



THE COMPLETE

John Ireland

volume 1

SONGBOOK

MARK STONE
SHOLTO KYNOCH



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THE COMPLETE *John Ireland* SONGBOOK volume 1

JOHN IRELAND (1879-1962)

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66'40

MARK STONE *baritone*
SHOLTO KYNOCH *piano*

JOHN IRELAND

Confident, romantic lyricism from an uncertain, self-critical bachelor

Part one: An unhappy childhood, losing both parents and being taught by Stanford

John Nicholson Ireland was a composer at the heart of English music in the first decades of the twentieth century. He studied composition under Charles Villiers Stanford, was organist and choirmaster at St. Luke's, Chelsea, and taught a number of the next generation of English composers, including E.J. Moeran, Geoffrey Bush and Benjamin Britten. He wrote several orchestral and chamber works, including the most popular British piano concerto of its time and a film score, as well as a large amount of music for solo piano. But it is primarily for his vocal compositions that he is now remembered, with his ever-popular choral works, both sacred and secular, and especially his songs.

He was born on 13th August 1879 in Bowdon, Cheshire. His father, Alexander Ireland, who was 70 years old at the time, was born in Edinburgh and had moved to Manchester around 1846 to become manager of the new *Manchester Examiner* newspaper. He married his second wife Annie Nicholson, from whom Ireland inherited his middle name, in 1865; she herself was an author and a critic, in addition to being a keen amateur pianist. Alexander had a son from his first marriage, and he and Annie produced a further five children, the youngest of whom, by seven years, was John.

Ireland suffered an unhappy childhood and was treated, in his opinion, harshly by his older siblings when they were required to look after him, perhaps in reaction to the clear favouritism that he was shown by their mother. He was educated at a Dame School and then Leeds Grammar School, although he hated being sent away for his education and ran away at the age of seven. When in later life he exhibited an isolated, insecure, self-critical personality, various commentators have looked to this sorrowful start to his life as a possible cause. In spite of this melancholy, his mother nurtured his interest in music and poetry and he soon excelled at the piano. In addition, the young boy's home was steeped in literature, with a library full of poetry, and leading literary figures regularly visiting the house.

His youngest sister, Ethel was already studying at the Royal Academy of Music when in September 1893, at the age of fourteen, Ireland moved to London to study organ with Sir Walter Parratt, and piano with Frederick Cliffe, at the Royal College of Music. At this point

disaster struck the young Ireland when, within a week of his arrival in London, his mother died, followed a year later by his father. This undoubtedly had a huge impact on him, and for the next few years he was placed in the care of a succession of landladies, whilst his considerable inheritance was frugally managed by over-conservative guardians. In order to afford to pay for any small student luxuries, Ireland took jobs playing the piano in restaurants, played the organ for churches and won scholarships.

In 1895, he took his Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists diploma, and the next year was appointed assistant organist at Holy Trinity, Sloane Street. By this time he was more involved in composition and became determined to study with Stanford, which he did from 1897 to 1901. Stanford's teaching methods were considered harsh, and Ireland suffered more than most on account of his sensitive nature. On looking through the first manuscripts that Ireland offered to him, Stanford responded by saying "All Brahms and water, my boy – and more water than Brahms", promptly despatching him to study some Dvořák and produce something better. Later he told him that he was going to have to try a more stringent method of tuition with him, and made him study modal counterpoint, based on Palestrina, for a whole year, not allowing him to write any music except in these strict styles.

Stanford taught orchestration by trial and error. He would allow his students' compositions to progress week by week, and when they were finished he would have the college orchestra try them out. The exercise was normally concluded by Stanford closing the score, handing it back to the student and saying that it needed to be improved. It was through this method of public humiliation that Ireland was schooled over four years, and he remained insecure and over-sensitive to criticism for the rest of his life.

In spite of this, when Ireland looked back on the benefit he gained from these methods, he always expressed his utmost gratitude to the man who not only helped him, but countless other English composers, at a time when English music was beginning to enjoy a revival. At the turn of the century, Ireland graduated from the Royal College of Music, after eight years of study, ready to start his work as a professional musician.



THE COMPLETE *John Ireland* SONGBOOK volume 1

1 **Sea fever**

John Masefield (1878-1967)

When Masefield finally heard Ireland's most famous song, written in October 1913, he said that it did not agree at all with the meaning of his poem, taken from the 1902 collection *Saltwater ballads*. He was not the only one to fail to be won over by it: the publisher Leslie Boosey listened to Ireland perform it with the singer George Parker, but turned it down because Masefield had already assigned the rights to another composer, and Boosey had not had much success with their recent publication of Haydn Wood's sea songs. Augener published in 1915, and it was soon selling 10,000 copies a year.

