

Poetry Series

# **Thomas MacDonagh**

## **- poems -**

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# Thomas MacDonagh(1 February 1878 - 3 May 1916)

Thomas MacDonagh (Irish: Tomás Mac Donnchadha) was an Irish nationalist, poet, playwright, and a leader of the 1916 Easter Rising.

## <b>Early Life</b>

MacDonagh was born in Cloughjordan, County Tipperary. He grew up in a household filled with music, poetry and learning and was instilled with a love of both English and Irish culture from a young age.

Both his parents were teachers; who strongly emphasized education. MacDonagh attended Rockwell College. While there MacDonagh aspired to become a priest or brother and spent several years studying for this the vocation, however, after a few years he realized that it wasn't the life for him, and left.

He had abandoned a vocation for the priesthood, which came with the stigma of being "a spoiled priest". Very soon after, he published his first book of poems, *Through the Ivory Gate*, in 1902. He moved to Dublin where he joined the Gaelic League, soon establishing strong friendships with such men as Eoin MacNeill and Patrick Pearse.

## <b>Teaching Career</b>

His friendship with Pearse and his love of Irish led him to join the staff of Pearse's bilingual St. Enda's School upon its establishment in 1908, taking the role of teacher and Assistant Headmaster. He also founded the teachers' trade union ASTI (Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland). Though MacDonagh was essential to the school's early success, he soon moved on to take the position of lecturer in English at the National University. MacDonagh remained devoted to the Irish language, and in 1910 he became tutor to a younger member of the Gaelic League, Joseph Plunkett. The two were both poets with an interest in the Irish Theatre, and formed a lifelong friendship.

In January 1912 he married Muriel Gifford, a Protestant who converted to Catholicism; their son, Donagh, was born that November, and their daughter, Barbara, in March 1915. Muriel's sister, Grace Gifford, was to marry Joseph Mary Plunkett hours before his execution in 1916.

## <b>Republicanism</b>

In 1913 both MacDonagh and Plunkett attended the inaugural meeting of the

Irish Volunteers and were placed on its Provisional Committee. He was later appointed commandant of Dublin's 2nd battalion, and eventually made commandant of the entire Dublin Brigade. Though originally more of a constitutionalist, through his dealings with men such as Pearse, Plunkett, and Sean MacDermott, MacDonagh developed stronger republican beliefs, joining the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), probably during the summer of 1915. Around this time Tom Clarke asked him to plan the grandiose funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, which was a resounding propaganda success, largely due to the graveside oration delivered by Pearse.

### **<b>Easter Rising</b>**

Though credited as one of the Easter Rising's seven leaders, MacDonagh was a late addition to that group. He didn't join the secret Military Council that planned the rising until April 1916, weeks before the rising took place. The reason for his admittance at such a late date is uncertain. Still a relative newcomer to the IRB, men such as Clarke may have been hesitant to elevate him to such a high position too soon, which raises the question as to why he should be admitted at all. His close ties to Pearse and Plunkett may have been the cause, as well as his position as commandant of the Dublin Brigade (though his position as such would later be superseded by James Connolly as commandant-general of the Dublin division). Nevertheless, MacDonagh was a signatory of the Proclamation of the Republic.

During the rising, MacDonagh's battalion was stationed at the massive complex of Jacob's Biscuit Factory. On the way to this destination the battalion encountered the veteran Fenian, John MacBride, who on the spot joined the battalion as second-in-command, and in fact took over part of the command throughout Easter Week, although he had had no prior knowledge and was in the area by accident. MacDonagh's original second in command was Michael O'Hanrahan.

As it was, despite MacDonagh's rank and the fact that he commanded one of the strongest battalions, they saw little fighting, as the British Army avoided the factory as they established positions in central Dublin. MacDonagh received the order to surrender on April 30, though his entire battalion was fully prepared to continue the engagement. Following the surrender, MacDonagh was court martialled, and executed by firing squad on 3 May 1916, aged thirty-eight.

His widow died of heart failure while swimming in Skerries, Co Dublin on July 9, 1917; his son Donagh MacDonagh became a prominent poet, playwright, songwriter and judge. He died in 1968. In addition, his extended family were

spread across the British Isles in the Irish diaspora.

### <b>Reputation and Legacy</b>

MacDonagh was generally credited with being one of the most gregarious and personable of the rising's leaders. Geraldine Plunkett Dillon, a sister of Joseph Plunkett gives a contemporary description of him in her book *All in the Blood*: "As soon as Tomás came into our house everyone was a friend of his. He had a pleasant, intelligent face and was always smiling, and you had the impression that he was always thinking about what you were saying." In *Mary Colum's Life and the Dream*, she writes of hearing about the Rising from America, where she was living with her husband, Pádraic Colum, remembering Tomás MacDonagh saying to her: "This country will be one entire slum unless we get into action, in spite of our literary movements and Gaelic Leagues it is going down and down. There is no life or heart left in the country."

A prominent figure in the Dublin literary world, he was commemorated in several poems by [W.B. Yeats](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-butler-yeats/) and in his friend [Francis Ledwidge](http://www.poemhunter.com/francis-ledwidge/)'s Lament for Thomas MacDonagh.

Thomas MacDonagh Tower in Ballymun, Dublin, which was built in the 1960s and demolished in June 2005, was named after him, as was the train station (MacDonagh Station) and shopping centre (MacDonagh Junction) in Kilkenny (as MacDonagh had taught in St Kierans College, Kilkenny City during the early years of his career).

# A Dream Of Age

I dreamt last night that I was very old,  
And very lonesome, very sad of heart;  
And, shunning men, dwelt in a place apart  
Where none my barren sorrow might behold;  
There brooded grim beside my hearth-stone cold  
Cold days of shadow, dying, till with flame  
Of happy memory once more you came  
With laughing eyes and hair of burning gold.

-- O eyes of sudden joy! O storm-blown hair!  
O pale face of my love! why do you rise  
Amid the haunting spectres of despair  
To trouble their gaunt vigil with my cries?--  
In tears I woke and knew the dream was true:  
My youth was lost, and lost the love of you.

Thomas MacDonagh

# A Dream Of Being

I walked in dream within a convent close,  
And met there lonely a familiar nun;  
Then in my mind arose  
A vehement memory strife  
With doubt of being, arose and was fought and was won.  
Trembling I said: 'O mother of my life!'  
And she in tears: 'At last my fond heart knows--  
Surely I am the mother of my son!'  
And greeted me in dear maternal wise,  
And asked me all the story of my days,  
Silently garnering my quick replies,  
Shamefastly holding breath upon my praise  
Of him to whom she plighted the world's vows  
(So ran the tale), my father, her loved spouse.

It did not then seem strange that this should be  
(A long time there we stayed in company)  
Until she pondering said:  
'And yet I chose the better part, my child,  
When from that world's love and from thee I fled,  
Leaving the wild  
That I could never till aright and dreaded,  
And sought this marriage garden undefiled,  
The virgin of the Lover whom I wedded.

'Twenty years old I hither came,  
Twenty years ago:  
My child, if thy life were the same  
As in this tale thou dreamest now to know,  
These twenty years had been thine age to-day.'  
I answered her: 'It is my age to-day.'

And then a while she mused, nor marked the call  
Of one monotonous bell, nor heard, within the hall  
Hard by, the lonesome-sounding late foot-fall  
Of one nun passing after the rest were gone:  
Within they filled their places one by one,  
And a few wondered doubtless with vague surmise,  
Less on response devout,

Why still she tarried at that hour without.  
I heard their voices rise and fall and rise  
In their long prayer like quiet faded sighs  
Calling from hearts that lost  
Their passion long ago,  
That are not toss'd  
On waves that make them crying go  
Ever at all or make them happily go.  
She, quiet thus also,  
And something sad,  
Spoke on: 'My child, what if I had  
Chosen the other part, sought that world's love  
Of him thou tell'st me of,  
And thus had stayed with thee?--  
It had not then been better and not worse  
(I pray that thus it be),  
No blessing and no curse,  
Making the only difference of thee,  
No difference at all (that is) or false or true,  
To welcome or to rue  
No difference, whether thou came to be  
A man for men to see  
Or all a dream, my dreaming soul to fill  
With fancy thus an hour so waywardly.  
I turn back to the plot of life I till  
To fruit of such due virginal gifts  
As my soul lifts  
Within this heaven's house  
For twenty years unto my Lover and Spouse:  
I here return, and leave the dreamèd plot  
Which I have laboured not,--  
Leave thee, my child, who never has been born.  
Alas! Alas! that so thou art forlorn,  
Since I must lose thee so once more  
As I have lost thee (thus my dream) before,--  
Since I must lose thee...' 'Ah, dream of life!' said I,  
'What if the dream be life, and the waking dream?'  
Her eyes did wistful seem,  
A moment wistful, then with patient sigh,  
'If thou dream so,' she said, 'thou art indeed my dream.  
Strange that a dream like thee can dream again,  
And dreaming yearn for being!

And, vision-seen, can yearn for seeing!  
My child, thou standest always in God's ken,  
In ken of me an hour, never of men;  
And thou wilt now from mine depart,  
And wilt return  
Seldom to mind of me, never to heart:  
Nor shall I wonder or mourn,  
For it is but the difference of thee  
Who art now, art not in eternity;  
Nor wonder ever thus of him whose praise  
Thou didst rear so in story of thy days:  
He may be vain as thy vain days that burn,  
Small hour by hour, in other than life's fire,  
Though with my life coëval they expire:  
Life thou dost run, and he,  
Only in dream of me,--  
Who is the dreamer?' she faltered. I, poor ghost,  
Left here there pondering as the vespers ceased;  
And sisters hurrying forth met me almost  
Where I passed slowly out, from the dream released.

Thomas MacDonagh



# A Dream Of Hell

Last night I dreamt I was in hell;  
In waking dread I dream it yet;  
I feel the gloom, my brow is wet;  
My soul is prisoner of the spell.

Hell, gloomy, still, -- no fire, no cry.  
Flames were a joy and shrieks delight.  
And sounds of woe and painful light  
Were bliss to gloom without a sigh.

I dreamt that moments passed like years  
In dumb blind darkness whelmed and drowned,  
In silence of a single sound,  
In grief eternal void of tears.

A single sound I heard all night  
Pulse through the stillness like a sob:  
I heard the weary changeless throb  
Of dead damned hearts the silence smite.

No change, no end; no end, no change--  
As in a death house when the door  
Is closed, and to return no more  
One form is gone, when stillness strange

Creeps in and in one dim room stays,  
The widow, who with sleepless eyes  
Has watched long, hears with dull surprise  
A ticking she has heard for days,

So heard I myriad heart-beats blend  
Into one mighty changeless knell,  
The throb-song of the silent hell:  
No end, no change; no change no end.

In silence, solitude and gloom,  
With working brain and throbbing heart,  
Remembering things that cannot start  
To life again out of the tomb,

Remembering, ruining, day by day,  
And year by year, and age by age,  
In sorrow without tear or rage  
Watching the moments pass away,

I found thee -- of all mortals thee!--  
Buried in hell for endless time,  
Buried in hell for unknown crime,  
Who ever wert a saint to me.

I found thee there -- I know not how--  
And thou wilt never know that I,  
Thy pitying friend of earth, was nigh--  
My pity ne'er can reach thee now.

Thomas MacDonagh

# A Season Of Repose

In summer time, under the leaves, in Calm  
Of middle country, sweet it is to be  
Alone amid the old monotony  
Of sabbath Peace, which, holy as a Psalm  
Of David, falls on aching Thought in balm,  
Rich with the reverence of high ecstasy  
And dreams of David's land of vine and palm.

David is dead long time, and poets here  
Sell their rich souls upon more sordid marts:  
And as a grape is crushed all human hearts  
Are trampled of the Beauty they held dear,  
Their Wine soon quaffed, their Memory but a tear  
Dried by new Passion ere another starts--  
Dream not of David thou in human fear.

All souls are lost in the vain world of noise;  
All gifts of God are bartered for that pelf  
And every angel soul will change itself  
To serve a brutish idol which destroys  
The sacred spirit's mortal equipoise,  
Eternal Calm -- to serve an evil elf  
Who traffics but Life's lust for Cherub joys.

