



# Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry

*W. B. Yeats*

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## **Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry** W. B. Yeats

Dr. Corbett, Bishop of Oxford and Norwich, lamented long ago the departure of the English fairies.

"In Queen Mary's time" he wrote—

"When Tom came home from labour,

Or Cis to milking rose,

Then merrily, merrily went their tabor,

And merrily went their toes."

But now, in the times of James, they had all gone, for "they were of the old profession," and "their songs were Ave Marias." In Ireland they are still extant, giving gifts to the kindly, and plaguing the surly. "Have you ever seen a fairy or such like?" I asked an old man in County Sligo. "Amn't I annoyed with them," was the answer. "Do the fishermen along here know anything of the mermaids?" I asked a woman of a village in County Dublin. "Indeed, they don't like to see them at all," she answered, "for they always bring bad weather." "Here is a man who believes in ghosts," said a foreign sea-captain, pointing to a pilot of my acquaintance. "In every house over there," said the pilot, pointing to his native village of Rosses, "there are several." Certainly that now old and much respected dogmatist, the Spirit of the Age, has in no manner made his voice heard down there.

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