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume and the seagulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

2 The bells of San Marie

John Masefield

Ireland returned to Masefield again in 1918 for these words from his 1910 book *Ballads and poems*. The song is possibly sadder than the poem would immediately suggest, but timing is everything, when a pre-war poem is set after four desperate years of conflict. The text describes the mythical port of San Marie and the sailors who come there and ring the bells. The melancholy of Ireland's setting, which shares many features with *Sea fever*, adds a certain distance to the picture, as if describing happy days that will not return.

It's pleasant in Holy Mary
By San Marie lagoon,
The bells they chime and jingle
From dawn to afternoon.
They rhyme and chime and mingle,
They pulse and boom and beat,
And the laughing bells are gentle
And the mournful bells are sweet.

Oh, who are the men that ring them,
The bells of San Marie,
Oh, who but the sonsie seamen
Come in from over sea.
And merrily in the belfries
They rock and sway and hale,
And send the bells a-jangle,
And down the lusty ale.

It's pleasant in Holy Mary
To hear the beaten bells
Come booming into music,
Which throbs, and clangs, and swells,
From sunset till the daybreak,
From dawn to afternoon,
In port of Holy Mary
On San Marie Lagoon.

3 The vagabond

John Masefield

Masefield's 1902 poem from *Saltwater ballads* has something in common with Robert Louis Stevenson's *Songs of travel*, some of which were famously set by Ralph Vaughan Williams. In this song, a traveller explains he knows little about life apart from the pleasure he finds in a roadside fire, an inn and the road on which he wanders. Ireland's setting from 1922 is as simple as the poet's philosophy of life and death, with an unobtrusive piano part and a speech-rhythm melody, which easily accommodates the slang dialect of Masefield's poem.

Dunno a heap about the what an' why,
Can't say's I ever knowed.
Heaven to me's a fair blue stretch of sky,
Earth's jest a dusty road.

Dunno the names o' things, nor what they are,
Can't say's I ever will.
Dunno about God – he's jest the noddin' star
Atop the windy hill.

Dunno about Life – it's jest a tramp alone,
From wakin'-time to doss.
Dunno about Death – it's jest a quiet stone
All over-grey wi' moss.

An' why I live, an' why the old world spins,
Are things I never knowed.
My mark's the gypsy fires, the lonely inns,
An' jest the dusty road.

4

Hope the hornblower

Henry Newbolt (1862-1938)

This is Ireland's only setting of Newbolt, a poet whose sea poems were famously set by Ireland's composition teacher Stanford in his *Songs of the fleet* and *Songs of the sea*. This verse, from his book *Poems new and old*, stays on *terra firma*, describing a huntsman calling his followers to join him. Ireland's song is a rollicking affair, with the voice emulating the horn, and the piano galloping underneath. In fact, the original 1911 version also contained a more difficult accompaniment that was abandoned when the new edition was published ten years later.

“Hark ye, hark to the winding horn;
Sluggards awake, and front the morn!
Hark ye, hark to the winding horn;
The sun's on meadow and mill,
Follow me, hearts that love the chase;
Follow me, feet that keep the pace:
Stirrup to stirrup we ride, we ride,
We ride by moor and hill.”

Huntsman, huntsman, whither away?
What is the quarry afoot today?
Huntsman, huntsman, whither away,
And what the game ye kill?
Is it the deer, that men may dine?
Is it the wolf that tears the kine?
What is the race ye ride, ye ride,
Ye ride by moor and hill?

“Ask not yet till the day be dead
What is the game that's forward fled,
Ask not yet till the day be dead
The game we follow still.
An echo it may be, floating past;
A shadow it may be, fading fast:
Shadow or echo, we ride, we ride
We ride by moor and hill.”

5 **The East Riding**

Eric Chilman (1893-1976)

In 1914, at the age of 22, the poet Eric Chilman enlisted in the East Yorkshire regiment; he grew up in East Riding, and this poem describes the harsh, wind-swept environment of his home town. Ireland's setting dates from around 1920, the year of its publication. He sets the song as two verses, with only small differences between the two halves, but his harmonic colouring and use of octaves throughout the piano part adds a harshness similar to the description of the bitter Yorkshire wind of the text.

Salt-laden, sad with cry of ships
That in its forefront go,
The sea-wind rages – he that whips
From east the land I know.

And burdened with a heathy scent
Of bee-robbed moorland, cries
The tiger Arctic – southward bent
When the bluff easter dies.

