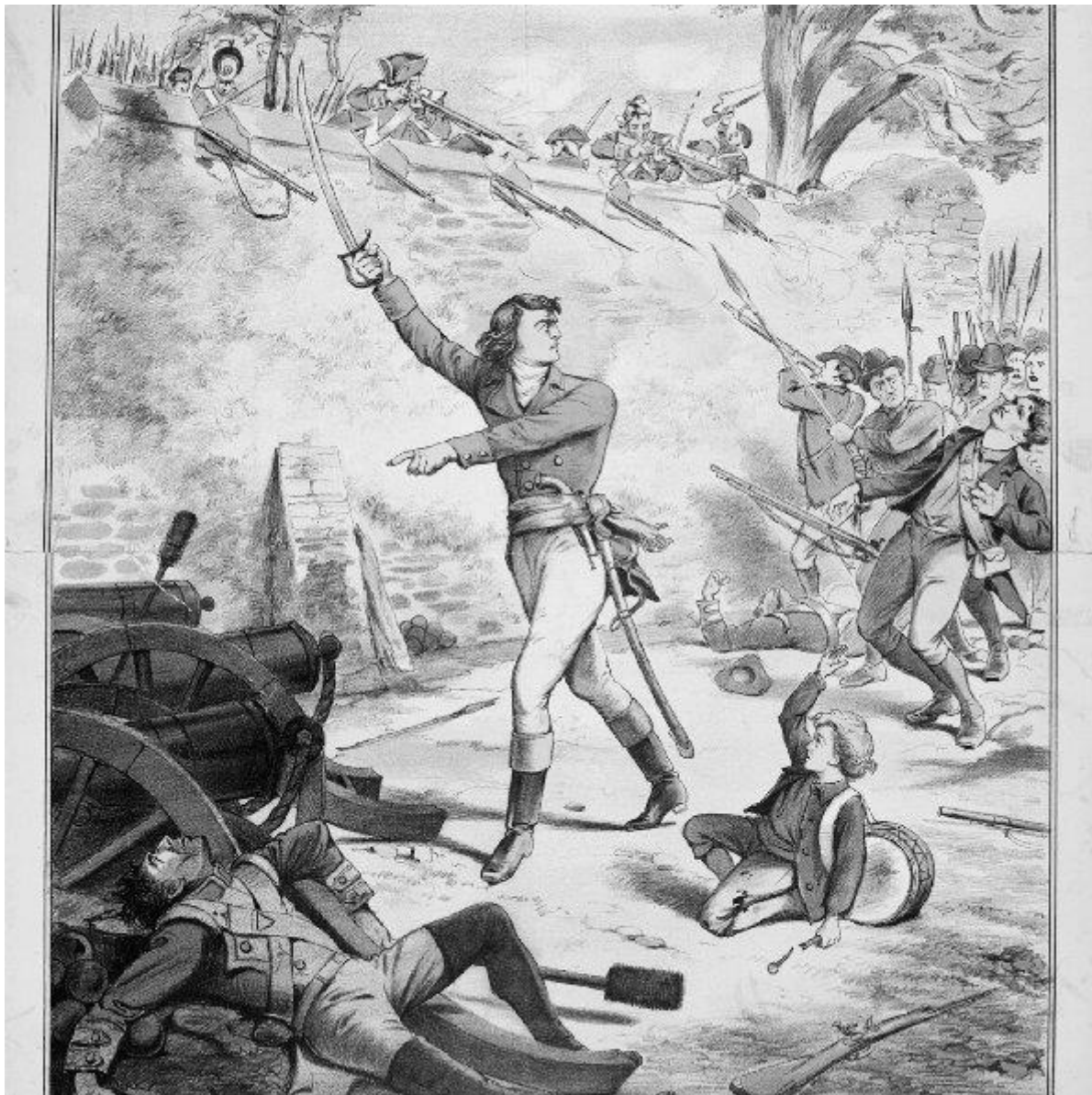


THE POETRY AND BALLADRY OF THE NORTH IN '98



Published by An Chartlann.



PREFACE

The following are a selection of eleven poems and ballads of the United Irishmen of Ulster in '98. The works have been taken from several bibliographic sources, most prominently *The Literary Remains of the United Irishmen* by R.R. Madden republished posthumously in 1887, who was and arguably remains the most foremost authority on the United Irishmen. Other sources consulted include *The Shan Van Vocht*, an Ulster literary magazine that ran from 1896 to 1899 edited by Alice Milligan and Ethna Carbery, the 1888 book *Betsy Gray Or Hearts of Down* by W. G. Lyttle, and Carbery's own collection of poetry *The Four Winds of Eirinn* published posthumously after her death in 1902. Any footnotes have been added by Cartlann.

