the ground is sufficiently thawed in the spring to admit of grave-digging.

## Curly Kate

square inch av God's 'arth would lould his ould bones. That sort av melted him, an' he says, quite civil loike, ' Oi'm sorry fer ye, mem, but it's not me that regalates the charges, but the company.' ' Oh, thin,' says Oi, ' ye can tell the company, wid my best respects, that they moight have a bargain day for the poor, when they could bury their dead dacent at cut prices.' An' that's ivery word Oi said, an' come away."

Some time later a sad thing happened in town. A young man, only eighteen years of age, named McCullough, had dropped dead on the street at midday. I thought by the address given in the newspaper, that it must have been one of "Curly Kate's" "she-devil's" boys, so when she came to wash next week I asked if it was so.

"Yes, indade, mein, it's a sorrowful thruth fer shure, an' whin Oi heard it Oi couldn't help cryin' fer the poor boy as hadn't no rearin', cut off so suddint an' onprepared; shure the puir lad got no thranin' with sich a

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mother, so Oi jist says t'll mysel', says Oi: 'Though ye vowed an' swore ye'd niver darken that villain's dour agin, yit Oi'm thinkin' the Lord'll fergive ye breakin' yer vow, if it's ony to show yer sympathy wid puir MacCullough—him as has always trated ye dacent, except whin he was under the influence av liquor.' So Oi wint t'll the house, an' Oi was shown int'll the room where the puir boy was lyin', an' whin the father came in mo heart was nearly broke, to see that big, sthrong man wid the tares sthramin' down his face, an' Oi couldn't say anythin', not wan word. So Oi jist took his wan hand in moi two, an' Oi says: 'Mr. MacCullough, dear, take it asey! take it asey!!' And that's ivery word Oi said, an' come away. Oi've heard tell seneo that it was eigarettes an' dhrink that killed the boy; an' Oi tell ye, mem, Oi'd like to choke ivery mother's son in this same city as sells eigarettes an' liquor; an' it's not wid eigarettes an' liquor Oi'd do it either. Nothin' half so comfortable an' aisy."

## Curly Kate

The evening before our next washday I heard a knock at the door, which I opened, and there stood a small child, who said: "Please, I've come to tell you that Mrs. Taters won't be here to wash fer you to-morrow."

"Why, how's that?" I exclaimed "What has happened?"

"I don't can tell azactly, but she was elainin' Paddy O'Shea's grocery store, an' she fell somehow, and got hurted badly, an' that's all that I know."

Next morning I started as soon as I could, and walked to her house, a good mile away. The door was opened by a queer battered specimen of humanity, who did not seem "right wise." but she showed me up to the bedroom where poor Mrs. Taters lay groaning. Her house was clean and tidy, and she appeared to be as comfortable as anyone could be in similar circumstances; but she was evidently suffering a good deal of pain. However, it seemed to



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"ase her a bit" to tell me about her misfortune.

"'Twas yisterday mornin'," she said, "an' Oi went to clean Paddy O'Shea's grocery, as Oi've done these many years, an' niver got kilt afore. But ye see it was this way: They'd been making alterations in the cellar an' furnace room, as Oi didn't know about, an' Oi had me pail in me hand, an' was goin' down fer a dhrop av water fer scrubbin'. So I opened the dour as usual, niver thinkin', an' down Oi went, loik a shootin' star through the air, dear; fer divil a stair was there; they had taken them away an' niver tould me. Well; Oi couldn't jist say which part av me sthruek bottoum furst, because Oi knowed nothin' until they was liftin' me up int'll a eab to take me home. If it wasn't that Oi seen me two feet fernenst me, Oi'd niver know thet Oi owned thim."

"But are there no bones broken?" I asked.