And blandly from the Pennine height
Across the Riding sail
Winds of the west, and soft and light
The south wind gives me hail.

And "Hail, good hail!" they shout, and shake
The sapling, branch and bole –
Belovèd brother winds that rake
The corners of my soul.

6 **In praise of Neptune**

Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

Campion was not only a poet, but a composer of lute songs to rival John Dowland. He was Cambridge educated, although did not take a degree, studied law in Gray's Inn and then medicine in France before practising as a doctor in London. It was in the *Gray's Inn Mask* of 1594 that these words first appeared, sung by Amphitrite, Thamesis and other sea-nymphs, and then later being published in Francis Davison's 1602 book *Poetical rhapsody*. Ireland's 1911 version, a traditional song with a repeated wave motif, is for unison voices and piano, although he also orchestrated it and produced a choral arrangement.

Of Neptune's empire let us sing,
At whose command the waves obey;
To whom the rivers tribute pay,
Down the high mountains sliding;
To whom the scaly nation yields
Homage for the crystal fields
Wherein they dwell:
And every sea-god pays a gem
Yearly out of his wat'ry cell
To deck great Neptune's diadem.

The Tritons dancing in a ring
Before his palace gates do make
The water with their echoes quake,
Like the great thunder sounding:
The sea-nymphs chant their accents shrill,
And the sirens, taught to kill
With their sweet voice,
Make ev'ry echoing rock reply
Unto their gentle murmuring noise
The praise of Neptune's empery.

7 **Here's to the ships**

Patrick Joseph O'Reilly (1877-1924)

This is a unison song from 1911, of which Ireland also produced an orchestrated version; the poem catches the mood of the time when England and Germany were engaged in a naval arms race in the run up to the First World War, and Ireland's stirring music fits the words and this sentiment perfectly. P.J. O'Reilly's nautical poems were also set by Haydn Wood the previous year in a group entitled *Three sea songs*, and it was the lack of success of these songs that contributed to Boosey's refusal to publish Ireland's *Sea fever*.

Here's to the ships, the grey ships,
The ships that wayward go,
Proudly to keep our flag afloat
In lands of sun or snow.
Here's to the ships, the grey ships,
That know not let nor bar,
The ships that guard our Motherland, –
Our kith and kin afar!

Here's to the guns, the long guns,
That speak with lips aflame,
Defiant as the thunderbolt
When grim war is the game.
Here's to the guns, the long guns,
That ope the sea gates wide, –
The guns that fierce dominion hold,
And will not be denied!

Here's to the men, the best men,
That e'er a nation boasts,
The men from vale and tor and town, –
The last and best of toasts!
Here's to the men, the seamen,
Who, at their country's call,
Will man her ships, will fight her guns;
The men! the best of all!

8 **Song from o'er the hill**
Patrick Joseph O'Reilly

This was Ireland's second setting of a text by P.J. O'Reilly, a poet who wrote the words for a number of songs around this period, whilst he was working as a clerk in a music warehouse. Composed in 1913, it has more in common with the ballads Ireland wrote under the name Turlay Royce (tracks 26-30) than with the main body of his song repertoire. It tells of a song that the poet heard years ago, but can still remember. The harmonic structure is very conservative by Ireland's standards, but there is a certain charm to the honest presentation of the text.

A song came o'er the hill to me
Ever so long ago,
A sweet and haunting melody
That set my heart aglow,
In olden days,
In golden days –
The days of long ago.

Gone is the singer but yet the song
Still floats across the hill,
In ev'ry breeze that sweeps along
I think I hear it still
Thro' lonely years,
Thro' all my tears,
The song from o'er the hill!

THE LAND OF LOST CONTENT

Alfred Edward Housman (1859-1936)

This cycle of settings from Housman's famous book of 63 poems, *A Shropshire lad*, was composed in 1920 and 1921 for the tenor Gervase Elwes, who died before he was able to perform it; the group's title is taken from Housman's poem *Into my heart an air that kills*, which Ireland did not set. Ireland's pupil Benjamin Britten, when performing the songs with the tenor Peter Pears in 1959, described the cycle as one of the composer's most personal, suggesting a similarity between Ireland and Housman in their nostalgia for the lost peacefulness of the country and the shattered innocence of its young men.

9 i The Lent lily

The first song of this group is Housman's call to pick daffodils while they last, a metaphor for seizing the moment in life. The setting is incredibly wistful, and the pensive mood is heightened by Ireland quoting a musical phrase from Butterworth's setting of another Housman poem, *Is my team ploughing*, in which a ghost asks his living friend about the world he has left behind. However subconscious this plagiarism – and he used the same phrase again in his 1922 piano piece *Soliloquy* – it demonstrates the composer's intentions for the song, taking his cue from the flowers imminent demise, rather than their beauty while they last.