Here, in a Summer of sweet Solitude,  
Oblivion lives gentlier than Thought,  
Which pains the spirit anxious and distraught,  
Hissing harsh names of disillusion rude--  
Blind Apathy of men, Ingratitude,  
And Gain for loss of noble kin dear bought--  
Here, 'mid the rose, let Envy not intrude.

The pious time of fretful Quietness  
Is panting with the happy heart of Noon,  
And Life, under the leaves, were yet a boon,  
If, lulled in slumber mute, this Happiness  
By night or day knew everlastingness,  
If 'twere not hurt by dread of waking soon,  
Something endured amid the world to bless--

Song, by enraptured Beauty waked and stirred,  
Filling the heart with bitter shrill delight,  
Killing the heart with joy to live aright,  
Stronger than Thought doled out in sound and word,  
And better than all noise of pipe or bird--  
The spirit's own high winging in great light,  
The spirit's own clear singing, spirit-heard.

Leaves weave a world of images to last--  
The tideless placid passage of the Nile,  
The sensuous seasons of a tropic isle,  
The blooms, the glooms, the shadows over-cast  
That fall in opiate peace upon the Past,  
Far from the stress of cities mile on mile,  
The middle calm of country, earth-bound fast.

In the beginning Calm on all things lay--  
Clung round Eternity as Light on Space,  
Setting a glory unto Beauty's face,  
Lulling the primal Time to drowse and stay;  
When we are hence she shall resume her sway  
And rule with other Time in every place--  
When echoes of old Life have ebbed away.

Here was a Druid's house of noise and spell  
In the forgotten yesterday of now:  
The glade called out with sacrifice and vow,  
Till on his gods long Death oblivious fell,  
And with that far Dawn rang the cloister bell  
Calling lone hermits at one shrine to bow:  
The forest stands above their dark-built cell.

The Tide with hideous whirl and wash and foam  
Breaks over all and all with tumult fills;  
But anon ebbs, backwards its billow spills:--  
Horace, the fish are free! But earth and loam  
Have claimed the ruins of thy little home,  
Have claimed thy farm among the Sabine hills,--  
Aye, and one day will claim thy tomb and Rome.

Ah, drown the hours deep in Oblivion's wave,

Or living shun they still Death's old regret!  
Unconscious falls the rose, the mignonette  
Buries its odour in a winter's grave,  
And no vain Love will strive their joy to save,  
No heart throb slow and think ne'er to forget--  
Only this human Life for tears doth crave.

O Vanity too vain of human heart,  
How dost thou mind thy Summer's withered bloom,  
And Beauty, springing from her Mother's tomb!  
How dost thou yearn for Manners that depart,  
And Times with goodness holy that will start  
To no new being from their tarnished gloom!--  
How dost thou cherish Memory's idle smart!

Drown Thought -- but ah, it will not die or swoon!  
It is the Worm that liveth for Hell's pain,  
The smoke of torment haunting the quick brain  
With faces mocking as the winter moon  
To a lost child, who hears the Banshee's croon  
Shrill in the shimmer of the icy plain,  
And knows her clammy hand will clasp him soon.

So are these piteous tears for ever shed,  
And Grief waits everywhere among the crowd  
Where Life with noise and folly most is loud:  
Now she invades my solitude with Dread  
And anxious Thought, all in my Summer bed  
Of flowers the fairest, curtained with a cloud  
Of lilac bloom, in Quiet's mansion spread.

But Noon is far, the dusk more narrow grows;  
And soon a star will hush the sparrow's din,  
And fold them all the stooping eaves within;  
Now cold will fall with drooping leaves the rose,  
The lilac flowers will drink the dew and close;  
And silent Hours will link anew and spin  
The world and Thought round Seasons of Repose.

Thomas MacDonagh

# A Song Of Another. For Eoghan

Often enough the leaves have fallen there  
Since life for her was changed to other care;  
Often enough the winds that swept the wave  
And mocked my woe, have moaned over her grave.

I will return: Death now can do no more  
Anywhere on these seas or on the shore,  
Since he has stilled her heart. I cannot mourn  
For her on these wild seas: I will return.

Death now can do no more. And what but Death  
Has any final power? He ceased her breath,  
Striking her dumb lips pallid; quenched the lights  
That were, O Death, my stars of the wild nights  
Out on rude ocean -- quenched and closed her eyes  
That were, O Death, my stars of the dawn-rise!

Long years ago her quiet form was thrust  
Into the quiet earth; low in the dust  
Her golden hair lies tarnished every thread  
These lone long years, tarnished and dim and dead.

I will return to the far valley, blest  
With her soul's presence, now her home of rest--  
(Where life was peace to her now death is peace)--  
There by her grave my pilgrimage may cease;  
There life, there death, in my vain heart shall stir  
No passion but the old true love of her.

Thomas MacDonagh

# A Woman

Time on her face has writ  
A hundred years,  
And all the page of it  
Blurred with his tears;

Yet in his holiest crypt  
Treasuring the scroll,  
Keeps the sweet manuscript  
Fair as her soul.

Thomas MacDonagh

# After A Year

After a year of love  
Death of love in a day;  
And I who ever strove  
To hold love in sure life  
Now let it pass away  
With no grief and no strife.

Pass -- but it holds me yet;  
Love, it would seem, may die;  
But we can not forget  
And can not be the same,  
As lowly or as high,  
As once, before this came.

Never as in old days  
Can I again stoop low;  
Never, now fallen, raise  
Spirit and heart above  
To where once life did show  
The lone soul of my love.

None would the service ask  
That she from love requires,  
Making it not a task  
But a high sacrament  
Of all love's dear desires  
And all life's grave intent.

And if she asked it not?--  
Should I have loved her then?--  
Such love was our one lot  
And our true destiny.  
Shall I find truth again?--  
None could have known but she.

And she?-- But it is vain  
Her life now to surmise,  
Whether of joy or pain,  
After this borrowed year.



Memory may bring her sighs,  
But will it bring a tear?

What if it brought love back?--  
Love? -- Ah! love died to-day--  
She knew that our hearts lack  
One thing that makes love true.  
And I would not gainsay,  
Told her I also knew.

And there an end of it--  
I, who had never brooked  
Such word as all unfit  
For our sure love, brooked this--  
Into her eyes I looked,  
Left her without a kiss.

Thomas MacDonagh

# At Dawn

Lo! 'tis the lark  
Out in the sweet of the dawn!  
Springing up from the dew of the lawn,  
Singing over the gurth and the park!--  
O Dawn, red rose to change my life's grey story!  
O Song, mute lips burning to lyric glory!  
O Joy! Joy of the lark,  
Over the dewy lawn,  
Over the gurth and the park,  
In the sweet of the dawn!

Thomas MacDonagh

# At The End

The songs that I sing  
Should have told you an Easter story  
Of a long sweet Spring  
With its gold and its feasts and its glory.

Of the moons then that married  
Green May to the mellow September,  
Long noons that ne'er tarried  
Life's hail and farewell to remember--

But the haste of the years  
Had rushed to the fall of our sorrow,  
To the waste of our tears,  
The hush and the pall of our morrow.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Averil

I love thee, April! for thou art the Spring  
When Spring is Summer; and thy wayward showers,  
Sudden and short, soothly do bring May flowers,  
Thus making thee a harbinger, whose wing  
Bright jewels, Nature's rarest choice, doth fling  
O'er dewy-glistening brakes and banks and bowers,  
To ravish loving eyes through longer hours  
When Winter is a dead forgotten thing.

Such promise dost thou give of Summer bloom;--  
But thine own sunshine hast thou, thine own light;  
And fair are April flowers, April leaves--  
Fairer to eyes aching from Winter's gloom  
Than late-blown joys of May, that greet the sight  
When drunk with gladness it from thee receives.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Barbara: Born 24th March, 1915

You come in the day of destiny,  
Barbara, born to the air of Mars:  
The greater glory you shall see  
And the greater peace, beyond these wars.

In other days within this isle,  
As in a temple, men knew peace;  
And won the world to peace a while  
Till rose the pride of Rome and Greece,--

The pride of art, the pride of power,  
The cruel empire of the mind:  
Withered the light like a summer flower,  
And hearts went cold and souls went blind;

And, groping, men took other gifts,  
(God is so good), and thought them the best:  
But the light lives in the soul that lifts  
The quiet love above the rest.

I have dreamt of you as the Maid of Quiet  
Entempled in ecstasy of joy,  
Secure from the madness of blood and the riot  
Of fame that lures with the glory of Troy,--

Barbara, alien to Athens and Rome,  
Barbara, free from their pride of wit,  
Strange to the country of Exile, at home  
In Eden, by memory and promise of it.

And so I have dreamt of your happy state  
When men go home from Troy and strife,  
And wait again for the vision, and wait  
To know the secret of their life.

I have dreamt that they will find you there  
Barbaric, strange, like Seraph or Saint,  
Innocent of their glory and care,  
Strong in the wit that their wit makes faint.

Yet why should I dream for you, my child?  
The deed will always out-dare the dream:  
This garden go the way of wild :  
These things will change from what they seem;

They will change to the glory they knew of old  
In the old barbaric way of the world  
That flames again in the hearts that were cold  
That flings to the winds the flags that were furled.

For the old flags wave again, like trees:  
The forest will come with the timid things  
That are stronger than the dynasties,  
As your curls are stronger than iron rings.

When the life of the cities of Europe goes  
The way of Memphis and Babylon,  
In Ireland still the mystic rose  
Will shine as it of old has shone.

O rose of Grace! O rare wild flower,  
Whose seeds are sent on the wings of Light!  
O secret rose, our doom, our dower,  
Black with the passion of our night;

Be bright again in the heart of this child,  
In peace, in trembling joy made known!  
Let Exile and Eden be reconciled  
For her on earth, in wild and sown!

Be one, my child, with that which returns  
As sure as Spring, to the arid earth  
(When the hearth lies cold the wild fire burns:  
When the sown lies dead the wild gives birth).

Be one with Nature, with that which begins,  
One with the fruitful power of God:  
A virtue clean among our sins,  
'Mid the stones of our ruin a flowering rod.

And, against the Greek, be one with the Gael,

One knowledge of God against all human,  
One sacred gift that shall not fail,  
One with the Gael against the Roman.

So may you go the barbaric way  
That the earth may be Paradise anew,  
And Troy from memory pass away,  
And the pride of wit be naught to you.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Catullus : Lxxvi.

If there be joy for one who looks back on his youth  
And knows he has kept faith with God and men,  
Never outraged the sanctity of truth,  
And never outraged trust -- there is joy then  
For you, Catullus, in the long years to be,  
Out of this love, out of this misery.

For all the service and duty that men can wish and give  
You have given to one heart, and you know their loss--  
They are lost, and their loss tortures you, and you live  
Wretched to rail at fate -- you are on your cross!  
Leave your cross. Take the only cure, and be  
Resolute, rid of love and misery!

It is hard at once to lay aside the love of years--  
It is hard, but must be -- God! if ever you gave  
Help to the dying -- if you are moved by tears,  
Look on me wretched! Pity me and save!  
I have lived pure -- from this love let me free!  
Let me free, root this canker out of me!

This lethargy has crawled through all my heart and brain,  
And driven out joy, like death evil and sure.  
I do not ask that she love me again,  
Nor -- what can not be now -- that she be pure.  
Let me be strong, rid of this agony --  
O God, for what I have been grant this to me!

Thomas MacDonagh



## Catullus : V.

Let us live and let us love,  
Lesbia, caring not a curse  
For the prate of Sour old men.  
Suns may set and rise again;  
But for us, when our brief light  
Once is set, waits one sheer night  
To be spent in single slumber.

Give me a thousand kisses, love,  
Then a hundred, -- then rehearse,  
Thousand, hundred, till they mount  
Millions -- and then blot the count;  
Lest we know, -- or some sore devil  
Over-look and bring us evil,  
Knowing all our kisses' number.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Catullus : Viii.

My poor Catullus, what is gone is gone,  
Take it for gone, and be a fool no more--  
Heaven, what a time it was! Then white suns alone  
For you, you following where she went before--  
I loved her as none ever shall be loved!

Then happened all those happy things -- all over,  
All over, all gone now, and far away!  
Then you got all you would, my happy lover,  
And she was not unwilling -- day after day  
White suns shone, white suns shone, and you were loved.

