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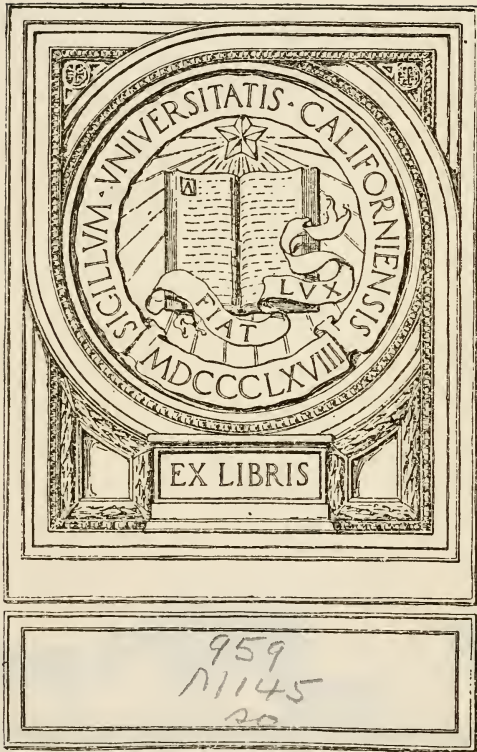


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SONGS of DONEGAL

By

Patrick MacGill



A
HERBERT
JENKINS'
BOOK





SONGS OF DONEGAL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

CHILDREN OF THE DEAD END

THE RAT-PIT

THE AMATEUR ARMY

THE RED HORIZON

THE GREAT PUSH

SOLDIER SONGS

THE BROWN BRETHREN

THE DIGGERS

GLENMORNAN

MAUREEN



Frontispiece



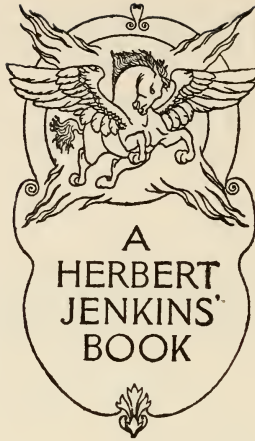
Lawrence, Photo. Dublin. Copyright

The house where Patrick MacGill was born.

SONGS OF DONEGAL

BY
PATRICK MACGILL

HERBERT JENKINS LIMITED
3 YORK STREET ST. JAMES'S
LONDON S.W. 1 ☚ ☚ MCMXXI



TO VISIT
ALBION

The Mayflower Press, Plymouth William Brendon & Son, Ltd:

DEDICATION

I SPEAK with a proud tongue of the people who
were

And the people who are,

The worthy of Ardara, the Rosses and Inish-
keel,

My kindred—

The people of the hills and the dark-haired
passes

My neighbours on the lift of the brae,

In the lap of the valley.

To them Slainthe !

I speak of the old men,

The wrinkle-rutted,

Who dodder about foot-weary—

For their day is as the day that has been and
is no more—

Who warm their feet by the fire,

And recall memories of the times that are gone ;

Who kneel in the lamplight and pray

For the peace that has been theirs—

And who beat one dry-veined hand against
another

Even in the sun—

For the coldness of death is on them.

I speak of the old women

Who danced to yesterday's fiddle

And dance no longer.

They sit in a quiet place and dream

And see visions

Of what is to come,

Of their issue,
Which has blossomed to manhood and woman-
hood—

And seeing thus
They are happy
For the day that was leaves no regrets,
And peace is theirs
And perfection.

I speak of the strong men
Who shoulder their burdens in the hot day,
Who stand in the market-place
And bargain in loud voices,
Showing their stock to the world.
Straight the glance of their eyes—
Broad-shouldered,
Supple.
Under their feet the holms blossom,

The harvest yields.
And their path is of prosperity.

I speak of the women,
Strong-hipped, full-bosomed,
Who drive the cattle to graze at dawn,
Who milk the cows at dusk.
Grace in their homes,
And in the crowded ways
Modest and seemly—
Mothers of children !

I speak of the children
Of the many townlands,
Blossoms of the Bogland,
Flowers of the Valley,
Who know not yesterday, nor to-morrow,
And are happy,
The pride of those who have begot them.

And thus it is,
Ever and always,
In Ardara, the Rosses and Inishkeel—
Here, as elsewhere,
The Weak, the Strong, and the Blossom-
 ing—
And thus my kindred.

To them Slainthe.

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SONGS OF DONEGAL

THE RACHARY WOR

SAID Peadar the Rachary Wor, God rest him !
Man alive and no one could best him—
His back wouldn't bend to the heaviest load,
And his feet were as sure on the rise as the
road,
Foot-certain and fit on the hill and the bog—
(For the level the pup and the rough the old
dog).

Born and bred in Rossnagull,
Where the kindly man is never dull,
Where the cattle are good and the pastures
prime,
Where no woman is old before her time.

And Peadar ! No beast of his stock was thin,
No hole in his roof let the water in.

For harvest he prayed 'neath the cloudy sky
But sharpened his scythe ere the storm was by.

And his friend : the neighbour, whose word of
 grace,

Brought a smile of hope to the widow's face,
And whose step was the ready step to the side
Of the friend by misfortune sorely tried—
And if this was his own for his friend, to claim,
He never stood much on his colour or name.

And Peadar at Fair. . . . The mart was full
Of his mountain sheep and mountain wool,
Branded and ribbaged, wether and ewe,
A man of substance whom everyone knew—
With his gnarled fingers against his hips,
His coloured dudheen between his lips.

Woollen wrapper and woollen socks,
Bawnagh-brockhagh. Keeper of Flocks !
My ! how he stood in the market town,
Paying in guineas money down ;
Ready to bargain and ready to spend
Or stand a drink to a drouthy friend.

A man whom the neighbours spoke about
As they stood at the bar and drank their
 stout,
Wishing the Man of Flocks increase
Who had not his heart in the penny piece.

Strong was his house. In all things handy
Thatting a haystack or mending a pandy
Cement in a bargain. His word was bond
In his own townland and many beyond.
In warranty certain.