'Tis spring; come out to ramble
The hilly brakes around,
For under thorn and bramble
About the hollow ground
The primroses are found.

And there's the windflower chilly
With all the winds at play,
And there's the Lenten lily
That has not long to stay
And dies on Easter Day.

And since till girls go maying
You find the primrose still,
And find the windflower playing
With every wind at will,
But not the daffodil.

Bring baskets now, and sally
Upon the spring's array,
And bear from hill and valley
The daffodil away
That dies on Easter Day.

10 ii **Ladslove**

S.R. Crockett took the title *Lad's love* for his 1897 novel from the old name for scented wormwood, or southern-wood, a sprig of which wooers used to wear when they went courting. It is possible that Ireland wanted to conjure up a similar reference for this romantic setting, which evokes a lover wooing his beloved, referring to the Narcissus legend to suggest both his beloved's beauty and the ideal of male perfection. It is quite poignant to hear his piano piece *A Grecian lad*, written twenty years later, which seems to be yearning back to the idealistic youth of this song.

Look not in my eyes, for fear
 They mirror true the sight I see,
 And there you find your face too clear
 And love it and be lost like me.
 One the long nights through must lie
 Spent in star-defeated sighs,
 But why should you as well as I
 Perish? Gaze not in my eyes.

A Grecian lad, as I hear tell,
 One that many loved in vain,
 Looked into a forest well
 And never looked away again.
 There, when the turf in springtime flowers,
 With downward eye and gazes sad,
 Stands amid the glancing showers
 A jonquil, not a Grecian lad.

11 iii **Goal and wicket**

“Tough and bitter” was how Britten described the third song of this group, and the musical language is certainly the most abrasive of this Housman group. The poem speaks of a young man who uses sport to distract himself from his melancholy, and although by the time of his parents’ deaths, when he was aged 14 and 15, he was already studying at the Royal College of Music, and so unlikely to have had the opportunity for weekly sport, phrases like “fighting sorrow for the young man’s soul” and “son of grief” must surely have rung powerful resonances with his own childhood.

Twice a week the winter thorough
 Here stood I to keep the goal:
 Football then was fighting sorrow
 For the young man’s soul.

Now in Maytime to the wicket
 Out I march with bat and pad:
 See the son of grief at cricket
 Trying to be glad.

Try I will; no harm in trying:
 Wonder 'tis how little mirth
 Keeps the bones of man from lying
 On the bed of earth.

12 iv **The vain desire**

There is a seductive tonal ambiguity to this setting of Housman's declaration of death-defying love, which creates an intensely personal and tender atmosphere. Ireland's title again gives an interesting insight into his own interpretation of the poem – one of ardent fertility – and his pensive postlude provides little resolution to the poet's troubled state. In *A Shropshire lad*, Housman responds to this poem with one entitled *The new mistress*, in which a new army recruit recollects the spurning he received from his beloved that drove him to enlist, and this positioning within the book may well have influenced Ireland's reading of the text.

If truth in hearts that perish
 Could move the powers on high,
 I think the love I bear you
 Should make you not to die.

Sure, sure, if steadfast meaning,
 If single thought could save,
 The world might end tomorrow,
 You should not see the grave.

This long and sure-set liking,
 This boundless will to please,
 – Oh, you should live for ever
 If there were help in these.

But now, since all is idle,
 To this lost heart be kind,
 Ere to a town you journey
 Where friends are ill to find.

13 v **The encounter**

The nebulous mood of the previous song is instantly broken with the piano's tritonic bass line pounding out with all the stubbornness and directness of the marching troop described in the poem, whilst the right hand sounds fanfares above. When the text describes the solitary soldier turning his head to see the observer in the crowd, the regularity of the accompaniment is broken, with the polyphony indicating the disturbance of a man being out of step with his comrades. As the army procession moves into the distance at the end of the song, the piano fades, alternating between the two themes of synchronicity and individuality.

The street sounds to the soldiers' tread,
 And out we troop to see:
 A single redcoat turns his head,
 He turns and looks at me.

My man, from sky to sky's so far,
 We never crossed before;
 Such leagues apart the world's ends are,
 We're like to meet no more.

What thoughts at heart have you and I
 We cannot stop to tell;
 But dead or living, drunk or dry,
 Soldier, I wish you well.