And now she is unwilling -- let her know  
That you can turn back from a vain pursuit,  
Now live no longer wretched, turn and go  
Strong on your way, be hard, be resolute.--  
Good-bye, my dear. Catullus goes unmoved.

Catullus never will yearn for you again.  
You are unwilling -- he will not ask for you.  
You'll sorrow when no one asks for you,-- and then,  
Bitter and bad and old, what will you do?  
What hope have you to give love and be loved?

What life is there for you? -- What life is there?  
Who will come now for love and your delight?  
Whose will they say you are? Who'll think you fair?  
Whom will you kiss? Whose lips now will you bite?  
But you, Catullus, go your way unmoved.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Cormac Óg

At home the doves are sporting, the Summer is nigh--  
Oh, blossoms of April set in the crowns of the trees!--  
On the streams the cresses, clustering, knotted, lie,  
And the hives are bursting with spoil of the honey bees.

Rich there in worth and in fruit is a forest fine;  
A winsome, lithe, holy maiden -- oh, fair to see!  
A hundred brave horses, lambs and a hundred kine  
By Lee of the trout -- and I an exile from thee!

The birds their dear voices are turning all to song,  
The calves are bleating aloud for their mother's side,  
The fish are leaping high where the midges throng--  
And I alone with young Cormac here must abide!

Thomas MacDonagh

# Death

Life is a boon -- and death, as spirit and flesh are twain:  
The body is spoil of death, the spirit lives on death-free;  
The body dies and its wound dies and the mortal pain;  
The wounded spirit lives, wounded immortally.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Death In The Woods

When I am gone and you alone are living here still,  
You'll think of me when splendid the storm is on the hill,  
Trampling and militant here -- what of their village street?--  
For the baying of winds in the woods to me was music sweet.

Oh, for the storms again, and youth in my heart again!  
My spirit to glory strained, wild in this wild wood then,  
That now shall never strain -- though I think if the tempest should roll  
I could rise and strive with death, and smite him back from my soul.

But no wind stirs a leaf, and no cloud hurries the moon;  
I know that our lake to-night with stars and shadows is strewn--  
A night for a villager's death, who will shudder in his grave  
To hear -- alas, how long! -- the winds above him rave.

How long! Ah, Death, what art thou, a thing of calm or of storms?  
Or twain -- their peace to them, to me thy valiant alarms?  
Gladly I'd leave them this corpse in their churchyard to lay at rest,  
If my wind-swept spirit could fare on the hurricane's kingly quest.

And sure 'tis the fools of knowledge who feign that the winds of the world  
Are but troubles of little calms by the greater Calm enfurled:  
I know then for symbols of glory, and echoes of one Voice dread,  
Sounding where spacious tempests house the great-hearted Dead.

And what but a fool was I, crying defiance to Death,  
Who shall lead my soul from this calm to mingle with God's very breath!--  
Who shall lead me hither and perhaps while you are waiting here still,  
Sighing for thought of me when the winds are out on the hill.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Druimfhionn Donn Dilis

-- O Druimfhionn Donn Dilis!  
O Silk of the Kine!  
Where goest thou for sleeping?  
What pastures are thine?  
-- In the woods with my gilly  
Always I must keep,  
And 'tis that now that leaves me  
Forsaken to weep.

Land, homestead, wines, music:  
I am reft of them all!  
Chief and bard that once wooed me  
Are gone from my call!  
And cold water to soothe me  
I sup with my tears,  
While the foe that pursues me  
Has drinking that cheers.

-- Through the mist of the glensides  
And hills I return:  
Like a brogue beyond mending  
The Sasanach I'll spurn:  
If in battle's contention  
I have sight of the crown,  
I'll befriend thee and defend thee,  
My young Druimfhionn Donn!

Thomas MacDonagh

# Dublin Tramcars

I.

A sailor sitting in a tram--  
A face that winces in the wind--  
That sees and knows me what I am,  
That looks through courtesy and sham  
And sees the good and bad behind--  
He is not God to save or damn,  
Thank God, I need not wish him blind!

II.

Calvin and Chaucer I saw to-day  
Come into the Terenure car:  
Certain I am that it was they,  
Though someone may know them here and say  
What different men they are,  
I know their pictures -- and there they sat,  
And passing the Catholic church at Rathgar  
Calvin took off his hat  
And blessed himself, and Chaucer at that  
Chuckled and looked away.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Eamonn An Chnuic

--Who is that out there still  
With voice sharp and shrill,  
Beating my door and calling?  
--I am Ned of the Hill,  
Wet, weary and chill,  
The mountains and glens long walking.

--O my dear love and true!  
What could I do for you  
But under my mantle draw you?  
For the bullets like hail  
Fall thick on your trail,  
And together we both may be slaughtered.

--Long lonely I go  
Under frost, under snow,  
Hunted through hill and through hollow.  
No comrade I know:  
No furrow I sow:  
My team stands unyoked in the fallow:

No friend will give ear  
Or harbour me here,--  
'Tis that makes the weight of my sorrow!  
So my journey must be  
To the east o'er the sea  
Where no kindred will find me or follow!

Thomas MacDonagh



# Envoi

I send these creatures to lay a ghost,  
And not to raise up fame!  
For I shrink from the way that they go almost  
As I shrink from the way that they came.

To lose their sorrow I send them so,  
And to lose the joys I held dear;  
Ere I on another journey go  
And leave my dead youth here.

For I am the lover, the anchoret,  
And the suicide -- but in vain;  
I have failed in their deeds, and I want them yet,  
And this life derides my pain.

I suffer unrest and unrest I bring,  
And my love is mixed with hate;  
And the one that I love wants another thing,  
Less unkind and less passionate.

So I know I have lost the thing that I sought,  
And I know that by my loss  
I have won the thing that others have bought  
In agony on this cross.

But I whose creed is only death  
Do not prize their victory;  
I know that my life is but a breath  
On the glass of eternity.

And so I am sorry that I failed,  
And that I shall never fulfil  
The hope of joy that once I hailed  
And the love that I yearn for still.

In a little while 'twill be all the same,  
But I shall have missed my joy;  
And that was a better thing than fame  
Which others can make or destroy.

So I send on their way with this crude rime  
These creatures of bitter truth,  
Not to raise up fame for a future time,  
But to lay the ghost of my youth.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now it is time to start, John-John,  
And leave this life behind;  
We'll be free on the road that we journey on  
Whatever fate we find.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Envoi : 1904

Seeking, I onward strive, straight on, nor yet  
Come to the place I sighted long ago,  
Nor shall come, I fear now, until the glow  
Of this impetuous morning-tide be set  
'Mid sober-tinted clouds of calm regret,  
Philosophy -- destined perhaps to grow,  
For all their shadow, into truth, and so  
To trust more sure that strongly can forget.

The prelude thus of all my after-play  
These variant notes, most wayward, hesitant,--  
The groping of blind fingers that will stray  
Over the stiff strange keys ere the bold chant  
Breaks from the organ, sudden, resonant,  
And men that murmured waiting, silent stay.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Eve (From The Old Irish)

I am Eve, great Adam's wife,  
I that wrought my children's loss,  
I that wronged Jesus of life,  
Mine by right had been the cross.

I a kingly house forsook,  
Ill my choice and my disgrace,  
Ill the counsel that I took  
Withering me and all my race.

I that brought winter in  
And the windy glistening sky,  
I that brought sorrow and sin,  
Hell and pain and terror, I.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Fairy Tales

O spirits heaven born!  
O kind De Danann souls,  
Whose music down our story rolls,  
And holds it near the morn,

You stir the poet heart  
To dream in quickening rimes  
The magic of the fairy times  
That never shall depart!

O fairy people good,  
Truth-tellers of the dew!  
The face of truth smiles only true  
Beneath your beauty's hood;

And wins from idle story  
Souls that the world would mar,  
Showing the common things that are  
As images of glory.

Thomas MacDonagh

# For Victory

An old man weeps  
And a young man sorrows  
While a child is busy with his gladness.  
The old shall cheer  
And the young shall battle,--  
The child shall tremble for their gladness.

O Victory  
How fair thou comest,  
Young though the ages are thy raiment!  
Thy song of death  
How sweet thou singest,  
Coming in that splendour of thy raiment!

All flaming thou  
In grandeur of the Fianna  
Or crowned with the memory of Tara!  
In the fame of Kings,  
In the might of chieftains,  
Bound in the memory of Tara!

Sweet little child  
To thee the victory--  
Thou shalt be now as the Fianna!  
For thee the feast,  
For thee the lime-white mansions,  
And the hounds on the hills of Fianna!

Thomas MacDonagh

# Grange House Lodge

Babylon is passed away,  
Dublin's day must now begin;  
On the hill above the bay  
Make your mansion, pray and sin.

Pray for grace yourself to be,  
To be free in all you do,  
For a straight sincerity,--  
Grace to see a point of view.

And you'll sin in praying so,  
For to know you're right is wrong,--  
Yet we can't like blossoms grow  
But to blow the wind along.

Sin is always very near--  
It is here as in the crowd;  
Know you're humble and austere,--  
Be sincere and you'll be proud.

Once was purple Babylon  
The pavilion of our pride,  
Now the lodge of Mauravaun  
Stays us on the mountain side.

In a lodge inside a gate  
Live in state and live apart,  
Till the little-distant date  
When your fate will bid you start,--

Bid you leave this room and that,  
Where you sat and where you slept,--  
Lock the door and leave the mat,  
Smiling at the way 'twas kept.

For, whate'er your sin or whim,  
You were prim and rounded things;  
And you kept your life in trim,  
Though not as the hymn-book sings.

What about it after all?--  
If you fall you rise again,  
And at least you never sprawl  
At the call of other men.

There again by pride you sin--  
Come within and shut the door;  
Far from Babylonian din  
Now begin your prayer once more.

Save me from sincerity  
Such as spoiled the Pharisee.-- Amen.

Thomas MacDonagh



# I Heard A Music Sweet To-Day

I heard a music sweet to-day,  
A simple olden tune,  
And thought of yellow leaves of May  
And bursting buds of June,  
Of dewdrops sparkling on a spray  
Until the thirst of noon.

A golden primrose in the rain  
Out of the green did grow--  
Ah! sweet of life in Winter's wane  
When airs of April blow!--  
Then drifted with the changing strain  
Into a dream of snow.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Ideal

Fragment of a perfect plan  
Is the mortal life of man:  
Beauty alone can make it whole,  
Beauty alone can help the soul  
To labour over the island span  
Lying between seas that roll  
Darkly, forward and behind:  
Beauty beatific will bind  
The mortal and the immortal mind.

Thomas MacDonagh

# In Absence

Last night I read your letters once again--  
Read till the dawn filled all my room with grey;  
Then quenched my light and put the leaves away,  
And prayed for sleep to ease my heart's great pain.  
But ah! that poignant tenderness made vain  
My hope of rest -- I could not sleep or pray  
For thought of you, and the slow, broadening day  
Held me there prisoner of my throbbing brain.

Yet I did sleep before the silence broke,  
And dream, but not of you -- the old dreams rife  
With duties which would bind me to the yoke  
Of my old futile, lone, reluctant life:  
I stretched my hands for help in the vain strife,  
And grasped these leaves, and to this pain awoke.

Thomas MacDonagh

# In An Island

'Mid an isle I stand,  
Under its only tree:  
The ocean around--  
Around life eternity:  
'Mid my life I stand,  
Under the boughs of thee.

Thomas MacDonagh

# In Calm

Not a wind blows and I have cried for storm!  
The night is still and sullen and too bright,  
Still and not cold,-- the airs around me warm  
Rise, and I hate them, and I hate the night.

Yet I shall hate the day more than the hush  
Henceforth forever, as life more than death;--  
And I have cried to hear the wild winds rush  
To drown my words, to drown my living breath.

Thomas MacDonagh

# In Dread

All day in widowed loneliness and dread  
Haunted I went, fearing that all your love  
Was dead, and all my joy, as sudden dead  
As once were sudden born our joy and love.

Thomas MacDonagh

# In Fever

I am withered and wizened and stiff and old,  
Sick and hot, and I sigh for the cold,  
For the days when all of the world was fresh  
And all of me, my soul and my flesh,--  
When my lips and my mouth were cool as the dew,  
And my eyes, now worn, as clear, as new.  
I wish I were lying out in the rain  
In the wood at home, that the waters might strain  
And stream through me -- But here I lie  
In a clammy room, and my soul is dry,  
And shall never be fresh again till I die.

