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HOLD THE HARVEST

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Now are you men or cattle then, you tillers of the soil?
Would you be free, or evermore in rich men's service toil?
The shadow of the dial hangs dark that points the fatal hour
Now hold your own! Or, branded slaves, forever cringe and cower! -

The serpent's curse upon you lies - you writhe within the dust
You fill your mouths with beggars' swill, you grovel for a crust
Your masters set their blood-stained heels upon your shameful heads
Yet they are kind - they leave you still their ditches for your beds! -

Oh by the God who made us all, the master and the serf
Rise up and swear to hold this day your own green Irish turf!
Rise up! And plant your feet as men where now you crawl as slaves
And make your harvest fields your camps, or make of them your graves! -

But God is on the peasant's side, the God that loves the poor,
His angels stand with flaming swords on every mount and moor,
They guard the poor man's flocks and herds, they guard his ripening grain,
The robber sinks beneath their curse beside his ill-got gain.

Words: Fanny Parnell (1848 - 1882)
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