14 vi **Epilogue**

This poem, which also appears near the end of Housman's collection – number 57 of 63 – describes a wonderfully benevolent posthumous sentiment, as if a dead man is comforting his lover as she tends his grave. Ireland provides a musical quote from his own 1920 song *My true love hath my heart* in the accompaniment to the words “And happy is the lover”, giving both a sense of reminiscence and a broad romantic gesture; the pianist Alan Rowlands described this passage as Ireland's passion motif, and the composer used it again in his Piano concerto and *Fantasy* sonata.

You smile upon your friend today,
Today his ills are over;
You hearken to the lover's say,
And happy is the lover.

'Tis late to hearken, late to smile,
But better late than never;
I shall have lived a little while
Before I die for ever.

15 **The heart's desire**

Alfred Edward Housman

Composed in 1917, this was the first of Ireland's Housman settings, and it appears that the image of the vain desire described in the final verse stayed with him, because he used it a few years later as the title of track 12. The poem describes a simple pastoral scene, with boys collecting daffodils and girls willow branches; everyone finds their heart's desire, and the poet asks that he may find his too. Ireland set only the final three verses of Housman's five-verse poem, entitled *March* – the first two verses set the spring scene with the sun rising and the farm animals waking up.

The boys are up the woods with day
To fetch the daffodils away,
And home at noonday from the hills
They bring no dearth of daffodils.

Afield for palms the girls repair,
And sure enough the palms are there,
And each will find by hedge or pond
Her waving silver-tufted wand.

In farm and field through all the shire
The eye beholds the heart's desire;
Ah, let not only mine be vain,
For lovers should be loved again.

WE'LL TO THE WOODS NO MORE

Alfred Edward Housman

This group of three pieces – two songs and a piano solo – was dedicated to Arthur George Miller (1905-86), “in memory of the darkest days” with some further words heavily scratched out. Miller was one of Ireland’s choirboys at St. Luke’s, and the pair became very close, holidaying together for a number of years. This was one of a number of dedications to him in the 1920s, each of which was dated around the young boy’s birthday, 22nd February. Although there is no evidence to suggest a sexual relationship, Miller clearly meant a great deal to the composer, and was a source of inspiration.

16 i We'll to the woods no more

This Housman verse, inspired by the 15th century French poem *Nous n'irons plus aux bois*, is the introduction to his 1922 publication *Last poems*, and was an apt metaphor for a book that he prefaced by writing “I publish these poems, few though they are, because it is not likely that I shall ever be impelled to write much more.” For Ireland, the words may have brought to mind the end of his closeness to Arthur Miller, with his own disastrous marriage in 1926 and Miller’s imminent marriage in June 1927 – in later years he found it almost too painful to listen to this set.

We'll to the woods no more
The laurels all are cut,
The bowers are bare of bay
That once the Muses wore.
The year draws in the day
And soon will evening shut:
The laurels all are cut
We'll to the woods no more.
Oh, we'll no more, no more
To the leafy woods away,
To the high wild woods of laurel
And the bowers of bay no more.

17 **ii In boyhood**

Again taken from Housman's *Last poems*, this song describes boyhood friends that have now died, and is strangely reminiscent of Ireland's 1912 motet *Greater love hath no man*. In this song, Ireland's sorrow is less to do with Arthur Miller, and more the friends he had lost during the First World War; he uses an ascending triplet in the piano to introduce the phrase "it was not foes to conquer" similar to that which he had previously employed in his 1921 piano piece *For remembrance*. The song ends with the voice singing the word "me" unaccompanied, before the piano repeats the opening phrase, giving a strong feeling of isolation.

When I would muse in boyhood
The wild green woods among,
And nurse resolves and fancies
Because the world was young,
It was not foes to conquer,
Nor sweethearts to be kind,
But it was friends to die for
That I would seek and find.

I sought them far and found them,
The sure, the straight, the brave,
The hearts I lost my own to,
The souls I could not save.
They braced their belts about them,
They crossed in ships the sea,
They sought and found six feet of ground,
And there they died for me.

18 **iii Spring will not wait**

Ireland had already set the poem from *A Shropshire lad* referred to in the title (track 19) when he wrote this piano piece; the opening phrase appears to fit the first two lines of verse two, with which the sheet music is inscribed. He saw it as a completion of the two previous numbers, with quotations from the two songs, but probably also as an antidote to their melancholy, with the title suggesting the composer's message that we should be happy whilst we can, having heard the sorrows of the previous two poems.

