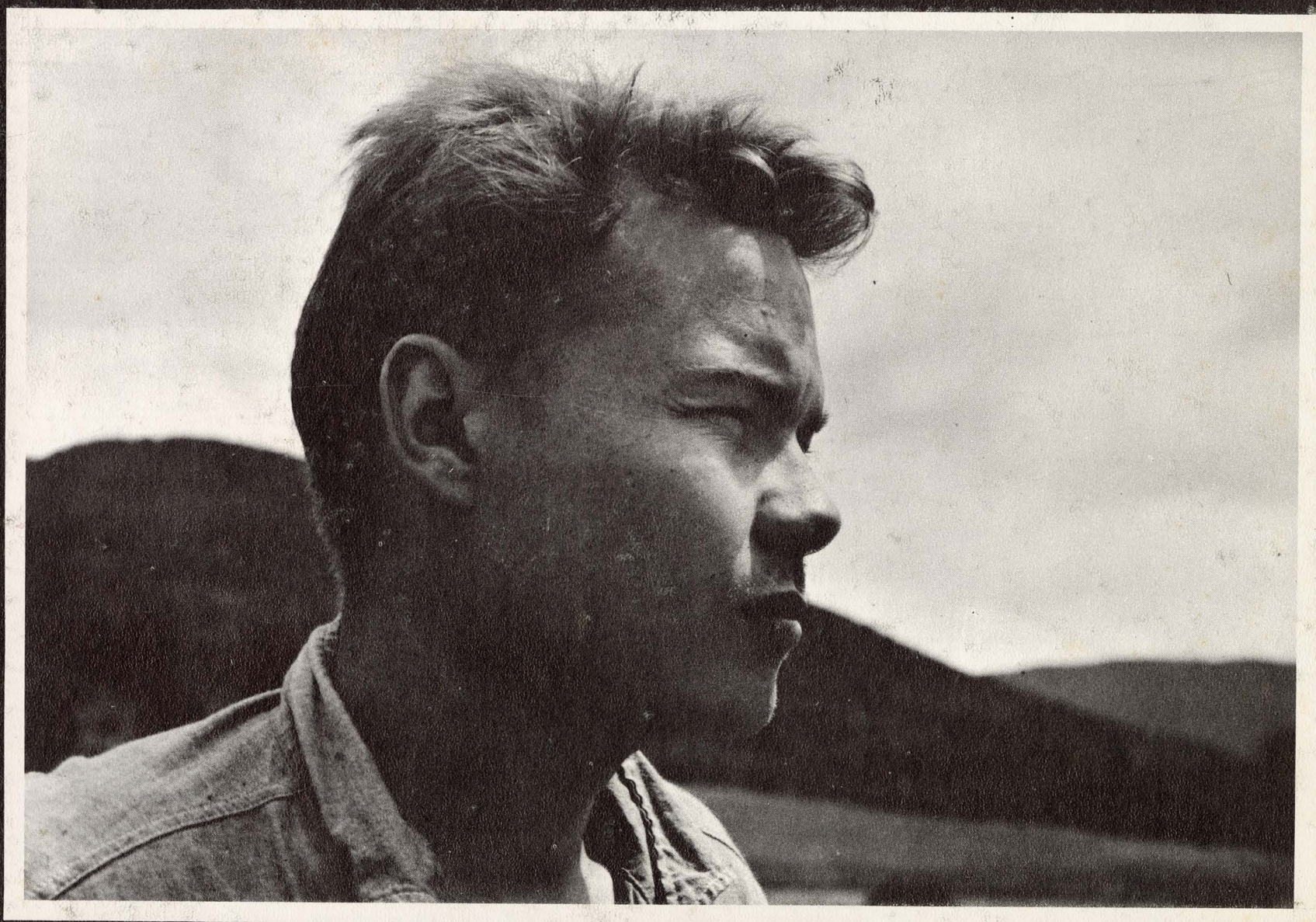


FSE-21

"Traditional and Original Songs of Ireland"

sung by

**BILL
MEEK** of Killinchy,
County Down



FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC. SHARON, CONNECTICUT



*Traditional and Original Songs
of Ireland*

sung by

**BILL
MEEK** of Killinchy,
County Down

*Recorded and edited by Sandy Paton
Notes by Bill Meek*

Bill Meek, young Irish singer and composer of songs in the folk idiom, was reared in Killinchy but now farms in County Wicklow, near Dublin. Much of his spare time is taken up with writing for Radio Eiranne. His music represents the happy blend of old and new which is common in the contemporary Irish folksong movement. As he states in his notes:

"I was once asked whether my style of singing was typical of the Irish folk music revival. The answer was 'No,' for the simple reason that there was never a sufficient decline in Irish folk music to necessitate a revival. I would say that to be reared in Ireland of Irish parents in itself makes one a captive to the traditions of Ireland. Then again, I write some of the songs that I sing. Yet this, far from removing one from the traditions of the country, places one, consciously, right in the tradition of the ballad makers, providing, of course, that the songs are accepted by the Irish people who hear them as their type of music. I believe that all the ballads and songs that have been made by Irishmen must be taken to lie somewhere within the bounds of the Irish tradition, whether they be love songs, patriotic songs, sleep songs, drinking songs, or narrative ballads. My criterion for judging them is not whether they are 'ethnic,' but whether I think they are good or bad. I doubt if any good Irish songs have been made with the Tin Pan Alley music industry in mind (although commercialism cannot be ruled out of the tradition, for the broadsheet vendors were certainly engaged on a commercial venture). I also believe the Gaelic influence to be the most important factor in the formation of the wonderful conglomeration that I consider to be the folk music of Ireland."

FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC., recorded Bill Meek while he was working for a short time on a farm here in Huntington, Vermont. He and his wife were visiting this country and Bill worked at every stop, doing everything from haying on farms to assisting an anthropologist in research in the religious customs of an Indian tribe in the Southwest.

Side 1:

THE IMMIGRANT (MEEK)
SWEET CARNLOUGH BAY
HOT ASPHALT
THE LAMBS IN THE GREENFIELDS
ENNISKILLEN DRAGOON
THE COMPLAINT OF THE BARD (MEEK)
GENERAL MUNROE
THE AMERICAN WAKE

Side 2:

THE HOUSE AT THE CROSSROADS (MEEK)
CARRICKMANNON LAKE
THE HEROIC CRUBEEN (MEEK)
FOOTBALL CRAZY
THE ORANGE LILY-O
NEWRY MOUNTAIN
I'M A POOR STRANGER
SKIBBEREEN
SLIEVE GALLAN BRAES

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FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.

Sharon, Connecticut 06069

PRINTED
IN
U.S.A.

BILL MEEK

Recorded by Sandy Paton

Notes by Bill Meek

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FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.

HUNTINGTON, VERMONT

BILL WEEK

Presented by Betty Nelson

Guest by Bill Week

1951



1951

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

INTRODUCTION

I was once asked whether my style of singing was typical of the Irish folk music revival. The answer was "No," for the simple reason that there was never a sufficient decline in Irish folk music to necessitate a revival. Yet I understand what was worrying the person who asked me that question. He had heard unaccompanied singers who sang in the old Gaelic style — either using the Irish language exclusively, or singing in English but phrasing both words and music in a way that showed direct Gaelic influence — and he wondered how I fitted into such a pattern.

The question is a difficult one. Although we in Ireland know the answer, it is not easy to phrase it in such a way as to convey the situation to one who is not acquainted with Irish life and, in particular, Irish music as a vital part of Irish life. I would say that to be reared in Ireland of Irish parents in itself makes one a captive to the traditions of Ireland. These traditions are strong, and the fact that one plays an accompaniment to oneself on the guitar is hardly a powerful enough weapon to escape them. Then again, I write some of the songs that I sing. Yet this, far from removing one from the traditions of the country, places one, consciously or unconsciously, right in the tradition of the ballad makers, providing, of course, that the songs are accepted by the Irish people who hear them as their type of music.