"'Dade, mem, but it's hard to say. The docther, he says 'no,' but though it's me that's

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sayin' it, Oi belave in me heart that the Almighty knows better. Oi'm thinkin' that all o' me bounces, from me shoulders down, is rattlin' round in me insoide, thryin' to foind their roight places, an' it's moighty little rest Oi'm gettin'. But Oi'm not dead yit, thank God, an' whin wanst the bounces gits settled loike where they belong an' the pain aises off a bit, Oi'll soon be round agin, an' plase God Oi'll live to die dacent in me own bed an' not get smashed int'll a 'holocaust' in any man's cellar, by fallin' down stairs which wasn't there."

I thought she had talked enough for her own good, so I rose to go.

"Thank ye kindly fer callin', mem, an' by the help o' God, Oi'll be at yer tubs agin in a wake or two, an' it's not Mary Satchell'll take me place this toime, fer Oi heard tell as how she'd been run in fer bein' dhrunk an' disordertherly on the sthrates—an' it's the dirty tongue she has fer shure when she's dhrunk. Poor Mary," she added, pityingly, "She'll have

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toime to consither her ways, but if she couldn't git the liquor she couldn't git dhrunk, an' him as sells it an' him as gives him lave to sell it has the bigger sin in moi puire jidgement, an' it's gospel truth Oi'm tellin' ye."

Poor Mrs. Taters did not recover from her accident as quickly as she expected and washings couldn't wait, weeks slipped past, the summer vacation came and went, and those bright, breezy October days had come once more. One day I was walking along the street and thinking "What splendid weather for washing blankets!" when I turned a corner, and who should I meet but Mrs. Taters.

"How strange," I exclaimed. "I was just thinking about you, Mrs. Taters, and wondering if you would be able to wash my blankets this fall."

"Shure, mem, dear, now didn't ye know Oi was goin' to wash yer blankets fer ye. Oi can't come this wake, but the furst foine day next wake, by the help av God, Oi'll be there." And

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so she was, and in an incredibly short time she had the lines full.

“See there, now, mem; did iver ye see sich an illigant yard full o’ blankets? Ye’ve a roight to be proud, if it is me as says it.”

Knowing what she wanted, I said:

“Certainly, Mrs. Taters, they look beautiful—so soft and white. You have done bravely. I see there is plenty of work in you yet.”

“Jist as good as iver, thank God; but are ye wantin’ to kape thim old pants of the Boss’s that Oi see lyin’ out in the cook-house? Jack says t’ll me this mornin’, ‘Maw, couldn’t ye git me an ould pair av pants fer workin’ in from some av yer customers?’ Says Oi, ‘There’s none av my customers pants ’ud fit ye, only Mrs. ——; but Oi’ll see.’”

I told her she might take the pants, if they would be of any use, that I had brought them downstairs some days ago to give to young Tuggit, who was carting the ashes away, but they were too small.

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“Do you know him?” I asked. “He lives on your street; he is only sixteen years old, and measures forty-two inches around the waist. He’s a perfect young giant.”

“Tuggit! Oh, that’ll be Bill Tuggit’s son—very respectable people. Oi’ve not seen him for a long toime.”

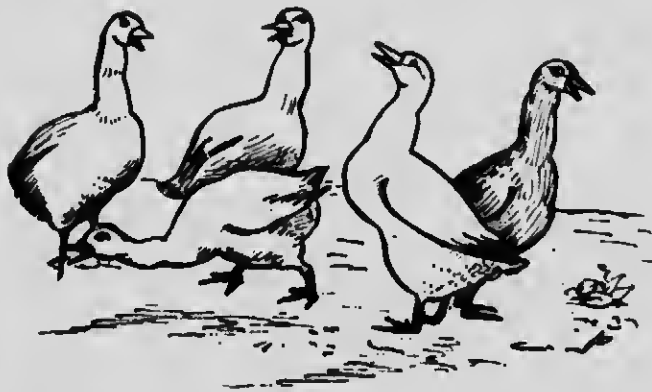
Then she laughed softly, and told me the following:

“That takes moi thoughts back a long way. Tuggit; he came from the same part av ould Oireland as Taters, an’ got here mcbbe two years afther I did. He come to see me, an’ the furst thing he done was to buy a flock of geese off me, the foinest iver ye seen. But a day or two afther he come agin to know would I take them back. It sames they’d been walkin’ where there’d been a foire, an’ the webs was burnt off av their feet, atwixt their toes, an’ Oi’d niver noticed. So Oi says t’ll him, ‘Will Oi take thim back? Of course Oi will. They’re fine geese, Mr. Tuggit, an’ that’ll make no difference to me, fer to tell ye the truth, Oi

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niver ate the webs av a goose's foot meself, ony-way.' ”

With that she turned to leave, but suddenly remembering all she had been doing at her house since I had been there, and not wishing



me to remain in ignorance, she wheeled round and said:

“ Oi wish, mem, ye could see how nice an' comfortable Oi am now. Me houses is all paid fer, an' me sittin' room is jist beautiful. Oi bought an' illigint parlor soot, at thurty dollars, from Horsey; Oi paid fifteen down, an Oi pays three dollars a month till they're paid fer:

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Thin, Oi have the pe-anny (fer little Betsy, me granddaughter) mor'n half paid fer, too; an' a foine new earpet on the floor, more'n half paid fer, too; an' the King an' Quane, at foive dollars apiece—'God bless em,' says Oi. But Pat Maloney, he says, 'Ye wouldn't say that same it ye're in ould Oireland; the people there don't think much about thim.' Says Oi. 'Pat Maloney, Oi'm a woman as can't read or write, but from all Oi here Oi don't think the people thare think much about onything. They jist go to work an' raise the divil about nothin'. They don't know what they think, or what fer they think it. Onyway, Oi'm not in the Ould Counthry at prisint, an' thare's no 'arthly reason why any won livin' in Canady shouldn't say, "God bless thim." They're wonnerful foine pictures, an' Oi paid \$5.00 down fer aich of 'em, as Oi said afore; an' they're on my walls, an' they'll stay there, fer all the Pat Maloneys this soide av Jordan.' An' Oi mis-doubt if there's ony loike him on the other soide, may God forgive me fer sayin' it. Well,

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good-bye, mem, an' thank ye koindly fer the pants."

The revolving wheel of Time has brought more ehanges. We have said farewell to the house and eity which have been our home for the last ten years—and to "Curly Kate."

The pieture which will remain in my mind's eye is not without its pathos as well as its humor.

The house was empty, swept and forsaken looking. I turned to take a last look from what had been my bedroom window for so long, down into the grassy yard with its fringe of golden-glow and Virginia creeper; and this is what I beheld—a goodly pile of all sorts of "odds and ends," bottles, erocks, bits of old carpet, an oil-cloth (all neatly rolled up and tied), clothes, books, baskets, tin boxes, etc., waiting for "Noble Trueman" (poor "dhrunken Tim's" successor) to arrive with his cart, and convey them away for "Curly Kate," who had once more come to our assistance, and



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was at the moment hovering over a small fire, stick in hand, burning up bits of paper and rubbish which even she could find no use for.

The kilted skirt and rolled up sleeves, the halo of crinkly grey hair about her face, recalled vividly to mind our first acquaintance, but she was in a much more subdued frame of mind than on that occasion. Ten years of hard work, worry and misfortune had robbed her frame of much of its muscular robustness, yet I doubt not that had the occasion warranted, the old spirit would have manifested itself as of yore. As it was, she was evidently in a reminiscent mood, and mumbling quietly to herself as she picked up fragments of untidiness and consigned them to the flames, I supposed, quite unconscious that she was being watched; but suddenly she straightened herself up, wiped a tear from her eye with the corner of her apron, and wheeling about, exclaimed, dramatically (as if by way of apology): "The Lord knows that well nigh twinty years Oi've been packin' pople in an' out ov this honse, an'

### Curly Kate

it's powerful sorry Oi am to see ye lave; but”  
(with a big sigh) “sich things, Oi suppose, must  
be, so long as we're on this 'arth, an' it's me  
that's hopin' the Almighty'll send ye good luck  
wheriver ye're goin'.” To which kindly senti-  
ment my spirit breathed a fervent “Amen.”