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RODDY MCCORLEY.

By Ethna Carbery.

Roddy McCorley was a United Irishman from near the town of Toome in County Antrim. On 28 February 1800, McCorley was executed near the bridge at his native Toome, having been betrayed by an informer. Carbery's ballad about McCorley remains one of the most popular Irish republican ballads, particularly in Ulster, to this day.

Ho! See the fleet-foot hosts of men
Who speed with faces wan,
From farmstead and from fisher's cot
Upon the banks of Bann!
They come with vengeance in their eyes –
Too late, too late are they –
For Roddy McCorley goes to die
On the Bridge of Toome to-day.

Oh Ireland, Mother Ireland,
You love them still the best,
The fearless brave who fighting fall
Upon your hapless breast;
But never a one of all your dead
More bravely fell in fray,
Than he who marches to his fate
On the Bridge of Toome to-day.

Up the narrow street he stepped,
Smiling and proud and young;
About the hemp-rope on his neck
The golden ringlets clung.
There's never a tear in the blue, blue eyes,
Both glad and bright are they –
As Roddy McCorley goes to die
On the Bridge of Toome to-day.

Ah! When he last stepped up that street,
His shining pike in hand,
Behind him marched in grim array

A stalwart earnest band!
For Antrim town! For Antrim town!
He led them to the fray –
And Roddy McCorley goes to die
On the Bridge of Toome to-day.

The grey coat and its sash of green
Were brave and stainless then;
A banner flashed beneath the sun
Over the marching men –
The coat hath many a rent this noon,
The sash is torn away,
And Roddy McCorley goes to die
On the Bridge of Toome to-day.

Oh, how his pike flashed to the sun!
Then found a foeman's heart!
Through furious fright, and heavy odds,
He bore a true man's part;
And many a red-coat bit the dust
Before his keen pike-play –
But Roddy McCorley goes to die
On the Bridge of Toome to-day.

Because he loved the Motherland,
Because he loved the Green,
He goes to meet the martyr's fate
With proud and joyous men,
True to the last, true to the last,
He treads the upward way –
Young Roddy McCorley goes to die
On the Bridge of Toome to-day.

THE BOYS OF THE BRAID.

Anonymous.

This ballad is taken from an article in *The Shan Van Vocht* from May 2nd, 1898 about the life of Captain Jack Fullerton, a United Irishman from Liminary, near Ballymena. Upon exile to America, he and his fellow comrades sang the following song about the rebels of the Braid Valley, the rural hinterland and United Irishman stronghold in 1798 that lies between Ballymena and Larne.

Last summer, when tyranny humbled our standard,
And made us as poor men as ever were made,
From mountain to mountain we carelessly wandered,
And slept every night in the cold, chilly shade.
When fortune directed our footsteps to Slemish,
Whose height made the downlookers dizzy and squeamish,
And there we remained till our troubles were finished,
And made our abode with the Boys of the Braid.

For they, like ourselves, were fighting for Freedom –
They followed wherever their brave leaders led;
They left home and wife when old Ireland did need them,
And in forefront of battle the poor Croppies bled.
The like of the Braid is not in the country,
Nor spies nor informers can ever find trade;
For in your distress they would never affront you,
Nor hint e'en so much you were asking for bread.

Then here's to yon hill of all hills, lofty Slemish –
I'll end with a prayer, though 'tis long since I prayed,
That if e'er Grania's¹ sons be prepared for a scrimmage,
We will prove that to fight is our favourite trade.
We'll burst from our lair in her flinty foundation,
And drive every red-coated rogue from this Nation;
Yes, like a strong wave, in our stern indignation.
We'll sweep their cursed bones from the soil of the Braid.

¹ "Grania", which is referenced in much of the literature of the United Irishmen, is believed to be Gráinne Mhaol (Grace O'Malley) and may be interpreted as a female personification of Ireland.

GENERAL MUNROE.

Anonymous.

One of the more famous Irish republican ballads, the song is about General Henry Munro, commander of the United Irishmen in County Down. Munro would be captured and executed following the final defeat of the United Irishmen of Ulster at the Battle of Ballynahinch.

My name is George Campbell, at the age of sixteen
I fought for old Erin her rights to maintain,
And many a battle I did undergo
Commanded by that hero called General Munroe

If you were at the battle of Ballinahinch,
Where the Croppies assembled to stand their defence,
It's many a battle we did undergo,
Led on by that valiant called General Munroe.

Munroe took the mountains, the boys took the field,
He swore to those tyrants he never would yield,
“Let the noise of their cannons, boys, ne’er daunt our soul,
Fight on, my brave heroes,” cried General Munroe.