Thomas MacDonagh

# In Paris

So here is my desert and here am I  
In the midst of it alone,  
Silent and free, as a hawk in the sky,  
Unnoticed and unknown.

I speak to no one from sun to sun,  
And do my single will,  
Though round me loud voiced millions run  
And life is never still.

There goes the bell of the Sorbonne  
Just as in Villon's day--  
He heard it here go sounding on,  
And stopped his work to pray--

Just in this place, in time of snow,  
Alone, at a table bent--  
Four hundred and fifty years ago  
He wrote that Testament.

Thomas MacDonagh



# In September

The winds are in the wood again to-day,  
Not moaning as they moan among bare boughs  
In winter dark, nor baying as they bay  
When hunting in full moon, the spring to rouse;

Nor as in summer, soft: the insistent rain  
Hisses the woe of my void life to me;  
And the winds jibe me for my anguish vain,  
Sibilant, like waters of the washing sea.

Thomas MacDonagh

# In The Storm

With laughing eyes and storm-blown hair  
You came to my bedside;  
I thought your living soul was there,  
And that my dreams had lied;

But ere my lips had power to speak  
A word of love to you,  
The moonlight fell upon your cheek,  
And it was of death's hue.

Sudden I heard the storm arise,  
I heard its summons roll:  
Wistful and wondering your eyes  
Were fading from my soul.

The moonlight waned, and shadows thick  
Went keening on the storm--  
Ah! for the quiet that was quick,  
The cold heart that was warm!

Thomas MacDonagh

# Inscription On A Ruin

I stood beside the postern here,  
High up above the trampling sea,  
In shadow, shrinking from the spear  
Of light, not daring hence to flee.

The moon beyond the western cliff  
Had passed, and let the shadow fall  
Across the water to the skiff  
That came on to the castle wall.

I heard below murmur of words  
Not loud, the splash upon the strand,  
And the long cry of darkling birds.  
The ivory horn fell from my hand.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Inscriptions : I. Of Ireland

A half of pathos is the past we know,  
A half the future into which we go;  
Or present joy broken with old regret,  
Or sorrow saved from hell by one hope yet.  
There once was pleasant water and fresh land  
Where now the Sphinx gazes across the sand;  
Yet may she hope, though dynasties have died,  
That Change abides while Time and she abide.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Inscriptions : II.

What of my careful ways of speech?  
What are my cold words to the heart  
That lives in man? They cannot reach  
One passion simpler than their art.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Inscriptions : Iii.

Though silence be the meed of death  
In dust of death a soul doth burn:  
Poet, rekindled by thy breath,  
Joy flames within her funeral urn.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Inscriptions : Iv.

My poet yearns and shudders with desire  
To bring to speech your music's intense thought:  
It is music all, yet he in ice and fire  
Excruciates till it to words is wrought.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Inscriptions : V.

--Winter is dead! Hark, hark, upon our hills  
The voices for whose coming thou didst yearn!  
Hail Spring! O Life, with happy Spring return!  
O Love, revive! Joy's laugh the dawntide fills,

--I shall not see him coming, Joy the vernal,  
Joy the heart-wakener, with his songs and roses:  
To thee the Spring: to me Death, who discloses  
The splendour of another Joy, eternal!

Thomas MacDonagh



## Inscriptions : Vi.

What is white?

The soul of the sage, faith-lit,  
The trust of Age,  
The infant's untaught wit.

What more white?

The face of Truth made known,  
The voice of Youth  
Singing before her throne.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Introit : I. Coeli Lucida Templa

The temples clean from star to star,  
Built up in that aethereal space  
Where forms of other being are,  
Image no being of this place.

We symbol forms enshrined in them  
Angels are emblemed in a clod,  
And every stone is made a gem  
Set in the altar of its God.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Introit : Ii. Images

I who austerely spent  
My years of youth, nor lent  
The journeys of my joy  
To youth's employ,

Who sacred held my life  
Apart from casual strife,  
Striving to comprehend  
Life's first and end.

I, in the watches grim  
Of winter mornings dim,  
Saw life inscrutable  
A God vigil,

And in a morn of May  
Heard at the dawn of day  
The music of that morn  
The stars were born.

I ancient images  
Of parts and passages  
Of powers and things that be  
Did know and see,

The chalice and the wine,  
The tree of knowledge divine,  
The veil, the gossamer,  
The hill-side bare,

The trampling ploughing team,  
The holy guiding gleam  
Of one star standing straight  
Above Light's gate,

The child with rapturous voice  
Singing, Farewell! Rejoice!  
Singing the joy of death  
The gate beneath,

The dumb shores of a sea,  
The waves that ceaselessly  
Uselessly turn and toss,  
Knowing their loss,

The flowers of heaven and earth,  
The moons of death and birth,  
The seasons of the soul,  
The worlds that roll

That roll their dark within  
Around their suns that spin  
Around the gate of Light  
In day, in night,

The soaring Seraphim,  
The God-wise Cherubim,--  
Forms of beauty and love  
I saw above.

And therebeneath I saw  
The form of transient law,  
The great of an earth or age,  
Captain and sage,

The lamps of Rome and Greece,  
The signs of war and peace,  
The eagle in the storm,  
Man's clay-fast form.

The phases of the might  
Of God in mortal sight  
I saw, in God's forethought  
Fashioned and wrought,

Now wrought in spirit and clay,  
In rare and common day,  
And shown in symbol and sign  
Of power divine.

These images of old

Reverently I hold,  
And here entemple, enstate.  
And dedicate,

That I with other men  
May worship here again  
Him who revealed to us  
His creatures thus.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Introit : Iii. The Tree Of Knowledge

In the dusk I again behold  
Figures of knowledge divine,  
A chalice of sacred gold  
Filled to the brim with wine,  
A double-woven veil  
With meshes that enfold  
A gauze of gossamer frail:  
I tremble and lie still,  
Held by a holy dread  
Lest the wine from the chalice spill  
And the knowledge of God lie dead.  
I lose the chalice from view  
Through infirmity of will.

I take the veil in my hands  
And to uncover the gauze  
I open the woven strands--  
And then in dread I pause  
Lest the gossamer be rent  
And the perfect knowledge destroyed  
Then I know how power is spent  
And the deed of the will made void.  
The veil has vanished too,  
And barren before me lies  
The hill where once I knew  
The lost secret of Paradise.

It was there I was as the wild  
Of the earth and the water and air,  
Untroubled by knowledge, the child  
Of God and Time -- it was there  
I shouted with joy in the light  
With the stars of morning and God,  
Where the knowledge tree in my sight  
Bent with fruit to the sod.  
There the spirit of me awoke  
To the serpent's constant call,  
To the earth of me it spoke  
And bade me to know all,

To eat and be as a god.  
I ate and was a man,  
With desire as a god to be,  
For then I first began  
Knowledge to taste and to see,  
And the eternal plan  
To know, and be one with the laws  
That are with eternity.

I ate and was a man  
Upon a bare hill side,  
For the tree was withered up  
And the ancient life had died.  
I held a gossamer gauze,  
And I gazed on a golden cup.

And now again I have seen  
The cup that I saw at my birth,  
And have held the gauze between  
Its webs in a veil of the earth,  
And I gaze on the hill again  
Where the tree that withered shall grow  
When I in pleasure and pain  
Have toiled to the full and know.

I gaze on the hill to see  
New promise of knowledge divine.  
I know that infirmity  
Shall be changed to power with the sign  
That to me is given now.

And I hear the trampling of hooves  
Thundering up with a plough,  
And a team of horses moves  
In splendour over the rise  
Of the ridge, and into the light.  
I shout with joy at the sight  
As I shouted in Paradise.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Introit : Iv. O Star Of Death -- Mortalem Vitam Mors Cum Immortalis Ademit

The earth in its darkness spinning  
Is a sign from the gate of horn  
Of the dream that a life's beginning  
Is in its end reborn--  
Dark symbol of true dreaming,  
The truth is beyond thy seeming  
As the wide of infinitude  
Is beyond the air of the earth!  
Death is a change and a birth  
For atoms in darkness spinning  
And their immortal brood.

The wisdom of life and death  
As a star leads to the gate  
Which is not of heaven or hell;  
And your mortal life is a breath  
Of the life of all, and your state  
Ends with your hail and farewell.

Wisdom's voice is the voice  
Of a child who sings to a star  
With a cry of, Hail and rejoice!  
And farewell to the things that are,  
And hail to the eternal peace,  
And rejoice that the day is done,  
For the night brings but release  
And threatens no wakening sun.  
Other suns that set may rise  
As before your day they rose,  
But when once your brief light dies  
No dawn here breaks your repose.

I followed a morning star,  
And it led to the gate of light,  
And thence came forth to meet our night  
A child and sang to the star.  
The air of the earth and the night were withdrawn



And the star was the sign of an outworn dawn  
That now in the aether was newly bright.  
For sudden I saw where the air through space was gone  
From the portal of light and the child and the sign o'er the portal--  
The star of joy a mortal leading  
In the clear stood holy and still,  
And under it the child sang on.  
I, who had followed of happy will,  
Knew the dark of life receding--  
One with the child and the star stood a mortal.

The child sang welcomes of the gate of light--  
Welcome to the peace of perfect night  
Everduring, unbeginning!  
Now let the mornings of the earth bring grief  
To other souls a while in darkness spinning,  
To other souls that look for borrowed light,  
Desiring alien joys with vain belief.  
Welcome and hail to this beyond all good,  
Joy of creation's new infinitude,

That never will the spirit use  
Another time for life, and yet  
That never will the spirit lose,  
Although it pass, but takes its debt  
To life and time, and sends endued  
With gain of life each atom soul  
New-fashioned to fulfil the whole.

O star of death! O sign that still hast shone  
Out beyond the dark of the air!  
Thou stand'st unseen by yearning eyes  
Of mourneres tired with their vain prayer  
For the little life that dies,--  
Whether holding that it dies  
That all life may still live on  
In its death as in its birth,  
Or believing things of earth  
Destined ever to arise  
To a new life in the skies.  
Blinded with false fear, how man  
Dreads this death which ends one span

That another may begin!--  
Holding greatest truth a sin  
And a sorrow, as not knowing  
That when death has lost false hope  
And false fear, begins the scope  
Of true life, which is a going  
At its end and not a coming,  
That the heart shrinks from the numbing  
Fall of death, but does not grope  
Blindly to new joy or gloom--  
Shrinks in vain, then yields in peace  
To the pain that brings release  
And the quiet of the tomb.

O star of death! I follow, till thou take  
My days to cast them from these flake on flake,  
My rose of life to scatter bloom on bloom,  
Yet hold its essence in the phial rare  
Of life that lives with fire and air,--  
With air that knows no dark, with fire not to consume.

I followed a morning star  
And I stand by the gate of Light,  
And a child sings my farewell to-night  
To the atom things that are.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Introit : V. Litany Of Beauty

Joy, if the Soul or aught immortal be,  
How may this Beauty know mortality?

O Beauty, perfect child of Light,  
Sempiternal spirit of delight!  
White and set with gold like the gold of the night,  
The gold of the stars in quiet weather,--  
White and shapely and pure!--  
O lily-flower from stain secure,  
With life and virginity dying together!

One lily liveth so,  
Liveth for ever unstained, immortal, a mystic flower:  
Perfectly wrought its frame,  
Gold inwrought and eternal white,  
White more white than cold of the snow,  
For never, never, near it came,  
Never shall come till the end of all,  
Hurtful thing in wind or shower,  
Worm or stain or blight;  
But ever, ever, gently fall  
The dews elysian of years that flow  
Where it doth live secure  
In flawless comeliness mature,  
Golden and white and pure.  
In the fair far-shining glow  
Of eternal and holy Light.

Beauty of earthly things  
Wrought by God and with hands of men!  
Beauty of Nature and Art,  
Fashioned anew for each Time brings,  
For each new soul and living heart!  
Beauty of Beauty that fills the ken  
Till the soul is swooning, faint with delight!  
Beauty of human form and voice,  
Of eyes and ears and lips!--  
O golden hair and brow of white!--  
Wine of Beauty that whoso sips

Doth die to a spirit free, and rejoice,  
Living with God and living with men,  
Rapt rejoice in eternal bliss,  
Raising his face to meet the kiss  
Of the Beauty seraphic he sees above  
In figure of his love.

