

IRISH PEASANT SONGS

IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The Words set to the proper Old Irish Airs

BY

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"A CHILD'S HISTORY OF IRELAND" "IRISH NAMES OF PLACES"

"OLD CELTIC ROMANCES" "ANCIENT IRISH MUSIC"

AND OTHER WORKS RELATING TO IRELAND

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PREFACE

IN 1872 I published "Ancient Irish Music," consisting of one hundred Irish Airs hitherto unpublished, with many Songs and scraps of Songs, Irish and English. In 1888 another little book, "Irish Music and Song," was edited by me:—a Collection of Songs in the Irish language, set to the old airs, which was published by the "Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language." This was the first book of its kind ever published, *i.e.* the first in which the Irish words and syllables were set under the musical notes. Both books were well received, and still command a good market.

I now publish this little Collection, different from both, the Title of which explains itself. Like the book last mentioned, it is the first of its kind ever given to the public, *i.e.* the first collection of English songs of the Irish peasantry—peasant songs pure and simple—set to the old Irish airs to which they were sung.

The peasant songs of Ireland written in English are, as a rule, very inferior to those in Irish; for the good reason that the song-writers were only imperfectly acquainted with English, while they were quite at home in Irish. The Irish language, as it were, ran in their blood: and indeed it runs in our blood at the present day, whether we speak Irish or not; for our English is everywhere coloured with Irish idioms.

Our Anglo-Irish peasant songs are, in fact, for the most part poor and trashy. But not all. I have been able to select, from

a vast collection—partly preserved in my own memory, partly printed on rude broadsheets—a considerable number by no means deficient in merit, and some really good.

I here offer six of them to the public, with a new song of my own; and if these are taken up, I will supply more. For I have, what my Irish-speaking friends would call a *bolg-a'-croládaí*—what Dr. Standish Hayes O'Grady would designate *Silva Gadelica*—in plain English, a great “Bag of Sundries”—a collection of selected songs of the same general character as the six given here.

However opinions may vary as to the words, no one, I think, will question the beauty of the airs: and the whole selection is at least fresh and wholesome, like a breeze from the heather of *lúthar-na-bhráoacán*.

In most cases words and airs are now published for the first time. The few exceptions are mentioned in the proper places.

I have had to deal with many corrupted versions of both words and music; and have often been obliged to make slight alterations in order to restore them to what I believe the old musicians and poets intended.

I think it necessary to state that the songs in this book—words, airs, and settings—are copyright; and that although I have, in the past, overlooked some unacknowledged piracies from my published books, I will not do so in the future. On this point I ought to observe, in justice to myself, that I have never yet refused any reasonable request for the use (with acknowledgment) of extracts from my books.

P. W. J.

LYRE-NA-GRENA, LEINSTER ROAD,
RATHMINES, DUBLIN,

April, 1906.

IRISH PEASANT SONGS

IN THE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

THE IRISH GIRL.

THIS beautiful air, and the accompanying words, I have known since my childhood; and both are now published for the first time.* I have copies of the song on broadsheets, varying a good deal, and much corrupted. The versions I give here of air and words are from my own memory, as sung by the old people of Limerick when I was a child; but I have thought it necessary to make some few restorations.

The "Red red rose" is common in Irish peasant songs; and I have one song where it comes in exactly as in this verse of Burns:—

"Oh, gin my love were yon red rose
That grows upon the castle wa';
And I mysel a drap o' dew
Into her bonnie breast to fa'!
Oh, there beyond expression blest,
I'd feast on beauty a' the night,
Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
Till fley'd awa by Phœbus' light."

The corresponding verse of the Irish peasant song is (I write it from memory):—

I wish my love was yon red red rose
That grows on the garden wall,
And I to be a drop of dew,
Among its leaves I'd fall—
'Tis in her sacred bosom
All night I'd sport and play,
And pass away the summer night
Until the break of day.

Burns took the idea, and partly the very words, from a Scotch peasant song—as was his custom—and with the magic touch of genius changed it to his own exquisite stanza.

These observations are merely preliminary to the following song:—"The Irish Girl."



1. As I walk'd out one eve - ning down by a riv - er

*More than half a century ago I gave this air to Dr. Petrie; and now I find—after printing the above—that it is included in the Stanford-Petrie collection of Irish Music recently published (No. 657): with my name acknowledged. But the words have never hitherto been published.



side, While ga-zing all a - round me An I - rish girl I



spied; A ro - sy red was on her cheeks, And



coal - black was her hair; And cost - ly were the



robes of gold This I - rish girl did wear.