My own feelings as to what constitutes Irish folk music should be set down. I believe that all the ballads and songs that have been made by Irishmen must be taken to lie somewhere within the bounds of the Irish tradition, whether they be love songs, patriotic songs, sleep songs, drinking songs, or narrative ballads. My criterion for judging them is not whether they are "ethnic," but whether I think they are good or bad. I must qualify my last statement by saying that I doubt if any good Irish songs have been written with the Tin Pan Alley music industry in mind (although commercialism cannot be ruled out of the tradition, for the broadsheet vendors were certainly engaged on a commercial venture). I also believe the Gaelic influence to be the most important factor in the formation of the wonderful conglomeration that I consider to be the folk music of Ireland.

Ireland is a land that has been subject to many invasions and migrations — Gaelic, Viking, Norman, Saxon, and Scots — and this has meant that many cultures have become intermingled. Although the invader was usually assimilated into Irish society, many becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves, this type of history has made for many traditions in one small island.

The Gaelic tradition survives strongly to this day, and thank goodness for that! Ireland has never been isolated from the cultural movements in the rest of the world, however, and music is no exception to this. This does not mean that there was any rivalry between the type of music that was strongly influenced by non-Celtic sources and the old music of the country. In fact, the two became complementary to each other, influenced each other, and the people of Ireland loved the lot. Two songs come to mind that illustrate this - Kelly the Boy From Killann and The Boys of Mullaghbawn. Both were more or less contemporary and both are in the English language, yet the former owes little to Gaelic sources whilst the latter is strongly influenced by such sources, both in the phrasing of the words and the music. But who can maintain that Kelly the Boy is totally outside the Irish tradition of ballad making?

There seems to be a tendency in the United States to believe that a singer who has been exposed to a formal education is at once removed from his "folk" background. This may be a valid argument in the United States, but a brief glance at the history of Ireland will show that it is by no means true for that country. The Gaelic tradition, inevitably the strongest cultural influence on Irish music, was for centuries kept alive through the efforts of the hedge-schoolmasters, despite official governmental oppression. It would be a mistake to think of these men as romantic, folksy characters who churned out gems of homespun philosophy. They were highly educated, erudite men, well acquainted with the classics in addition to being the propagators of the Gaelic tradition, which was, above all, a literary tradition. Likewise Carolan, Hempsey, O'Neill, and the other great harpers of Ireland were highly accomplished musicians who didn't hesitate to make use of any new technique that they came across - providing, of course, that they liked it. Indeed, a consideration of the harpers vividly illustrates the problem of defining Irish folk music. In the days of the Gaelic chiefs, the harper was a revered member of society and a constant companion of the chief. Because of this, and because they underwent years of musical apprenticeship, it has been alleged that harpers did not play the music of the people. Yet who were the people? It is unwise to apply the modern concept of democracy to old Irish society. Yet one can say that it was not a "status" society as was prevalent throughout feudal Europe. It seems clear that a clan chieftan would not have been perturbed because his swineherd might well be his second cousin. In such a society it seems unlikely that the chief and the swineherd did not share a common musical heritage. Even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the harpers were dependent on the patronage of the Anglo-Irish gentry, it is clear that they were equally at home in the "big house" or the poorest cottage on the estate.

The Irish people opposed the invasion on their culture as much as they resented the denial of their right to political freedom. They clung to their cultural heritage jealously, just as they fought time and time again for national independence. Some of the elderly people who sing the old songs today have had little formal schooling. Nevertheless they are the inheritors of an old literary tradition, and they feel no estrangement from their children who have had the opportunity of going to the colleges and universities to acquire a greater knowledge of the old culture, together with the sciences of the twentieth century.