It was on a wide plain our foes they did stand,
Full thirteen thousand they did command,
Their cavalry guarded by their entrenchments also,
But defeated they were by brave General Munroe.

When our foes they had gathered from us half-a-mile,
With undaunted courage our heroes did smile,
We attacked them with fury and drove them to and fro,
And laid four thousand dead by command of Munroe.

We fought the whole day until night it came on,
We never did lose but two hundred men,
We took their artillery and baggage also,
And gained a full victory under General Munroe.

Here's a health to Lady Moira, and long may she reign,
We fought our last battle all in her domain;
We fought them eight hours, beat them to and fro,
Commanded by that hero, brave General Munroe.

But Munroe being wearied he lay down to sleep,
He gave a woman ten guineas the secret to keep,
When she got the money, the devil tempted her so,
She sent for the cavalry, and surrounded Munroe.

Munroe he was taken and placed in a hall,
It's for his dear life those tyrants did call;
They there did condemn him and lead him away,
And stuck his head on a spear that very same day.

His last words to his friends, as we did understand,
"Never to yield until they would free their land;
Never be daunted at the strength of your foe,
Until you claim your freedom," said General Munroe.

It's in came his sister, and she drest in green,
With a sword by her side that was both sharp and keen,
She gave three huzzas, and away she did go,
Saying, "Revenge I will have for my brother Munroe."

Here's a health to each hero who for freedom does stand,
May their souls rest in peace who died for our land;
Remember the martyrs were slain by the foe –
Brave Emmet, Fitzgerald, and General Munroe.

WILLIE NELSON.

By Ethna Carbery.

Willie Nelson (or Neilson) of Ballycarry, County Antrim was only sixteen years old when he and his brothers took part in the Battle of Antrim. Local folklore is that upon the defeat of the rebels, he was captured and was repeatedly offered clemency in exchange for information about the rebels and their leaders. He refused and was thus executed in front of his mother's house in his native Ballycarry. He is known to this day as the "Ballycarry Martyr."

He wakened at the blackbird's song and flung his casement wide –
The drowsy East shot shafts of gold across the countryside;
His young keen eye swept up the heights and down the quiet glen –
'Twas time to warn from wood and brae the stern United Men.

And who will be the messenger to tell the fight's at hand?
And who will bear the signal word to rouse the sleeping land?
And who shall win a glorious name that time cannot destroy?
Oh! who but Willie Nelson – the widow's blue-eyed boy.

He has many a lonely mile to wend before his goal be won,
And many a danger to withstand ere yet his task be done,
But there is never a fear in the boyish heart as out from his mother's
door
He speeds with the tidings that call the brave to the trysting at
Donegore.

There are gallant steeds to pick and choose in the stable at Redhall,
And lightly does he tread his way – alert – from stall to stall.
"Ho! Bonny mare, our course lies far through vale and over hill,
To tell the faithful waiting ones there's life in Ireland still.

"McCracken has given the word at last, and there will be joy this
day,
When pikes are drawn from the smoke-browned thatch, where
bright and secure they lay."
Then all alone, in the dewy dawn, the dauntless lad rides forth
With a message of hope and a rallying call to the sentinels of the
North!

They will muster strong from Magheramorne, Mallusk and
Ballyclare;

And Island Magee has stalwart sons eager to do their share;
And from the Bann's broad sedgy banks will troop the fishers brown
To strike a blow for Ireland to-day in Antrim town.

Hurrah for Willie Nelson! as around the good news flies,
The news so dear to rebel hearts and rebel memories.
Hurrah! And hurrah! That the waiting's past – and long has the
waiting been
To the marching men with their shining pikes and their floating flag
of green!

Well, God be praised! the pikes were red before the sun went down –
And God be good to those who fell that day in Antrim town,
Let no one deem, though sad her fate, heart-wrung and tempest-tost,
When such brave blood cries for revenge our country's cause is lost!

There was wailing from Moylena's banks to Carrickfergus Tower –
And by Carnmoney's desolate hearths the sad-eyed widows cower –
And the few who came to tell the tale long shuddered o'er that scene,
When Irish pikes crossed English steel on the Bridge of Massareene.

But where is he who roused the land and bore the signal-word
That nerved at length the patriot hand to wield the patriot sword?
The captain and his yeomanry have sought him far and wide,
And they find the weary lad at last by his mother's ingleside.

They've taken Willie Nelson from his weeping mother's arms –
Alas! no kindly voice is nigh to soothe her wild alarms,
As, with his brothers twain, he turned in spite of oaths and jeers
For a last look at the loving face, half-blinded with her tears.