O Beauty of Wisdom unsought  
That in trance to poet is taught,  
Uttered in secret lay,  
Singing the heart from earth away,  
Cunning the soul from care to lure,--  
O mystic lily, from stain and death secure,  
Till the end of all to stay!  
O shapely flower that must for ever endure!  
O voice of God that every heart must hear!  
O hymn of purest souls that dost unsphere  
The ravished soul that hears! O white, white gem!  
O rose that dost the senses drown in bliss!  
No thought shall stay the wing, or stem  
The song or win the heart to miss  
Thy love, thy joy, thy rapture divine!  
O Beauty, Beauty, ever thine  
The soul, the heart, the brain,  
To own three in a loud perpetual strain,  
Shriller and sweeter than song of wine,  
Than song of sorrow or love or war!

Beauty of heaven and sun and day,  
Beauty of water and frost and star,  
Beauty of dusk-tide, narrowing, grey!

Beauty of silver light,  
Beauty of purple night,  
Beauty of solemn breath,  
Beauty of closed eye, and sleep, and death!

Beauty of dawn and dew,  
Beauty of morning peace,  
Ever ancient and ever new,  
Ever renewed till waking cease  
Or sleep for ever, when loud the angel's word

Through all the world is heard!

Beauty of brute and bird,  
Beauty of earthly creatures  
Whose hearts by the hand of God are stirred!

Beauty of the soul,  
Beauty informing forms and features,  
Fairest to God's eye,--  
Beauty that cannot fade or die  
Though atoms to ruin roll!

Beauty of blinded Trust,  
Led by the hand of God  
To a heaven where Cherub hath never trod!

Austere Beauty of Truth  
Lighting the way of the just!

Splendid Beauty of Youth  
Staying when Youth is sped,  
Living when Life is dead,  
Burning in funeral dust!

The glory of form doth pale and pall,  
Beauty endures to the end of all.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Introit : Vi. The Great

This way in power the great went by.  
Hark to the echoes throbbing still!  
Hark to the voices chanting high  
Deeds for a while that shall not die!

Splendid they shone in purple and gold.  
See where we caught the perfect gleam,--  
Wrought it in tapestry of old.  
The purple fades but the gold is gold.

The great, they bore a soul in each,  
A link-shell in the chain of souls,  
Theirs were the jewels of Life's beach,  
From gem to gem an age doth reach.

Heaven-lent, for Heaven they held their dream,  
Though their vesture, e'en purple, marked it not:  
The earthlings one in fortune seem,  
But are forgone -- no gold, no gleam!

This way the great shall ever pace,-  
Be our great the great till the end of it;  
Fall not our gold from its burnished place;  
Be our voice not dumb to another race.

This way -- or so then, not this way,  
Perhaps not thus the great will go;  
Perhaps our Heaven they will gainsay;  
Our jewels perhaps -- so not this way.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Introit : Vii. The Poet Captain

They called him their king, their leader of men, and he led them well  
For one bright year, and he vanquished their foe,  
Breaking more battles than bards may tell,  
Warring victoriously, -- till the heart spake low  
And said -- Is it thus? Do not these things pass? What things abide?  
They are but the birds from the ocean, the waves of the tide;  
And thou are naught beside,-- grass and a form of clay.  
And said -- The Ligurian fought in his day,--  
In vain, in vain! Rome triumphs. He left his friends to the fight,  
And their victory passed away,  
And he like a star that flames and falls in the night.

But after another year they came to him again,  
And said -- Lead us forth again. Come with us again.  
But still he answered them -- You strive against fate, in vain  
They said -- Our race is old. We would not have it pass.  
Ere Rome began we are, a gentle people of old,  
Unsavagely when all were wild.  
And he -- How Egypt was old in the days that were old,  
Yet is passed, and we pass.  
They said -- We shall have striven, unreconciled.  
And he went with them again, and they conquered again.

Till the same bare season closed his unquiet heart  
To all but sorrow of life -- This is in vain! Of yore  
Lo, Egypt was, and all things do depart,  
This is in vain! And he fought no more.  
He coned the poems that poets had made in other days.  
And he loved the past that he could pity and praise.  
And he fought no more, living in solitude,  
Till they came and called him back to the multitude,  
Saying -- Our olden speech and our old manners die.  
He went again, and they raised his banner on high:  
Came Victory, eagle-formed, with wings wide flung,  
As with them a while he fought, with never a weary thought, and with never a  
sigh,  
That their children might have again their manners and ancient tongue.

But again the sorrow of life whispered to his soul

And said -- O little soul, striving to little goal!  
Here is a finite world where all things change and change!  
And said -- In Mexico a people strange  
Loved their manners and speech long ago when the world was young!  
Their speech is silent long -- What of it now? -- Silent and dead  
Their manners forgotten, and all but their memory sped!  
And said -- What matter? Heart will die and tongue;  
Or if they live again they live in a place that is naught,  
With other language, other custom, different thought.  
He left them again to their fight, and no more for him they sought.

But they chose for leader a stern sure man  
That looked not back on the waste of story:  
For his country he fought in the battle's van,  
And he won her peace and he won her glory.

Thomas MacDonagh



## Introit : Viii. The Golden Joy

What has the poet but a glorious phrase  
And the heart's wisdom? -- Oh, a Joy of gold!  
A Joy to mint and squander on the Kind,--  
Pure gold coined current for eternity,  
Giving dear wealth to men for a long age,  
And after, lost to sight and touch of hands,  
Leaving a memory that will bud and bloom  
And blossom all into a lyric phrase--  
The glorious phrase again on other lips,  
The heritage of Joy, the heart again,  
Wisdom anew that ages not but lives  
To Sappho-sing the Poet else forgot.

O Joy! O secret transport of mystic vision,  
Who hold'st the keys of Ivory and Horn,  
Who join'st the hands of Earth and Faerie!  
Thou art the inmate of the hermit soul  
That shuns the touch of every street-worn wind  
Sweet to all else, the shuns doctrine and doubt,  
To wait in trembling quietness for thee.  
Thou art the spouse of the busy human mind  
That bravely, sanely, bears his worldly part  
And claims no favour for the gift of thee:  
But, Nature's child, lives true in Nature's right,  
Filling the duties of the Tribe of Man,  
Keeping the heart, O Joy! untarnished still  
And pinion-strong to soar the exalted way.

The Poet guards the philosophic soul  
In contemplation that no importunate thought  
May mar his ecstasy or change his song;  
And though he see the gloom and sing of sorrow,  
He is the world's Herald of Joy at last:  
His song is Joy, the music that needs sorrow  
To fill its closes, as Death fulfils Life,  
As Life fills Time, and Time Eternity:  
Joy that sees Death, yet in Death sees not woe.

O Joy! the Spring is green -- on many a wall

The roses straggle, on many a tree dew-laden;  
And now the waters murmur 'neath their banks  
And all the flocks are loud with firstling cries,  
And in the heart of life Joy wakes anew  
To live a long day ere the winter falls;  
And now the song of an invisible lark,  
And now a child's voice makes the morning glad;  
The kindling sky and the mist-wreathed earth  
Have broken from the drowsihood of night,--  
Dawn widened grey, but now the orient blush  
Is over all the roses on the wall,  
Over the drooping trees that wait the winds  
To join them to the murmur of the day.

The Pilgrim Seer who journeyed silently  
When all the ways were Winter, wild and bare,  
Tarries to-day to hear the call of bliss,--  
Of Joy, Joy, Joy! thou emblem, symbol, sign  
Of all the Pilgrim's dream of Paradise--  
The Beatific Vision of Beauty supreme!  
Thou art the Angel of the Gate of Heaven!  
Thou art the great Vice-regent of the King!

Then forward goes and will not brook Life's house,  
Yearning to dwell far away, far away,  
In the wide palace of Eternity--  
To hold a life beyond this birth and death  
With the high Prophets in their calm sublime.--  
Ah yet, in Joy's despite, his heart will keep  
Memorial futile melancholy thought  
Of this and some that never knew the gold!  
And so he turns, bows down to toil with men,  
To toil and strive and care for earthy cares;  
The common life that has her claim on all  
Claims him, and yet leaves him his ecstasy;  
Knowing the glooms of life and the dark nights,  
Sure of the dawns and the white Summer days,  
He sings in twilight and the state of Job  
One golden Dawn and one enduring Wealth!  
So he keeps ever burning in his heart  
The fire eternal that will flame and shine  
When the man lies compounded with the rest

Who never knew to look upon his light,  
Whose light none saw, whose lives are all forgot.  
One is Eternity to common man,  
Twain to the poet soul;-- though his name die,  
Though after fall of years many or few  
His phrases wander out of memory's fold,  
His soul is twain, a heritage has he,  
His dreams are children dreams and parent dreams.

What has the Poet but a glorious phrase  
And the heart's wisdom? He has naught to do  
With April changes that your lives endue,  
Sunshine and shadow. Him your blame and praise  
Trouble in calm along the spirit's ways  
That are with the great Change, unchanging, true,  
With the great Silence where no voice is new  
And no voice old -- a train of prophet days.  
What but the Golden Joy that sacred stands  
As gift of Paradise to human art?  
For though the lust of the world still claims and brands  
All others, the Joy stands for us apart  
And will not fail or tarnish touched by hands  
That highly bear the trust of poet heart.

So would I rhythm and rime the glorious phrase  
In this Spring lyric morning of my day,  
When brown and green and nebulous silver lie  
Quiet and happy 'neath the vernal pomp  
Of that rich sky,--- the trees a dome of song,  
Song in the waters, in the sea-born wind,  
And in the human soul the Cherub hymn  
Of Joy, which is the heart's philosophy.

Dear holy hymn, yet wert thou sad to hear  
Matched with the dream song of the Ivory Gate  
That waked a boy to rapture long ago,  
That raised a boy to poet in an hour,  
That the boy failed to mimic with his voice  
But held heart-hid against his vocal day  
And sings here to thee, Joy, this lyric morn!  
For first he sang out of a book of Death  
Before his day, and then with weaker voice

Chanted a resurrection, sang for Hope  
All in a Spring like this, before his day.  
Of Beauty now which is the light of Hope  
He sings and of the Quest that cannot cease  
Voyaging to Wonder on an endless road;  
But chiefly and over all and through the whole  
Sings yet the memory of untaught days  
When dawn and dark brought to the waiting soul  
The vision that he sees now through the dusk  
Leading him back to thy tranquility.

I saw last night again the Unknown Land,  
And, travelled far, I stood beside a sea  
Whose pale waves crowding stared head over head  
And mouthed warning inarticulate.  
Spirits of poets they, high called and lost,  
Thus missing half the Man's eternity  
For gaining half the Poet's, Joy forgone.  
And there by the dread waste of liquid life  
My feet were set upon a living shore  
Wrought of the souls that never knew the Joy  
And never needed, never lost, -- all dumb  
But at long rest while the waves turn and toss.  
These quiet I loved more than the quick foam,  
And yet the human pity at my heart  
Stirred and would draw me to that passionate shame,  
But that the Joy flamed and the glorious phrase  
Broke into rapture: the waves wept to hear,  
Wept for the exaltation once their own,  
Wept for the gold they never more may spend  
In mintage of the phrase upon the Kind,  
Wept, wept, to scatter from the spirit's tower  
The joy-notes and the glory of this song.  
I hastened thence to spare them cruelty  
Out through the Ivory Gate,-- and thus I know  
The dream was but a symbol of the true.

