

ADARE

By JOHN F. O'DONNELL

The morn comes freshly from the East,
It strikes with fire the upland ridge,
And pours a shaft of gold between
The midmost shadows of the bridge
Where late at eve shall dance the midge.
Flame fills the immemorial tree,
Which keeps its chestnuts for the time
When harvest banquets through the world,
And the hot breezes flow in rhyme.

Soft sleeps the village in the maze
Of dreamy elm and sycamore;
Soft slides the river's rosy tide
Through blossomed sedges by the shore,
Rushes, and pendent willows hoar.
The little boat moored in the cove
Takes no pulsation from the stream,
But shadowed on the water lies,
The lovely image of a dream.

I leave the village to its rest -
White walls with ivy diapered,
Brown roofs that in the Springtime give
Asylum to the happy bird,
Whose wing the southern air has stirred;
And wandering down the grassy marge
Of Maigue, amidst its Paradise,
Turn one green bend of lawn, and lo!
Three Hundred Years confront mine eyes.

Three Hundred Years in channelled stones,
Hewn in some quarry vast and fair,
But touched with melancholy gray -
That habit of our Irish air,
Which slays, but still knows when to spare.
Chancel, quadrangle, tower, are here;
Gaunt cloisters, roof and mullions riven;
With that clear interspace through which
Souls, tired of flesh, looked out to Heaven.

I see it all - the choir, the stalls,
The broad east window, smote with blood -
(Bright as six rainbows ribboned) -
St. Francis's brown-robed brotherhood,
Each with his crucifix of wood.
Slowly the instant pageant fades;
Ruin returns to leaf and stone;
A shadow rises from my brain,
And I am, with the sun, alone.

And who were these? By what access
Of patience did they find their way
To those cold penitential aisles
To stifle self, to bravely pray
Until their hairs grew scant and gray,
And some one plucked them by the sleeve
Some hour of interrupted breath?
They turned to find who touched them so,
And met the smiling face of Death.

They were not wasted hearts alone,
Craving forgiveness and the rod -
Whose hearts' best wine had spilled to earth,
And left the sediment to God;
They heard no outside world applaud.
Their daily boon companions were
The matin lark, the sunset rock;
And for excitement and repose,
The cloister, or the desk chained book.

Thus thought I, musing in Adare;
The little village slowly woke,
And from a heaven of purple cloud
The sun, a bright conclusion, broke
Clearly as if some prophet spoke.
O lark in either choiring loud
In that blue sanctuary's light!
Tell those I love in far-off streets
I shall see Limerick to-night.