In Carrickfergus hard shall be his prison bed to-night,
And morning with its singing-birds shall yield him no delight,
It brings the stern commander's frown – the redcoats' grim array,
And the blue-eyed boy before them all – a traitor's part to play.

“Come, tell us, lad, the leader's plans, and tell the rebel lair,
And not a churlish hand shall touch one gold lock of your hair.”

But firm he closed his childish lips, and never a word spake he,
Though threatened with the cruel lash, and then the gallows tree.

“Come, tell us where McCracken hides.” He thought of Slemish then,
And the ruined hopes of as true a chief as ever led marshalled men
Or fired their souls to heroic deeds; and the pale boy calmly heard
His captor offer the traitor’s gold, but never he spake a word.

They’ve tied a rope around his neck and brought him home to die,
To Ballycarry’s strand, where oft he watched the gulls wheel by,
When, hark! a cry soul-wrung and wild, and sudden from the wood –
Anear, his frantic mother rushed, and in their pathway stood.

“Oh, spare him, spare my dearest son,” she cried. Kerr’s angry brow
Grows darker that the wild appeal disturbs his progress now.
“Just fifteen years” – Still on he rode. “Up, woman, or I spur
My horse upon you.” Nought availed that piteous prayer of her.

They’ve screened his blue eyes from the sun; he flings the bandage
far –

“Why should I fear to meet my doom and go where heroes are?
But grant my brother’s liberty, and let my death suffice,
Since mine the will to break your laws, then mine to pay the price.”

They’ve hanged him to the clefted tree against his mother’s door;
His swinging shadow comes and goes upon her cottage door;
They’ve gone their way with brutal jest, and left her with her dead,
Her thin hands lifted up to heaven, her vengeful curse half-said.

All through that dreary night she sat – her dead boy on her breast,
His golden curls across her arm, to her’s his cold cheek pressed –
Without the tramp of the yeomen guard, who watched till the morn
broke clear

O’er the widowed mother – the murdered son – fell on her tortured
ear.

Remember Willie Nelson at the Dawning of the Day,
When Freedom beckons from her height, and we have found the way
That brave men fought and died to find on many a battle field,
And taught us how to fight and die – but *never* how to yield.

Oh! Irishmen, when the signal comes again be ye gathered there,
Be ye as ready to take your stand as ever your fathers were;
Facing your foemen for Ireland's sake, sweep like a torrent down,
And strike them a stronger, *surer* blow than that day in Antrim town.

WAKE OF WILLIAM ORR.

By William Drennan.

William Orr (1766-1797) was a United Irishman originally from the townland of Farranshane, near Antrim Town, raised to a well-off Presbyterian family. In

1797, he was arrested and charged with high treason for allegedly administering the United Irishman oath to a soldier by the name of Hugh

Wheatly, a charge punishable by death. He was convicted and hung at Carrickfergus. Orr would become the first martyr of the United Irishmen, the watchword of the United Irishmen from that point on being "Remember Orr!"

Here our brother worthy lies,
Wake not him with women's cries;
Mourn the way that mankind ought;
Sit, in silent trance of thought.

Write his merits on your mind,
Morals pure, and manners kind;
On his head, as on a hill,
Virtue placed her citadel.

Why cut off in palmy youth?
Truth he spoke, and acted truth;
"Countrymen, Unite!" he cried,
And died, for what his Saviour died!

God of Peace, and God of Love,
Let it not thy vengeance move!
Let it not thy lightnings draw,
A nation guillotined by law!

Hapless nation! rent and torn,
Early wert thou taught to mourn!
Warfare of six hundred years!
Epochs marked by blood and tears!

Hunted through thy native grounds,
And flung reward to human hounds,

Each one pull'd, and tore his share,
Emblem of thy deep despair!

Hapless nation, hapless land,
Heap of uncementing sand!
Crumbled by a foreign weight,
Or by worse, domestic hate!

God of mercy, God of peace,
Make the mad confusion cease!
O'er the mental chaos move,
Through it speak the light of love!

Monstrous and unhappy sight!
Brothers' blood will not unite.
Holy oil, and holy water,
Mix – and fill the Earth with slaughter.

Who is she, with aspect wild? –
The widow'd mother, with her child;
Child, new stirring in the womb,
Husband, waiting for the tomb.

Angel of this holy place!
Calm her soul, and whisper, Peace!
Cord, nor axe, nor guillotine,
Make the sentence, not the sin.

Here we watch our brother's sleep;
Watch with us, but do not weep;
Watch with us, through dead of night –
But expect the morning light.

Conquer Fortune – persevere –
Lo! it breaks – the morning clear!
The cheerful cock awakes the skies;
The day is come – Arise, arise!

DONEGORE HILL.

By James Orr.