2.

The little shoes this maiden wore
Were of a Spanish brown;
The mantle, on her shoulders,
Of silk 'twas wrought all round.
Her modest face, her gentle ways,
Have left my heart in pain,
And I'd range this world all over
My Irish girl to gain.

3.

I wish my love was a red red rose,
To bloom in yon garden fair,
And I to be the gardener,
That rose would be my care.

I'd tend the pretty flowers all round—
Sweet-william, pink, and rue,
Primrose and thyme—but most of all,
Sweet rose, I'd cherish you.

4.

I wish I was a butterfly,
I'd light on my love's breast;
I wish I was a nightingale,
To sing my love to rest;
I'd sing at morn, I'd sing at eve,
A love-song sweet and slow;
And year by year I will love my dear,
Let the wind blow high or low.

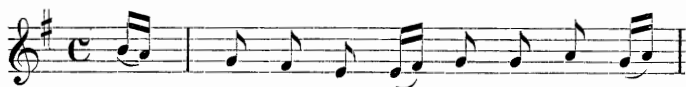
(See page 20 below, for another song to this air.)

SWEET COOTEHILL TOWN.

THIS song comes from Cootehill in the County Cavan. How it got to Limerick, where I heard it, is more than I can tell; and indeed I know nothing whatever about it save that I learned it when a mere child from the inimitable singing of Dave Dwane of Glenosheen, the best local singer we had. I heard him sing it for the last time at an "American Wake," *i. e.* a meeting of friends on the evening before the departure of several young people for America, as a farewell celebration. The song was very suitable for the occasion: and poor Dave—who was himself going away with the others—sang it with such intense feeling and power, that the whole company—men, women, and children—were in tears. That is now more than sixty years ago; and to this hour I find it hard to restrain tears when I recall the scene.

The air I think belongs to Munster; for I heard it played and sung everywhere, and quite often with other words besides "Sweet Cootehill Town." In Cork and Limerick the people often sang to it Burns's song, "Adieu, a heart-warm fond adieu," so that it was commonly known by the name of "Burns's Farewell."

The air, as well as the Cootehill words, are now published for the first time. The last verse presents a pleasing picture: ἀδῆ, ῥάγδισι θεῖσι! How seldom we see it realised!



1. Now fare you well, sweet Coote-hill town, The



place where I was born and bred; Thro' sha-dy groves and



flower-y hills, My youth-ful fan-cy did ser-e-nade. But



now I'm bound for A - mer - i - kay, A coun - try that I



ne - ver saw ; Those pleas - ant scenes I'll al - ways mind, When



I am ro - ving far a - wa.

2.

The pleasant hills near Cootehill town
 Where I have spent my youthful days ;
 Both day and night I took delight
 In dancing and in harmless plays.
 But while I rove from town to town,
 The memory in my mind shall stay
 Of those pleasant happy youthful hours
 That now are spent and passed away.

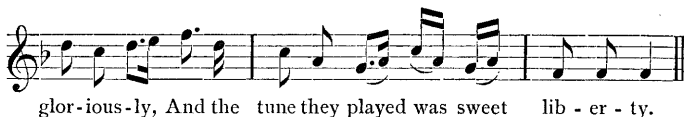
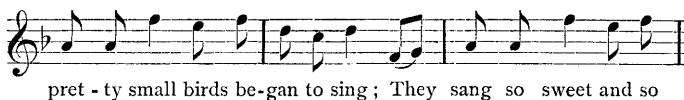
3.

I hope kind fate will reinstate—
 That fortune's face will on me smile,
 And safe conduct me home again
 To my own dear native Irish isle :
 When my comrades all and friends likewise
 Will throng around and thus will say,—
 “ We will sing and play as in days of old :
 So you're welcome home from far away ! ”

THE CROPPY BOY.

THIS song was a great favourite in the southern and south-eastern counties : and I have known both air and words from my childhood. I published the air and the first verse of the song in my "Ancient Irish Music." I have a broadsheet with the words rudely and very incorrectly printed. The words, of course, date from 1798 : but the air is much older.

Slow and expressive.



2.

'Twas early, early, last Thursday night,
The yeoman cavalry gave me a fright ;
The fright they gave me was to my downfall :—
I was prisoner taken by Lord Cornwall.

3.

'Twas in his guard-house I was confined,
And in his parlour I was closely tried ;
My sentence passed and my spirits low,
And to Duncannon* I was forced to go.

* Duncannon, the government fortress and prison on the Wexford side of Waterford harbour.