It is the Spring and these the songs of Spring,  
Songs of the rathe rose and the lily's hope;--  
For now the Poet hears the lily call  
That came to Christ from beauty's natural shrine  
And, through his lips, soared sacred out and up

Into the space beyond of holiness,  
The aether of the rapture of High God.  
Oh! it steals to us like the breath of dawn  
That fills the pipes of Nature with sweet sounds,--  
Steals low and swells anon into a chant  
To throb and triumph through the heart of Spring  
With the clear canticle of Love that hails  
The orient Epiphany of Joy.  
And now the poet heart is calling too  
And called aloud by every voice divine  
Behind our wall out through the lattices.  
Now is the season of the Golden Joy,  
Now is the season of the birth of Love--  
The perfect passion of the heart of God,  
The rapture of the beauty of the world,  
The rapture of eternity of bliss!  
For all our Winters pass and all rains go,  
And all the flowers of Joy appear again,  
And Spring is green with figs more beautiful  
And sweet with odours of the mystic Tree  
That droops its branches over Heaven and Earth,  
Scattering flowers and fruit and passionate wine  
Down into all the places of the sun,  
And into all the nether places dim,  
Fragrant with ecstasy of Joy and Peace.  
And who will steep his senses in the flowers  
And who will feed his spirit on the fruit  
And who will his veins with the great wine  
Shall see no Winters and shall feel no rains  
But Joy perpetual in the Land of God.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Isn'T It Pleasant For The Little Birds

Isn't it pleasant for the little birds  
That rise up above,  
And be nestling together  
On the one branch, in love?  
Not so with myself  
And the darling of my heart--  
Every day rises upon us  
Far, far apart.

She is whiter than the lily,  
Than beauty more fine.  
She is sweeter than the violin,  
More radiant than sunshine.  
But her grace and nobleness  
Are beyond all that again--  
And O God Who art in Heaven,  
Free me from pain!

Thomas MacDonagh

# John-John

I dreamt last night of you, John-John,  
And thought you called to me;  
And when I woke this morning, John,  
Yourself I hoped to see;  
But I was all alone, John-John,  
Though still I heard your call;  
I put my boots and bonnet on,  
And took my Sunday shawl,  
And went full sure to find you, John,  
At Nenagh fair.

The fair was just the same as then,  
Five years ago to-day,  
When first you left the thimble-men  
And came with me away;  
For there again were thimble-men  
And shooting galleries,  
And card-trick men and maggie-men,  
Of all sorts and degrees,--  
But not a sight of you, John-John,  
Was anywhere.

I turned my face to home again,  
And called myself a fool  
To think you'd leave the thimble-men  
And live again by rule,  
To go to mass and keep the fast  
And till the little patch;  
My wish to have you home was past  
Before I raised the latch  
And pushed the door and saw you, John,  
Sitting down there.

How cool you came in here, begad,  
As if you owned the place!  
But rest yourself there now, my lad,  
'Tis good to see your face;  
My dream is out, and now by it  
I think I know my mind:

At six o'clock this house you'll quit,  
And leave no grief behind;--  
But until six o'clock, John-John,  
My bit you'll share.

The neighbours' shame of me began  
When first I brought you in;  
To wed and keep a tinker man  
They thought a kind of sin;  
But now this three years since you've gone  
'Tis pity me they do,  
And that I'd rather have, John-John,  
Than that they'd pity you,  
Pity for me and you, John-John,  
I could not bear.

Oh, you're my husband right enough,  
But what's the good of that?  
You know you never were the stuff  
To be the cottage cat,  
To watch the fire and hear me lock  
The door and put out Shep--  
But there, now, it is six o'clock  
And time for you to step.  
God bless and keep you far, John-John!  
And that's my prayer.

Thomas MacDonagh



# Love Is Cruel, Love Is Sweet

Love is cruel, love is sweet,--  
Cruel, sweet.  
Lovers sigh till lovers meet,  
Sigh and meet--  
Sigh and meet, and sigh again--  
Cruel sweet! O sweetest pain!

Love is blind -- but love is sly,  
Blind and sly.  
Thoughts are bold, but words are shy  
Bold and shy--  
Bold and shy, and bold again--  
Sweet is boldness,-- shyness pain.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Luna Dies Et Nox Et Noctis Signa Severa

The mountain, rolled in purple, fold on fold,  
Delicate, dim, aware,  
After the sunset, when the twilight air  
Is hush, expectant :-- And below, between  
The road-way and the mountain, the thin screen,  
Frigid and straight, of trees of darkening green:

Above the middle mountain, sudden, soon,  
Half burnished, ready risen, the round moon:  
Then burnished full : Splendour and the stars' light:  
Light and the night and the austere signs of the night.

Thomas MacDonagh

# May Day

I wish I were to-day on the hill behind the wood,--  
My eyes on the brown bog there and the Shannon river,--  
Behind the wood at home, a quickened solitude  
When the winds from Slieve Bloom set the branches there a-quiver.

The winds are there now and the green of May  
On every feathery tree-bough, tender on every hedge:  
Over the bog-fields there larks carol to-day,  
And a cuckoo is mocking them out of the woodland's edge.

Here a country warmth is quiet on the rocks  
That alone make never a change when the May is duly come;  
Here sings no lark, and to-day no cuckoo mocks:  
Over the wide hill a hawk floats, and the leaves are dumb.

Thomas MacDonagh

# My Love To-Night

My love to-night, her arm across her face,  
Has wept for me, wandering she knows not where,  
And wept the while she suffered his embrace,  
Letting him think she wept for other care.

Weep, O my love, for your own piteous fate,  
For all that now is lost of your love's right:  
I wait alone, without -- I tearless wait,  
For you, my love, more bitter is this night.

Thomas MacDonagh

# My Poet

--My poet the rose of his fancies  
Wrought unwritten in verse,  
And left but the lilies and pansies  
To strew his early hearse.

--The master-dream of your poet  
Has perished for ever then?

--What know we? Should we know it  
If it were born again?

Thomas MacDonagh

# O Bursting Bud Of Joy

O bursting bud of joy  
I pluck thee in thy flower!  
Fast I plant thee in my breast  
To bloom and bloom for ever.

I lived without thee long,  
Lonesome my life without thee.  
Lightly blossom in my breast,  
O flower mine, for ever!

Thomas MacDonagh

# Of A Greek Poem

Crave no more that antique rapture  
Now in alien song to reach:  
Here uncouth you cannot capture  
Gracious truth of Attic speech.

Utterly the flowers perish,  
Grace of Athens, Rome's renown,  
Giving but a dream to cherish  
Tangled in a laurel crown.

I that splendour far pursuing  
Left unlit the lamps of home,  
And upon my quest went ruing  
That I found not Greece or Rome.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Of My Poems

There is no moral to my song,  
I praise no right, I blame no wrong:  
I tell of things that I have seen,  
I show the man that I have been  
As simply as a poet can  
Who knows himself poet and man,  
Who knows that unto him are shown  
Rare visions of a Life unknown,  
Who knows that unto him are taught  
Rare words of wisdom all unsought  
By him, and never understood  
Till they are taken on trust for good  
And, all unspoiled by pride, again  
Uttered in trust to other men.  
This is my practice and my rule,  
Albeit I have been at school  
These thirty years and studied much.  
I've found wise books but never such  
As could teach me a single word  
To set by what my childhood heard.

I've studied conduct but not found  
A single rule in all the round  
Of sagest laws to set by this,  
That he who runs to seek shall miss,  
That he who waits in trusting calm  
Shall have the laurel and the palm.  
The singing way and winning way:  
Who in himself aware can stay,  
Leaving all memory and all strife,  
Shall have the things of Truth and Life  
Around him, as around a child  
The timid creatures of the wild,--  
Shall know the state that Adam gave  
For gain of reason and the grave.

Let no one from this saying look  
To find no poems in this book  
But poems learned and uttered so:



Life I have lived and books I know,  
And other common things I tell  
That me and other men befell.  
But when this rapture stirs the blood  
When the first blossom breaks the bud  
And Golden Joy begins anew,  
Then in the calm stand near to view  
The things we saw with Adam's eyes  
In the first days of Paradise;  
And these of all my seeing be  
The light, and of my life to me:  
Of life with life here and beyond:  
They lift my deeds the grave above  
And give a meaning to my love.

So to you two for whose loved sake  
This gathering of song I make  
I need not tell of right and wrong  
Or set a moral to my song.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Of The Man Of My First Play

As one who stands in awe when on his sight  
A fragment of antiquity doth burst  
And body huge above the plain which erst  
Knew its high fame and all its olden might,  
So in a dream of vanquished power and right  
I gazed on him, a fragment from the first,  
A ruin vast, half builded here and curst,--  
Perhaps full moulded in the eternal night.

How may I show him? -- How his story plan  
Who was prefigured to the dreaming eye  
In term of other being? -- May he fill  
This mask of life? -- Or will my creature cry  
Shame that I dwarf the sequel and the man  
To house him thus within a fragment still?

Thomas MacDonagh

# Offering

To her who first unmade a poet and gave  
Love and unrest instead of barren art,  
Who dared to bring him joy and then to brave  
The anger and the anguish of his heart,

Knowing the heart would serve her still; and then  
Who gave back only what to art belongs,  
Making the man a poet over again,--  
To her who gave me all I give these songs.

Thomas MacDonagh

# On A Poet Patriot

His songs were a little phrase  
Of eternal song,  
Drowned in the harping of lays  
More loud and long.

His deed was a single word,  
Called out alone  
In a night when no echo stirred  
To laughter or moan.

But his songs new souls shall thrill,  
The loud harps dumb,  
And his deed the echoes fill  
When the dawn is come.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Our Story

There was a young king who was sad,  
And a young queen who was lonely:  
They lived together their busy life,  
Known to each other only,--

Known to each other with strange love,  
But with sighs for the king's vain sorrow  
And for the queen's vain loneliness  
And vain forethought of the morrow.

After a barren while they died,  
In death they were not parted:  
Now in their grave perhaps they know  
Why they were broken-hearted.

Thomas MacDonagh

## Postscriptum : September 1913

I, Adam, saw this life begin  
And lived in Eden without sin,  
Until the fruit of knowledge I ate  
And lost my gracious primal state.

I, Nero, fiddled while Rome burned:  
I saw my empire overturned,  
And proudly to my murderers cried--  
An artist dies in me! -- and died.

And though sometimes in swoon of sense  
I now regain my innocence,  
I pay still for my knowledge, and still  
Remain the fool of good and ill.

And though my tyrant days are o'er  
I earn my tyrant's fate the more  
If now secure within my walls  
I fiddle while my country falls.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Quando Ver Venit Meum?

--Poet, babbling delicate song  
Vainly for the ears of love,  
Vail not hope if thou wait long;  
Charming thy hope to song  
Thou wilt win love.

Thou dost yearn for lovelier flow'r  
Than all blooms that all men cull:  
Thou wilt find in its one hour,  
In its one dell, the flow'r  
That thou wilt cull.

Thou wilt know it in its own dell,  
And pause there; and thy heart then  
Leaving hope will sing love well,  
Fill with heart's joy the dell  
Of thy love then.

--Where is thy dell, when is thy time.  
Lovely winsome tenderling?  
Ah! if death fall ere that prime--  
Now, bring me now in time  
My tenderling!

Thomas MacDonagh

# Requies

He is dead, and never word of blame  
Or praise of him his spirit hears,  
Sacred, secure from cark of fame,  
From sympathy of useless tears.

Thomas MacDonagh



# Snow At Morning

As with fitful tune,  
All a heart-born air,  
Note by note doth fall  
The far vision fair  
From the Source of all  
On the dreaming soul,  
Fall to vanish soon.

From the darkening dome,  
Starlight every one  
Brightening down its way,  
Each a little swan  
From a cygnet grey,  
Wave on wave doth sail,  
Whitening into foam.

Late unloosed by God  
From their cage aloft  
Somewhere near the sky  
Snow flakes flutter soft,  
Flutter, fall, and die  
On the pavement mute,  
On the fields untrod.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Sundown

Lilac and green of the sky,  
Brown of the broken earth,  
Apple trees whitening high,  
May and the Summer's birth.

Voices of children and mirth  
Singing of clouds that are ships,  
Sure to sail into the firth  
Where the sun's anchor now dips.

Here is our garden that sips  
Sweets that the May bestows,  
Breath of laburnum lips,  
Breath of the lilac and rose.

Blossoms of blue will close  
After the ships are gone,  
Drinking the dew in a doze  
Under the dark till the dawn.

Twilight and ships crowd on  
Into the road of the West,  
After the sun where he shone  
Reddening down to rest.

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Anchorite

I saw thy soul stand in the moon  
Last night, the live-long night--  
The jewels of Heaven in thy hand,  
Thy brow with cherub coronal spanned,  
And thou in God's light.

Hell is the demons' gulfèd lair  
Beneath the flaming bars;  
And Heaven, whereto thou goest soon,  
Beyond thy dwelling in the moon  
And beyond the stars.

