

Newspaper Articles-1914-1916

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1914 – 1916

Revised October 30, 2015

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THE IMPARTIAL REPORTER

Established 1808

Newspaper for Enniskillen, Northern Ireland

PILGRIMS' CAMP IN TYRONE DWELLING IN MARQUEES BAPTISMS IN A POND

A camp of upwards of four hundred men and women who styled themselves 'Christians,' and popularly termed 'Cooneyites,' although they strongly dissociate themselves from that term, has been formed at **Coolkill, Eglis, near Dungannon**, where ground was placed at their disposal by Mr. James Richardson. The proceedings began on Friday last and ended on Tuesday.

It was a local convention, one of several. Members contributed what they could towards the general maintenance. On Sunday several candidates were publicly baptised by total submersion in a pond which had been constructed by banking up an adjoining stream. A number of hymns were sung during the ceremony. In addition services were held on Sunday in a large marquee, when a number of visitors and spectators attended.

A correspondent writes—The Convention was much smaller than those which have taken place in former years at Crocknacrieve, Ballinamallard. Two large tents, each capable of seating about 300 were erected on the lawn beside the house of one member, Mr. J. H. Richardson. One was used as a dining and the other as a meeting tent. Sleeping accommodation was provided in the office-houses, a mission hall was used as a cooking house, and other buildings were used for various purposes.

The members, some 400, of this community were early astir. Breakfast, consisting of porridge, tea, and bread, was provided at eight, dinner at one, and tea at five. The fare was good, and hospitality was offered to all. A spirit of friendship and equality was noticeable on every hand; men in all conditions of life attending from various parts of Ulster. They all sat together, ate together, and no distinctions were made. Half of the dining and assembly tents were, however, set apart for the women.

Mr. Edward Cooney and Mr. Robert Humphreys, two Fermanagh men, were the leaders at this Convention. **Mr. Wm. Irvine** is in County Meath. His health is stated not to be as good as usual.

Although it was a local Convention several came from distant lands. One German-American at one of the meetings told of how he had been brought up in Germany, and of having emigrated when 14. In six years he had saved enough money to buy a farm. He had cleared the land, and was about to build a house, when, as he said, 'the true preachers came round.' Then he became convicted of the errors of his ways, became a disciple of Christ, and finally decided to sell all and go and preach to the people of Germany.

The spirit which animated this man would appear to be the moving power among these people, and their addresses all manifest this

spirit. On this occasion no intemperate statements were made, and all the speakers addressed themselves to those who adopt their views. Many of the meetings were 'open,' and people from different parts of the country gave their experience.

Two preachers, one of whom is **Miss Barton**, Pettigo, have lately returned from **North Italy and Switzerland**, and there were Swedes at the Convention.

Mr. Edward Cooney was a frequent speaker. On Monday he said he did not find it hard to preach the Gospel in this way. He had found all the sorrow in his life had been the result of disobedience. They might not understand it, but God knew better than any of them. If he had planned his life he would not have gone out to preach. It was God's plan, and it had been very satisfactory. He hoped in the days to come he would have less of his own way and that God would have more of His way. 'Ye shall weep and lament and the world shall rejoice, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' One man who would go out to preach was worth all the money in Fermanagh. The Testimony had progressed in many ways, and some people who had come to pick holes had found nothing to object to.

They needed to guard against the marks of sacrifice disappearing out of their lives, because then the wall of Jerusalem, the separation between them and those without, would be broken down. They did not want to have a repetition of past mistakes, but they did want to have something of the same spirit of sacrifice that was manifest at the outset.

On a later occasion **Mr. Cooney** spoke on the third chapter of 1st Peter. The world, he said, could not understand the words, 'Be ye all of one mind.' On the previous day some hundreds of people with a little of the love of God in their hearts had met together. They had tasted something of the fellowship that was eternal, and if they loved one another as brethren they would have a foretaste of Heaven. There should be true courtesy amongst them. The world had a dressed up sham, but they had got rid of sham. There was a kindly way of talking to people that made those who heard realise that they loved them. Worshipping Jesus always meant, 'I want to be more like Him.'

