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The Old Man Angry

Author(s): Padraic Colum

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# The Old Man Angry

By *PADRAIC COLUM*

He threw his crutched stick down : there came  
Into his face the anger-flame,  
And he spoke viciously of one  
Who thwarted him—his son's son.  
He turned his head away—"I hate  
Absurdity of language—prate  
From grown fellows. We'd not stay  
About the house the whole of a day  
Keeping no job and giving tongue.  
When we were young  
If we have answers we'd not come  
For bit or sup, but stay from home  
From day to dark, or we would creep  
Back to the house and in we'd peep  
Just like a cornrake.

My grandson and his comrades take  
A piece of coal from you, from me  
A stick or sod of turf maybe—  
And in some empty place they'll light  
A fire and stay there all night  
A wisp of lads. Now understand  
The blades of grass under my hand  
Would be destroyed by company.  
There's no good company, we go  
With what is lowest to the low.  
He stays up late, and how can he  
Rise early? He lags in bed  
And she is worn to a thread

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With calling him—his grandmother—  
She's an old woman, and she must make  
Stir when the birds are half awake  
In dread he'd lose this job like the other.

They'll not do  
Anything for me or you  
The men that rule the town above.  
Their only travail is to shove  
A friend of their's into a job,  
And as for the others, it's well said  
The hump is lower than the head.  
The men below just draw their pay  
And walk abroad and watch the day.  
And each is like an ill-managed hen  
That's always off the clutch, and then  
The hatch gets addled. They let burn down  
The timber-yard where father and son  
Had good employ, though firemen stand  
In boots and brasses big and grand  
The crow of a cock away from the place.  
And with the yard they let burn too  
The clock in the tower, the clock I knew  
Child and man as I know my face.

The men above brought yon fellow here  
And set him up for an overseer.  
Though men from work are turned away  
That thick-necked gaffer draws his pay  
Three pounds a week. He's broken bounds,  
He comes to skulk inside these grounds.  
Behind the bushes he lay down  
And stretched three hours in the sun.  
He rises now, and like a crane  
He looks abroad. He's off again,

## THE OLD MAN ANGRY

Three pounds a week ! And still he owes  
Money in every street he goes  
Hundreds of pounds where we'd not get  
The second shilling of a debt.

Old age has every impediment,  
Vexation and discontent.  
The rich have more than we—for bit  
The cut of bread and over it  
The scrape of hog's lard, and for sup  
Warm water in a cup,  
But different sorts of feeding breaks  
The body with more pains and aches  
Than fasting does.

I'm not too badly off, for I  
Have pipe and tobacco, a place to lie,  
A room to myself. But from my hand  
Is taken the strength to back command—  
I'm broken, and there's gone from me  
The privilege of authority."

*I left him there  
An old man heavy on the sod,  
Letting his anger come  
Between him and the thought of God.*