James Orr (1770-1816) was one of the most prominent of the Weaver Poets in Ulster, oft compared to his much more famous Scottish contemporary Robert Burns. Hailing from Ballycarry, County Antrim, Orr would take part in the 1798 rising fighting at the Battle of Antrim. “Donegore Hill” is a rather self-reflective poem lamenting at the failure of the rising, and is a fine piece of literature written in the braid Scots common in the Protestant rural hinterlands of County Antrim.

The dew draps wat the fiels o’ braird.
That soon the war-horse thartured;
An’ falds were oped by monie a herd
Wha lang ere night lay tortured;
Whan chiels wha grudged to be sae taxed,
An’ tythed by rack-rent blauthry,
Turned out *en masse* as soon as axed
And unco throuither squathry,
Were we that day.

While close leagued crappies raised the hoards
O’ pikes, pike shafts, forks, fire-locks,
Some melted lead – some sawed deal boards,
Some hade, like hens, in byre neuks;
Wives baked bannocks for their men,
Wi’ tears instead of water;
And lasses made cockades of green
For lads wha used to flatter
Their pride ilk day.

A brave man firmly leaving hame
I aye was proud to think on;
The wife obeying son of shame
Wi’ kindlin’ e’e I blink on;
“Peace, peace be wi’ you! ah, return!
Ere lang, and lea the daft anes” –
“Please Gude (quo’ he) before the morn

In spite of a our chieftains
An' guards this day."

But when the pokes of provender
Were slung on ilka shoulder,
Hags wha to henpeck did'na spare
Loot out the yells the louder –
Had they, whan blood about their heart
Cauld fear make cake and crudle,
Ta'en twa rash gills frae Herdman's quart,
'Twad rouse the calm, slow puddle
I' their veins that day.

Now leaders laith to lea the rigs
Whase leash they feared was broken,
An' privates cursin' purse-proud prigs
Wha brought 'em balls to slacken.
Repentant Painties at their prayers,
An' dastards crouselly craikin',
Move on, heroic to the wars
They mean na to partake in
By night or day.

Some fastin', yet now strave to eat
The piece that butter yellowed;
An' some in flocks, drank out cream crocks
That wives but little valued.
Some lettin' on their burn to mak
The rearguard, goadin', hastened;
Some hunkrin' at a lee dyke back
Boost haughel on, ere fastened
Their breeks that day.

The truly brave as journeyin' on
They pass by weans an' mithers,
Think on red fiels whare soon may groan
The husbands an' the fathers;
They think how soon the bonnie things
May lose the youths they're true to;
And see the rabble (strife aye brings)

Ravage their homes, while new to
Sic scenes that day.

When to the top of Donegore
Braid-islan's corps cam postin',
The red-wud, warpin, wild uproar
Was like a bee scap castin';
For — took ragweed farms
(Fears e'e has still the jaundice),
For Nugent's red coats, bright in arms,
An' rush! the pale-faced randies
Took leg that day.

The camp's brak up, ower braes and bogs,
The patriots seek their sections;
Arms, ammunition, bread bags, brogues
Lie strewed in a' directions.
And some, alas, wha feared to face
Auld fogies, or e'en women,
They swore in pride, tho' yet untried
They yet wad trounce the yeomen
Some other day.

Come back ye dastards? — can ye ought
Expect at your returnin'
But wives and weans stript, cattle houghed,
An' cots an' claughins burnin',
Na, haste ye hame! ye ken ye'll scape,
That martial law ye're clear O;
The nine-tailed cat or choakin' rape
Is mostly for the hero
On sic a day.

Saint Paul, I ween, doth counsel weel,
An' somewhere Pope the same in,
That "first of a', folk should themsel
Impartially examine;"
If that's na done, whate'er the loon
May swear to, never swithrin',
In every pinch, he'll basely flinch,

“Guid bye to ye my brethren”
He’ll cry that day.

The ill-starred wights wha stayed behind
Were moved by mony a passion;
By dread to stay, by shame to rin,
By scorn and consternation.
Wi’ spite they curse, wi’ grief they pray,
Now start, now pause – more pity,
“Tis mad to go, ‘tis death to stay” –
An unco doleful ditty
On sic a day.

What joy at home our entrance gave,
“Guid God! is’t you? fair fa’ ye!
‘Twas right, tho’ fools may say not brave
To rin before they saw ye!”
“Aye wife, ‘tis true without dispute,
But lest sunts fail in Zion,
I’ll have to swear they forced me out;
Better they swing than I on
Some hangin’ day.

My song is done, an’ to be free,
Full sair I ween they smarted,
Wha wad hae bell’d the cat awae
Had they no’ been deserted;
They lacked the drill, and in my min’,
Where it came not before mon,
In tryin’ times, maist folk, you’ll fin’
Will act like Donegore men,
On any day.

