

THE WOMEN OF THE GAEL

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The women of the Gael by James F. Cassidy

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JAMES F. CASSIDY

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OF THE GAEL**

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By
JAMES F. CASSIDY, B. A.



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Prefatory Note

IT IS proper that a country that has taken for itself the most feminine representation should have a book devoted to the eulogy of its womanhood. "The Women of the Gael" renders justice—even romantic justice—to the womanhood of the country whose representations are Dark Rosaleen, and Kathleen ni Houlihan, and The Poor Old Woman. Its writer has made of it a long roll of honor, a roll of women with beautiful names who have been remembered for their piety, their learning, and their patriotism: It is distinctly a Legend of Good Women.

Little is said of another type of woman that has been celebrated from far-of times in Ireland—the woman whose virtue was in her overflowing energy, the woman whose type is Queen Maeve, bearer of warrior children, herself a warrior and a great lover. And naturally in a Legend of Good Women nothing would be said of that woman of the O'Briens who, on coming back to her castle, finds the women lamenting for her husband slain in battle, and says "Dead men are no use to us here," and rides back to the battle-line, and there and then marries the general of the opposing army. Little is said of the women of that type: The Women of the Gael who are spoken of have their names on the roll for being guardians of the national virtue and custodians of the Gaelic civilization.

The conquest of Ireland—or rather, the repeated half-conquests of the country—inflicted an especial wrong upon the Women of the Gael. Peculiarly fitted as they were for a brilliant social life and for artistic enterprise of every kind, they were, with the exception of privileged ones, deprived of a life that might have such manifestations. It was theirs to spiritualize as harsh conditions as were anywhere. A single glimpse is often revealing, and we have seen Connacht women come in from working in the fields,