When he departed
All his neighbours were broken-hearted
And they gathered together and pondered o'er
The Word and Wisdom of Rachary Wor.
For thus he spoke :

'Twas me to discover
That we twist the same rope over and over.
Faith and Charity, Love and Hope
Show in the strand of the meanest rope,
And the Seven threads of Deadly Sin
Are set in the line that all men spin.

For all is the same for us, man and men,
On the lift of the hill, in the lap of the Glen—
We come and we go, but the end is sure.
Kind word, act and purpose. These three
endure—

For 'tis digging of graves and sowing of corn
Now as on the day we were born.

What do we know and What have we thought ?
Much, but never as much as we ought.

This thing or that thing ? Read me the riddle,
And on knotted strings, come play the fiddle !
Life is a journey, but once to make—
Not great for the foes but the friends we make.

Not even here nor in any town
Is the place for the man whose lips hang
 down,
Whose bitter look and jeering tone
Cuts to the heart and bites to the bone—
For three are the things that come from the
 devil :
The tongue, the eye and the mind that is evil.

Cursed be he of blood and name
Who jokes abroad of a woman's shame—
And scant is their welcome at heaven's door
Who envy the worthy and scorn the poor.

Worthy your deed ! But no one knew
In your own townland what was done by you—
Now close your lips on your deed of shame,
But seven townlands will speak your name—
Though the worthy deed may be chained to its
 seat

The deed that is evil has supple feet.

Thus far, now further. Take heed once more
To the Word and Wisdom of Rachary Wor.

Three things accursed. The Gambling Den,
The Whisky Bottle, the Lawyer's Pen,

Once to the hazard ! And Once calls Twice
To win on the Cards what you lost on the Dice.
Winning ! A gift ? No : the luckless bait
That drags you to ruin soon or late—
For this, the say and the word of sense :
Your profit is made at a friend's expense—
Thus to the finish and this the end :
You lose your portion or lose your friend.

True of the world as of Donegal :
As the brook from the mountain sings to its
 fall
So the drunken man goes down to his fate,
His paunch the coffin of real estate.
Empty the bottle and empty the purse
To the end and certain, bad to worse—
Broad acres your own, grazing and grass—
And are gone in the dregs of the whisky glass.

That man among men I never saw
To add to his store by the aid of the law—
Writ, summons and plea make the lawyers
fatter,
Who catch their best fish in troubled water.
The fool to its refuge ! The fool is shorn—
Sheep lose their best wool in the sheltering
thorn.

The House of your Stay it is yours to watch,
For a downdrop creeps through the snuggest
thatch.

Look not to his faults and forget your own.
For the sin not yours was never known ;
And thin the roofing that does not keep dry
A finger-nail breadth of the meanest sty.

A word in your hearing ! Just listen once more
To the Wit and Wisdom of Rachary Wor.



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“What road runs straight to the top of the hill?” (page 35)

Three slender things on which all men rest :
The slender stream of milk from the breast,
The slender blade on the green corn-lands,
And the slender thread through the spinner's
 hands.

Three sounds of increase : a lowing cow,
The smithy sparks, the swish of a plough.

Three things strong and a house is blest :
The table, the fire, the hand to a guest.

Three are the tokens of goodly dress :
Elegance, comfort and lastingness.

Three hands and the world its best will yield :
The hand in the smithy, the byre and the field.

Three things to trouble a woman's rest :
A neighbour's butter on bread for a guest,

The word of esteem that comes too slow ;
The washing with never a shirt to show.

Three are the words of grace from the tongue :
The good, the merciful, the word that is sung.

Three sorrowful things for a man of pride :
A saddle but not the horse to ride,
A narrow seat on the country's land,
The treat in the ale-house he cannot stand.

Two have feet that are often bare :
The shoemaker's wife and the smithy mare.

Three are the suits for a man to own :
One for the field where he works his lone,
A second to wear on a market day,
But the best for the church where he goes to
pray.

The Gombeen Man. He is scraggy and thin
And always is getting the money in—
And the money he gathers, penny and pound,
Is fashioned round, but not to go round—
Flat to be built on, and that his say,
As he adds to his portion day and day.
He has rolls of notes and bags of gold,
As much as a wooden chest can hold ;
That he has and nobody knows
What will be done with it when he goes.
But where will he go when he leaves it ?

Where ?

Nobody knows or seems to care.
Dead, he will count, so good folk tell,
Red-hot coins on the hob of hell.

Three things of wonder I've seen in my day :
The house in which no man kneels to pray,

The thing that feeds fat and is always lean,
The tree that bears where no blossoms have
been.

Three things of wonder : and these the three :
The grave, the sword and the gallows tree.

Truth has one face, but seven a lie—
All truths are good save three that try :
The truth from the tongue of an angry lass,
The truth that comes from a whisky glass,
And the truth to drive a mother wild,
The ill-timed truth from the lips of her child.

Keep your own guinea. Beware of the friend
Who sleeps while you save but is near when
you spend.

Share out the loot and finish with blows—
Oh ! who is the soldier whom nobody knows !

Keep to your promise. The world will pay
Heed to "I will" while forgetting "I may."
"I may." To your thatching! Lone Widow,
no hope.

"I will." Quick! The ladder, the straw and
the rope!

Keep your own counsel. A secret will be
Roared to the world when whispered to three.
"A word in your ear and listen. Speak low!
None know it. 'Twas told me a minute ago."

In the House of the Merry him to the door,
The one who has heard that story before.

On famine your thought when the feasting is
gay—

Don't cut your scollops on a windy day.

Blessed the Meek who throw aside,
The chains of conceit, the shackles of pride—
Humble, but worthy, as corn is found
When heavy of ear, with its head to the
ground.

Three times married. Just listen once more
While he speaks of his wives, the Rachary
Wor.

Three things put years on a good man's life :
The curl in the gub of a scolding wife,
The purse in the petticoat he cannot fill
And the nagging tongue that is never still.

In your House be Master. But remember still,
To a man his due but a woman her will.
So Man of the House be mute in your chair—
Two women and a goose make a noisy fair.

A man in the house and all to himself,
To milk the cows and wash the delf—
The teapot is cold that sits on the hob,
'Tis bad with Herself not there on the job.
A fireless hearth at Wintertide
Is the single man's bed without a bride.

