

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.

By Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa.

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Friends of the Irish people, you
Who'd right your country's wrong,
Will hear from me a word or two;
My tale will not be long.

In old *Iov Laoghair* by the hills
My youthful days passed by,
That 'Famine' came which filled the *keels*;
I saw my father die.

The bailiff with his notice came,
The bit of ground was gone;
Saw the roof-tree in a flame,
The crow-bar work was done.

With neither house, nor bed, nor bread,
The work-house was my doom;
And on my jacket soon I read,
'The Union of Macroom.'

My mother died o' broken heart;
My uncle from the town
Came for her with a horse and cart,
And buried her in *Gleann*.

I joined the red-coats then – *mo leir!*
What did my father say?
And I was sent before a year
On service to Bombay.

I thought to be a pauper
Was the greatest human curse;
But fighting in a robber's cause
I felt was something worse.

I helped to murder and to slay
Whole tribes of India's sons;
And I spent many a sultry day
Blowing Sepoys from our guns.

I told these things to Father Ned -
The murder and the booty.
'They are no sins to you,' he said,
'You had to do your duty.'

And when that duty here was done,
A journey home I made;
And all my friends being dead and gone,
I joined the Pope's Brigade.

I got some medals on my breast
For serving this campaign;
And next I'm found in the far West
A-soldiering again.

With fearless Captain Billy O'
I joined the Fenian band,
And I swore one day to strike a blow
To free my native land.

Back in that sinking isle again,
Where landlords drain our blood,
Where friends are scattered, starved, and slain,
I'm told I'm cursed by God.

If I can swear my lifelong days
To fight from pole to pole,
For any power, however base
With safety to my soul.

It cannot be by God's decree
I'm cursed, denounced, and banned
Because I swear one day to free
My trampled native land.

