

The Road Maker

Huddled in a ditch in Ypres
bowed beneath the rain
hunkers Francis Ledwidge,
keeping low, trying to stay alive.
bowed beneath the rain
and German artillery shells
hunkers Francis Ledwidge.

Ledwidge is an Irishman,
a son, a brother, a road maker,
a forsaken lover, a reasoning man.
He is an Inniskilling Fusilier,
an Irish Patriot from Meath
and a poet
in a British Uniform.

He is weary,
tired of mud,
tired of dust,
tired of fighting,
tired of war wounds.

He is tasked to make a road,
when the rain stops.
Road making is a skill
Ledwidge is proud of.

Looking at no-one he shelters
under his greatcoat and helmet
and thinks again of home
and the green fields of Slane.
When he closes his eyes
he can hear a blackbird
singing in his mother's garden
in Janeville.
He listens awhile

A whiz-bang jerks him back
to making roads in Passchendaele.
Will the Belgians keep his road
after this war is over, he wonders?
He wonders if,
after this bloody war is over
will they let him help
to build a New Ireland?
So many Irishmen, Welshmen,
Englishmen and Scots here,
fighting for what?

The same old same old?

All these experiences shared.
All these wisdoms learned.
Surely with these we will make
A new Britain,
A new Ireland,
Free, proud and safe.

But first a road to make
to Boezinge.

Ken Ramsey