

Classic Poetry Series

Emily Lawless
- poems -

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Emily Lawless(17 June 1845 – 19 October 1913)

Emily Lawless was an Irish writer.

She was born at Lyons House below Lyons Hill, Ardclough, County Kildare. Her grandfather was a member of the United Irishmen Valentine Lawless and son of a convert from Catholicism to the Church of Ireland. In contrast her brother Edward Lawless was a landowner with strong Unionist opinions, a policy of not employing Roman Catholics in any position in his household, and chairman of the Property Defence Association set up in 1880 to oppose the Land League and "uphold the rights of property against organised combination to defraud". Horace Plunkett was a cousin.

Emily wrote 19 books of fiction, biography, history, nature studies and poetry, many of which were widely read at the time. She is most famous nowadays for her Wild Geese poems.

It is widely believed that she was a lesbian and that Lady Sarah Spencer, dedicatee of *A GARDEN DIARY* (1901) was her lover.

She spent part of her childhood with the Kirwans of Castlehackett, County Galway, her mother's family, and drew on West of Ireland themes for many of her works. She occasionally used 'Edith Lytton' as pen name.

Fontenoy. 1745

OH, BAD the march, the weary march, beneath these alien skies,
But good the night, the friendly night, that soothes our tired eyes.
And bad the war, the tedious war, that keeps us sweltering here,
But good the hour, the friendly hour, that brings the battle near.
That brings us on the battle, that summons to their share
The homeless troops, the banished men, the exiled sons of Clare.

Oh, little Corca Bascinn, the wild the bleak, the fair!
Oh, little stony pastures, whose flowers are sweet, if rare!
Oh, rough the rude Atlantic, the thunderous, the wide,
Whose kiss is like a soldier's kiss which will not be denied!
The whole night long we dream of you, and waking think we're there,—
Vain dream, and foolish waking, we never shall see Clare.

The wind is wild to-night, there's battle in the air;
The wind is from the west, and it seems to blow from Clare.
Have you nothing, nothing for us, loud brawler of the night?
No news to warm our heart-strings, to speed us through the fight?
In this hollow, star-pricked darkness, as in the sun's hot glare,
In sun-tide, in star-tide, we thirst, we starve for Clare!

Hark! Yonder through the darkness one distant rat-tat-tat!
The old foe stirs out there, God bless his soul for that!
The old foe musters strongly, he's coming on at last,
And Clare's Brigade may claim its own wherever blows fall fast.
Send us, ye western breezes, our full, our rightful share,
For Faith, and Fame, and Honour, and the ruined hearths of Clare.

II.—After the Battle; early dawn, Clare coast.

MARY MOTHER, shield us! Say, what men are ye,
Sweeping past to swiftly on this morning sea?"
"Without sails or rowlocks merrily we glide
Home to Corca Bascinn on the brimming tide."

"Jesus save you, gentry! why are you so white,
Sitting all so straight and still in this misty light?"
"Nothing ails us, brother; joyous souls are we,

Sailing home together, on the morning sea.”

“Cousins, friends, and kinsfolk, children of the land,
Here we come together, a merry, rousing band;
Sailing home together from the last great fight,
Home to Clare from Fontenoy, in the morning light.

“Men of Corca Bascinn, men of Clare’s Brigade,
Harken stony hills of Clare, hear the charge we made;
See us come together, singing from the fight,
Home to Corca Bascinn, in the morning light.”

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In Spain

YOUR sky is a hard and a dazzling blue,
Your earth and sands are a dazzling gold,
And gold or blue is the proper hue,
You say for a swordsman bold.

In the land I have left the skies are cold,
The earth is green, the rocks are bare,
yet the devil may hold all your blue and your gold
Were I only once back there!

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In Spain: Drinking Song

MANY are praised, and some are fair,
But the fairest of all is She,
And he who misdoubts let him have a care,
For her liegemen sworn are we!
Then Ho! for the land that is green and grey,
The land of all lands the best,
For the South is bright and the East is gay,
But the sun shines last in the West,
The West!
The sun shines last in the West!

A queen is she, though a queen forlorn,
A queen of tears from her birth,
Ragged and hungry, woeful and worn,
Yet the fairest Fair on the earth.

Then here's to the land that is green and grey,
The land of all lands the best!
For the South is bright, and the East is gay,
But the sun shines last in the West,
The West!
The sun shines last in the West!

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