

LAMENT for ROGERS O'NEILL

F. O'Neill 1849-1936

slowly; very freely (40)

mf

2

4

6

8

10

12

14 *slower (30)*

16

Many times in these pages I have had occasion to reference Francis O'Neill, the great Irish-born tune collector, writer, supporter, and organizer who after an almost unbelievably adventurous life became in 1901 Chicago's Chief of Police. His efforts on behalf of the great work of preserving Irish traditional music have earned him the respect he so richly deserves, respect which continues eighty years after his death.

What is not generally known about "the Chief" is the incredible ordeal he and his wife had to undergo in watching five of their sons die at a young age (including two on the same day). The cause seems to have been what today would be recognized as genetic, since no disease or accident seems to have been involved.

This beautiful piece appears in O'Neill's *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, published in 1913. It is on the same page as three other pieces in the same style (including "Lamentation for Owen Roe O'Neill", included in this collection). There is no composer attribution with the piece; the only information is this single laconic sentence:

"Not less expressive of woe, if more modern in musical phraseology, is a lamentation composed in 1904 on the death of a young collegian of brilliant promise in Chicago."

This "young collegian" was Francis and Anna O'Neill's oldest son, Rogers (his mother's maiden name). The lament could only have been composed by "the Chief" himself.