

Townlands

*Songs of Donegal*

By

Patrick MacGill

1921

I SPEAK with a proud tongue of the people who  
were  
And the people who are,  
The worthy of Ardara, the Rosses and Inish-  
keel,  
My kindred  
The people of the hills and the dark-haired  
passes  
My neighbours on the lift of the brae,  
In the lap of the valley.

To them Slainthe !

I speak of the old men,  
The wrinkle-rutted,  
Who dodder about foot-weary  
For their day is as the day that has been and  
is no more  
Who warm their feet by the fire,  
And recall memories of the times that are gone ;  
Who kneel in the lamplight and pray  
For the peace that has been theirs  
And who beat one dry-veined hand against  
another  
Even in the sun  
For the coldness of death is on them.

I speak of the old women  
Who danced to yesterday's fiddle  
And dance no longer.  
They sit in a quiet place and dream  
And see visions  
Of what is to come,  
Of their issue,  
Which has blossomed to manhood and woman-  
hood  
And seeing thus  
They are happy  
For the day that was leaves no regrets,  
And peace is theirs  
And perfection.

I speak of the strong men  
Who shoulder their burdens in the hot day,  
Who stand in the market-place  
And bargain in loud voices,  
Showing their stock to the world.  
Straight the glance of their eyes  
Broad-shouldered,  
Supple.  
Under their feet the holms blossom,  
The harvest yields.  
And their path is of prosperity.

I speak of the women,  
Strong-hipped, full-bosomed,  
Who drive the cattle to graze at dawn,  
Who milk the cows at dusk.  
Grace in their homes,  
And in the crowded ways  
Modest and seemly  
Mothers of children !

I speak of the children  
Of the many townlands,  
Blossoms of the Bogland,  
Flowers of the Valley,  
Who know not yesterday, nor to-morrow,  
And are happy,  
The pride of those who have begot them.  
And thus it is,  
Ever and always,  
In Ardara, the Rosses and Inishkeel  
Here, as elsewhere,  
The Weak, the Strong, and the Blossom-  
ing  
And thus my kindred.

To them Slainthe.

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#### Townlands

Now as townlands these three townlands are  
the best that can be seen,  
Meenahalla and Strasallagh and Caghara-  
creen.

Now take the road to Rosses Beag as well as  
Rosses Wor,

And the townlands marching either hand are  
well above a score.

And mark them well in hill and holm, and bog  
and pasture land,

And good strong houses standing snug and  
white on either hand,

“ Good luck be on ye, decent man !” The  
girshas passing by

Will have the soft laugh on the lip, the brave  
look in the eye.

The hearty men : “ It’s warm indeed ! Sit  
down, sir, if you please,

To have a pull iv this old pipe and make  
yourself at ease !”

“ Good bless you, decent man, and all !” the  
good housewife will say :

“ And sit you down and eat a bit to help you  
on the way ! ”

And you, out on the Rosses road that runs to  
Rosses Wor,

Will go through many a brave townland and  
they’re above a score

But as townlands these three townlands are  
the best you've ever seen,

Meenahalla and Strasallagh, and Caghara-  
creen !

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At Inishkeel

HOUSE and housing either hand, down here !

Hush you in this calm townland, down here !

There they rest at noon and night,

Twice a spade-length out of sight,

Down here.

Sleep you all and sleep you well, down here ?

Have you not a word to tell, down here ?

Who have spun and set and sown

In the homes and holms you've known,

Yet you seem to like it well,

Down here.

Oonah, Norah, Ishabel, down here,

Have you anything to tell, down here ?

Light hands at the spinning wheel,

Feet as light to foot a reel,

Oonah, Norah, Ishabel,

Down here.

Murtagh, Dermot, Donal Dhu, down here,

Is it well, bold boys, for you, down here ?

At the pattern, dance and fair,

Girls, full-bosomed, miss you there,

And they wait in vain for you

Down here.

Farley, Peadar, Eamon Wor, down here,  
You have neither stock nor store down here.  
Heavy-headed corn and rye  
Swathe the fields of years gone by,  
Farley, Peadar, Eamon Wor,  
Down here.

Tell me, do you like the place, down here ?  
Men of mettle, girls of grace, down here ?  
Does your heart not long once more  
For the fair, the dancing floor ?  
Woe and Joy have not a place  
Down here.

House and housing either hand, down here !  
Hush you in this calm townland, down here !  
Here they rest at noon and night  
Twice a spade-length out of sight,  
Down here.

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### Two Together

CARRICKMACARTH for raking,  
Where the good old tales are told !  
Greenans for merrymaking  
And nobody growing old !  
And putting it all together,  
If you are the boy for fun,  
Minding not wind and weather,

Foot it to Carrigdun !  
Now stop on the way a minute  
By the marches of Drimagool  
It's land and the cattle in it,  
Its mountains white with wool !  
And further, by hill and hollow,  
Where the burns of white trout run-  
Ah ! that is the road to follow,  
That takes you to Carrigdun !

When I was supple and hearty,  
Fifty years gone by  
Carrickmacarth for a party,  
Greenans when blood ran high !  
Now, taking the world as you find it,  
Say where would the light feet run ?  
To a hedge and a girl in behind it !  
Ah, young blood and Carrigdun !

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#### In The Parish

MULLANMORE, Meenahalla,  
Glenmornan, Strasalla,  
By the highway, either hand  
Derrinane, Cornagrilla,  
Kilmore, Drimnisilla,  
But the best is my own townland !  
The strong cows are lowing,

And the prime corn growing,  
And heavy the ear of its grain,  
Great store of good money,  
White trout and wild honey  
And would I were back there again !

The big, brown loaves baking  
The fair girls hay-making,  
And the cut meadows, swath on sward ;  
The flower-bright lane edges,  
The haw-speckled hedges  
And the fairy raths daisy-starred.

Meenarood and Kilfinnan,  
Cleengarra and Crinnan,  
That slope to the salt sea strand  
Gortameera, Kingarrow,  
Drimeeney, Falcarragh,  
But the best is my own townland.

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