The Irish people have a catholic taste in music. On many an evening I have seen a traditional singer with guitar follow an old-style unaccompanied singer and the audience has been aware of no incongruity. Even the sentimental "exile" ballad of doubtful Irish origin is totally accepted by the very folk whom the collector delights in as being truly "folk". Perhaps we lack discrimination, but that's the situation as it is, and, like it or not, it is all to some extent part of the Irish tradition. It means that we accept a lot of stuff that is bad, but it also means that we are surrounded by much more that is really good. There is no folk music "movement" in Ireland. There is no need for it. We have a living folk music that, far from being killed by the radio, has thrived because of it. The people of Ireland love their traditional music, and the radio has given them an opportunity to hear a lot more of it. I think it is inherent in our nature to welcome scholars who are interested in studying the music of our country. But it is not in our nature to be overly classified. If the musicians and singers of Ireland start spending a lot of time trying to mould themselves according to a certain style, the freshness and spontaneity will go, and the music of the country will be banished to the archives of the museums and universities. Should this happen, the Irish people will indeed have lost a living part of themselves. But I cannot see it happening. If nothing else, we are individuals and unlikely to sit quietly at the "wake" to our own music.

Emigration is the theme to many of the songs that I sing. Perhaps this is because emigration is a fear that has been at the back of most Irishmen's minds for many generations. The first wave of mass emigration from Ireland, at least in historic times, was probably that of the "Wild Geese". The "Wild Geese" were members of the old Irish aristocracy and their followers, who supported the Jacobite cause during the Williamite wars. They offered their services to the armies of many different foreign powers, from the Russian Empire to the Turkish. It was this exodus that explains how, at a much later date, a Marshal MacMahon became president of the French Republic. During the eighteenth century there was a large emigration of Ulster Presbyterians, who left their by no means unprosperous farms to go to North America, where they became known as the "Scots Irish". There they played a prominent part in United States history, producing many famous sons, from Andrew Jackson to Samuel Morse.

After the '98 Rebellion and throughout the nineteenth century, hundreds of Irishmen were deported to the West Indies, Australia, and elsewhere. Yet by the middle of the century the population of Ireland was still half that of England. Then came the failure of the potato crop and ensuing famine. Thousands of Irish folk were allowed to die of starvation in the ditches, having been turned out of their homes by the agents of absentee landlords. Thousands more emigrated. Unfortunately, emigration has continued to be a blight on Irish life in the twentieth century, and it is small wonder that so many Irish songs mirror this background.

I wrote this song when I was myself an immigrant, if a temporary one, in London. At that time the British government was in the process of introducing an Immigration Bill which many felt was aimed at the Irish and West Indian workers in England. Both groups were resentful, feeling that the British had helped themselves to our hospitality for hundreds of years, and that they should at least extend theirs a little more graciously, especially as an important section of their economy was based on migrant labour.

It isn't very long, boys, since I first came to this shore,
But my mind has never settled down and I think of home
the more.

For a man must earn a living to raise a family,
And that is why, an immigrant, I crossed the Irish sea.

I'm an immigrant, I'm an immigrant,
I come from a land in the West.
Still I hope some day to go
To the isle I love the best.

There's ~~may's~~ the decent Englishman but does he really
know
What his land did to my land today and long ago?
"Have you itchy feet?" you'll hear him say, but can he
understand
That itchy were the feet of those who ravaged Ireland.
There's British politicians who'll bawl into your ear,
"It's time we stopped those Blacks and Paddies coming
over here."
There's a thing that they've forgotten, someone should
tell them quick,
That it's us who build their factories, it's our girls
who nurse their sick.

So listen, politician, if my land you'd left free,
We'd have laboured in our own vineyards to end our
poverty.
But there's a thing they call extortion, seven hundred
years or more,
And that is why young Irish folk sail to an alien shore.

So come all you stalwart immigrants and listen well to
me.
Do all you can to make your land a nation one and free.
For when Irish men own Irish soil, they never more will
roam,
For in spite of all those lies they tell, we'd rather
stay at home.

Side I; Band 2. SWEET CARNLOUGH BAY

This is a little song that comes from the Glens of
Antrim. The Scottish Isles are situated close by the Antrim
coast, and the area of the Glens has long been strongly in-
fluenced by the Gallic Scots. Indeed, the chiefs of the
"MacDonnell of the Isles" clan considered the Glens to be
within their domain, and it was one of these chiefs who mur-
dered Sean O'Neill, a famous chieftain of Gaelic Ulster,
near to Glen Dun.