But Purgatory, thine old abode  
Since Life's impure delay,  
Towers athwart the circling air  
Whose topmost Heaven-reaching stair  
Thou dost tread to-day.

Thy soul within the moon doth stand--  
How many years of toil!  
And I must bear a greater load,  
And I must climb a harder road  
Ere God me assoil!

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Coming-In Of Summer

Yesterday a swallow  
Cuckoo-song to-day,  
And anon will follow  
All the flight of May,  
For Summer is a-coming in.

Corncrake's ancient sorrow  
Pains the evening hush,  
But the dawn to-morrow  
Gladdens with the thrush--  
And Summer is a-coming in.

Oh! laburnum yellow,  
Lilac and the rose,  
Chestnut shadow mellow  
In my garden-close,  
And Summer, Summer coming in!

Lo, with shield and arrow,  
Burnished helm and spear,  
Flower and leaflet narrow  
Rank on rank appear--  
King Summer is a-coming in!

Summer, haste and hallow  
Something of the Spring,  
Which is harsh and callow  
Till thy herald sing--  
Oh! Summer is a-coming in!

Thomas MacDonagh

# The House In The Wood Beside The Lake

The house in the wood beside the lake  
That I once knew well I must know no more  
My slow feet other paths must take --  
How soon would they reach the old known door!  
But now that time is o'er.

The lake is quiet and hush to-day;  
The downward heat keeps the water still  
And the wind that round me used to play  
Ere through elm and oak from the pine-clad hill  
I plunged with heart a-thrill.

A time can die as a man can die  
And be buried too and buried deep;  
But a memory lives though the ages fly--  
I know two hearts one memory keep  
That cannot die or sleep.

How clear the shadow of every tree--  
The oaks and elms in stately line!  
The lake is like a silent sea  
Of emerald, or an emerald mine,  
Till the forest thins to pine.

For the slender pine has never a leaf,  
And the sun and the breeze break through at will--  
There's a weed that the eddy whirls in a sheaf  
In the brown lake's depths, all wet and chill,--  
I call it the lake-pine still.

Such idle names we used to give  
To the weeds as we passed here in our boat--  
We shall pass no more, and they shall live  
While others o'er them idly float--  
They shall neither hear nor note,

They are things that never hear or see--  
Yet once I trusted my heart to all;  
I heard my tale from many a tree,--

Thought the lake-pines knew one light foot-fall,  
One laugh and one low call.

And perhaps they did, for all the day  
They seem like me to be sad and lone;  
The current has not come to play  
And twist its sheaf; no breeze has blown,  
Though yon the sedges moan.

And oft o'er the waters I fondly bowed,  
And made belief that I saw there  
One face, for my fancy featured a cloud  
Or showed me my own more bright and fair--  
How vainly now I stare!

Is it vain to think that at some time yet--  
Far off, perhaps in a thousand years--  
We shall meet again as we have met:  
A meeting of olden joy and tears  
Which all the more endears.

Perhaps in a house beside a lake  
In a wood of elm and oak and beech--  
Ah, hope is long! It can wait and wake.  
Though the world be dead it can forward reach  
And join us each to each.

But I fear the waiting -- God, recall,  
Recall, recall Thy fated will!  
How can I wait while the slow leaves fall  
From the tree of time and I fulfil  
My vigil lone and chill?

How can I wait for what is mine?--  
Thou didst will it so, and Thou art just--  
Oh, give me the life of the water-pine  
Till I hear one laugh, one call I trust,  
One foot-fall in the dust!

Mine then! Mine now, by changeless fate--  
I ask but this with humble soul ;--  
But bid me not, O God, to wait

With miser hope's reluctant dole  
While wakeful aeons roll!

The time I loved is dead, cold dead;  
For it could die, and shall not rise  
As I shall from a grosser bed  
To wait and watch with hungered eyes  
And many a vain surmise.

The sedge and pines are moaning now;  
The current comes to twist its sheaf;  
The shadow of the isle-tree bough  
Is blotted out; and twilight brief  
Foreruns long night of grief.

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Man Upright

I once spent an evening in a village  
Where the people are all taken up with tillage,  
Or do some business in a small way  
Among themselves, and all the day  
Go crooked, doubled to half their size,  
Both working and loafing, with their eyes  
Stuck in the ground or in a board,--  
For some of them tailor, and some of them hoard  
Pence in a till in their little shops,  
And some of them shoe-soles -- they get the tops  
Ready-made from England, and they die cobblers--  
All bent up double, a village of hobblers  
And slouchers and squatters, whether they straggle  
Up and down, or bend to haggle  
Over a counter, or bend at a plough,  
Or to dig with a spade, or to milk a cow,  
Or to shove the goose-iron stiffly along  
The stuff on the sleeve-board, or lace the fong  
In the boot on the last, or to draw the wax-end  
Tight cross-ways -- and so to make or to mend  
What will soon be worn out by the crooked people.  
The only thing straight in the place was the steeple,  
I thought at first. I was wrong in that;  
For there past the window at which I sat  
Watching the crooked little men  
Go slouching, and with the gait of a hen  
An odd little woman go pattering past,  
And the cobbler crouching over his last  
In the window opposite, and next door  
The tailor squatting inside on the floor--  
While I watched them, as I have said before,  
And thought that only the steeple was straight,  
There came a man of a different gait--  
A man who neither slouched nor pattered,  
But planted his steps as if each step mattered;  
Yet walked down the middle of the street  
Nor like a policeman on his beat,  
But like a man with nothing to do  
Except walk straight upright like me and you.



Thomas MacDonagh

# The Night Hunt

In the morning, in the dark,  
When the stars begin to blunt,  
By the wall of Barna Park  
Dogs I heard and saw them hunt  
All the parish dogs were there,  
All the dogs for miles around,  
Teeming up behind a hare,  
In the dark, without a sound.

How I heard I scarce can tell--  
'Twas a patter in the grass--  
And I did not see them well  
Come across the dark and pass;  
Yet I saw them and I knew  
Spearman's dog and Spellman's dog  
And, beside my own dog too,  
Leamy's from the Island Bog.

In the morning when the sun  
Burnished all the green to gorse,  
I went out to take a run  
Round the bog upon my horse;  
And my dog that had been sleeping  
In the heat beside the door  
Left his yawning and went leaping  
On a hundred yards before.

Through the village street we passed--  
Not a dog there raised a snout--  
Through the street and out at last  
On the white bog road and out  
Over Barna Park full pace,  
Over to the Silver Stream,  
Horse and dog in happy race,  
Rider between thought and dream.

By the stream, at Leamy's house,  
Lay a dog -- my pace I curbed --  
But our coming did not rouse

Him from drowsing undisturbed;  
And my dog, as unaware  
Of the other, dropped beside  
And went running by me there  
With my horse's slackened stride.

Yet by something, by a twitch  
Of the sleeper's eye, a look  
From the runner, something which  
Little chords of feeling shook,  
I was conscious that a thought  
Shuddered through the silent deep  
Of a secret -- I had caught  
Something I had known in sleep.

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Philistine

I gave my poems to a man,  
Who said that they were very great--  
They showed just how my love began  
And ended, but too intimate

To give to read to every one.  
I took my book and left him there,  
And went out where the sinking sun  
Was calling stars into the air.

He thought that I had let them look  
Privily in behind the bars,  
Had sold my secret with a book--  
I cursed him and I cursed the stars.

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Poet Saint

Sphere thee in Confidence  
Singing God's Word,  
Led by His Providence,  
Girt with His Sword;

Bartering all for Faith,  
Following e'er  
That others deem a wraith,  
Fleeting and fair.

'Walk thou no ample way  
Wisdom doth mark;  
Seek thou where Folly's day  
Setteth to dark.

'Darkness in Clarity  
Wisdom doth find,  
Folly in Charity  
Doubting the Kind,

'Folly in Piety,  
Folly in Trust,  
Heav'n in Satiety,  
Death in Death's dust.

'Thou from the dust shalt rise  
Over all Fame,  
Angels of Paradise  
Singing thy name.'

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Rain It Raineth

The homeless bird has a weary time  
When the wind is high and moans through the grass:  
The laughter has fainted out of my rime--  
Oh! but the life that will moan and pass!

An oak-tree wrestling on the hill,  
And the wind wailing in the grass--  
And life will strive with many an ill  
For many a weary day ere it pass--

Wailing, wailing a winter threne  
In the clouds on high and low in the grass;  
So for my soul will he raise the keen  
When I from the winds and the winters pass.

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Seasons And The Leaves

Now when the storms have driven out the cold  
The Spring comes in with buds in tender sheaf  
The Spring comes in with buds, the Winter flown,  
The Winter fled and dead -- the May will fold  
Around us the soft clothing we have known  
In dreams of Joy when Calm lulled storm and leaf  
The lurking showers patter down the May  
And wash to glory all the yellow gleam  
That loves with light and gold and greens to play  
On bole and bough and spray --  
But after Summer, Autumn's quiet beam  
Comes, and the West Wind, and the skies are grey--  
And then the leaves grow heavy, the soul grows old,  
Old as an age within a little day,  
When once they see the doubtful dim extreme,  
When belfries of the Winter once have tolled  
The knells of death, then dross is all their gold.

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Sentimentalist

If after years, if years find us together,  
How we shall tell each other the old tale  
Of this brave time, when through this doubtful weather  
For Love's Hesperides we two set sail!

From opposite far shores fate bid us start,  
We knew not whither and we cared not then--  
And shall we meet? Or shall we drift apart?  
Or meet and part, never to meet again?

And if the after years find us asunder?--  
Well, I may brood over this broken rime,  
While you perhaps in some far place may wonder  
If I think ever still of this old time.

Thomas MacDonagh



# The Song Of Joy

I.

O mocking voice that dost forbid always  
The poems that would win an easy praise,  
Favouring with silence but the delicate, strong,  
True creatures of inspirèd natural song,  
Only the brood of Art and Life divine,  
Thou say'st no fealty to the spurious line  
Of phantasies of earth,-- to mortal things  
That strain to stay the heavens with their wings  
And ape the crownèd orders at the Throne  
Around a graven image of their own,  
Setting the casual fact of one poor age  
Aloft, enormous in its privilege  
Of instant being! -- O voice of the mind,  
Wilt thou forbid the songs that come like wind  
Out of the south upon the poet heart,--  
Out of the quietude of certain art?  
Now the cross tempests from the boreal frost  
Harry my atmosphere, and I have lost  
My joyous light of poetry in vain  
Without the gloom profound of hell for gain--  
With only hostile follies that annoy,  
That brawls that overwhelm the song of joy,  
And are not sorrowful or strong enough  
To make a passion out of wrath or love--  
Only To-day with its vain self at strife,  
And affectations of fictitious life,  
And spite, and prejudice, and out of worn rules  
Kept by the barren ignorance of fools,--  
Why, when I come to thee, shunning them all,  
Why must the harsh laughter of mockery fall  
Upon my soul, waiting to know the word  
Of a new song within my heart half heard?  
Why must the music cease and hate come forth  
To call these winds out of the withering north?

II.

You bring a bitter atmosphere  
Of blame and vain hostilities,

Stirring beauty and joy with fear  
Of words, as night wind stirs the trees  
With whispers which will leave them sere.

So, harsh and bare, your bitter heart  
Will leave you like a bush alone,  
Sullen and silent and apart,  
When all the winds it called are gone--  
The winds were airs of your own heart

Ah, bitter heart, nor always thus  
You came, but with a storm of Spring,  
With happiness impetuous,  
With joy and beauty following--  
Who now leave all these ruinous!

III.