THE SOCIAL THISTLE AND SHAMROCK.

Attributed to Henry Joy McCracken.

The following song is attributed to Henry Joy McCracken by his sister, Mary Ann. According to R. R. Madden, the song was meant to settle differences between the United Irishmen of the Rea Fencibles and Limerick Militia, stressing a common brotherhood and origin between the Scots and Irish.

TUNE – “*Charley is my Darling.*”

COME all you valiant heroes, now unto me draw near,
On my Highland pipes, I'll play a tune, will every bosom chear.
Shea da wea ma wallagh, ma wallagh, ma wallagh,²
Shea da wea ma wallagh, come listen unto me.

Highlandmen and Irishmen, how happy we will be,
When like brethren, we're dancing, and singing Gramachree.³
Shea da wea ma wallagh, ma wallagh, ma wallagh,
Shea da wea ma wallagh, that now happy day.

Then o'er the misty mountains, and through the rushy glens,
The poor industrious labourers will find us trusty friends.
Shea da wea ma wallagh, ma wallagh, ma wallagh
Shea da wea ma wallagh, all mankind should agree.

The Scotch and Irish friendly are, their wishes are the same,
The English nation envy us, and over us would reign.
But shea da wea ma wallagh, ma wallagh, ma wallagh,
Shea da wea ma wallagh, Oh! that must never be.

The auld gill stoups, we'll gie a coup, and drink prosperity,
To the ancient clans, in Scottish lands, that fought right manfully.

² Is not currently known as to what *Shea da wea ma wallagh* is a phonetic rendering of in Irish.

³ Gramachree is a phonetic rendering of *Gradh mo chroidhe*, “love of my heart” and is a traditional Gaelic air in both Scotland and Ireland.

Shea da wea ma wallagh, ma wallagh, ma wallagh,
Shea da wea ma wallagh, fu' weel I mine that day.

Our historians and our poets, they always did maintain,
That the origin of Scottishmen and Irish were the same.
Shea da wea ma wallagh, ma wallagh, ma wallagh,
Shea da wea ma wallagh, as brothers we'll remain.

Now to conclude and end my song, may we live long to see,
The Thistle and the Shamrock, entwine the olive tree.
Shea da wea ma wallagh, ma wallagh, ma wallagh,
Shea da wea ma walalgh, a hearty health to thee.

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOUR; OR THE FOUR IRISH SOLDIERS.

By William Sampson.

The following poem is about four soldiers of the Monaghan militia, executed at Blaris-Camp in 1797 for being United Irishmen. Owen McKenna, William McKenna, Daniel Gillen and Peter McCarron. The four men grew up near the Monaghan-Tyrone border, close to the town of Aughnacloy and are remembered in the area's local folklore. The men were offered clemency if they renounced their oath to the United Irishmen and informed on their comrades but valiantly refused.

My soul is sunk beneath a world of grief,
My blood runs chill and slow thro' every part,
Nor can this world's joys afford relief,
For bitter anguish preys upon my heart.

Four Irish lads, with no dishonour stain'd,
Four gallant youths as Ireland ever saw,
Have met their doom, by treachery arraign'd,
And murder'd by the blight of barb'rous law.

What was their crime? To love their country well,
To wish its Union, and to wish it free;
For this, they bled, for this, they nobly fell;
True to themselves, – O Ireland! – and to thee.

Since wicked men, their evil ends to gain,
First sent the soldier to a foreign grave;
And order'd countless thousands to be slain,
None perish'd half so honest, or so brave.

I saw the dismal sight! I saw them brought,
Solemn, and silent, to the bed of death;
From slavish hirelings, they receiv'd the shot;
And yielded up to heav'n, their native breath.

A thousand times, to tempt them to betray,
Life and rewards were offer'd them in vain;

They proudly cast the proffer'd boons away,
And spurn'd the tempter, with a cold disdain.

Nor friends, nor kindred, their firm souls could move,
Sweet images that cling around the heart;
They left them all their wealth – their country's love,
And bade farewell! For evermore to part.

I saw the aged father standing by,
Scorning by treason, his son's life to save,
For he could bear to see his darling die;
But not to live a *traitor* or a slave.

Intent and firm he watch'd the ruffian stroke,
Intrepid courage beaming in his eye;
Nor ever other words than these he spoke,
Son, thou hast taught thy countrymen to die.

Oh! truth and honour, where must you be found?
Not in the palace, or the glitt'ring court;
You rather dwell within the lowly cot,
And with the simple, and the poor resort.