Better to find her, for good or ill,
Across the ditch than across the hill—
And seven leagues is a space to roam,
And I found her there and brought her home—
Oonah from Meenarood, the same
Came into my house and took my name.
Her portion strong. But she loved her gold—
To see was to have and to have was to hold,
And the decency bite folk left on her plate
Was not what they could not but should not
eat.

What was she not and had she but known,
Better (her talk) to have lived her lone !
Meenarood in her every say,
From the break of dawn to the shut of day—
And soon it was mine to understand
That I married with Oonah her whole townland.

One thing not right ! Another not good !
We did it better at Meenarood !
The milk went thin and the fire went dull :
Just what she expected in Rossnagull !

I can see her now who rests in Heaven,
Seven years my wife, the mother of seven.
Tidy and thrifty she toils and spins
At the shut of day and when day begins :
And the dust she swept from the hearth and floor
Came back in gold to the woman's door.

Near-going Oonah and tight of hand,
And never liked much in her own townland.
Oh ! the back of my hand to her at the door,
Who never adds weight to a poor man's store—
And rusty her heart wherever she lives
Whose eye looks after the gift she gives.

So far so good ! Just listen once more
While he speaks of his second, the Rachary
Wor.

We never see, though we claim to be wise,
The Last Year's snare in the New Year's
guise—

The fair was at Creenan. I met her there,
The pick of the coolens at Creenan fair
And her face her portion. But bare, her feet
Never knew the road or the street.

Her quality style ! Ah there the trouble—
Boots for the cradle—none for the stubble.

Conceited the coolen, cuddled and kissed,
Ring her and then you'll spancell your wrist—
And as woman's warranty set greater store
On the washing tub than the dancing floor.

Discretion her gin. Her blush a lie,
Tricky her heart, fraud in her eye,
Guile in each tress from her curling pins—
Where a man's art finishes a maid's begins.

She would not yesterday ! She will to-day !
Not strange, my son ! 'Tis a woman's way—
As her fishing season has its rise and fall,
Better a sprat than no fish at all

Skittish the woman. Her seed's the same,
For the wild duck's egg is never tame !

Soft are her arms. A hangman's rope
Throttles surer when greased with soap.

Her name was Eileen from Carrigmore.
Dead thirteen years. Her children four.

Three times married. Not me to say
A word of the woman alive to-day.

Over the ditch he has cattle and land—
Oh ! big is the crust in the neighbour's hand.
From the start you've striven and striving still !
What road runs straight to the top of the hill ?
Bitter your buffets, your stress and strain,
Yet threshing removes the chaff from the grain—
And God, for your work, when he judges that
 same,
Gives so much for the job, but much more for
 the aim.

A moment for thought. Just listen once more
And his talk of Himself—the Rachary Wor.

For seventy years I've lived in peace,
Watching my store and stock increase—
March and mearing stretch far and wide,
Round land the best of the countryside,
Tilth and turbary, meadow and moor—
Prosperous now who once was poor.

And all to what end when my days are told ?
Clay in the face and a bed in the mould
And a prayer maybe, from those who live on
For the Rachary Wor who is dead and gone.

Will I go when the seed is set in the clay
And struggles to rise to the peep of day ?
Or yet when the mowster, sned in hand,
Sweats o'er the swathes in the meadow land ?

Or yet when the brave young eyes alight
Shine to the dance of a Winter night ?

What matters the season ? Where I lie
Will know no change when the Spring goes
by—

Will know no Spring whose harvest is mown—
Will know no dance of the many I've known—
But this to all :

Be merciful, kind,
And leave a name that will live behind,
At the certain end all men to bless
The man who is gone, for his righteousness—
And his seed will stand, sound to prevail,
And the name that he leaves will never fail.

And thus his Word, the Rachary Wor,
A man of substance and goodly store—

And he left his holding, his hearth and home
And they buried him deep in the churchyard
loam.

They carried him there one Lammas-tide,
Thrice seven years now since he died—
But the word that he left will never die
In his own Townland and many forbye,
Where they pray for him still as they did of
yore,
For the soul of the good man, Rachary Wor.

CHANGELINGS

AND now that I be sittin', it's the neighbours
round to say ;

“ He'd a brother and a sister that the fairies
took away,

Round the road and up the hill and down the
hill again

And hid them be the Holy Well that's near the
crooked lane—

Up the lane and down the lane and three times
round the brae,

Niall Beg and Norah Beg the fairies took
away ! ”

The pot that's hangin' from the crook is talkin'
to itself,

Talking to the dresser with the rows of shiny delf,
And up above the chimney brace and hanging
from the wall

Is the clock that hasn't got a voice and never
talks at all,

But if it had a voice in it, 'tis up 'twould get
and say

Where Niall is and Norah is the fairies took
away.

'Tis nice to live in Dooran now and you so
very wee,

With a churn for makin' butter and a pot for
makin' tea—

It's some are great on workin' and some on
makin' gold—

I'll have a purse and it so full afore I'm very old,



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Lawrence, Photo. Dublin. Copyright

“ March and meandering stretch far and wide,
Round land the best of the countryside ” (page 36).

But had I pounds and pounds of gold it's it
I'd give the day
For Niall Beg and Norah Beg the fairies took
away.

Now when I'm old and very old, it's out I'll go
and see
The place that's not for them at all that are
so very wee—
It's up the hill, across the hill, my bundle in
my hand,
To travel miles and miles and miles and that
to Fairyland
And will not tire by light or dark until I meet
one day
Niall Beg and Norah Beg the fairies took
away.

TOWNLANDS

Now as townlands these three townlands are
the best that can be seen,
Meenahalla and Strasallagh and Caghara-
creen.

Now take the road to Rosses Beag as well as
Rosses Wor,
And the townlands marching either hand are
well above a score.

And mark them well in hill and holm, and bog
and pasture land,
And good strong houses standing snug and
white on either hand.

“ Good luck be on ye, decent man ! ” The
 girshas passing by
Will have the soft laugh on the lip, the brave
 look in the eye.

The hearty men : “ It’s warm indeed ! Sit
 down, sir, if you please,
To have a pull iv this old pipe and make
 yourself at ease ! ”

“ Good bless you, decent man, and all ! ” the
 good housewife will say :

“ And sit you down and eat a bit to help you
 on the way ! ”

And you, out on the Rosses road that runs to
 Rosses Wor,
Will go through many a brave townland and
 they’re above a score—

But as townlands these three townlands are
the best you've ever seen,
Meenahalla and Strasallagh, and Caghara-
creen !

