

Dismissed!

Black, red and silver, the helmet's hard dome
summons the pomp of a ramrod Empire,
spike on top like the stem on a pepper –
these Irish loyal servants were hot-housed
by officers from crack British regiments.
Poor Catholic boys already schooled in obedience
drank down the seductive potion – safety
in uniform and rank, standing rifle-straight outside
the barracks they guarded. How could they
not have been divided? Even before the revolution
an aged sergeant was heard in his confusion issuing
commands that ricocheted between haggard and
barracks yard– *Yessir! Nosir! At Once! Dismiss! Halt!*
Woah back, Whee! Gee up! That's the gurl! Fine Hay!
Pike it up there, Jim! Dismiss! Yessir! Nosir, At once Sir!

Martina Evans