Mr. Humphreys, speaking on Hezekiah, said that they were told that 'he did what was right in the sight of God.' As they went from place to place some people admitted that they were impressed with their lives. But when they exposed all that it was inconsistent to the life and doctrine of Christ they resented it. The servants of God always sought to pull down and to build up. That was what Hezekiah had done.

Solos were a feature of many of the meetings. Several of the singers sang their own composition. The following is one of these choruses:—

'As we are willing now to scatter
Seeds in spite of wind and rain,
By-and-by we'll do the reaping,
And with Him for ever reign.'

Sunday Morning, April 19, 1914
THE ATLANTA JOURNAL
ATLANTA, GA
LIKE APOSTLES OF OLD,
YOUNG GIRL (IDA HAWKINS)
IS PREACHING IN NORTH GEORGIA
By Angus Perkerson

The tent was like a white cup turned down on a green cloth. The hillsides, planted in grain, made a carpet beneath the fruit trees. The wind, breaking off petals from the trees, blew them through the opening of the tent among the waiting people. Over the hill came a group of five, one leading...a slender figure walking with raised head and clasped hands. The rows of blossoming fruit trees reached out until their branches touched and made an arbor of blossoms over the path to the tent. The people waiting read from Bibles in their laps, or prayed: some looked off, through the opening in the tent at the fields. The five paused, then entered: four sat down on the canvass seats, and the fifth went to the pulpit.

The people leaned forward, absorbed. This intentness partly caused a strange news story last week. It was a three-inch item on an inside page. But enough to describe this meeting of plain farmers and their wives at Mt. Airy, Ga., as a queer cult, and the evangelist whose faith suggests a religious Joan of Arc, as an imposter.

APOSTLES HER EXAMPLE

The girl preaching was the leader pictured as head of a religious group which worshipped her as divine. "Believing," added the story, "that she is immune from bodily ills, and that they can see a supernatural light play off her face." She is twenty years old, her voice is soft, her manner is simple, her belief is plain. But she has left home and friends—the real point missed by last week's story, to teach the uncaring of Christianity. She takes as her example the Apostles. "They gave up everything, didn't they?" She asked this abruptly.

"Then, why shouldn't I? I try to live my religion. Perhaps in that I'm different.

But the news caused a religious stir in North Georgia. There was only casual comment here—a moment's wonder at the extent of credulity. But near Mt. Airy, people came eagerly to see the woman preacher worshipped as a divinity. And the evangelist, who meant to prove Christianity by simple faithful living, became to some a feminine Elijah, the second. Even the curious had a place with the believers in the small tent on the top of a green hill, circled by fruit trees bearing pink and white blossoms. The people leaned forward, in intent attitudes. None of them chatted, or looked around.

HER INTENT HEARERS

Some leaned with elbows on the seats in front of them, both hands closed and resting against their cheeks. Some sat with their chins in their hands. Queer how the expressions differed. One's lips would be pursed, another's would be wide open, another's half closed. But all were absorbed in the girl who stood before them on the platform, which made a rude pulpit. She stood where the light fell on her hair and made it shimmer. The lower part of her face was in shadow, but a full light was on her eyes and forehead. And this light and shadow gave her face the expression of a religious painting. She was like a picture of youth and faith—a part of the fresh blossoms, the green plants, the blue sky, the fresh earth. The curious forgot their curiosity, and listened.

The preacher came nearer to the edge of the platform, half raised her hands toward the people, then let them drop at her sides. She was a very young girl with light hair, blue eyes, and the sweetness of expression that prayer and good deeds produce. She began to speak, but not to preach. Her voice never reached above conversational tones, and she spoke of how she thought it is wisest to live. "Faith," she explained. "Is best. It makes you feel best, do your best. The doubtful man is the unhappiest. I am not unhappy. I know and believe."

