

ODDS AND ENDS

AN MANGAIRE SUGACH

More songs of exile

LAST week I wrote about songs of exile, and among the songs of that kind that I quoted from was one written by Michael Scanlan, who emigrated with his family from Castlemahon to America in 1833, when he was only 14 years of age.

Scanlan, who later became deeply involved in the Fenian movement in America, came to be described as "the Poet Laureate of Fenianism." He wrote *The Bold Fenian Men*, that rousing song that commences-

*See who come over the red-blossomed heather,
Their green banners kissing the pure mountain air;
Heads erect, eyes to front, stepping proudly together,*

Sure freedom sits throned on each proud spirit there.

Apart from Scanlan's song of farewell to his native land, which I quoted last week, he wrote a second equally lovely farewell song, which he called *Goodbye-*

*The apple boughs were dripping dew
On my pathway;*

*The robin sang the meadows through
His plaintive lay.*

*The valleys never looked so sweet
As on that day,*

*When from my childhood's blest retreat
I turned away,*

*To breast the wild and searching sleet
That sweeps the world's highway.*

*I turned upon the mountain heath
To look my last,*

And gazing o'er the vales beneath

*My tears fell fast.
Bright eyes that sparkled long ago*

*Rose soft in view;
Sweet voices floated from below*

*That once I knew,
Were but the echoes of my woe*

From 'neath the church-yard yew.

How fast the stern and rock-ribbed coast

*Fades from my sight;
Soon, soon, the green hills will be lost*

*In endless night.
The moon will rise on wings of gold,*

*And the sad sea
Unto the hills will sing her old*

*Weird melody.
Yet I shall never more behold*

Thy beauties, grá mo chroí!

Another Limerick exile song that I like very much is that called *Ringmoylan Quay*. And by the way, the word 'quay', which occurs at the end of each verse, should be pronounced 'kay'; otherwise the rhyming pattern will go awry.

*Farewell to Pallaskenry town,
Likewise sweet Shannon-grove;*

*It is in search of fortune
That I am forced to rove.*

*But if Providence proves kind to me,
I won't stay long away,*

*I'll never forget my sweetheart,
Or you, Ringmoylan Quay,*

*It was on a summer's evening
To Pallas I did stray,*

*I met a pretty fair maid
By chance along the way.*

*She saluted me most kindly,
And this to me did say:*

"Young man, come along

*with me,
Down by Ringmoylan Quay."*

*Farewell, my pretty fair may,
I have no time to spare;*

*For I'm in search of my father's sheep,
That strayed along the way.*

*But if you be here next Sunday,
At the closing of the day,*

*Together we'll walk like lovers,
Down by Ringmoylan Quay.*

*The very next Sunday evening,
I went to meet my dear;*

The sun was sinking in the west,

*The sky shone bright and clear.
You'd like to see this fair maid,*

*Dressed in her grand array;
Together we walked like lovers,*

Down by Ringmoylan Quay.

*We both ascended the wind-mill hill,
With a step both light and gay,*

*And gave three cheers for our comrades,
Though some were far away:*

*Forever I'd stay at home
If my darling girl would say:*

*"Stay here, young man,
along with me,*

Down by Ringmoylan Quay."

*We both sat on the Boat Hill,
And fondly gazed around,*

*To view the hills of Cratloe,
Where verdure does abound;*

*We spoke on past pleasures,
And friends that were far away,*

*And we bade adieu to Shannongrove,
And sweet Ringmoylan Quay.*

More than 80 years ago, a J. W. Enright, of Ahawilk, Feohanagh, who emigrated to Australia, wrote a song of farewell to the little river called the Bonoke, of which this is the final verse:

But before I close this ditty there is one thing I will say:

Sweet rippling stream of thee I'll dream until my dying day;

*And when I'm in Australia I'll often sing of thee,
And pray that Ireland soon may be - a nation proud and free.*

But when all is said and done, I suppose the best known of all Limerick's songs of exile is that called *The Vales of New Dirreen*, which was composed by John Downey, a farm labourer, of great natural ability, who fell in love with the daughter of the farmer for whom he worked.

The farmer wouldn't hear of such a match, and forced his daughter to emigrate to America.

Downey followed her some time later, but she had died before his arrival. His pathetic song of farewell rings with sincerity. I have space to quote only the final verse:

*I now conclude these limping lines,
In case I'd be too late,*

*As the morning train from Ardagh
Leaves at twenty-five past eight.*

*God be with you Ireland,
Thou star-lit ocean queen,*

*And a fond farewell to all who dwell
In the vales of New Dirreen.*