19 **Hawthorn time**

Alfred Edward Housman

This last Housman song, a setting of poem 39 from *A Shropshire lad*, was composed in 1919; the words describe the spring in Wenlock, which is surmised by the poet, as he imagines the hawthorn blossom falling like snow in his absence. Ireland produced a strongly nostalgic rendering of this poem, with a largely chordal accompaniment and a rhythmically-simple melody with jumps of fifths and sixths producing a poignant effect. The subtle variations to the largely strophic form of the three verses are effective, and the repetition of the last two lines produces a definite, satisfying conclusion.

'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town
The golden broom should blow;
The hawthorn sprinkled up and down
Should charge the land with snow.

Spring will not wait the loiterer's time
Who keeps so long away;
So others wear the broom and climb
The hedgerows heaped with may.

Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,
Gold that I never see;
Lie long, high snowdrifts in the hedge
That will not shower on me.

20 **Spring sorrow**

Rupert Brooke (1887-1915)

This was the third and last of Ireland's Rupert Brooke poems. Ireland's choice of these words from Brooke's collection *Poems 1911-1914* was unusually optimistic, perhaps expressing his belief that the war was approaching its end, even if the spring of peace would be coloured by the remaining winter pains of war. He did, in fact, have three possible endings for the song, and allowed a pupil of his to have the final decision; the end result seems to have been the right one, as this unaffected, heartfelt song has remained one of Ireland's most popular.

All suddenly the wind comes soft,
And spring is here again;
And the hawthorn quickens with buds of green
And my heart with buds of pain.

My heart all winter lay so numb,
The earth so dead and froze,
That I never thought the spring would come,
Or my heart wake any more.

But winter's broken and earth has woken
And the small birds cry again.
And the hawthorn hedge puts forth its buds,
And my heart puts forth its pain.

TWO SONGS TO POEMS BY RUPERT BROOKE

Rupert Brooke

Once described by W.B. Yeats as the handsomest young man in England, Rupert Brooke was an early casualty of the First World War. He died on St. George's day in 1915 on a French hospital ship in the Aegean, but the rather unromantic reason for his death was sepsis as a result of an infected mosquito bite. His renowned beauty, his early death and, most of all, his evocative poetry, made him an iconic figure of the Great War, and a symbol of the price England paid for their involvement. Both of these poems come from his collection *Poems 1911-1914*.

21 i The soldier

Brooke's personal corner of a foreign field, as described in his most famous poem, was an olive grove on the Greek island of Skyros. His composer friend William Denis Browne, who chose the spot for Brooke's grave, wrote of his death "At 4 o'clock he became weaker, and at 4.46 he died, with the sun shining all round his cabin, and the cool sea-breeze blowing through the door and the shaded windows. No one could have wished for a quieter or a calmer end than in that lovely bay, shielded by the mountains and fragrant with sage and thyme". Ireland's patriotic setting dates from 1917.

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

22 ii **Blow out, you bugles**

The first verse of Ireland's setting of Brooke's elegiac poem is underpinned by a marching bass line in the piano to give the impression of the troops continual effort in spite of comrades' deaths, until the word "immortality" releases a wave of triplets that introduces the more spiritual themes of the second verse. This 1918 song again finds Ireland swept up in the tide of patriotism that had gripped the country, and although some commentators are surprised by the nature of the song, with its four-square melody, the harmonic invention is unmistakably Ireland.

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhop'd serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and love, and pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

SONGS OF A GREAT WAR

Eric Thirkell Cooper (1886-1960)

Composed in November 1916 and published the following year, these two poems were taken from Cooper's *Soliloquies of a subaltern somewhere in France*, which itself was published in September 1915 and dedicated "to the 2nd Battalion London Regiment Royal Fusiliers T.F.". The book consists of just over thirty verses about life in the early stages of the First World War. Ireland was clearly responding to the national mood at the time by producing these two war songs, whose different characters produce an excellent contrast of the reactions to the hardships of war.

23 i **Blind**

Ireland unusually starts this song without any piano introduction, and provides a setting that sounds more like a hymn tune than a song. It is a powerful effect given that the words are a prayer asking God, who provided everything and then took away the poet's sight, to give him the strength to cope with his adversity. Stanford schooled Ireland rigorously in the use of modes in composition, and so it is probably thanks to this teaching that Ireland employed the Dorian mode for this song, giving it a medieval sound, and conjuring up images of monastic solitude.

God, Who gave the world its fairness,
Swooning seas and ardent skies;
Fashioned it with every rareness
That could dazzle human eyes;
God, Who gave me all of these,
Help me do without them, please.

Giver of the light and flowers,
Running stream and forest tree,
Help me through the heavy hours,
When I think what others see.
God, who took my sight away,
Help me do without it, pray.

