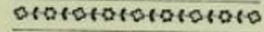


laugh at it in comfort. I didn't know much about Irish, and I knew practically nothing about Goethe, and that little was wrong. In a truly anthropomorphic spirit I re-created Goethe in my own image and likeness, as a patriotic young man who wished to revive the German language, which I considered to have been gravely threatened by the use of French. I drew an analogy between the French culture that dominated eighteenth-century Germany and the English culture by which we in Ireland were dominated.

While I was speaking, it was suddenly borne in on me that I no longer had a job or a penny in the world, or even a home I could go back to without humiliation, and that the neighbours would say, as they had so often said before, that I was mad and a good-for-nothing. And I knew that they would be right, for here I was committing myself in public to all the vague words and vaguer impressions that with me passed for thought. I could barely control my voice, because the words and impressions no longer meant anything to me. They seemed to come back to me from the rows of polite blank faces as though from the wall of my prison. All that did matter was the act of faith, the hope that somehow, somewhere I would be able to prove that I was neither mad nor a good-for-nothing; because now I realized that whatever it might cost me, there was no turning back. When as kids we came to an orchard wall that seemed too high to climb, we took off our caps and tossed them over the wall, and then we had no choice but to follow them.

I had tossed my cap over the wall of life, and I knew I must follow it, wherever it had fallen.



## IV

### AFTER AUGHRIM'S GREAT DISASTER