4.

My sister Mary in deep distress,
She ran downstairs in her morning dress,
Five hundred pounds she would lay down,
To see me walking through Wexford town.

5.

As I was walking the hills so high,
Who could blame me if I did cry,
With a guard behind me and another before,
And my tender mother crying more and more.

6.

So farewell, father and mother too,
And sister Mary, I have but you ;
And if e'er I chance to return home,
I'll whet my pike* on those yeomen's bones !

* Pike : *i.e.* a croppy-pike, the favourite weapon of the rebels of Ninety-eight : and a formidable weapon it was.

HANDSOME SALLY.

I LEARNED this pretty ballad, air and words, from constantly hearing it sung at home in my childhood. Further than this I know nothing about it: but I believe it commemorates a real event. I am not aware that it was ever printed before, either air or words.



1. Young men and maid-ens I pray draw near; The



truth to you I will now de - clare; How



a young la - dy's heart was won; All



by the lov - ing of a farm - er's son.

2.

As she walked out through a silent grove
Who should she meet but her own true love:
"Kind sir," she said, "and upon my life,
I do intend for to be your wife.

3.

"Now I have got a vast estate
My father left to me of late ;
And heir of that then you shall be,
If you consent, love, and marry me."

4.

"O fairest creature, it cannot be
That I should be wedded unto thee,
Since I am going for to be wed
To Handsome Sally, your waiting-maid."

5.

"If that be true that you tell to me,
A bitter pill I will prove to thee,
For shipping I'll take immediately,
And I'll sail with Sally to Floridee."

6.

As they were sailing upon the main,
This wicked wretch contrived a scheme,
While Handsome Sally lay fast asleep
She plunged her body into the deep.

7.

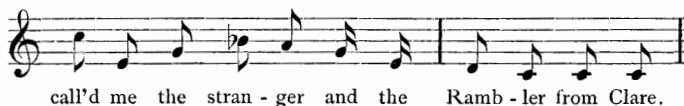
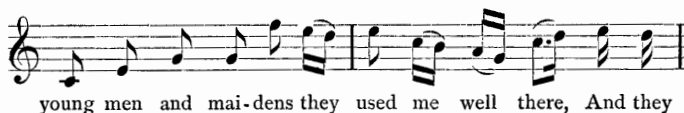
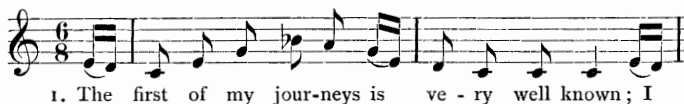
When to the shore she did return,
Her wicked conscience did her burn,
And in her mind she could find no rest,
Until the truth she had confessed.

8.

Hanged and burned then was she,
For her sad crime and her cruelty ;
So two fair maids were by love undone,
And in Bedlam lies the farmer's son.

THE RAMBLER FROM CLARE.

THIS is a Ninety-eight song, which tells its own story. It was very popular in Munster sixty years ago ; and I picked up the air from hearing it among the people. I also retained in memory part of the words ; but I subsequently found the whole song printed on a broadsheet, though greatly corrupted. So far as I know, air and words are now published for the first time. There is a different air with the same name in the Stanford-Petrie collection of Irish music.



2.

'Twas there I enlisted in the town called The Moy ;
 But with so many masters I could not comply :
 I deserted next morning—the truth I declare—
 And for Limerick city starts the Rambler from Clare.

3.

Then like a deserter, while myself I concealed,
I was taken and brought to the town of Rathkeale ;
Then off to headquarters I was forced to repair :—
Now the jail is the lodging of the Rambler from Clare.

4.

I took off my hat and I made a low bow,
In hopes that the colonel would pardon me now ;
The pardon he gave me was hard and *severe* :
'Twas—" Bind him, confine him ; he 's the Rambler from Clare ! "

5.

'Twas then the United Men* marched to the town ;
They attacked and they conquered with fame and renown ;
The jail they broke open and rescued me there,
And they made full commander of the Rambler from Clare.

.
The rebels fight some successful battles under
the Rambler's command.
.

6.

So now that I'm titled a United Man,
No more can I stay in my own native land ;
And off to America I must repair,
And leave all the friends of the Rambler from Clare.

7.

Farewell to my comrades wherever you be,
And likewise my sweetheart, young Sally Magee ;
Our sails they are spread and the wind it blows fair :—
" He's gone—God be with him—he 's the Rambler from Clare ! "

* United Men : *i.e.* they belonged to the " United Irishmen " the widely-spread secret society by which the Rebellion of 1798 was chiefly directed.