GREEN RUSHES

It's now for me a petticoat red
And a whip of green rushes,
So out on the road with my eyes ahead
For the lane of the wild thrushes.
Who was it saw my good red dress ?
And who was it saw me dressing ?
'Twas himself indeed and none the less,
And that was a great blessing !

There's many the rush in a whip that's long,
In a whip of green rushes !
There's many a song and them all in song,
In the lane of the wild thrushes.

What wouldn't they give for a petticoat red?
And wouldn't they call me funny
That's more for the dreams that's filling my
head
Than a crock of good red money?

THREE ROSES

ON her breast were three roses
And she stirred the stirabout pot.
“ Where have you got the roses
And are you married or not ? ”

The sparks sang up the chimney—
Her brave eyes were so bright.
A pink rose and a red rose
And a rose bog-blossom white.

“ Where did I get the roses ?
That’s what I’ll tell to none,
And how can a girl be married,
And her by herself alone ? ”

The white neck in my elbow—
The tumbled breasts of desire !
And the roses petal by petal
Dropping into the fire.

The white and the pink and the red rose
Sobbing into the flame—
One couldn't tell where they went to,
One couldn't tell whence they came.

WHEN I WAS WEE

'Twas me was the divil when I was wee,
Full iv capers and up for fun,
And there wasn't one in the parish like me,
And dear ! how my two bare feet could run
When I was wee !

Fetch or fellow iv me to get
Ye'd wander far on either hand.
But that and all ye'd never set
Eyes on the bate in yer own townland
When I was wee !

Ah ! sharp the tip iv the tongue that's old,
And white the laugh when the lips fall in—

It's the young to laugh and the aged to scold,
The old to pray and the young to sin,
And I was wee.

And ye want to go out to the dance, avic,
As if ye have nothin' else to do ?
And me the poor old man on a stick,
But once I could step on the floor like you
When I was wee !

FISHIN'

Now, who would ye be at the dark iv night
That comes to the door and raps that way,
And fright'nin' me be the fire me lone
And him at his work on Gweebarra Bay,

Fishin' ?

Him at his work and me in the house,
With a league iv water between us two—
Cold and black on me childre dead,
And drowned were the two iv them, Micky and

Hugh,

Fishin'.

It's work for the two iv us ; him at the turf
When the weather is warm, or else the kelp,

And it's knittin' for me, when he bees out
At night on the sea with no one to help,
Fishin'.

'Twas yerself be the door, was it? All the time!
And, there's fear in yer eyes and yer face is
white—
Himself it is! Drowned! Oh! Mother iv
God!
Look down upon me from above this night!
Fishin'!

GARRYBAWN

It's Micky Eamon Diver and he's only skin
and bone,

With acres holm and heather, that, and money
of his own—

It's all day long he's sitting with his elbow on
the hob,

The crabbit Micky Eamon with his dudheen in
his gob ;

A near old scranny scrape-the-pot that's askin'
dusk and dawn :

“ Boy ! are ye never gettin' on with diggin'
Garrybawn ! ”

My gallowses are hangin' down and twistin'
round my legs ;

The girls can see the most of me that's stickin'
through my rags ;

It's dribs and drabs on back and front and
freezin' to the pelt—

Ye'll see it's up to him one day and give him
such a welt !

The close and scringy rip of sin that's at me
dusk and dawn

With : “ Will ye never hurry up with diggin'
Garrybawn ! ”

Now if he's let me to a dance or better to a fair,
A penny whistle I would buy and learn a
dancin' air—

I'd maybe whistle it at work, or wouldn't it be
fun

To blow it right in Micky's face at night when
work bees done !—

It's thrawn he is, the people say, but I can be
as thrawn—

For Micky Fergus I can't stick, him, and his
Garrybawn.

But, wait a bit till Old Hall' eve and then you'll
see my plan ;

It's off from here I'll scoot to where they'll
treat me like a man,

As good as any in the place, and not because
I'm wee

They'll curl their gobs and think it smart, that
looking down on me !

And three pounds comin' ! It's a lot ! Just
wait till that is drawn

I'll take the road from Micky's house, him, and
his Garrybawn !

THE WEE MAN

AT night when I be sitting in the corner of the
house,

And oh ! so close and quiet that I wouldn't
scare a mouse,

With the wind above the chimney top and it's
me can hear its song :

“ Go to bed you sleepy head, you're staying
up too long ! ”

Then Mawmy up and looks at me and says :

“ It's now to bed,

Or else 'twill be the Fellow with the Wee Red
Head ! ”



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Lawrence, Photo. Dublin, Copying

"I'll take the road from Micky's house" (page 55).

Now, sure he's all for capers and up to any
trick,

It's him to blow the rushlight out and wet the
candle wick,

It's to a weasel he can turn, for he's the one for
that,

Or maybe to a clocking hen and maybe to a
cat—

And things that's worse than that he'll do if
it's not me in bed—

I'm feear'd of him, the Fellow with the Wee
Red Head !

There's many a thing I'm not to do and that
because I'm wee,

And if I'm up to any tricks he's got his eye on
me—

It's him that lets the downdrops in and salts
the stirabout

And him to shove the kitchen door and give
you such a slout !

Some say the wind is doing it, but don't I know
instead,

It always is the Fellow with the Wee Red Head !

There lives a man across the ditch, a scraggy
man and thin,

But he's the one that has the fist to draw the
money in—

His face that dry and head that bald. He's
only skin and bone,

But that and all though poor he looks, he's
money of his own—

Bags of it and crocks of it, but my ! afore he's
dead,

He'll lose it to the Fellow with the Wee Red
Head.

I'm not a bit afeard of him and it the light of
day,

But that is not his time to come and carry boys
away ;

It's coming down the chimley brace when Maw
puts out the light,

And round the house and round the house he's
going all the night—

So now it's me upon my knees and pray and
then to bed,

Or else 'twill be the Fellow with the Wee Red
Head !