The Words and music to Sweet Carnlough Bay can be found
on page 188 of "Irish Street Ballads", by Colm O Lochlainn.
The notes to that collection state that the words are by a
local poet by the name of McKay. However, I have heard a

Scots singer render almost identical words to a different air, but using Scottish place names. Whether the poet McKay or his rival across the North Channel encountered the muse first, I'm afraid I cannot say.

As winter was breaking o'er high hills and meadows,
And dark were the clouds o'er the fast flowing sea,
I met a wee lassie as daylight was dawning,
And she asking the road to sweet Carnlough Bay.

Said I, "My wee lassie, I canna well tell ye
The number of miles and how far it will be,
But if you consent I'll convey you a wee while,
To show you the road to sweet Carnlough Bay.

"Ye turn to the right and go down by that graveyard,
Cross over the river and down by the sea.
We'll stop at Pat Hamill's, we'll take a wee drop there,
Just to help us along to sweet Carnlough Bay."

So here's to Pat Hamill, likewise the wee lassie,
And all of ye laddies wherever ye be;
Don't turn your back when ye meet a wee lassie
And she asking the road to sweet Carnlough Bay.

Side I; Band 3.

HOT ASPHALT

This is a song of the Irish navvies, the workmen who have helped build the countless miles of new highway throughout Great Britain, and there would appear to be as many versions to the song as there are miles of road.

Hot Asphalt has been condemned as tending to place the Irish worker in Britain in a rough light. I feel that this is putting too serious an interpretation on a simple, light-hearted bit of bragging. The Irish navy gives a valuable service to the community in which he works, and I feel there is no need to smother his reputation for high spirits in a protective wrapping of cotton wool. Anyway, the "policeman" in the song got no less than he deserved.

The air is the same as that sung to the equally high-spirited song Mister Maguire, and I was fascinated to hear Larry Older (Folk-Legacy Records, FSA-15) play the same tune, having learned it in the lumber camps of New York State as Bonaparte's March.

Oh, good evening to you fellows, and I'm glad to see
you well,
If you'll gather all around me then me story I will tell,
For I've a situation and a very pleasant job,
I'm tellin' you that me weekly wage is nineteen bob.
It's twelve months come October since I got to Camden
Town,
But I wish me boots could walk again on decent Irish
ground.
I wears a gansai sweater and around me waist a belt,
I'm the gaffer of the squad that makes the hot asphalt.

Ye talk about your soldier boys, your sailors and
the rest,
Tinkers, tailors, and shoemakers, but we please
the ladies best.
What other lads can always make the coldest heart
to melt
But the boys around the boiler making hot asphalt?

Then up there came a polisman, I think he's called
Maguire,
With divil as much as a by-your-leave he sits down by
me fire.
"Oh," says he, "You Tipperary ones, you'll always play
the goat."
So we shoved him into the hot asphalt and we scrubbed
him down with soap.
With the rubbing and the scrubbing, sure he'll find
his death of cold,
For scientific purposes his body will be sold.
In the Birmingham museum he'll be hanging from a belt
As a monument to the Irish making hot asphalt.

Side I; Band 4. THE LAMBS IN THE GREENFIELDS

This is an Irish version of the classical ballad The False Hearted Lover. The story is the old one of the rejected suitor making a last attempt to win the affection of his beloved "although (she) is wed to another." He is deterred by the understandable wrath of the groomsman, and bids the listener to "dig you my grave both long, wide, and deep." It is interesting how these lines appear in so many ballads - Irish, British, and American. In this version the rejected lover would appear to be planning his own death, as "the best way to forget her," more in a spirit of defiance than of humble acceptance of the doleful situation.

Some of the dialogue is very similar to Scottish colloquial usage, and suggests that this version of the ballad comes from the province of Ulster in the north of Ireland.

The air is a variation on the old Irish melody Cill Muiire, and, indeed, there is a version of the ballad from the south of Ireland that sticks more closely to that air.

The words and music to a version very similar to the one I sing can be found on page 170 of "Irish Street Ballads", by Colm O Lochlainn, which is published at "The Sign of the Three Candles," Dublin, Ireland.