24 ii **The cost**

In contrast to the prayer-like reverence of the previous track, this song is a bitter reaction to the loss of a friend in battle. Unlike the guarded homoeroticism of Housman's poetry, here the love for his friend is worn plainly on the poet's sleeve, as he cries out in his grief for his comrade to be miraculously returned to life. Ireland's setting is suitably dramatic in its outpouring of emotion, from its heroic introduction of rising quavers emphasising the mourner's cries being hurled up to God in desperate resentment, to the fading final chords as he sinks back down when his prayer is unanswered.

Take back the honour and the fame,
The victory we've won,
Take all the credit from my name,
If this can be undone –
Let him, my friend that used to be,
Somehow be given back to me.

Don't mock me with the pride of it,
The glory of his death,
I only know he sighed a bit –
I felt him catch his breath.
O God, if miracles can be,
May he be given back to me!

25 **A garrison churchyard**
Eric Thirkell Cooper

This song was a relatively recent discovery, and as such was not included in the Complete Edition of Ireland's songs, and was published with a couple of other waifs and strays in 1998. It was written in December 1916, the month after the other two Cooper settings, and also comes from his book of war poems *Soliloquies of a subaltern somewhere in France*. In spite of the book's title, this poem is actually detailed as having been written in Valletta. Malta was referred to at the time as the nurse of the Mediterranean, and Cooper was clearly inspired by the island where many soldiers died.

A churchyard by a roadside bend,
Forgotten and unkept,
Bestrewn with gravestones, end to end,
Where stricken hearts here wept.

The scarlet of the gallant dead
Though hid beneath the turf,
Is born again in poppies red
That nod towards the surf.

O little silent waiting place
That looks towards the sea,
Within your crowded little space,
Lies all that's dear to me.

FIVE SONGS BY TURLAY ROYCE

Ireland wrote five songs under the pseudonym Turlay Royce, which were published between 1911 and 1913. No reason is given as to why he used this pseudonym, although he was perhaps embarrassed about producing popular songs of this type, referred to at the time as royalty ballads, for which publishers would pay well-known singers a fee to perform. In spite of this, they are wonderfully composed songs, and it is a shame that Royce's career was so short. As to the reason for the choice of name: cryptic crossword solvers will notice that Turlay Royce is an anagram of Royalty Cure.

26

i Love's window

Henry Druce Banning (1876-1958)

One important feature of royalty ballads, such as those written under the Royce pseudonym, is that the text needs to have an immediate sentimental appeal. For this first song, Ireland set the words of H.D. Banning, a little-known poet whose poems have been set by only a handful of composers. The text fits the bill completely – a love song pleading the beloved to look inside the heart of the singer – and Ireland's music is equally as appropriate, with a full-blooded, impassioned melody and a rich, pulsating accompaniment, illustrating the lover's beating heart.

Were there a little lamp within my soul,
Illumining my thoughts and secret ways,
Then would you see that as the seasons roll,
My only thought is ever in your praise.

Were there a little window in my heart,
Then would you know my ev'ry word was true,
Graved on it you would find your counterpart,
For all my loving heart is full of you.

Frederic Edward Weatherly (1848-1929)

Weatherly was a lawyer who also wrote the lyrics for around 3,000 popular songs, a dual career described by the title of his autobiography: *Piano and gown*. Amongst his most popular songs were *Danny boy*, *The holy city* and *Roses of Picardy*. He never pretended to be a poet, in spite of these great successes, and remained a modest man, who also wrote a number of books of prose and translated several foreign operas into English. Naval tales were a favourite of his, such as this song, which tells the story of the brave Billee Bowline and his crew, who fought to their deaths for England's sake.

O 'twas Monday in the morn,
Billee Bowline he was born,
An' the waters was a-roarin' an'
a-rollin',

But a jolly laugh laugh'd he,
"Why, you can't afrighthen me,
For I'm born to go to sea!" said
Billee Bowline!

So he up an' sail'd away
On a cutter trim an' gay,
An' across the sea away he went a-rollin',
Till just at mornin' light,
He got the foe in sight,
"By the Lord! But that's all right!" said
Billee Bowline!

O but when the foe espied
Billee Bowline side by side,
All with anger an' with pride, his eyes
was rollin';

"You must strike your flag" said he,
"You must come aboard of we" –
"Was you speakin', sir, to me!" said
Billee Bowline!

So he blazed across the deep,
Till his guns were put to sleep,
Yet he fought on, just to keep the ball a-rollin';
"You may rake us thro' an' thro',
You may bang us black an' blue,
But we'll do what men can do!" said
Billee Bowline.