BREED ASTHOR

COME, cuddle closer, Breed asthor,
For youth will have its way—
The eyes so bright at Candlemas
Grow sad on Lammas Day.

There's bitter bliss in Lammas love
And sure in time to pass,
And wrinkle-rutted dreams of hope
Grow cold at Hallowmass.

Then cuddle closer, Breed asthor,
Ere time brings cark and care ;
We'll catch the fancy born in flame
Ere it goes out in air !

FAIRIES

MEENAHALLA bedding and grass,
Butter and milk in Inishmool,
And big the pastures in Ardnaglass
That has no equal in sheep and wool—
There are seven corners in Donegal,
And acres many meadow and moor ;
Rich in money, but that and all,
The folk of the Rosses are very poor.

The guinea coin is the butt of care,
And hearts are heavy for hands that hold,
But the Rosses people, and they be bare,
Have neither their hearts in gear nor
gold—

And it's all of them always for song and fun,
First to frolic at dance and spree
With nimble toes when the day is done,
In Carrandooragh and Meenaree.

And they take the gifts from the mill and churn
And the mallard wor on the Rosses bog
To the gentle oak by the Dooran burn
For the little people from Tir nan Og,
Who come with the dusk their gifts to find
In the sacred ring by the haunted oak,
And they weave a spell over souls so kind,
So the Rosses people are happy folk.

FAIRY WORKERS

SAID the Fairies of Kilfinnan
To the Fairies of Macroom :
“ Oh ! send to us a shuttle
For our little fairy loom,
Our workers, one and twenty
Are waiting in the coom——”
So Kilfinnan got a shuttle
From the Fairies of Macroom.

Kilfinnan got the shuttle,
The shuttle for the loom.
“ Now, send us back a hammer,”
Said the Fairies of Macroom.
“ We’ve cobblers, one and twenty,
All idle in their room.”

And Kilfinnan sent a hammer
To the Fairies of Macroom.

The Queen of all the Fairies
Sat in her drawing-room :
Her robes came from Kilfinnan
Her brogues came from Macroom.
Now, at the Royal Dinner
The proudest in the room
Were the Fairies from Kilfinnan
And the Fairies from Macroom.

A MOTHER'S TEARS

THERE was a widow and her son.
They lived, the two, in Inishmell—
Her son was bad, and when he died,
St. Peter packed him off to hell.

And in her cabin night and night
When darkness fell and lights were dim
The widow thought upon her son
And wept through all the night for him.

“ A mother's love can draw,” she said,
“ Her children from the deepest sea
But it will never bring my son,
My erring son again to me.”

And saying thus, she wept at dusk,
And saying thus, she wept at dawn,
And then she died. Her uncle grabbed
Her farm. His name was Connel Bawn.

She went to Heaven. There a crowd
Was standing waiting by the gate.

“ Now, Widow Bawn,” St. Peter said,
“ You’ve caused the crowd, so you must wait.”

“ I ’ve caused the crowd ! ” said Widow Bawn.

“ I do not know what you’re about ! ”

“ Your tears on earth,” St. Peter said,
“ Have put the Devil’s furnace out,

“ So we’ve to house all sinners here
Until the flames of Hell are lit,
For what’s the good of souls in Hell
Without a flame to warm the Pit.

“ So now it rests with you, Good Soul,
To have the fire relit or drawn.”

“ Then light it up,” the Widow said,

“ And keep it hot for Connel Bawn.”

THE HERD-BOY

A WEE white cap and a wee green feather—
And who is the chap that's in the heather ?
Speak me the word on the lap of the brae
As the cattle I herd in dusk and the day.

It's nothing I'd doubt of that man of sin
Whose nose sticks out and his chin drops in
And at me all day in the night and the
morn
With " The cow's in the hay and the stirk's
in the corn ! "

Then Herself on the ditch bent like a root,
And I know she's a witch hand and foot,

Elbow and shoulder, neck and knee,
With " Ne'er was a bolder rake than me ! "

He's old as the hill, and my ! so thin,
She's older still, all bones and skin !

What they eat when they eat is nothing to see,
And what's left on the plate is left for me !

At school I'm no good. I'm deaf and I'm dumb,
Can't read a book and can't do a sum !

But leave me my lone on the fields where I
know

How the birds make the nest and the butter-
cups grow.

There ! don't you hear it up on the bush !

Watch me go near it. My ! it's a thrush.

Home of its own in the rowan tree—

It may be its lone but it's not hid from me !

A wee white cap and a wee green feather—
It's me is the chap that's in the heather !
Speak me the word on the lap of the brae
As my cattle I herd in dusk and the day.

THE RETURN

(Argument: Hughie Gallagher, son of the Widow Gallagher, returns to Dooran, his native town-land with the Fairy Queen his wife.)

WHEN Hughie Gallagher came home, his bosom
filled with pride,

And brought to Dooran, as his own, his bonnie
Fairy Bride,

The people gazed on her dismayed. The
Widow stroked her chin :

“ She’s nice enough,” the Widow said. “ But
my ! she’s very thin ! ”

“ Thin’s not the word,” said Eamon Wor.

“ To meet the work in hand

A ranny like her never yet was seen in all the
land ;

She's just the woman that meself would never
want to own.

Thin's not the word," said Eamon Wor.

"She's only skin and bone."

"More bones than skin," said Norah Friel.

"Sure, I did never see

A rachary like Hughie's wife, so doncy and so
wee.

He sure could hide her in his boot or house her
in his cap!

I never saw a thing like that get married on a
chap!"

Said Fergus Dhu who dug for spuds: "God
help us, but she's small,

The like of her was never seen in County
Donegal.



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“The dark-haired passes and star-high peaks” page 91.

The way she walks, the way she talks, her
figure, cut and shape !

I've hoked up pratees twice as big at Lammas
on a graip ! ”

Neal Hudagh laughed a mighty laugh, as if his
sides would break—

“ Poor Hughie Gallagher,” he said. “ It's you
that has the cheek

To take that thing to tend your home. And
married to her now,

You'll never see her bake or sow, nor churn,
nor milk a cow.”

Said Myles O'Malley : “ Grosha Yagh ! that
such a thing I've seen !

God help you, Hughie Gallagher, you and your
Fairy Queen !