Not ruinous, O mockery, not all  
Ruinous quite! -- Not sped beyond recall  
My storm of Spring, my storm of happy youth,  
That blew to me all gifts of joy but truth,  
That blew to me out of the Ivory Gate  
Figures and phantasies of life and fate.  
I sang of them that they were life enough,  
Giving them lasting names of joy and love;  
And when I saw their ghostly nothingness  
I made a bitter song out of distress,  
And cried how joy and love had passed me by;  
Though my heart happily whispered that I,  
Not truth of joy or love, had broken ease,  
Had broken from false quiet, won release.  
I sang distress, then came out fresh and new  
Into good life, knowing what fate would do.  
Not bitter, mockery, not harsh to blame,  
Not with dark winds of enmity I came,  
But following truth, in dread of shapes that seem  
Of life and prove but of a passing dream,--  
In dread of ease, that has the strongest chain,--  
In dread of the old phantasies again.  
The south wind blew: it was my storm of Spring--  
O tempest of my youth, what will you bring  
To me at last who know you now at last?--

The south wind blew, and all my dread was past.  
Yet thou, O mockery, wouldest hold the world  
Of that harsh day, though here the south has stirred!  
Cease now for ever, for that day is done;  
My sad songs are all sung, Joy is begun.  
Voice of the mind, thy truth no more shall mock:  
That door of ease with love's rare key I lock,--  
And reverent, to Joy predestinate,  
With the same key open my door of fate.

IV.

A storm of Spring is blowing now  
And love is throwing buds about!  
Oh, there's a bloom on yonder bough  
Under the withering leaves of doubt!--  
The bough is green as Summer now.

O lover! laugh, and laughing hold  
What follows after piety:  
In faith of love be over-bold,  
Lover, the other self of me--  
The bitter word no more I hold.

How could I mock you, happy one,  
Who now have captured all a heart?  
Take up my tune and follow on:  
Borrow the passion of my art  
To sing your prothalamion!

V.

Now no bitter songs I sing:  
Summer follows for me now;  
For the Spirit of the Spring  
Breathes upon the living bough:  
All poor leaves of why and how  
Fall before this wonder, dead:  
Joy is given to me now  
In the love of her I wed.

She to-day is rash to cast  
All on love -- and wise thereby;  
Love is trust, and love at last

Makes no count of how and why;  
Worlds are wakened in the sky  
That had slept a speechless spell,  
At the word of faith,-- and I  
Hold my faith from her as well.

For she trusts to love in all,  
Life and all, and life beyond;  
And this world that was so small,  
Bounded by my selfish bond,  
Now is stretched to Trebizond,  
Upsala and Ecuador,  
East and west of black and blond,  
In my quest of queens like her.

Was she once a Viking's child  
That her beauty is so brave?  
Sun-gold, happy in the wild  
Of the winter and the wave,  
Pedestal'd by cliff and cave,  
With the raven's brood above,  
In the North she stood and gave  
Me the troth of all her love.

Or in Egypt the bright storm  
Of her hair fell o'er my face,  
And her features and her form,  
Fashioned to that passionate grace,  
Won me from an alien race  
To her love eternally,  
Life on life in every place  
Where the gods cast her and me.

Her to-day we stand at last  
Laughing in our new-born mirth  
At the life that in the past  
Was a phantasy of earth,  
Vigil of our life's true birth  
Which is joy and fate in one,  
Now the wisdom of the earth  
And the dooms of death are done.

So my bride is wise to-day  
All to trust to love alone:  
Other wisdom is the clay  
That into the grave is thrown:  
This is the awakening blown  
By the Spirit of the Spring:  
Laughing Summer follows soon,  
And no bitter songs I sing.

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Stars

In happy mood I love the hush  
Of the lone creatures of God's hand,  
But when I hate I want the rush  
Of storms that trample sea and land.

The stars are out beyond the storms  
Which are my kin, and they are cold  
And critical, and creep in swarms  
To guess what could be never told.

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Stars Stand Up In The Air

The stars up in the air,  
The sun and the moon are gone,  
The strand of its waters is bare.  
And her sway is swept from the swan.

The cuckoo was calling all day,  
Hid in the branches above,  
How my stóirín is fled away,  
'Tis my grief that I gave her my love.

Three things through love I see--  
Sorrow and sin and death--  
And my mind reminding me  
That this doom I breathe with my breath.

But sweeter than violin or lute  
Is my love--and she left me behind.  
I wish that all music were mute,  
And I to all beauty were blind.

She's more shapely than swan by the strand,  
She's more radiant than grass after dew,  
She's more fair than the stars where they stand--  
'Tis my grief that her ever I knew!

Thomas MacDonagh

# The Suicide

Here when I have died,  
And when my body is found,  
They will bury it by the roadside  
And in no blessed ground.

And no one my story will tell,  
And no one will honour my name:  
They will think that they bury well  
The damned in their grave of shame.

But alike shall be at last  
The shamed and the blessed place,  
The future and the past,  
Man's grace and man's disgrace.

Secure in their grave I shall be  
From it all, and quiet then,  
With no thought and no memory  
Of the deeds and the dooms of men.

Thomas MacDonagh



# The Yellow Bittern

The yellow bittern that never broke out  
In a drinking bout, might as well have drunk;  
His bones are thrown on a naked stone  
Where he lived alone like a hermit monk.  
O yellow bittern! I pity your lot,  
Though they say that a sot like myself is curst--  
I was sober a while, but I'll drink and be wise  
For I fear I should die in the end of thirst.  
It's not for the common birds that I'd mourn,  
The black-bird, the corn-crake, or the crane,  
But for the bittern that's shy and apart  
And drinks in the marsh from the lone bog-drain.  
Oh! if I had known you were near your death,  
While my breath held out I'd have run to you,  
Till a splash from the Lake of the Son of the Bird  
Your soul would have stirred and waked anew.

My darling told me to drink no more  
Or my life would be o'er in a little short while;  
But I told her 'tis drink gives me health and strength  
And will lengthen my road by many a mile.  
You see how the bird of the long smooth neck  
Could get his death from the thirst at last--  
Come, son of my soul, and drain your cup,  
You'll get no sup when your life is past.  
In a wintering island by Constantine's halls  
A bittern calls from a wineless place,  
And tells me that hither he cannot come  
Till the summer is here and the sunny days.  
When he crosses the stream there and wings o'er the sea  
Then a fear comes to me he may fail in his flight--  
Well, the milk and the ale are drunk every drop,  
And a dram won't stop our thirst this night.

Thomas MacDonagh

# To A Wise Man

If I had spent my talent as you spend,  
If you had sought this rare thing sought by me,  
We had missed our mutual pity at life's end,  
As we have missed only our sympathy.

Thomas MacDonagh

# To Eoghan

Will you gaze after the dead, gaze into the grave?--  
Strain your eyes in the darkness, knowing it vain?  
Strain your voice in the silence that never gave  
To any voice of yours an answer again?

She whom you loved long years is dead, and you  
Stay, and you cannot bear it and cry for her--  
And life will cure this pain -- or death: you too  
Shall quiet lie where cries no echo stir.

Thomas MacDonagh

# To James Clarence Mangan

Poor splendid Poet of the burning eyes  
And withered hair and godly pallid brow,  
Low-voiced and shrinking and apart wert thou,  
And little men thy dreaming could despise.  
How vain, how vain the laughter of the wise!  
Before thy Folly's throne their children bow--  
For lo! thy deathless spirit triumphs now,  
And mortal wrongs and envious Time defies.

And all their prate of frailty : thou didst stand  
The barren virtue of their lives above,  
And above lures of fame ;-- though to thy hand  
All strings of music throbbed, thy single love  
Was, in high trust, to hymn thy Gaelic land  
And passionate proud woes of Roisin Dubh.

Thomas MacDonagh

# To My Lady

You with all gifts of grace, have this one gift--  
Or simple power -- your way of life to lift  
For way of love out of the common way  
Of manner and conduct where with all it lay.  
Your love, although your life now, is apart  
From these, and not by will so but by heart.  
You hold no secrets of yourself from you:  
You have no vanity, no doubt to do  
What 'tis your way to do; and as you live  
Not in yourself alone, you take and give:  
You hold no secrets of yourself from me,  
Nor fail to see in me what is to see.  
So you, surrendering every defence,  
Yield not, but hold the perfect reticence  
Of intimate love. We have no need of speech  
(Though I speak this) our equal trust to reach.  
Our acts we guard not, and we go our ways  
Free, though together now for all our days.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Two Songs From The Irish

I.

(Is truagh gan mise i Sasana)

'Tis a pity I'm not in England,  
Or with one from Erin thither bound,  
Out in the midst of the ocean,  
Where the thousands of ships are drowned.

From wave to wave of the ocean  
To be guided on with the wind and the rain--  
And O King! that Thou might'st guide me  
Back to my love again!

II.

(Táid na réalta 'na seasamh ar an aer)

The stars stand up in the air,  
The sun and the moon are gone,  
The strand of its waters is bare,  
And her sway is swept from the swan.

The cuckoo was calling all day,  
Hid in the branches above,  
How my stóirín is fled far away--  
'Tis my grief that I give her my love!

Three things through love I see,  
Sorrow and sin and death--  
And my mind reminding me  
That this doom I breathe with my breath.

But sweeter than violin or lute  
Is my love, and she left me behind--  
I wish that all music were mute,

And I to my beauty were blind.

She's more shapely than swan by the strand,  
She's more radiant than grass after dew,  
She's more fair than the stars where they stand--  
'Tis my grief that her ever I knew!

Thomas MacDonagh

# Über Allen Gipfellen Ist Ruh

Over all the mountains is rest;  
In all the tree tops the faint west  
Scarce stirs a bough.  
The nestlings hush their song.  
Wait awhile -- ere long  
Rest too shalt thou.

Thomas MacDonagh



# When In The Forenoon Of The Year

When in the forenoon of the year  
Fresh flowers and leaves fill all the earth,  
I hear glad music, faint and clear,  
Singing day's birth.

Its dear delight thrills the dawn through  
With melody like an old lay  
Of country birds and morning dew  
And of the May.

And then I hear the first cock crow,  
And then the twitter in the eaves,  
And gaze upon the world below  
Through green rose leaves.

And see the white mist melt away,  
And watch the sleepless sheep come out  
Under the trees that hear all day  
One cuckoo's shout.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Wishes For My Son, Born On Saint Cecilia's Day, 1912

Now, my son, is life for you,  
And I wish you joy of it,—  
Joy of power in all you do,  
Deeper passion, better wit  
Than I had who had enough,  
Quicker life and length thereof,  
More of every gift but love.

Love I have beyond all men,  
Love that now you share with me—  
What have I to wish you then  
But that you be good and free,  
And that God to you may give  
Grace in stronger days to live?

For I wish you more than I  
Ever knew of glorious deed,  
Though no rapture passed me by  
That an eager heart could heed,  
Though I followed heights and sought  
Things the sequel never brought.

Wild and perilous holy things  
Flaming with a martyr's blood,  
And the joy that laughs and sings  
Where a foe must be withstood,  
Joy of headlong happy chance  
Leading on the battle dance.

But I found no enemy,  
No man in a world of wrong,  
That Christ's word of charity  
Did not render clean and strong—  
Who was I to judge my kind,  
Blindest groper of the blind?

God to you may give the sight  
And the clear, undoubting strength  
Wars to knit for single right,

Freedom's war to knit at length,  
And to win through wrath and strife,  
To the sequel of my life.

But for you, so small and young,  
Born on Saint Cecilia's Day,  
I in more harmonious song  
Now for nearer joys should pray—  
Simpler joys: the natural growth  
Of your childhood and your youth,  
Courage, innocence, and truth:

These for you, so small and young,  
In your hand and heart and tongue.

Thomas MacDonagh

# With Only This For Likeness, Only These Words

With only this for likeness, only these words,  
I took this June upon the bloom of the earth,  
Upon the rare brown and the young green of the earth,  
Yearning for power and finding but these words.

The changing tide of radiance in the sky  
Is over me, and earth and earth around,  
Here where no waters rock, no streets resound--  
Earth glory and the glory of the sky.

Around, above -- but far, how far beyond!--  
For these will pass, their memory will sleep--  
The train of Beauty vain in vain will sweep  
Past the dumb soul, the memory beyond.

I cannot grasp that glory with my hand,  
Nor clasp my wonder in the casket choice  
Of undulant words or words of the straight voice--  
I, stammering of speech and halt of hand.

Thomas MacDonagh

# Within The Temple

The middle of the things I know  
Is the unknown, and circling it  
Life's truth and life's illusion show  
Things in the terms of sense and wit.

Bounded by knowledge thus, unbound,  
Within the temple thus, alone,  
Clear of the circle set around,  
I know not, being with the unknown;

But images my memories use  
Of sense, and terms of wit employ,  
Lest in the known the unknown lose  
The secret tidings of my joy.

Thomas MacDonagh