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Poor Boys Who Ecca ne Great

By FREDERICK HOUK LAW
John Boyle O'Reilly, a Soldier of Fortune.

"The red rose whispers of passion
And the white rose breathes of love."

So wrote John Boyle O'Reilly, who died in 1890 at the age of 46, a poet, a novelist, an editor, soldier, lover of the land of his birth, a man who led the life of an adventurer of the Middle Ages, a fighter for freedom, ready at any time to make himself a martyr, and one whom people knew only to love.

"The singer who lived is always alive; we hearken and always hear," he wrote in one of his poems. "If there is any lover of Ireland who is not familiar with the poems of John Boyle O'Reilly, he should go at once to the nearest public library and demand them. In them he will find the music and charm and the spirit of the Celtic race."

When John Boyle O'Reilly was alive he kept the British wondering where he was and what he would do next. The one great thing that he longed for was the freedom of Ireland. At 19 he was in a British regiment, joking, singing songs, making all men love him—and winning recruits for the Irish revolution. Before that, he had stood, as have so many men of genius, before the compositor's case and set type—for he had to make his own way in the world. From a school father and a talented mother he had gained a fair education; from the air of his native Ireland he had breathed in a love of freedom. He heard the words: "John O'Reilly, you are sentenced to be shot!" but Irishman's luck sent him off to Eng-

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lish jails and finally to exile in the hottest part of Australia. Did he die there? Not he! Like the flea, where you thought he was, he wasn't! He slipped from the guards, found his way to a boat, and sailed across the Pacific to the United States. After some years, he came back with a ship and sailed away with those who had been his fellow-prisoners. He had not forgotten them: In the United States he became noted as a poet and novelist, and made a deep impression. In 1884 he wrote a sort of prophetic novel, "The King's Men, in collaboration with others, and told what would happen in the reign of George V. "Songs of the Southern Seas", and "Songs Legends and Ballads", contain examples of powerful poetry. The poor Irish lad made himself a great writer as well as a lover of freedom.—*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 9th.

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