You've house and home and stock and store,
but all will go to pot,
Because the woman that ye need is what ye
haven't got."

Now Hughie turned him to his wife and looked
at her and said :

"Than house ourselves in Dooran, dear, we'd
better far be dead.

We'll scoot, my love ! " And as he spoke he
caught her by the hand.

And both together toddled off again to Fairy-
land.

THE FAIRY CURSE

THE Carrameera fairies went to Meenawara-
wor

Where the goodwives placed the butter on the
lintels of the door—

The fairies went there early before the town
was up

And every little fairy brought an empty
buttercup,

But that day they got no butter, for the cats
were there before,

Cats that licked the fairy lintels o'er in Meena-
warawor.

Spoke the Queen of all the fairies : “ I will

curse them heart and head,

Curse them in the cradle and curse them in the

bed,

Curse their stock and substance, curse each

home and hill,

Curse the hale and hearty and curse the weak

and ill !

They were happy while they served us, but

they'll now be sick and sore ! ”

This, the curse, the Queen of Fairies put on

Meenawarawor.

Now all the folk are weeping from the moun-

tain to the plain,

For the churn that bears no butter and the field

that bears no grain,

For the fire that will not kindle and the pot
that will not boil,

Since the Fairy Curse is heavy on the shieling,
stock and soil.

Yet the wives still place the butter on the
lintels of the door

And the cats are getting fatter now in Meena-
warawor !

CARRIGDUN

THE good town of Carrigdun has acres hill and
holm to show,

Turbary upon the moors and corn upon the
loam to show—

Cows in calf and cows in milk ! See them feed
together,

On the rich braes of Carridgun their udders on
the heather !

And foot old Ireland up and down : by hilly
lands and hollow,

It's Carrigdun to take the lead whatever roads
you follow !

The good men of Carrigdun are mighty men and
merry men,

For working and for drinking these good men
are the very men !

The hardest task in all the land and they're
the ones to dare it !

The burden that their backs can't bear no
other backs will bear it !

And models, every man of them of strength,
grit and sincerity,

As witnesseth their spoken word, their honour
and prosperity !

The large heart and lavish hand the wives of
Carrigdun possessed,

And none went hungry in the land, for some to
all when one possessed,

But none went poor ! For stock and store the
thrifty wives were rich in—

Butter butts in the pantry stored, sticks of eels
in the kitchen—

And travel left and travel right, and take all
as you find it,

It's Carrigdun a league in front, and other
towns behind it !

The coolens fair of Carrigdun ! Their worth ?
Go, take as token,

The light feet that step a reel ; the strong
hearts hourly broken !

By day beneath the creels of kelp the dear
white feet are moving,

At night—"The night is ours," they say.

"For that's the time for loving."

Come, scrape the fiddle ! Foot the reel ! The
time is now or never !

Bold men, good wives and pretty girls and
Carrigdun for ever !



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Lawrence, Photo, Dublin, Copyright

“Depths unknown, heights austere” (page 91).

AT INISHKEEL

HOUSE and housing either hand, down here !

Hush you in this calm townland, down here !

There they rest at noon and night,

Twice a spade-length out of sight,

Down here.

Sleep you all and sleep you well, down here ?

Have you not a word to tell, down here ?

Who have spun and set and sown

In the homes and holms you've known,

Yet you seem to like it well,

Down here.

Oonah, Norah, Ishabel, down here,

Have you anything to tell, down here ?

Light hands at the spinning wheel,
Feet as light to foot a reel,
Oonah, Norah, Ishabel,

Down here.

Murtagh, Dermot, Donal Dhu, down here,
Is it well, bold boys, for you, down here ?
At the pattern, dance and fair,
Girls, full-bosomed, miss you there,
And they wait in vain for you

Down here.

Farley, Peadar, Eamon Wor, down here,
You have neither stock nor store down here.
Heavy-headed corn and rye
Swathe the fields of years gone by,
Farley, Peadar, Eamon Wor,

Down here.

Tell me, do you like the place, down here ?

Men of mettle, girls of grace, down here ?

Does your heart not long once more

For the fair, the dancing floor ?

Woe and Joy have not a place

Down here.

House and housing either hand, down here !

Hush you in this calm townland, down here !

Here they rest at noon and night

Twice a spade-length out of sight,

Down here.

CARRA

It's back I'd be in my home again, that is up
by Carra way,

Where quilted petticoats they wear and suits
of hodden grey,

The good wives by Carra way and bold men
straight and strong—

And here I walk on grey streets and always
thinking long !

The whins on flower by Carra way and the lush
land so still !

And the white lake of Carra sleeps under the
hush of the hill—

Brown loaves in the oven rise, drone the honey
bees,

The thatched home snug on the braes beneath
the humming trees !

So it's back I'd be in my home again where
they wait for me day and day,

In the little house with its hat of thatch that
stands by Carra way—

Stirabout and buttermilk, a six-hand reel and
song ;

And here I walk on the grey streets and always
thinking long !

TWO TOGETHER

CARRICKMACARTH for raking,
Where the good old tales are told !
Greenans for merrymaking
And nobody growing old !
And putting it all together,
If you are the boy for fun,
Minding not wind and weather,
Foot it to Carrigdun !

Now stop on the way a minute
By the marches of Drimagool—
It's land and the cattle in it,
Its mountains white with wool !
And further, by hill and hollow,
Where the burns of white trout run—

Ah ! that is the road to follow,
That takes you to Carrigdun !

When I was supple and hearty,
Fifty years gone by—
Carrickmacarth for a party,
Greenans when blood ran high !
Now, taking the world as you find it,
Say where would the light feet run ?
To a hedge and a girl in behind it !
Ah, young blood and Carrigdun !

BRIAN O'LYNN

(After a Ballad of Merit.)

BRIAN O'LYNN was a fellow of note ;
He wore a red shirt and he hadn't a coat—
He walked in the rain and the shirt it was thin—
“ But it's grand for good weather,” said Brian
O'Lynn.

Brian O'Lynn had a nail in his boot,
And walking the highway, it jagged at his
foot—
He came to a river ; the boot he threw in.
“ Barefooted, no corns,” said Brian O'Lynn.