The lambs in the greenfields, they sport and they play,
And many strawberries grow round the salt sea.
And many strawberries grow round the salt sea,
And many's a ship sails the ocean.
And many's a ship sails the ocean.

The bride and bride's party, to church they did go.
The bride she rides foremost, she bears the best show,
While I followed on, me heart it was low,
To see my love wed to another.
To see my love wed to another.

The first time I saw them, 'twas at the church stand,
With gold on her finger, her love by the hand.
I said, "My sweet darling, I'll still be the man,
Although you are wed to another.
Although you are wed to another."

The next time I saw them, 'twas on the way home.
I ran on before, not knowing where to roam,
And I said, "My sweet darling, I'll stand by your side,
Although you are wed to another.
Although you are wed to another."

"Stop," says the groomsman, "Let me have my word.
If you value your life, will you stop at my sword?
For courting too slowly you've lost this fair maid,
And now you will never enjoy her.
Begone, for you'll never enjoy her."

Dig you my grave both long, wide, and deep,
And cover it over with flowers so sweet,
And lay me down in it to take my last sleep,
For that's the best way to forget her.
Aye, that's the best way to forget her.

Side I; Band 5. THE ENNISKILLEN DRAGOON

This song originated in Ulster but is a great favorite throughout Ireland.

The town of Enniskillen is the capitol of County Fermanagh, and is situated between two lakes, the upper and lower Loch Erne. It was in Enniskillen that two of the most famous regiments of the British army, the Dragoons and the Fusileers, were recruited.

The story of the song is the familiar one in Irish balladry of the young man in love with a maiden "of higher degree." The girl complains that he has "'listed full soon" in the Dragoons, but he replies that this is because her parents "have slighted (him) morning, night, and noon." All ends on a note of hope, however. She tells him that although "children their parents must always obey", when he's left Ireland "they'll soon change their tune, saying the good Lord be wi' ye, Enniskillen dragoon."

I have heard some singers render this song at march tempo but mostly it is sung slowly. The words and music to The Enniskillen Dragoon can be found on page 208 of "Old Irish Folk Music and Songs," by P. W. Joyce (1909 edition). Edith Fowke has recently discovered it in tradition in Ontario, Canada.

A beautiful damsel of fame and renown,
A gentleman's daughter from Monaghan town,
As she went through the barracks this beautiful maid
Stood up in her coach to see dragoons on parade.

Fare ye well, Enniskillen, I must leave you for a
while,
And all thy fair waters and every green isle.
And when the wars are over I'll return in full
bloom,
And they'll all welcome home their Enniskillen
dragoon.

They were all dressed up the like of gentlemen's sons,
With their bright shining rapiers and carabine guns,
Their bayonets fornenst them; oh, she saw them full soon,
Just because that she loved an Enniskillen dragoon.

She looked to the bright sons of Mars on the right,
Their armor outshining the stars of the night.
"Oh Willie, dearest Willie, you have 'listed full soon,
In the royal, loyal Enniskillen dragoons."

"Oh Flora, dearest Flora, your pardon I crave,
Both now and forever, sure you know I'm your slave,
But your parents they have slighted me morning, night,
and noon,
Just because that you loved your Enniskillen dragoon."

"Oh Willie, dearest Willie, heed not what they say,
For children their parents must always obey.
And when you've left Ireland they'll soon change their
tune,
Saying, 'The Good Lord be wi' ye, Enniskillen dragoon'."

Side I; Band 6. COMPLAINT OF THE BARD

This bit of home ballad making could, perhaps, be described as a protest song. I think a word of explanation is warranted on the subject of why it was written. The Irish country fiddler is known for his precise form of playing and his highly developed musicianship. At many a ceili I have heard fiddlers play out variations on a reel, jig or hornpipe that would do credit to the late J. S. Bach. It is no reflection on the mountain fiddlers of the United States to say that their Irish colleagues simply do not favour the double stops and slurs that are so characteristic of the American country style. It has caused consternation amongst old style Irish musicians and singers, completely brought up in the traditions of their country, to find that visiting American collectors have considered them "too polished to be truly ethnic."

