

# Selected Poetry

## A Ballad of the Volunteers

Oh, may the fields that hide the hare  
Hide well our hunted men,  
As scattered rocks conceal the fox,  
And smallest trees the wren,  
As by the cart-wheel's crushing track  
The skylark knows no fears—  
In vain, God grant, may England hunt  
The Irish Volunteers.

Oh, may the winter be a spring  
About them where they hide,  
Oh, may by night the stars be bright  
Their silent feet to guide,  
May streams with fish and boughs with fruit  
Be teeming through the years,  
And every field a harvest yield  
To the Irish Volunteers.

For bloody-hearted are their foes  
And honor's path they spurn,  
They take their pay, a pound a day,  
To torture, kill, and burn;  
To rob the helpless and the poor,  
Rejoicing in their tears,  
And mercy none is ever shown  
To the Irish Volunteers.

Oh, you that torture captive men,  
That hapless prisoners slay,  
That shoot, or drown, or sack a town  
In a devil's holiday,  
Can do but shame your country's name,  
While ours more bright appears—  
From scoundrel hands of "Black-and-Tans"  
God save the Volunteers.

It was such men as these that set  
America's flag on high,  
It was such men that freed again  
Victorious Italy;  
And Belgium fought the German foe  
In such a cause as theirs —  
Then will we boast the fearless host,  
The Irish Volunteers.

Remember well the noble dead  
Who died to make men free,  
In every land they make their stand  
For Ireland's liberty.  
That cause has stood through pain and blood  
For seven hundred years—  
So till Freedom's day we'll sing and say  
God bless the Volunteers!  
—DESMOND MCCARTHY, in the *Manchester Guardian*.

## Unexpressed

There are sweeter words than were ever said,  
And sweeter songs than were ever sung;  
And fonder tears than were ever shed,  
By eyes of the old or hearts of the young;  
For the tenderest music the spirit knows  
Is the music that cannot be expressed;  
And the fondest tears of love are those  
That lie unwept in the breaking breast!

For the soul is strong and the flesh is weak,  
And fonder far than the words we hear  
Are the words our lips refuse to speak,  
When they whom our souls love best are near.  
For the love that speaks is the love that dies,

And soonest yields unto Time's control;  
But the fadeless love is the love that lies  
Deeply shrined in the silent soul.

Ah, God, to think that it must be so!  
To think dear God, in the morning light  
That the hearts we love must never know  
The tears we wept thro' the lonely night!  
Ah, ever thus with the old and the young,  
Till both are laid with the silent dead—  
The sweetest songs must remain unsung,  
And the fondest words remain unsaid.

—SAMUEL K. COWAN, in the *Irish World*.

## Irish Music

A voice beside the dim enchanted river,  
Out of the twilight, where the brooding trees  
Hear Shannon's druid waters chant forever  
Tales of dead Kings, and Bards, and Shanachies:

A girl's young voice out of the twilight, singing  
Old songs beside the legendary stream,  
A girl's clear voice o'er the wan waters ringing,  
Beats with its wild wings at the Gates of Dream.

The flagger-leaves, whereon shy dewdrops glisten,  
Are swaying, waving gently to the sound,  
The meadow-sweet and spearmint as they listen,  
Breathe wistfully their wizard balm around;

And there, alone with her lone heart and heaven,  
Thrush-like she sings and lets her voice go free.  
Her soul, of all its hidden longing shriven,  
Soars on wild wings with her wild melody.

Sweet in its plaintive Irish modulations,  
Her fresh young voice tuned to old sorrow seems,  
The passionate cry of countless generations  
Keens in her breast as there she sings and dreams.

No more, sad voice; for now the dawn is breaking  
Through the long night, through Ireland's night of tears.  
New songs wake in the morn of her awaking  
From the enchantment of nine hundred years.

—JOHN TODD HUNTER.

## Will-'o-the-Wisps

When the soul forsakes the body,  
Into space it upward fleets;  
Rising to the dome celestial,  
Souls from other worlds it meets;  
Questions them, converses with them,  
To return to earth with sighs  
For the misery repulsive  
In which matter sunken lies—  
Misery with which in weakness  
Poor humanity each day  
Drags its vanities and follies,  
Purposeless in work or play,  
All forgetful of the tribute  
It must to the graveyard pay.

There, where kings are friends with beggars,  
No distinctions more are found;  
There end vanity and rancor;  
He whose riches knew no bound,  
And the ragged man and hungry  
Join to fertilise the ground.  
All is equal there; the charnel  
And the tomb no difference hold.  
Tho' diverse may be their lineage,  
Men and women, young and old,  
With corpse candles, all together  
Wander 'mid night's darkness cold.

—ALVARO OBREGON, in the *Mexican Review*.



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