

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

5 *The Ballad of Moll Magee*

Come round me, little childer;  
There, don't fling stones at me  
Because I mutter as I go;  
But pity Moll Magee.

My man was a poor fisher  
With shore lines in the say;  
My work was saltin' herrings  
The whole of the long day.

And sometimes from the saltin' shed  
I scarce could drag my feet, 10  
Under the blessed moonlight,  
Along the pebbly street.

I'd always been but weakly,  
And my baby was just born;  
A neighbour minded her by day, 15  
I minded her till morn.

I lay upon my baby;  
Ye little childer dear,  
I looked on my cold baby  
When the morn grew frosty and clear. 20

A weary woman sleeps so hard!  
My man grew red and pale,  
And gave me money, and bade me go  
To my own place, Kinsale.

He drove me out and shut the door, 25  
And gave his curse to me;  
I went away in silence,  
No neighbour could I see.

The windows and the doors were shut,  
One star shone faint and green,  
The little straws were turnin' round  
Across the bare boreen.

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I went away in silence;  
Beyond old Martin's byre  
I saw a kindly neighbour  
Blowin' her mornin' fire.

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She drew from me my story —  
My money's all used up,  
And still, with pityin', scornin' eye,  
She gives me bite and sup.

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She says my man will surely come  
And fetch me home agin;  
But always, as I'm movin' round,  
Without doors or within,

Pilin' the wood or pilin' the turf,  
Or goin' to the well,  
I'm thinkin' of my baby  
And keenin' to mysel'.

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And sometimes I am sure she knows  
When, openin' wide His door,  
God lights the stars, His candles,  
And looks upon the poor.

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So now, ye little childer,  
Ye won't fling stones at me;  
But gather with your shinin' looks  
And pity Moll Magee.

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1889

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