



Contrasts at Christmas
in Limerick . . . Right:
the Redemptorists' crib,
Left: the Killeely cross,

The Paupers' Cross

IT IS a rather unseasonal sight in an Advent-Christmas approaching grey December afternoon. The nebulous luminosity of a sky that never really brightened from the evening before is fast shedding any semblance of luminary vision it contained.

Beside one, erect, strange, anachronistic and sparse, impervious to the prevailing breeze, is one of the last monuments to the pre-cumenistic era: the plain wooden emblem of a rude cross in what was colloquially known as the Paupers' Graveyard.

Hewn from a tree in a haphazard fashion, it is, nevertheless, despite traces of green weather stain, still steadfast in the ground and blind to the changes about it.

Nearby, barely emerging from the grass, is a piece of stone—an attempt at a grave-stone or another cross?

On the surface of the field, where itinerants were wont to camp, moments of burned grass, wire, dessicated but temporarily swamped grass and pieces of rusted iron are in abundance.

Nails

The only embellishment of the Cross itself is a few half ingraind nails. Its vista: Paupers' Cross across the way in Killeely and a Christmas tree proclaiming festivity on a factory chimney.

Shortly the new housing estate planned for Ballynanty More will be encroaching on its doorstep and its fate open to conjecture.

The following are the remarks in prose and poetry of a young man who was born in one side of the areas surrounding the Cross and is now resident on the other side.

The Paupers' Cross

*stands stark over the
the land dividing Bally-
nanty and Killeely on the
north side of the city.
The land is rough with
unmarked graves . . .
graves of people who had
no family or friends.*

*I remember seeing the
famine and plague pits
open in the fields of
Killeely where thousands
of coffinless corpses were
flung in heaps over each
other from the pestilen-
tial pens of the numerous
workhouses . . .*

—From Michael Hogan,
Bard of Thomond, born
New Road, Thomondgate,
November, 1832. Died
1899.

*Today young children
play, oblivious of the
land's sad and cruel his-
tory. Paupers are not
buried there anymore . .
the Cross and ridges re-
main as a reminder of
callous Christianity.*

THE PAUPERS' CROSS

*There is a Cross
Near where I live
To give thought
Is to create sadness
In a cruel Catholic city
"Pauper" solved it all
Without pity.*

*The City Home was
made*

*Wooden boxes
Greeted corpses
No priest prayed.
A Paupers' Cross
Covers my youth
Where we played
A field of ridges.*

*Rome became the rage
The wooden Cross
Was a reminder
Of unknown names.*

*How many "paupers"
Were carted to Killeely
Where priests now pass
In shining cars?*

*Ridges have been
Rubbed smooth by time
A Cross weather-cruci-
fied,*

There is no wine . . .

—FRANK HAMILTON.