Come all you bards of Ireland, and listen to me caoin,
Beware of each American with the electric tape machine.
It's for your reputation if your fame's to travel far,
Remember that each ethnic singer suffers from catarrh.

'Twas early in my pigsty, 'twas on a bright July,
There came a Yank collector, he with whiskey did me ply.
The sow began to farrow, the strong drink went to my head,
When the Yank produced a microphone and placed it by my bed.

Though I knew not words or music, I sang Sweet Adeline.
With all the drink I couldn't think, so I tried and I
tried again.

He thought it was magnificent, and before we two did part,
He said he'd never heard my like for genuine folk art.

So if you're giving them The Blackbird, likewise The Rocks
of Bawn,

You must forget a verse or three, and make sure that your
meter's teetotally and completely all wrong.

And if you chance to vomit, with delight they'll surely swoon,
And remember that each ethnic singer must sing out of tune.

And now in Greenwich Village my praises they do shout,
I've many a record to my name, and my picture's in
"Sing Out."

But the Irish press says I'm a mess, likewise the GAA,
But surely then all Irish men of any talent at all to
get their just recognition must travel over the sea.

I've a contract with Carnegie Hall, ye'll mind I've traveled
far.

I'm the permanent attraction in a New York coffee bar.
So success to thon collector with his flowing beard so thick,
It's a lucrative old game to play to be the real ethnic.

Side I; Band 7.

GENERAL MUNROE

This is typical of the many ballads celebrating the deeds of local Irish patriotic heroes. However, it is unusual in that it defies categorization, being partly narrative, partly a call on the listener to follow the example of the hero, and at the same time a lamentation. I have heard many versions to this ballad sung, and each one seems to emphasize one or another of the characteristics to a greater or lesser extent.

The ballad deals with the time of the rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798. At that time the radical spirit of the French and American Revolutions swept Ireland, as can be seen from contemporary literature and music, for example, The Rights of Man hornpipe. The rebellion was unique in that it was the first time since the collapse of the Gaelic clan system that the Irish demanded total independence from British rule. Further, it is remembered as a time when Irishmen, both Catholic and Protestant, ignored their religious differences to unite against a common tyranny. I have always had a great interest in the stories and songs of '98, for at that time many of my own forbearers took up arms, and some were hanged when the rebellion was finally crushed.

Henry Munroe, the hero of this ballad, was a storekeeper in the town of Lisburn, County Antrim. At the commencement of the '98 insurrection (which was largely centered in the counties of Down and Antrim in the north and Wicklow and Wexford in the south-west), the Reverend Porter, a Presbyterian minister, was appointed the rebel general for Down, but was immediately captured by Royalist troops and hanged in front of his manse in the town of Greyabbey before the eyes of his wife and children. Munroe was selected to succeed Porter, and at first his army had some success. At the Battle of Ballinahinch (which is the name of some versions of this ballad), he was defeated by a large force of British regulars and local "loyalist" militia, betrayed by a woman called Dogherty, and hanged in his own home town. In that part of the country they'll still warn you, "never trust a Dogherty." The teller of the tale is George Clokey, who was second in command to Munroe.

General Munroe is only one of many fine songs that come from the period of '98. Others are, from the north, The Wake of William Orr, The Tragedy of Blaris Moor, Roddy MacCorley, The Mantle of Green, and Henry Joy McCracken, and from the south Kelly the Boy from Killann, The Croppy Boy, Boolavogue, Dunlavin Green, and Eamonn an Cnuic.

A version of General Munroe can be found on page 130 of "Irish Street Songs," by Colm o Lochlainn.

My name is George Clokey: at the age of eighteen
I joined the United Men to fight for the green.
And many's the battle I did then undergo
With our hero commander, brave General Munroe.

Have you heard of the Battle of Ballynahinch,
When the people oppressed they all rose in defense?
When Munroe left the mountains all his men took the field
And they fought for twelve hours and they never did yield.

Munroe being tired and in great want of sleep,
Gave a woman ten guineas his secret to keep,
But when she got the money the devil tempted her so
That she sent for the soldiers and surrounded Munroe.