Brian O'Lynn had a master of means,
Who fed the poor servant on pratees and
beans—



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*" . . . one with the waters
That thresh your shores, Tironail " (page 92).*

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O'Lynn to the threshing, and lay on the bin.

“ Empty sacks cannot stand, sir,” said Brian
O'Lynn.

Brian O'Lynn regaled at the board ;

With the fat of the townland his stomach was
stored—

He went to the threshing, but would not
begin.

“ Full sacks cannot bend, sir,” said Brian
O'Lynn.

Brian O'Lynn took Red Ellen for wife ;

A necklace of gold was the wish of her life.

His arms round her neck and he tickled her
chin—

“ How's that for a necklace ? ” said Brian
O'Lynn.

Brian O'Lynn and his last hour was due.

“ Repent or St. Peter will not let you through !”

“ I've a trick up my sleeve if he won't let
me in,

So give me a jemmy,” said Brian O'Lynn

TIRCONAIL

TIRCONAIL !

On the hem of the royal Hill, the Hill of

Aileach,

I stood—

And the Past, the Present and the Future

Were in my eyes

As nothing—

The light foot in a forgotten dance,

A spark in the air.

Tirconail !

Of the dark-haired passes and star-high peaks,

Depths unknown, heights austere,

What have you to say ?

What is the message

In the moan of the winds in your glens,

The wail of the waters on your surf-bitten
shores ?

In the sun-bright lustre of Croagh-an-Airgead,

The haughty coldness of Errigal,

The drum of the sea on Tory,

The white laugh of the waters in Gweebarra
Bay ?

Errigal has listened to the light feet

On the dancing floors of Gweedore !

Curving and curtseying

The white bones of the time-forgotten dancers

Are one with the waters

That thresh your shores, Tirconail.

For they were and are not,

They are and will not be !

And thus, I, too,
The onlooker of a moment will go.
My moment as nothing,
The strain of a fiddle in the twilight,
A low wind on the hills.

Tirconail !

THE MOTHER

A FULL house when he came
But black with his going !
Tongue of mine gave him name,
My eyes saw him growing !
Not to Mary I'll pray !
Not hers my sorrow.
Can it draw from the spade-deep clay,
My one who is taken away
And rouse him the morrow ?

After the girls, the lad !
The nights he stayed out !
But the dear white body he had
When he was laid out—

And the last dress he wore
On the cold bed lying,
Under the candles four.
And all of them crying,

Norah, Unah and Breed,
Plump girls and hearty—
Didn't they love him indeed !
And me in the party
With not one tear in my eye
For the poor white sleeper.
Ah ! there's blessed ease in a cry,
But my blow struck deeper.

Rootless the young heart's need,
For all their crying—
Norah, Unah and Breed
With strong men lying !
And not to Mary I'll pray !

Not hers my sorrow.
Can it draw from the spade-deep clay,
My one who is taken away
And rouse him the morrow ?

THEY DRANK IN THE TAVERN

THEY drank in the tavern forty years ago,
Farley Og, Shemus Og, Shan and Meehal Roe,
Straight men and strong men, full of fire and
fun,

But now they don't remember them here in
Carrigdun !

The wild herds of Carrigdun loosened for the
fair—

Fit to keep them well in hand the strong men
there.

Wild from the pasturage watch the cattle go,
With Farley Og, Shemus Og, Shan and Meehal
Roe.

Dressed in your high attire, where do you speed,
Norah and Unah, Eveleen and Breed ?
Breasts of desire, to whom do you go ?
Farley Og, Shemus Og, Shan and Meehal Roe.

And now just as always, the great world rolls
on—

Fair girls out of sight : strong men gone,
Who drank in the tavern forty years ago,
Farley Og, Shemus Og, Shan and Meehal Roe.

FAIR DREAM

SHE dressed her well in her bodice brown

And well in her gown of gray.

“ Off am I to my own love’s town

A hundred miles away—

And will not tire by brough or brae

And will walk on the soft-floored sea :

For my love is his from day to day—

But, oh ! does my love love me ?

Has his strong arm a place for my head ?

Will his strong hand feel my breast ?

Fine soft linen and a bridal bed,

For that’s what a girl loves best !

Word or warning not mine to send
Of the journey so soon to be :
Though my love is his to the world's end.
But, oh ! does my love love me ? ”

FAIR LADIES

I PUT an Ant in a Spider's web ;
The Spider, a greedy, grasping sinner,
Collared the Ant for an early dinner,
Forgetting, of course, the Robin's neb !

On the apple-tree Miss Robin sat,
And the morning's tragedy horrified her—
Down she flew and gobbled the Spider,
Forgetting, of course, the watching Cat.

“ Mew ! my turn to do my bit,”
Said the Cat, place-proud, benignant, subtle—
Down through the branches shot like a shuttle,
Straight on the Robin and gobbled it.

I know no moral to take from that—
Yet think, a hoary unshriven Sinner,
When I see sweet ladies eating their dinner,
Of the Ant, the Spider, the Robin and Cat.

THE TINKER'S SON

BROGUES of buttermilk, petticoats of glass !

Light-footed Unah walks on the grass.

Light-footed Unah from Carrigun,

Wild in her love for the tinker's son.

Her mother, she stands by the brown half-door.

“ A saucy heart,” her words, “ will soon be
sore,

For the high step to earth, though high as a
hill !

But nothing can break a proud girl's will !

“ Cows,” said the mother. “ And seven at
stake—

The milk they give, and the butter they make !

And this to be all for her breed and birth :
A tinker's cart on the roads of the earth !

“ And four score sheep stand thick on the
braes.

Head-high one that another can graze !
And the geese on the holm. Oh, more than one
Has been stuffed in the sack of the tinker's
son ! ”

Brogues of buttermilk, petticoats of glass !
Light-footed Unah walks on the grass.
Light-footed Unah from Carrigdun,
Wild in her love for the tinker's son !

IN THE CROWDED PLACE

IN the crowded place
Proudly arrayed—
The look on her face
So little betrayed ;
That I watched her passing,
But nothing was said.

In a quiet place
In hodden gray,
They sit at their ease,
Who were young one day !
Would you live and dare it,
Proud Maid, as they ?

The loud laugh
Makes for loud crying.

Sad the rose
Slow in its dying.
Better its blooms
In the swift wind flying !