For from an humble stock these heroes grew,
Strangers to fortune, and unknown to fame.
By heav'n alone, endow'd with hearts so true,
And rich in death, which consecrates their name.

THE SECOND PART.

CEASE then, unavailing woe,
Since to heav'n their souls have fled;
Ireland let the *traitors* know,
That not in vain thy sons have bled.

Irish heroes grasp your arms,
Firmly clasp the pointed steel,
Shake their souls with fierce alarms,
Teach their harden'd hearts to feel.

Let the tyrants of the world
See their hateful reign is o'er;
From their seats let them be hurl'd,
Nor wield their iron sceptre more.

And Scottish lads so bold and brave,
Unite with Ireland and be free;
Renounce the *traitor* and the slave,
Hail! fortune, hope, and liberty.

Victory shall then be yours,
Honours and rewards shall show,
That he who first the *foe* abjures,
Ireland's bounty first shall know.

HENRY JOY MCCRACKEN.

By Patrick Joseph McCall.

The following ballad was first published in *The Shan Van Vocht* in June 1896 by Patrick Joseph McCall. It is set to an old ballad popular in Belfast, called "The Belfast Mountains.", and is a lover's lament, believed to portray Mary Bodell, the mother of McCracken's illegitimate daughter.

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.

BETSY GRAY.

Anonymous.

Betsy Gray (1778-1798) was born in Gransha, County Down, and at the age of around twenty, fought for the United Irishmen in the Battle of Ballynahinch.

Upon the rout of the rebels, the yeomanry partook in an indiscriminate massacre targeting both fleeing rebels and innocent civilians, Gray, as well as her brother and her lover Willie Boal, were among the dead. Her death made her a local folk heroine, and a famous ballad was written, featured in the 1888 book about Betsy Gray's life, *Betsy Gray Or The Hearts of Down* by W. G. Lyttle. The tune of the ballad or the ballad's author remains unknown.

Oh, many a noble lad and lass
Who joined the fight of ninety-eight,
To right the cruel wrongs of years,
Did meet with sad and bloody fate.

On Ednavady's sloping heights,
In June, upon the thirteenth day;
In thousands stood the Patriots bold,
To fight for home and victory.

But bravest of them all, I weep,
Who mustered there upon that day,
And drew the sword for fatherland,
Was lovely, winsome Betsy Gray.

From Granshaw, near to Bangor town,
With Willie Boal that day she came;
Her brother, too, was by her side.
Inspired by patriotic flame.

And when the tide of battle raged,
And showers of bullets fell around,
Still in the thickest of the fight,
Was noble-hearted Betsy found.

When adverse fate with victory crowned
The loyal host upon that day,

Poor George and Willie joined the flight,
And with them lovely Betsy Gray.

Along the Lisburn Road they fled,
Pursuing Yeomen keeping watch;
Then Betsy drew her gleaming sword
And hid it in a farmhouse thatch.

She reached the vale of Ballycreen –
Her friends some distance were behind –
And quickly did she look around
A quiet hiding-place to find.

But, ere 'twas found, she heard a cry
Alas! too well she knew the sound;
Her brother and her sweetheart true
Had by the Yeomen been found!

Then from the grassy vale she sprang
This beauteous, noble, fearless maid –
And back she ran with bounding step,
That she might seek to give her aid.

Ah, what a sight then met her gaze!
Her Willie weltering in his gore;
And George, her brother, by his side,
Pleading for life in accents sore.

A Yeoman raised his sword to strike,
As Betsy to the rescue ran
“Oh, spare my brother's life!” she cried,
“Oh, spare him, if you be a man!”

She raised her white and rounded arm
As if to ward the dreaded stroke
Vain was her prayer – the weapon fell
And smote her hand off as she spoke.

Another of the murderous crew,
A man who came from Anahilt,

Laughed at the brutal deed and cried –
“More rebel blood must yet be spilt!”

He drew a pistol from his belt,
And shot poor Betsy in the eye;
She sank upon the heathery mound,
And died without a sob or sigh.

That night the murdered three were found,
By Matthew Armstrong – then a lad;
Who quickly running to his home,
Related there his tidings sad.

No tombstone marks that humble grave,
No tree nor shrub is planted there;
And never spade disturbs the spot,
Where sleeps the brave, where rests the fair.

Shame on the cruel, ruthless band,
Who hunted down to death their prey!
And palsy strike the murderous hand,
That slew the lovely Betsy Gray!

THE REBEL'S GRAVE.

By James Morgan.

