

# Selected Poetry

## Augustine

At Ostia by the Tiber, she and I  
Once watched the daylight dying in the sky;  
The peace of summer eves was on her brow;  
For she had brought me safe: she held me now,  
Her white hand in mine own, and her sad eyes  
In prayer uplifted towards the skies.  
Our window opened on the garden, where  
The flowers dreamed and music filled the air;  
And there in peace we sat an hour or more,  
I at her feet, and all my wanderings o'er.

A little time went by, and then one day  
She closed her eyes. But ere she passed away  
Gently she spoke; and the last words she said  
Were: "Bury me anywhere when I am dead.  
One thing alone I ask: where'er you be  
Before God's altar always pray for me."  
She has gone home! And oh, my grief, my pain!  
For I shall never see her face again.  
Her love, her tears saved me and washed me clean;  
And made me see how vain my years have been.

"You loved your mother; you were always kind":  
Dying she told me that to heal my mind.  
But O my God, my God who made us twain,  
To think I shall not see her face again!  
Could I recall the days of long ago  
How different were the way my feet would go!  
O Monica, whose heart hath bled for me,  
God heard your prayers and gave me light to see.  
You bore my body once, and now my soul,  
Reborn in sorrow, your dear love makes whole.

—J.K.

## Do I Remember Ireland?

Do I remember Ireland? Is it that you ask ashore?  
Well may be you have reason to, for fifty years or more  
Have left their changes on me, since thro' tears and ocean  
spray  
My swollen eyes beheld her shores grow dim and fade away.  
Yes, fifty years and over, that's a length of time 'tis true,  
With all its cares and troubles, its scenes and faces new:  
But neither tears nor ocean, child, will ever wear away  
The Memory of old Ireland—'tis fresh as yesterday.  
And when I call the vision up, how vivid it appears,  
So near me, and so real, through the long, long lane of  
years:  
Every scene I used to love, ev'ry haunt I used to know,  
When youth's bright days were with me, in Ireland long  
ago.  
The hills are crowned with heather, where I loved so well  
to climb  
For cowslips sweet and daisies in the beautiful springtime,  
To rob the prickly furze bush of its gems of golden pride,  
Or search beneath the hedges where the primrose used to  
hide.  
The red-breast's merry chirrup, and the thrush's joyful  
lay,  
The perfume of the hawthorn; all the beauties of the May,  
The fragrance of the turf-smoke as it curled blue and thin,  
With tales and laughter laden, from the happy hearts  
within.  
I mind me how I wandered thro' the castle old and grey,  
A thousand years 'twas standing, and 'tis standing yet  
they say.  
How grim it looked and solemn, keeping watch upon the  
flow  
Of the river that swept headlong 'neath the mossy rocks  
below.  
These pictures of the buried past come trooping up at will:  
The coach, the house it stopped at, the bridge, the noisy  
mill,

The dear old whitewashed chapel, where my childhood's  
prayers were said,  
The churchyard with, God rest them, its loved and honored  
dead.  
You say, and may be rightly, that this land has scenes as  
fair,  
I know and love its beauty, yet it's not the same as there.  
Your mountains, lakes, and rivers may be wonderful and  
grand,  
But give to me the beauties of my dear old native land.  
Yes, I remember Ireland, child, and if it were God's will—  
A foolish wish you call it, sure, but I must wish it still—  
When death shall end my days on earth, I'd wish my bed  
of clay  
With Irish sods were covered, in that churchyard far away.

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## Old Roads

If you turn west from the sunken river,  
And toil through the trees up the mountainside,  
You will come upon traces of old roads, fashioned  
By folk that long ago lived and died.  
Here are the stones of their leaf-choked sluiceways,  
And here are the tracks that their wheels have worn,  
And the broken spans of their rotted bridges  
Amid a tangle of weed and thorn.

They wind on, these roads, past roof-trees fallen;  
Past cairnlike chimneys, forsaken and cold;  
Past unpruned orchards where yet in August  
The harvest apples hang out their gold.

Where by these roads now the tireless fowler,  
Seeking for grouse, through the thickets may stray,  
Men once went trudging with cumbrous flint-locks,  
Bound for a muster or training day.

Along these roads to the springtime sowing  
With a whistle men strode in days gone by;  
Now the only music amid the stillness  
Is a hidden woodbird's grieving cry.

There, round the hearths that were home for some one,  
Cling lilacs in riot and matted grass;  
There, where the haymakers passed at sundown,  
The shy, wild shapes of the forest pass.

—G.S.B., in the *New York Tribune*.

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## Our Ancient Tongue

Many years have passed since the Lord God gave  
Out of His bounteous store  
A gift surpassing all gifts of earth,  
Or told of in fairy lore—  
'Twas the tongue of our Brehons and scholars and kings  
In the knightly days of yore.  
'Twas the tongue in which Con of the Hundred Fights  
Rallied his warrior clan;  
'Twas the brave, clear cry of the great Boru  
When the beaten lochlannach ran,  
'Twas the tongue in which thanks was given to God,  
By Lee and Liffey and Bann.

*Lamh dearg a buí* was the gallant cry  
On many a crimson field,  
And *mo bhron, mo bhron*, was the wailing sore  
For the dead, who never would yield;  
And, oh, sweetest of tongues is the tongue of the Gael  
To tell of the sorrow unhealed.

In the tongue of a nation it's spirit dwells,  
Be that spirit enslaved or free;  
Then proudest of races on earth's broad breast  
Should our country's children be,  
For the spirit that breathes in our ancient tongue  
Is the Genius of Liberty.

PADRUG MACBROINN, in the *Irish Weekly*.