In the crowded place
Proudly arrayed.
Would that you were now
In the cold earth laid !
As now, for ever
Be mine, Proud Maid.

And on forever,
If Fates allow
To see you just
As I see you now !
Full-bosomed Maid
With the snow-white brow !

THE CHILDREN'S SONG

THE Wee Red-headed Man is a knowing sort
of fellow.

His coat is cat's-eye green and his pantaloons
are yellow.

His brogues are made of glass and his hose are
red as cherry—

He's the lad for devilment, if you only make
him merry.

He drives a flock of goats, has another flock
behind him—

The little children fear him, but the old folk
never mind him.

To the frogs' house and the goats' house and
the hilly land and hollow,
He will carry naughty children where their
parents dare not follow.

Oh ! little ones, beware. If the red-haired man
should catch you,
Rats will be your playmates and frogs and eels
will watch you—
A bed between two rocks and not a fire to warm
you !—
But, little ones, be good and the red-haired man
can't harm you.

The Wee Red-headed Man has piles and piles
of riches,
Guineas in his wallet and the pockets of his
britches.

And if you're very poor and meet him, he is
willing
To bargain for your soul if you'll sell it for a
shilling.

He's cute and he is coaxing and hard although
he's civil—
But let him get your soul and he'll give it to
the devil,
And when the devil gets it (the devil's hoof is
cloven)
He'll spit it and he'll steam it and he'll roast
it in an oven.

But, children, if the Red-haired Man comes up
to you, don't worry,
Just say, " Excuse me, sir, to-day, for I am in
a hurry ! "

He'll say, " Be off ! " Then shake your heels ;
let one leg race the other
And never turn to look behind, till you get
home to mother !

IN THE PARISH

MULLANMORE, Meenahalla,
Glenmornan, Strasalla,
By the highway, either hand—
Derrinane, Cornagrilla,
Kilmore, Drimnisilla,
But the best is my own townland !

The strong cows are lowing,
And the prime corn growing,
And heavy the ear of its grain,
Great store of good money,
White trout and wild honey—
And would I were back there again !

The big, brown loaves baking—
The fair girls hay-making,
And the cut meadows, swath on sward ;
The flower-bright lane edges,
The haw-speckled hedges
And the fairy raths daisy-starred.

Meenarood and Kilfinnan,
Cleengarra and Crinnan,
That slope to the salt sea strand—
Gortameera, Kingarrow,
Drimeeney, Falcarragh,
But the best is my own townland.



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"The best is my own townland."

Lawrence, Photo, Dublin. © Bright



THE DROUTH

A STUMP of a tooth, that was all, in his
mouth—

A vagabond, always half-dead with the drouth,
Who sober, had little to say.

But give him a drink, and then one would see,
With his pipe in his mouth and his hat on his
knee,

How he'd talk for a night and a day.

Then : " Once I had stock and once I had
store,

A house of my own and prime cattle galore,

A table and dresser and delf.

And the best of the country sat down at my
board,
Fed full and hearty and thanking the Lord,
In the very same voice, thanked myself.

“ Invited to parties ! Aye, always the first,
Till the neighbours grew sick of my damnable
thirst
And shut their black doors in my face !
Then to add to my sorrows the bailiffs came
round,
Put my acres to auction, my beasts to the
pound,
And now—neither penny nor place !

Four score his years. Half-dead with the
drouth,
Porter he'd drink through a clay-crust'd clout,

But sober he's nothing to say.

But give him a deoch if you've porter to spare,

And see him sit down at his ease on a chair,

And he'll speak for a night and a day.

NIGHT

(She, who sits in the Lamplight and whose Shadow is thrown on the red window Blind, is the Speaker.)

AND what do ye want at all, at all ?

And what do ye want at all ?

Raking about at the shut of day,

With yer own townland three miles away ?

Three long miles to have put behind,

To look from the dark through an old red blind !

So what do ye want at all ?

(He, who, for an hour has been exploring the Blind to find a crack to peep through, is the Speaker.)

And what do I want at all, at all,

And what do I want at all ?

Three hard miles I won't do again
To flatten my nose on an icy pane—
And ye, sittin' snug at the back of the blind,
That hasn't the go to make up yer mind
To come out for a minute at all !

(Two are speaking in the darkness. Whispers, kisses, protestations, reproofs, etc. One Listener unseen hears all, a Wren who shelters in the hedge-row. This the Conversation as the Wren hears it.)

And what do ye want at all, at all ?—
And what do ye want at all ?—
Takin' me out on a night like this !—
Now, will ye ?—I won't ! Another wee kiss !—
Oh ! the boys that are here about nowadays !—
And the girls that are and so hard to plase !—
BUT WE'RE HAPPY ENOUGH AND ALL !

THE DARK BLOSSOM

To market ; her feet on the hard road—
Not hard as the heart within her !
To Mass : and her dark sins a load—
The dark and dear little sinner !
What will I do with myself
Day and daily ?
Proud you grow while I grow thin,
Hard heart and soul of sin,
Eileen Faly !

GIRLS

WHERE they walk along on the green :
Their white feet,
The lilt of a song and their teeth are seen
Like white stones,
Little white stones
In the pink of the dawn !

Have you seen them at all
On the green grass ?
The white feet that softly pass
On the sod ?
And the dews of God
Hang as they hung

On the heather, the flowers and the grass
Where their feet have trod !

Silk-soft, milk-white,
The feet are moving,
The air of a song—a forgotten song
That seeks its words,
The lost white feathers
Of holy birds.

SLAN LEATH

ONCE 'twas my song at a ball,
My dance at a wedding,
But now the bones of me call
For bed and bedding,
Sheet and sheeting that's sound,
And I will go off in
Pomp to the house in the ground,
The clay in a coffin.

'Tis seed-time at Candlemas,
Then, there let it !
There are, when I come to pass,
Fine men to set it,

Men and them hale and strong—
Of breed and breeding.
Their hands won't idle long,
Sowing and seeding !

It's a brave turf fire the night
In the house I've grown old in—
A narrow home is in sight,
But room to grow cold in !
Is it Candlemas now with its rain ?
Or Lammas Day with the mowing ?
Neither will know me again,
And it time to be going.

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