

# a limerick christmas

"Limerick?" Dirty and priest-ridden", he said-  
The taximan speeding to Heuston.  
"Twill stop at the Junction. You'll be in by ten,"  
The checker, strong-smelling of porter.  
A seat by the window, the jolt as we leave;  
The sea-crossing's lingering tiredness.  
Dark, ghostly hedgerows recede in the night,  
And Christmas scenes steal through the darkness.

O'Connell surveying his Georgian world -  
Echoes of great crowds with torches.  
Tinkers at corners, with holly and fir,  
And blessings to loosen the purse-strings.  
Carols at Cannock's, fasting at Todd's,  
"Remember the poor", "Buy a line, Sir",  
Reaping the harvest of hope-filled hearts,  
High on the tide of festive fervour.

Ubiquitous Bethlehem, cotton-wool snow,  
Sacristans grappling with statues,  
Dutiful families trooping down aisles,  
Homecoming crowds filling churches.  
Noisy pubs brimming with boisterous song,  
Card playing, porter-filled laughter,  
Red noses nodding in solemn conclave  
"Bob's sound, lads, we'll get in the back door"!

Bells at the natal hour, bells at noontide,  
Sweet-sounding bells, o'er the city,  
Catholic, Protestant, Mary's and John's.  
Tonight, 'tis Christ's birth they're pealing.  
"Fall on your knees, O hear the angels voices!"  
"Wake up, Sir! We're there, Sir!" - the porter.  
A loudspeaker carolling "O Holy Night" -  
And the Railway Inn welcomes the stranger.