SIMPLE ADVICE

The people were quiet. No one moved or spoke. Their absorption was unbroken. And yet, they listened merely to simple advice, spoken quietly, in which there was no new religious idea. Perhaps it was her simple words. She told how she thought, how she felt, what seemed best to her. The writings most read now are personal experiences. A man or a woman tells how he reorganised his business or she remodeled her husband. And, telling it truthfully, they get an attentive hearing. Here was an example of simple goodness mixed with commonsense, free from fault, told in a direct half confessional way, and given emphasis by the personality of the preacher.

Billy Sunday—if you've heard him—engrosses his hearers because he has a manner that would make a text from Revelation interesting. But he also gets his effects partly from rousing music and a spirit of excitement with which he stirs his audience. The girl preaching at Mt. Airy has no such aid. She speaks in a gentle voice, she avoids themes that would provoke hysteria, and the hymns are simple, often without an organ accompaniment. It is her unusual faith that stirs listeners. Her conversations—not sermons—on how I live, how you should live, have such earnestness that the effect gave rise to the story that she is worshipped.

THERE IS NO CULT

But there is no cult, no strange leader, no queer or foolish belief. Simply a girl of twenty who thinks she has been called like the apostles of old to preach. Yet she has no faith in visions. She says that religion must be practical, and she insists to her congregations: "Do the possible things in life. Believe the sane ones. Don't be a fool in the name of religion."

"A few years ago I was the one daughter in a well to-do family in Baltimore." Her brother was cashier in a bank. Then, both decided that preaching was the thing for which they were intended, and both left home and people to teach the truths they consider the secret of happiness. This is how she told of it. Her words to the people meeting in the tent had become faster. Her earnestness had increased, her voice had grown the least bit louder. Then, abruptly, she ended."That is all I have to say."

THE GREEN COUNTRY

The people, by groups and twos, followed a path over which the fruit trees, reaching out their branches, made an arbor of peach blossoms. Beneath the trees was the deep, perfect green of the growing plants. The path wound down a hillside and then upward. At the top, all turned to look back at the tent—the white cup turned down on the green cloth. The five, turning to the left hand, separated from the worshippers. The roof of a house could be seen in the direction they walked. An old man, with plain red face, tanned until it was the color of brick, put one hand to his ear as though not understanding. "What's that?" he asked. "Oh, yes," with a nod of his head. Then pointing toward the roof showing above the trees: "They're staying there."

The countryside seems covered by green plants. One hill of green rises after another and the fruit trees here, where the northern peach belt begins, all blossom in pink and white. The road was like a path through a garden. But abruptly it ended at the weather-beaten, brown, age-worn house. There was nothing about the house suggesting spring except the straggling flowers in the yard.

A woman who was bent and whose hair was gray opened the door. "Yes, of course," she agreed. "Come in. Sit in there. They'll be glad to see you," she added turning back from the door. "There's nothing to hide. The other chair's more comfortable." The bed spread was worked in raised circular figures, and on the walls were lithographs. The floor was bare, but there was not a spot of dust in the room. Then, again, the door opened. The preacher and the others entered. There were not chairs enough for everyone and some stood up. She sat waiting for the questions that were to be asked.

THEIR SIMPLE FAITH

Her hands were folded, her eyes were lowered, and she seemed younger than when she had stood on the platform. She looked up at the inquiry. "Do we know about this report: Why, yes." Her voice was unusually low and gentle. "I'm afraid it will handicap our work. It may make some lose faith in us. To try to correct it, though would only make matters worse. "We believe in living simply and plainly and honestly as we teach our belief. It's just Christianity. Just everyday belief in the Bible. We urge people to greater faith. We are not Baptists, or Methodists, or Presbyterians: we are all of them. There's nothing unusual about us. We do try to live our religion as well as preach it. Maybe we are different in that way. "We are teaching that one should not only believe a thing, but live it.

"Divine healing? No. We don't believe in such things as that. We teach only the possible things, not the foolish."

