A Passage Paid

Mid the forests grand + trackless

Far away within the West

Where the settler built his log hut

And the mocking bird her nest

Lay a poor young Irish woods man

Sick with fever with pain

All his brow was flushed to crimson

All his life-sweat poured like rain

There was need of careful nursing + the stranger was most kind

Tending to the dry lips burning - to the restless wandering mind

He had hewn the mighty timbers

He had cleared the [] glade

For long months the echoes trembled

To his axes sounding blade

All his work was for his dear ones – For the mother whose cold days

Had been cheered with many comforts

And relived in many ways

Though she’d feel, I know, more happy

And have made more thankful prayer

Just to hear his glad laugh near her

To stroke down his dark-brown hair.

IIII

Just to catch his step at evening, as to come before the door

On to mark him in his manhood, like his father years before

When she died, they found a paper, stained with tears hid in a box

One brown lock of hair some letter – and a child’s small faded socks.

She was sleeping in Kilsheelan, and last week a letter went

Taking home two sisters passage + a years hard earned rent

But another ship was sailing, Guided by an angel hand

Sailing fast to bear him onwards to a fairer better land

Ah! twas sad to hear him raving of the old familiar hills

Where the music of his childhood sang in fifty murmuring rills

Of his home in far Tipperary

And the winding wild boreen

Where [the] brown thrush sang the sweetest

Where the leaves kept longest green

Of the forthall the harding of the dance + of the fair

Talking of the pleasant places the kindly neighbours there

VI

Driving home the cows for milking, And as slow they browsing came

In the dear old Irish language

Checking each with some pet name

Now the plough sunk in the fallow

Stiff with weed + damp + brown

And he softly urged the horses

As they toiled the long field down

Ah: twas sad to see him trying

The poor fellow in his pain

To rise up + stroke the forehead

To smooth back the tangled mane

They were simple things to cling to

And his life was much the same

Full I think god loved to see him

When the summer later came

Twas an hour before the dawning

As his white lips moved in prayer

That the angles softly called him

To that land where all is fair

And I question though I know not

When the angels call the roll

Mid the martyrs bearing branches

Shall we see this poor boy’s soul

[s]aw sure his hands were spotless

All his heart was clear + true

And he gave his life for others

Not much more might martyrs do.