

This Week's Guest Writer  
May 1951

Here is a delightful breath of Ireland written by a real Irish lass, Bridget Corrigan, who came to America in 1926 and married an American named Joe Collins, who is now in Korea, a CBM in the United States Navy. They came to Alpine a little over a year ago with their five children and live on Highway 80 near the Willows; Bridget is active in the PTA, the Brownies and her church work.

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I was born in Ireland and spent the first 17 years of my life there. I lived the first 11 years in a very rural area which was Co. Covan about three miles from a little town called Virginia. Then my parents bought a home and farm in Co. Meath, two miles from the towns of Kells on the main highway where they still live. I have three brothers and two sisters living in Ireland; three sisters and two brothers in the United States.

The school system in Ireland is so different from this country. The one thing that impressed me most was the freedom the young people had here even in the home. We had to take responsibility at a very early age. But despite all our hardships, I remember my life in Ireland, and it has helped me in many ways. I suppose everyone loves and remembers their childhood, no matter where or what country it has been.

Ireland is a beautiful country surrounded by water. Anything green is always associated with Ireland because it is one of the richest green colors you have ever seen. I suppose this is because it is warmed by the gulf stream. It has a fairly warm and moist climate. Parts of California along the coast and a few miles inland can make any Irishman a little homesick.

Ireland is a country of beautiful scenery and is noted for its old castles. Many are in ruins, but some are still standing and are kept up. Its lakes and mountains are pictures. It is too bad so few people go to visit Ireland. Most who travel from America abroad, follow the beaten track because it is an added expense to detour. Airways have done a lot for Ireland and brought about a big change.

The antiquarian, the poet, the religious person, and the historian find an immense interest in Ireland. It is a long and interesting story.

St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland although he was not an Irishman. He was sold into slavery in Ireland and the time he spent there infected him with a great love for everything Irish. After he escaped, he promised to return and he did. He became a bishop in the Catholic church. He landed back in Ireland from France in the year 33. More than fifteen hundred years ago he converted Ireland into Christianity.

In 1846 to 1848 Ireland underwent a great famine and millions of her people emigrated to North and South America. The U. S. immigration reported that from 1820 to 1900 that 3,873,000 Irish were admitted into the United States. And in the last 50 years many people have left Ireland for Canada, Australia and America. Agitation for independence from Great Britain became very strong in World War I. In 1916, the Easter Week Rebellion was repressed by the British. And in 1918, 73 Sin Feiners were elected to the British Parliament in Dublin and declared themselves an Irish Parliament. The result again was with the British, which lasted until 1921. I lived there during that time and I can sympathize with people in many parts of the world today who have to live under fear, which really has not changed any when it comes to war.

Ireland fought for years and, at last, a peace treaty was signed with political status equal to that of Canada, which still leaves Ireland cut in half. England still owns and governs six counties in northern Ireland. Independent Ireland has 26 counties which became known as the Irish Free State, then as Eire, and finally as the Republic of Ireland.

Ireland remained neutral during the last war. This was hard for many people to understand, but Ireland's history and her agricultural economy helps to make her neutrality clearer, as she already had been fighting for hundreds of years for what little freedom she has now. Three times has Ireland's application for membership in the United Nations been turned down. Her application was vetoed by Soviet Russia. That is understandable, as Ireland will have no part of Communism.

This is the land St. Patrick converted from druidism to Christianity, which is as strong today as ever.

To the millions of Irishmen in this country and all over the world, Ireland is always the home, the country, the hope, to go back and visit, and those men and women of Ireland remembering the teachings of St. Patrick have helped make his faith and theirs stronger wherever they go.

I have had the pleasure of visiting Ireland in 1932 and in 1936. Both times I saw a big change. My parents visited us in New York in 1938, and it was "coming home" for my mother as she had been born and raised in New York going to Ireland when she was about 17 where she met my father and has since lived there.

Bridget Corrigan Collins