

# Selected Poetry

## QUEST

Where shall I find beauty,  
Where shall I find song?  
Ah, I wandered far and wide,  
And the road was long!

But the wind was voiceless,  
All the stars burned pale;  
Nowhere was there answer,  
On no sea a sail.

—ELIZABETH SHAW MONTGOMERY, in *Scarlet Runner*.

## THE TRAMP

The warm wind from the spruces,  
The cool wind from the sea,  
The good hard road beneath my feet  
And the blue sky over me.

I know a place where gray-green downs  
Surge up to meet the sky,—  
Where goldenrod and red trees grow,  
And clouds go swinging by.

I know a pool that is blue and deep,  
Where the trees hang over the edge,  
Yellow and tawny and red and brown  
From beach and from rocky ledge.

The salt wind from the ocean,  
The sweet wind from the hill,—  
And it is through the cool blue shadows I go  
As I follow my wandering will.

I know where the pines stand straight and high,  
And the sun shines over the world;  
Where the great green waves go racing by  
With their crests of white foam curled.

I know where sunshine flecks the hills  
And shadows come and go;  
Where the hurrying thunder-storm sweeps down  
From heavy clouds hung low.

The spiced wind over daisies  
And new-mown hay in a load,  
And the sea-wind flinging its spray in my face  
As I follow the open road.

—CORALIE HOWARD HAMAN, in *Interludes*.

## THE OULD MAN'S TALK

Cathal O'Flynn lives all his lone  
Wi' never a one to call his own;  
There's nobody knows the age he is,  
Nor one in the place wi' a beard like his,  
He'll sit an' dream on the bog all day,  
Wi' his owld eyes starin' far away,  
An' take no heed if it's wet or dry,  
Nor see the one that would pass him by,  
But still an' all, at the dusk o' night,  
Himself in the house an' the lamp alight,  
The people come by two an' three  
An' chap at the door for company;  
An' it's "Come on in an' warm yer shins,"  
An' "God save all," at Cathal O'Flynn's.  
'Tis then he'll pile the turf to burn  
While the wee dog smells at them all in turn;  
There's chairs for three an' a boss o' wool,  
An' two can sit on the creepie stool;

"An' sure," sez he, "if I do my best  
There's only the floor to take the rest."  
An' when they're settled about the room,  
Half in the glow an' half in gloom,  
'Tis then the talk an' the tales begin,  
An' the best at the tellin' is Cathal O'Flynn.

He'll tell o' the days when himself was young,  
An' sing wee staves o' the songs they sung—  
An' none but himself would know them now—  
He'll tell o' Andy McGinley's cow,  
Drowned off the steep o' the Gola bight,  
That still would walk on the land at night.  
He'll tell o' travellin' here an' there  
An' fifty miles to the hirin' fair,  
An' barefoot there an' back again—  
O' wee folk that himself saw plain  
Behind Screglea twixt the dark an' dawn,  
An' them in a ring round Peggeen bawn,  
Owld Maura's child that they took away,  
An' none heard tell o' her since that day.  
He'll tell o' the church in his own townland  
That never was built by mortal hand,  
But every night it would grow a bit,  
An' the whisper rose who was buildin' it;  
An' twould ha' been finished stone on stone  
If them that was at it was left alone.  
But once when the night was dark an' deep  
Owld Kitty the broguey went to peep,  
An' the dear knows what it might be fevel,  
But never a bit o' herself would tell—

"Now God forgive me," was all she'd say,  
"For drivin' the blessed saints away."  
An' speech was dead on her tongue since then,  
An' the good saints never came back again.  
An' the wee church never was roofed at all,  
Though it's standin' yet wi' its broken wall.  
An' maybe he'll tell how, long ago,  
When a ship drove in on the rocks o' Bo,  
He rode his mare across Dunmore strand,  
An' sank to her ribs in the shiftin' sand;  
"An' sure, if it had-a-been death for me  
I had no sin on me then," sez he.  
He'll whisper too as the light burns dim,  
The wild-like things that have chanced to him  
Beyond in the south by hill an' glen,  
When he'd cross the land o' the mountainy men.  
The wee, dark lough on the mountain side  
That none will name or there'd ill betide,  
For never a one but knows full well  
That deep in its waters the big hounds dwell.  
An' sure there'd be fear for miles about  
If the whisper'd come that themselves were out;  
The doors would be shut both far an' wide  
An' God help him would be left outside.  
An' once himself wi' a harvest load  
Saw the wet trail o' them on the road,  
An' lay in the bog as the dead might lie,  
An' heard the rush o' them passin' by;  
An' sure when he rose in the mornin' light  
The hair on his head was shinin' white.

An' that's the talk o' him, tale on tale,  
Till them that listen are feart an' pale,  
An' none would venture the dark alone,  
For fear o' meetin' wi' things unknown.  
An' sure as he sits there, bent an' thin,  
His long white beard on his mumblin' chin,  
There's some has pity they couldn't own  
For lavin' the owld man there his lone,  
Wi' the wild wind cryin' about the shore.  
But still there's whiles, as they lave the door  
They'll fancy they hear—but och, dear knows—  
The breath o' a laugh as the last one goes.

—ELIZABETH SHANE, in *By Bog and Sea in Donegal*.

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