



Dead!

ALLEN, O'BRIEN, LARKIN.

"Dead!" said the gray mother crooning
At night by the quick-wasting fire;
"Dead!" said the shuddering children,
And clung to the knees of their sire;
Dead! ah, abhorred consummation!
Would, God, we had strength to forgive—
"False!" cried the storm in the housetop,
"Forever they live."

Pale student, with palm-shaded eyebrows,
And lips white and rigid as death,
You see in the knout and the coffin
The emblems of hope and of faith;
Three graves in a vile British prison
Where never shall bloom flower or leaf—
Three graves! they're the seed of our triumph,
Our Trust, our Belief.

Had they died for a dream, they were noble,
Having died for the Truth they were great,

Proud hearts that beat highest and swiftest,
As swiftest and darkest gloomed Fate;
We were told we were dead as a nation—
A corpse with its face to the sky—
Objectless, powerless, hopeless—
They gave it the lie.

And their blood to confession was witness,
Their deaths were the seal of their creed,
Translating the visions of ages!
In actual substance and deed;
They fell, and they fell as befit them—
They died the brave deaths of brave men;
Let them leap from their ashes to-morrow—
They'd strike so again.

Ay, strike whilst above this good nation
One emerald tatter shall fly,
And God, though he quenches the starlight,
Shall leave us one mark in the sky:
One wreck from the enemy's pillage,
Though sodden with bloodstain and dust—
Oh, graves in the cloud-covered prison—
Three shrines of our Trust.

For if Ireland, curst, beggared, and slandered
Had nothing to show for her cause,
Save protests, remonstrances, wallings
Against England, her lash, and her laws,
The nations might blush for our meanness,
Or laugh at our eloquent might,
Those corpses below have redeemed us—
They fought the good fight.

They fought it—they proved to our Masters
The truth that too long was unfelt:
No dungeon can hold or extinguish
The fire and the force of the Celt;
'Twas seen in the white face of London—
'Twas seen in its wild unrepose—
Three men moved the land like an earthquake
And these men were those.

"It is good," saith the chronicler, "wholeson
To pray for the peace of the dead."
But the heart of a nation secured then,
The Palms of the martyrs who bled;
For Ireland they poured out their life tides,
Heroes, defiant, and grand—
Rest happy, forerunners of Freedom—
God Save the Old Land.

