

Selected Poetry

Easter Week

Grief for the noble dead
Of one who did not share their strife,
And mourned that any blood was shed,
Yet felt the broken glory of their state,
Their strange heroic questioning of Fate
Ribbon with gold the rags of this our life.
—EVA GORE-BOOTH.

Heroic Death, 1916

No man shall deck their resting place with flowers;
Behind a prison wall they stood to die,
Yet in those flowerless tragic graves of ours
Buried, the broken dreams of Ireland lie.

No cairn-heaped mound on a high windy hill
With Irish earth the hero's heart enfolds,
But a burning grave at Pentonville,
The broken heart of Ireland holds.

Ah! ye who slay the body, how man's soul
Rises above your hatred and your scorns—
All flowers fade as the years onward roll,
Theirs is the deathless wreath—a crown of thorns.
—EVA GORE-BOOTH.

I Have Not Garnered Gold

I have not garnered gold;
The fame I found hath perished;
In love I got but grief
That withered my life.

Of riches or of store
I shall not leave behind me
(Yet I deem it, O God, sufficient)
But my name in the heart of a child.
—P. H. PEARSE.

I am Ireland

I am Ireland:
I am older than the Old Woman of Beare.

Great my glory:
I that bore Cuchulainn the valiant.

Great my shame:
My own children that sold their mother.

I am Ireland:
I am lonelier than the Old Woman of Beare.
—P. H. PEARSE.

The Mother

I do not grudge them: Lord, I do not grudge
My two strong sons that I have seen go out
To break their strength and die, they and a few,
In bloody protest for a glorious thing,
They shall be spoken of among their people,
The generations shall remember them,
And call them blessed;
But I will speak their names to my own heart
In the long nights;
The little names that were familiar once
Round my dead heart.

Lord, thou art hard on mothers:
We suffer in their coming and their going;
And tho' I grudge them not, I weary, weary
Of the long sorrow—And yet I have my joy;
My sons were faithful, and they fought.
—P. H. PEARSE.

Christ's Coming

I have made heart clean to-night
As a woman might clean her house
Ere her lover come to visit her:
O Lover, pass not by!

I have opened the door of my heart
Like a man that would make a feast
For his son's coming home from afar:
Lovely Thy coming, O Son!
—P. H. PEARSE.

The Wayfarer

The beauty of the world hath made me sad,
This beauty that will pass;
Sometimes my heart hath shaken with great joy
To see a leaping squirrel in a tree,
Or a red lady-bird upon a stalk,
Or little rabbits in a field at evening,
Lit by a slanting sun,
Or some green hill where shadows drifted by
Some quiet hill where mountainy man hath sown
And soon would reap; near to the gate of Heaven;
Or children with bare feet upon the sands
Of some ebb'd sea, or playing on the streets
Of little towns in Connacht,
Things young and happy.
And then my heart hath told me:
These will pass,
Will pass and change, will die and be no more,
Things bright and green, things young and happy;
And I have gone upon my way
Sorrowful.

—P. H. PEARSE.

Renunciation

Naked I saw thee,
O beauty of beauty,
And I blinded my eyes
For fear I should fail.

I heard thy music,
O melody of melody,
And I closed my ears
For fear I should falter.

I tasted thy mouth,
O sweetness of sweetness,
And I hardened my heart
For fear of my slaying.

I blinded my eyes,
And I closed my ears,
I hardened my heart
And I smothered my desire.

I turned my back
On the vision I had shaped,
And to this road before me
I turned my face.

I have turned my face
To this road before me,
To the deed that I see
And the death I shall die.

—P. H. PEARSE.



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