MY MIND IT IS UNEASY.

THIS song is an example of the consummate taste and skill of those unlearned old song-writers in suiting words to music : for both song and air are characterised by intense sadness. I learned both in childhood ; I never heard either air or song outside my own home ; and I do not believe that they have ever been printed. Though the words are rude and artless, it is well worth printing them for their passionate earnestness, as well as for the sake of preserving the lovely air.



1. My mind it is un - eas - y for a fair lass that



lives near home ; For love it has en-snared me, I



ne - ver am let a - lone ; O love it has en -



snared me, which caus - es my head to reel ; She's the



fair - est in this na - tion, that fair lass I do es - teem.

2.

The looks of my dear darling would charm a heart of steel ;
Each evening and each morning the pains of her love I feel :
Her cheeks are like the roses that grow in the month of June,
And her lips are like the coral, the model of sweet nature's bloom.

3.

Not wealth or great estate, dearest maiden, that makes me moan ;
Your cattle or your lands I crave not, but you alone :
Give me your hand in earnest ; don't leave me with cold disdain ;
For one kind word from your fair lips would ease me of all my pain.

4.

But when I asked your parents, my suit they at once denied ;
So now the case is altered, for you refuse to be my bride .
It's little you know the danger attendant on perjury—
The vows and protestations you daily have made to me.

RORY THE BLACKSMITH FROM IRELAND.

THIS is not exactly a peasant song in the usual sense of the words: but I hope it will be let pass as an exception. The old air—which I have selected for its fine swing—I give from memory as I learned it in my youth: but with some modification. It has not been hitherto published. The words are my own.

The old Irish name Rory figures well in Irish literature: most readers will remember “Rory of the hills,” and “Our hope is in God and in Rory O’More.”

With spirit.



Now who is this stur-dy young black-smith I see, with his



hamm-'ring and forg-ing and sing-ing in glee? “O, I

Ad lib.



come from a land striv-ing hard to be free”: Says



Ro - ry the Black - smith from Ire - land.

I.

Now who is this sturdy young blacksmith I see,
With his hamm’ring and forging and singing in glee?
“O, I come from a land striving hard to be free”:
Says Rory the Blacksmith from Ireland.

2.

“I come from old Erin of ancient renown,
A land under England, her laws, and her crown,
A land where the people are wrong'd and kept down ” :
Says Rory the Blacksmith from Ireland.

3.

“And here in Chicago I work day by day ;
And at night, when I'm thinking, I earnestly pray
That good luck may attend on that land far away ” :
Says Rory the Blacksmith from Ireland.

4.

“But I'm told that at home they have now made a stand,
That leaders and people are joined hand in hand,
All working together to free the Old Land ” :
Says Rory the Blacksmith from Ireland.

5.

“Ah, that is the fairest land under the sun,
And now she will prosper while centuries run ;
For Home Rule is coming as sure as a gun ” :
Says Rory the Blacksmith from Ireland.

6.

“Then Freedom, with smiles, will return to our shore,
Our trade and our commerce will flourish once more,
Our schools and our scholars will shine as of yore ” :
Says Rory the Blacksmith from Ireland.

7.

“When our Parliament meeting in Dublin I see,
When gentle and simple are happy and free,
Then, please God, I'll go back to my home by the Lee ” :
Says Rory the Blacksmith from Ireland.

NOTE ON "THE IRISH GIRL," PAGE 6, ABOVE.

IN my childhood I picked up a song to this air from hearing the elder members of my family sing it. It is not a peasant song; but it was evidently suggested by "The Irish Girl." I am under the impression that it was taken from one of the Irish Penny Journals or Magazines; but though I have searched all the volumes of that class on my book-shelves, I have failed to find it. I give it here from memory: and I am quite sure I give it correctly.

OH, COME WITH ME, MY IRISH GIRL.

1.

Oh, come with me, my Irish Girl,
 To climes beyond the sea;
 For oh, thou art the brightest pearl
 In my heart's treasury.
 I may regret my native isle,
 And ties as yet unbroken;
 But oh, where'er thy graces smile
 Shall be my home, my heaven.

2.

And thou wilt soothe me with thy sighs,
 Should sickness cloud my brow;
 And bless me with those angel eyes,
 Should fate my spirit bow.
 And I will cling till death to thee,
 In weal, or woe, or peril,
 And bless my lot, whate'er it be,
 With my sweet Irish Girl.

WORKS
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