

The CROPPY BOY

"GOOD MEN AND TRUE IN THIS HOUSE WHO DWELL
TO A STRANGER BUACHAILL I PRAY YOU TELL:
IS THE PRIEST AT HOME? OR MAY HE BE SEEN?
I WOULD SPEAK A WORD WITH FATHER GREEN."
"THE PRIEST'S AT HOME, BOY, AND MAY BE SEEN
'TIS EASY SPEAKING WITH FATHER GREEN
BUT YOU MUST WAIT TILL I GO AND SEE
IF THE HOLY FATHER ALONE MAY BE."

THE YOUTH HAS ENTERED AN EMPTY HALL
WHAT A LONELY SOUND HAS HIS LIGHT FOOT-FALL!
AND THE GLOOMY CHAMBER IS CHILL AND BARE
WITH A VESTED PRIEST IN A LONELY CHAIR.
THE YOUTH HAS KNELT TO TELL HIS SINS
"IN NOMINE DEI," THE YOUTH BEGINS
AT "MEA CULPA" HE BEATS HIS BREAST
AND IN BROKEN MURMURS HE SPEAKS THE REST.

"AT THE SIEGE OF ROSS DID MY FATHER FALL
AND AT GOREY MY LOVING BROTHERS ALL
I ALONE AM LEFT OF MY NAME AND RACE
I WILL GO TO WEXFORD TO TAKE THEIR PLACE!
I CURSED THREE TIMES SINCE LAST EASTER DAY
AT MASS-TIME ONCE I WENT TO PLAY
I PASSED THE CHURCHYARD ONE DAY IN HASTE
AND FORGOT TO PRAY FOR MY MOTHER'S REST.

"I BEAR NO HATE AGAINST LIVING THING
BUT I LOVE MY COUNTRY ABOVE MY KING
NOW, FATHER, BLESS ME AND LET ME GO
TO DIE, IF GOD HAS ORDAINED IT SO."
THE PRIEST SAID NAUGHT, BUT A RUSTLING NOISE
MADE THE YOUTH LOOK UP IN WILD SURPRISE
THE ROBES WERE OFF, AND IN SCARLET THERE
STOOD A YEOMAN CAPTAIN WITH FIERY GLARE.

WITH FIERY GLARE AND WITH FURY HOARSE
INSTEAD OF A BLESSING, HE BREATHED A CURSE:
" 'T WAS A GOOD THOUGHT, BOY, TO COME HERE AND SHRIVE
FOR ONE SHORT HOUR IS YOUR TIME TO LIVE!
UPON YON RIVER THREE TENDERS FLOAT
THE PRIEST'S IN ONE - IF HE ISN'T SHOT
WE HOLD THIS HOUSE FOR OUR LORD AND KING
AND AMEN, SAY I - MAY ALL TRAITORS SWING!"

AT GENEVA BARRACKS THE YOUNG MAN DIED
AND AT PASSAGE THEY HAVE HIS BODY LAID
GOOD PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN PEACE AND JOY
BREATHE A PRAYER, SHED A TEAR
FOR THE CROPPY BOY!