The following poem was taken from *The Ulster Magazine*, and was published for its first issue in 1830. It was believed to have been written by James Morgan from Newry, and is arguably one of the more bitterly sad and reflective compositions of the Northern folk literature of '98. It is void of all romanticism, it lays bare the horrors, tribulations and sufferings of the rebel and of those who are left behind, the grief-stricken lover, the keening mother and the crestfallen old man. Above all else, it depicts the loneliness of the rebel's grave, the grave of a forgotten cause.

'Twas a lonely spot; above it grew
An aged thorn; and moaning through
The leafless boughs, the evening gale,
Sullenly, like a funeral wail,
Sighed sadly o'er it.
A solitary sunbeam fell
Upon the grove; – it seemed to tell
Of joys long gone; – it was the last
Day-beam of heaven; – a chill cloud cast
Its shade before it.

I thought of him who slept beneath,
Now cold in clay and dark in death,
Once high in happiness – ere yet
His sun of life so darkly set
Through a cloud of blood.
I sighed – another answer gave –
'Twas not the loose and rustling wave
Of the long lank grass. I looked around –
Gazing upon the grassy mound
An old man stood.

Damp o'er his brow and forehead ran
The earliest curse on sinful man;
His eyes were sunk; his withered cheek
Was sorrow-blanch'd, yet seemed to speak
Of long lost bliss.

He muttered something hastily;
But whether to himself or me
I wist not: "To let fall a tear
Where folly found an early bier
Is foolishness."

"And though 'twere worse," I sternly cried,
"Yet shall it fall for him who died
For freedom. Hallowed be his rest –
Light lie the turf upon his breast –
Heaven's tears bedew it!"
The old man sighed; a mournful smile
Lit his dim eye. "So did beguile
His soul that phantom on to crime. –
Nay, frown not, youth – the seal of time
And truth is to it.

"I knew him in his early youth,
When all was innocence and truth –
A mother's hope – her only stay –
The light that cheered her close of day –
Heaven's smile his guide.
"He loved – was loved – for nuptial tie
The day was fixed; and hope was high: –
But hush! hark! no – he did not wed –
Below thou seest his bridal bed –
And *there* – his bride!"

I listened: – 'twas the wildest strain
That ever burst from breast of pain.
I looked: – across the dewy heath
A maniac rushed – a wild flower wreath,
Around her twined.
Her bosom bare – her garments torn –
Her cheek so pallid, wan and worn,
Had deathly looked, but that 'twas brown
With summer's sun, and fiercest frown
Of winter's wind.

Can this she be – where wilderment
Such lorn and frenzied fire has lent
To the dark eyes, whose vivid flashes
Beam wildly through the long eyelashes
The mind's despair?

It is. Upon the grave she flung
Her wild flower wreath; and as she sung
Her love-lorn lay, she swept the dew,
That gemmed the shamrocks as they grew
In mockery there.

The old man sighed, resumed his tale:
“Their faith and plighted vows to seal
The day was fixed; – but, ere it came,
Rebellion burst its smothered flame,
And sparkled keen.

“When treason dark the tocsin rung,
Forth from his Mary's arms he sprung,
And madly rushed where folly's band
Rallied around, with heart and hand,
The flag of green!

“He fought: – how wildly and how well,
Still some survive who love to tell. –
A hand so strong and heart so brave
Deserved at least a soldier's grave: –
But fate forbade.

“There stood his aged mother's cot –
Before her very door they brought,
Like felon vile, her hope's last gem,
And underneath this hawthorn stem,
His grave they made.

“They hanged him high upon that bough –
O God! methinks, I hear e'en now
The shriek his wretched mother gave:
She saw his limbs convulsive wave
In agony: –
“She saw the headsman take his head;

She saw him in his bloody bed
A headless trunk; she prayed to press
On his black lips one last caress
Then – died away!

“The rest – if further thou wouldst hear –
See, there; upon that grassy bier,
The fairest flower – our hamlet’s pride –
My Mary sweet – young Henry’s bride –
A maniac wild!”

He ceased. Poor Mary long had listened,
And once, methought, a tear-drop glistened,
In her dark eye; – but oh, it past; –
‘Twas but the night dew falling fast
O’er sorrow’s child.

‘Twas when he spoke of bliss gone by,
I marked that dew within her eye.
It seemed as if the blessed light
Of reason, yet could shed one light
Through transient gleam;
But, when he spoke of headsman grim –
Of blackened lip and quivering limb –
She started from her lover’s grave –
With wild and frenzied look she gave
A heart-wrung scream.

I leaned me ‘gainst the withered tree,
Musing on human misery: –
I raised my eye – I saw alone –
The maniac fled – the old man gone –
The long grass wave.
Chill gleamed above me faint and far
The evening’s lone and lovely star: –
I turned, and left, with sorrowing sigh,
With heavy heart and tearful eye,
THE REBEL’S GRAVE.

