

chapter 21

death
and
dying



The man that was born to be hanged need never
fear water.

—Traditional



*A few mornings before John Philpot Curran's death
a doctor observed to him that he coughed very badly.*

He said:

That's strange, for I've been practising all night.



*An Irishman was explaining to some friends that he
thought he saw a ghost one night and took up his gun
and shot it. When he got up in the morning he found
it was only his shirt. 'What did you do then?' asked his
friend. He replied:*

I knelt down and thanked God I was not in it.



*For Brendan Behan's last quip—looking up at the
nun just before he died—he whispered a thank you,
and then said:*

May you be the mother of a bishop.



Death is not a God. He is only the servant of the Gods.

—Oscar Wilde, *La Sainte Courtisane*



*When a man had died and foul play was suspected:
Someone had helped Providence away wi' the
crathur.*

—*Poor Rabbin's Ollminic*

**A thing is not necessarily
true because a man
dies for it.**

—Oscar Wilde, "The Portrait of Mr. W. H."

*A barrister friend of J.C. Percy was consulted about a
will in which a deceased woman left her house:
...to be sold at my death to provide for my future
maintenance.*



At the funeral of Lord Longford, Brendan Behan met a friend of other old hard times, Jimmy Hiney. 'I was standing at the gate of the Protestant cemetery wondering whether I should go in or not,' says Jimmy, 'when Brendan came up.' Behan said:

Jimmy, I think we'll go in and sing a few hymns for the ould * * * *. He has as much a chance of heaven as either of us.



Judge Eugene Sheehy recorded that James Joyce's father was at breakfast one morning and read an obituary notice of a dear friend, Mrs. Cassidy:

Mrs. Joyce: Oh! Don't tell me that Mrs. Cassidy is dead!

Mr. Joyce: Well I don't quite know about that, but someone has taken the liberty of burying her.



Death and vulgarity are the only two facts in the nineteenth century that one cannot explain away.

—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*