"It was two years ago, when I first came here, and since then I and the others have gone from place to place, wherever the people will listen to us, and have taught what we know is the truth."

She hesitated over the next question. "Why, yes, I'll tell you our names. There are five of us. **George Walker** is from Philadelphia; **George Burge**, from Newfoundland; **Annie McLaughlin**, from Paterson, N. J., and **Edgar Hawkins**, who is my brother, from Baltimore. I am **Ida Hawkins**. That doesn't sound mystic, does it?

"We believe it is meant for some people today to go from place to place and preach as the apostles did. And that is all we are doing. I and my brother came to believe this at a meeting in Baltimore. And we decided that we'd leave everything and everyone and preach. So we did. Of course, it meant sacrifices. Yes, it was hard for our people. But when a girl marries doesn't it often mean heartaches for her father and mother? Shouldn't"—she leaned forward—"shouldn't any sacrifice be made in the name of religion? Whoever knows the truth about anything, should feel himself bound to give that knowledge to everyone. The greater good it will do them, the greater effort he must make to spread his knowledge. We think we know practical spiritual truths that are worth teaching—that is why I left home to teach as the apostles taught, to go from place to place, and to show, if I can, how one should live. That is all."

Fermanagh Times

November 18 1915

A DOUBLE TRAGEDY IN FERMANAGH AS THE SILLIES RIVER CLAIMS TWO VICTIMS

The most distressing drowning fatality involving the lives of **Mrs. Sarah Flannigan**, aged 70 years, a widow, of Corr, and **Miss Lucy Anna Elliott**, her niece, aged 18 years of Rosscolton, occurred on Thursday evening some miles from Enniskillen at the Sillies River.

How the accident actually occurred is enveloped in impenetrable mystery. It has been gathered that Mrs. Flanagan went to visit her brother, **Robert Elliott** who lived ½ mile distant. She crossed the river as a shortcut at a point where it is 20 yards wide, a man named William Henry Eaton rowing her across.

When she returned about four o'clock in the evening, Miss Elliott went with her to row her back across the river, and, as she did not return after some time her friends went in search of her. No sign of either was found or a boat could be seen. The matter was reported to the police at Carngreen Barracks that night but as the river was in a flooded condition and darkness had then set in they could make no effort to search for the bodies then but later in the following day both bodies were recovered.

The funeral of Mrs. Flanagan, which took place on Sunday to Monea was very largely attended, there being no fewer than 57 cars besides those on foot. The Rev. W. B. Steel officiated at the graveside. The remains of Miss Elliot were laid to rest in Monea Churchyard on Monday, and the funeral was of very large proportions. The customary **Pilgrims Service**, with hymns, was conducted at the graveside and was taken part in by Messrs. B. Donaldson, Derrygonnelly; John West, Crocknacrieve; James Bothwell, Monea; John Dane, Tuberton, and a number of other **Pilgrims** from the surrounding districts.

***Elliott Family in 1911 Census:

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/feedback/1911/Fermanagh/Ross/Rosscolton/515197/>

Note their religion is shown as "Pilgrim" in both census and newspaper account.

TTT Note: Robert Elliott is most likely related to Tom Elliott, early worker known as Tom the Baptist.

September 29, 1916

The Irish Times (Dublin)

The Cooneyites in Fermanagh

Re Beacom Infants

Mr. James Geoghegan (instructed by Mr. Henry Murphy) applied on behalf of Edward Beacom, farmer of Kinmore, near Maguiresbridge, Co. Fermanagh, for a conditional order of *habeas corpus*, directed to his wife, Mrs. Anne Jane Beacom, requiring her

to deliver up his two youngest infant children, Robert Beacom and Wilson Hunter Beacom, at present living with her at Nutfield, near Lisnaskea.

In an affidavit Mr. Beacom stated that he was married to his wife, Anne Jane Beacon, (nee Hunter) on 27 th Feb, 1891, in the Church of Ireland at Maguiresbridge, and they had five children, including the two mentioned, who were baptized in the same church.

