

The Poet

Oh what a wonderful character Mr. Gene (Eugene) O'Shea was and he will live long in my memory.

He was a friend of my father, and afterwards my mother, and he would come to our house to play cards; a game called 45. He was a presence more than a babysitter. He would make soup and bring it to us, he would help us carry up coal from the basement. He would stop in often ... When his mood turned melancholy, he would go on about learning at the hedgerow school and could recite poetry at length about the glorious days of Ireland and her struggles.

When the sadness began to overcome him, he would shake a fist and shake himself and start to recite, "When you are away down in Alaska" etc. He would leave and then it would be weeks before we would see him again.

The title of the painting, by the way, is "The Poet"

— Mary Butterfield Reidy
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