some has been gleaned from his library of over 400 books: "I'm a great collector of old books," he says, "and I was myself before me. One I find particularly useful is Samuel Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, published in 1837." Regrettably, he has only managed to secure volume one of this and is on the look out for the second part.

The children are all encouraged to browse among the books: "No fiction is allowed in the house, let them read to gain information, as I was brought up to do myself!"

These children must be paragons of learning. Let us take a look at them. Mary recites a litany of names: Margaret 17, Seamus and Padraic 16, Marcus and...