Within the past seven or eight years his wife had come under the influence of preachers of a new religion, the members of which were locally known as "Cooneyites," the founder being a Mr. Cooney, of Enniskillen.

She pressed him (her husband) constantly to allow the preachers to stay in his house as guests, and endeavoured to persuade him, and finally to force him to contribute to the support of the new religion. When he refused to subscribe she demanded that he should pay her £12 per year for her work in the house, which sum she proposed to pay to the Cooneyites. As he refused that she made a false charge against him to the police in Maguiresbridge of cruelty to and neglect of his children. The police investigated the complaint, and finding it without foundation did not take any proceedings. At the same time his wife refused to allow the children to go to Sunday School, alleging that the Bible directed that the parents alone should teach. She frequently got up in the night and read the Bible by candle light, and prayed in an outhouse. (Laughter).

On the 17th ult his wife and four younger children, including the two infants mentioned, left his house and went to reside at Nutfield, near Lisnaskea in a cottier's house belonging to Mr. M'Clung, a prominent member of the Cooneyite Church. His eldest child, William H. Beacon did not leave him and still resided with him. His wife refused to return home or give up the two younger children, who, he desired, should be brought up in the tenets of the Church of Ireland. He had a good home for them and was never cruel to them or neglectful of them.

In reply to Mr. Justice Gordon, Mr. Geohegan said they believed M'Clung was harbouring the wife and children, but he did not ask for any order against him.

Mr. Justice Gordon granted a conditional order of *habeas corpus*, as sought.

October 7, 1916

Fermanagh Herald

Wife who Joined the "Cooneyites"

Application in Dublin Courts

In the King's Bench Division, Dublin, before Mr. Justice Gordon, Mr. James Geoghegan (instructed by Mr. Henry Murphy) applied on behalf on Mr. Edward Beacom, farmer, of Kilmore, near Maguiresbridge, Co. Fermanagh, for a conditional order of habeas corpus directed at his wife, Mrs. Anne Jane Beacom, requiring her to deliver up his two youngest infant children, Robert Beacom and Wilson Hunter Beacom, at present living with her at Nutfield, near Lisnaskea.

In an affidavit, Mr. Beacom stated that he was married to his wife Jane Beacom (née Hunter), on 27th February 1891, in the Protestant Church of Maguiresbridge, and they had five children, including the two mentioned, who were baptised in the same Church.

Within the past seven or eight years his wife had come under the influence of the preachers of a new religion, the member of which were known locally as "Cooneyites," the founder being a Mr. Cooney of Enniskillen. She pressed him (her husband) constantly to allow the preachers to stay in his house as guests and endeavoured to persuade him, and finally to force him to contribute to the support of the new religion.

When he refused to subscribe she demanded that he should pay her £12 per year for her work in the house, which sum she proposed to pay to the Cooneyites.

As he refused that she made a false charge against him to the police in Maguiresbridge of cruelty to and neglect of his children. The police investigated the complaint and finding it without foundation did not take any proceedings. At the same time his wife refused to allow the children to go to Sunday School, alleging that the Bible directed that parents alone should teach. She frequently got up in the night and read the Bible by candlelight and prayed in an outhouse. (Laughter.)

On the 17th ult., his wife and the four younger children, including the two infants mentioned, left his house and went to reside at Nutfield, near Lisnaskea, in a cottier's house, belonging to Mr. M'Clung, a prominent member of the Cooneyite Church.

His eldest child, William H. Beacom did not leave him and still resided with him. His wife refused to return home or to give up the two younger children, who he desired should be brought up in the tenets of the Protestant Church. He had a good house for them, and was never cruel to them or neglectful of them.

In reply to Mr. Justice Gordon, Mr. Geoghegan said they believed M'Clung was harbouring the wife and child, but did not ask for any order against him. Mr. Justice Gordon granted a conditional order of habeas corpus as sought.