Molly Doyle, the Heroine of Ross

Molly Doyle, the Heroine of Ross
(William Rooney)

Up from fitful sleep we wakened at the first kiss of the day;
There was silence by our watchfires, for we knew the task that lay
To be wrought to joy or ruin ere the stairs should look again
On the places of our childhood hill and river, rath and glen.

We were thinking of the dear ones that we left to face the foe,
And we prayed for all the brave ones that were lying cold and low,
And we looked upon the meadows staring blank against the sun,
Then we thought upon the future and the work that must be done.

Fear! we knew not, for Vengeance burned fierce in every heart;
Doubt! why doubt, when we but hungered each to do a true man's part?
"On to Ross!" our pulses quickened as the word from man to man
Passed along, and brave John Kelly forward stepped to lead the van.

Through the misty summer morn by the hedgerows bright we sped,
While the lark with joyous music filled the spreading dome o'erhead.
And the sun rode up the circle, and the earth began to smile,
But our hearts knew nought of pleasure, they were cold as ice the while.

Silent all, with stony gaze, and lips as tightly locked as death,
On we went by flowering thorns through the balmy summer's breath,
On, till Ross was close upon us, then a shout resounding rose,
And like ocean's waves in winter in we leaped upon our foes!

For a brief, brief spell they quavered, then their muskets rang reply,
And our boys in hundreds falling looked their last upon the sky.
But, the empty places filling, still we rallied to the fray,
Till the misty summer morning wore into the dusty day.

Then a figure rose above us, twas a girl's fragile frame,
And among the fallen soldiers there she walked with eyes aflame,
And her voice rang o'er the clamour like a trumpet o'er the sea:
"Who so dares to die for Ireland, let him come and follow me."

Then against the line of soldiers with a gleaming scythe
Lo! she strode, and though their bullets whistled round, they passed her by,
And a thousand bosoms throbbing, one wild surging shout we gave,
And we swept them from our pathway like the sand before the wave.

(An incident of the insurrection of 1798. The heroine
was a girl named Molly Doyle, of Castleboro. She persuaded
her father to return home because of his age and she took
his place in the Insurgent ranks)

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