So they sank beneath the blue,
Billee Bowline an' his crew;
O'er the waters don't you hear his voice a-rollin'?
"Though they beat us, 'twas no shame,
For we died for England's name,
And our sons will do the same!" says Billee Bowline!

Henry Druce Banning

Ireland returned to H.D. Banning to provide the text for his third Turley Royce composition – a declaration of undying love in spite of old age, with a similar message to John Lennon and Paul McCartney’s *When I’m sixty-four*. This strophic setting has a beautifully arching melody, with a chordal accompaniment; only at the end does the tune alter to allow the voice to finish on a high note, followed by an arpeggiated coda on the piano. The style of the song is very similar to the first Royce-Banning creation: instantly appealing, and uncharacteristically simple in harmonic structure.

When I grow old
And past my youthful day,
Will love grow cold,
My early faith decay?
No! I am thine alone.
Ah! Thine alway.

Not for youth’s prime
My whisper’d troth was giv’n,
And though by time
From thee I may be driv’n,
We will be lovers still,
My own, my love, in heav’n.

James Vila Blake (1842-1925)

The words of the now-neglected American Unitarian minister, James Vila Blake, were used by Ireland for a number of his songs and part-songs; he set several of Blake's translations of German poetry, but this fourth Royce ballad comes from his 1902 collection *Songs*. Ireland sets the first and final two verses of Blake's six verse poem, defiantly telling old age that he has no power over the poet – the omitted verses tell of the damage he has witnessed old age bring to the legs, heads and hearts of others.

I do defy ye crabbed age!
 I've seen ye, ne'er did feel ye:
 Go, for another turn a page;
 But I, a flip I deal ye.
 Where'er I go, where'er I go
 'Tis antic youth I bring,
 No matter what I do,
 'Tis then I sing –
 Hillo – and nonny,
 Hillo, hillo, and tra la, la, la, la,
 Hillo, hillo, my bonny.

My love, my bonny, tell me now,
 Didst ever know us aged,
 Or count what years upon the brow
 Had made us cynic-saged?
 Where'er we go, where'er we go,
 'Tis April's self we bring,
 Give this or that to do,
 'Tis then we sing –
 Hillo – and nonny,
 Hillo, hillo, and tra la, la, la, la,
 Hillo, hillo, my bonny.

Come I will kiss thee here and here,
 Thou sunny side of twenty,
 And tumble up our youth, my dear,
 With follies wise and plenty:
 Where'er I go, where'er I go,
 'Tis love and love I bring,
 If wooing is to do,
 'Tis I can sing –
 Hillo – and nonny,
 Hillo, hillo, and tra la, la, la, la,
 Hillo, hillo, my bonny!

Frederic Edward Weatherly

The final Royce song is another Weatherly setting, and again finds the poet describing a naval scene, this time the lively harbour town of Porto Rico, and its obliging female inhabitants. The poet claimed that he was first inspired to write songs by the influence of a reputed lunatic he knew as a child who used to write and sing his own songs. Weatherly was a scholar at Brasenose College, Oxford where he entered three times for the Newdigate Prize for poetry, without winning, but clearly this did little to deter him, and he went on to write some of the most popular songs of his time.

O 'Rico is a bully place,
 'Twas there I met Lolita,
 She'd two red lips and a sun-brown face,
 And a waist so trim and neat, ah!
 I doffs my cap and I says "Good-day!"
 Though the lingo I couldn't speak, oh!
 But that's no odds when you know the way
 With the girls o' Porto Rico!

Then come along, boys, to 'Rico,
 Though the lingo you can't speak, oh!
 On the spot you can learn a lot,
 Especially at Porto Rico!
 Come along, boys, to 'Rico,
 Johnny won't you come to 'Rico?
 Girls are sweet, where'er you meet,
 But especially in Porto Rico!

But when our cargo all was stow'd,
 An' the boa's'n's pipe was blowin',
 Say I, "My dear, I sadly fear
 That we must now be goin'!"
 I kiss'd her once, an' I kiss'd her twice,
 For I thought that words would fail her,
 But she whisper'd "Jack, you will come back,
 For I loves you English sailor!"

Oh come along back to 'Rico,
 Tho' the lingo you can't speak, oh!
 On the spot you'll learn a lot,
 Especially at Porto Rico.
 Come along, boys, to 'Rico,
 Johnny won't you come to 'Rico?
 Have no fears, my pretty dears,
 For we'll all set sail to 'Rico!

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