

HENRY JOY MCCRACKEN

From The Shan Van Vocht, June 1896.

TUNE – “The Belfast Mountains.”

‘Twas on the Belfast mountains I heard a maid complain,
Who vexed the sweet June evening with her voice-broken strain,
Crying, “Woe is me! Love’s anguish is more than heart can dree,
Since young Harry Joy McCracken died on the gallows tree.

“At Donegore, right proudly he rode with sash of green,
And brave in vain, at Antrim, his sword flashed lightning-keen,
And when by spies surrounded, his band from Slemish fled,
He came here to the Cave Hill to rest a weary head.”

“I watched for him while nightly within our cot he slept,
At daybreak to the heather ‘round MacArt’s fort we crept;
Then word acme from Greencastle of a good ship anchored nigh,
And so by yon wee fountain we met to give good-bye.”

“He said: ‘My dear, be cheerful, love’s tears and fears are vain,’
And he said: ‘My dear, be hopeful, our land will rise again;’
He kissed me, kissed me fondly, he kissed me three times o’er -
‘E’en death shall not divide us, O love for evermore.”

“That night I climbed Cave Hill and watched till morning blazed
And when its fire had kindled, across the lough I gazed
There lay the English tender at anchor by Garmoyle,
But ah, no good ship bore him away to France’s soil.”

“Thrice in the night a trampling came from the old Shore Road,
‘Twas Ellis and his yeomen, false Niblock with him strode;
Soon, father, homeward hastening, a grievous story told -
‘Ochone,’ he sighed, ‘poor Harry for fifty pounds is sold.”

“And was it true?” I asked her – “Ah, it was true,” she said;
“Here, to his heart that loved him, I pressed his gory head,
And every night, pale, bleeding, his ghost creeps to my side,
My Harry, my dead lover, comes for his promised bride.”

Up on the Belfast mountains the maid's complaints are still,
For in the clay they've laid heron high Carnmoney Hill;
Here solemn waves beneath us chant requiems for the dead,
While rebel winds shriek "Freedom" for living hearts o'erhead.