



The Poetry Of Francis Ledwidge: Poetry From An Irish Nationalist Rebel

Francis Ledwidge

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Francis Edward Ledwidge was born on 19th August, 1887 in the small village of Janeville in Slane, Co Meath in Ireland to parents that believed strongly in education. However at the age of 5 his father died and the entire family, already desperately poor, was forced into work and by 13 this entailed whatever job was to hand - from farm hand to road labourer. Throughout this time he applied himself to his poetry writing whenever and wherever he could. His work was published on a regular basis from the age of 14 in the Drogheda Independent, his local paper. Francis was an ardent Nationalist and was well known for his Sinn Fein and trade union activism. This association got him fired from his job at the Slane copper mines, for organising a strike for better working conditions, but prompted his appointment as the Secretary to the Slane branch of the Meath Labour Union. Francis found patronage from Lord Dunsany who was well known in literary circles and despite the Lord's offer of regular funds if he did not fight in World War I. Francis was originally opposed to the War (he had helped to found the Irish Volunteers a short time before) but then changed his view and enlisted and fought for Lord Dunsany's regiment, part of the 10th Irish Division. He thrived in the army finding promotion, happy to be serving Ireland and continuing to write but on 31st July 1917 his body was blown to bits by a shell explosion. Francis Ledwidge, the patriot and nationalist has been dubbed the soldier poet or peasant poet and whilst his work has been recognised for its vivid descriptions and intense brilliance, it has been sorely neglected.

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