Aye, the soldiers they came and surrounded that place,
They took him to Lisburn and lodged him in jail.
His father and mother on passing that way,
Heard the very last words that their young son did say.

"I die for my country as I fought for her cause,
I don't fear your soldiers, nor yet heed your laws."
So let every true man who hates Ireland's foe
Fight bravely for freedom like Henry Munroe.

And early next morning, the sun was still low,
They murdered our hero, brave General Munroe;
And high o'er the courthouse stuck his head on a spear
To make the United Men tremble with fear.

Up rode Munroe's sister, she was dressed all in green,
With a sword in her hand that was well sharpened and keen.
She gave three rousing cheers, aye, and away she did go,
Saying, "I'll have revenge for my brother, Munroe."

All you good men who listen, consider the fate
Of the brave men who died in the year '98.
Oh Ireland, my Ireland, would be free long ago
If her sons were all rebels like Henry Munroe.

Although the Irish tradition of the "wake" for the dead is well known to many people, perhaps fewer are familiar with that of the "American Wake." On the evening before prospective emigrants were due to depart for America it was the custom for their friends and relations to gather with them to sing and talk together for the last time. This gathering was called an "American Wake," for once across the Atlantic Ocean the chances were slim that they'd ever be seen again.

This song comes from County Cavan in south Ulster, an area that has produced many great songs, singers, and musicians. Other versions of The American Wake are known as Sweet Cootehill Town (which may be found on page 191 of "Old Irish Folk Music and Song," by P. W. Joyce), The Peacock, and Burn's Farewell. A variation on the air is also used for one of the finest songs to close an evening of singing, The Parting Glass.

Oh fare you well, sweet Cootehill town,
The place where I was born and bred.
Your valleys green and wooded hills
My youthful fancy did serenade.
But now I'm bound for Amerikay,
A country that I never saw.
These pleasant memories I will hold dear
When I am wanderin' and far awa'.

Perchance kind fate will reinstate
And fortune's face upon me smile,
And I'll return to home once more,
To my own dear native Irish Isle.
Then all my friends and comrades likewise
Will gather round and to me say,
"We will sing and dance as in days gone by,
For you're welcome home from far away."

I wrote this song in honour of a certain hostelry that lies no more than two miles from the house where I was brought up. It is a hostelry with a long tradition for hospitality, for in former times it was a coaching inn. Today the good cheer continues, and the convivial drink is often accompanied by a song or a tune on the fiddle or the squeeze-box. As far as my own musical career goes, I can say that it was at the House at the Crossroads that I first got an audience to listen to whatever I had to sing. The refrain, "Drink it up, men, it's long after ten," refers to the infamously early hour at which the pubs in the northeast of Ireland are expected to close. This reflects on the men who make the laws for that area rather than on any lack of hospitality on the part of the landlord.

When I make a song I usually try to think up an original tune to go with it. In this case, however, I must admit to having played about with the old jig tune Paddy Whack (which can be found in the Bunting Collection).

At the House at the Crossroads I once went astray,
For I'd drank enough drink for to fill Whiterock Bay.
Going up in the evening I'd wore out me shoes
On the way to the Cross for the best of good booze.
Drink it up, men, it's long after ten.

At the House at the Crossroads there's whiskey and beer,
There's cognac and vodka that's fragrant and dear;
But for killing the thirst or for raising the gout,
Ah, there's nothing that stands to a sleeshing of stout.
Drink it up, men, it's long after ten.

I've traveled in England, I've traveled in France,
At the sound of good music I'll sing or I'll dance.
So hear me there, mister, and pour me one more;
If I canna drink it up, then throw me out the door.
Drink it up, men, it's long after ten.

Them folks o'er the water think Bitter is fine,
And some of them swear by the juice of the vine,
But there's nothing that's squeezed from the grape or
the hop
Like the black liquidation with the froth on the top.
Drink it up, men, it's long after ten.

My character's stolen, my money is spent,
I'm soon for eviction, I can't pay the rent;
But despite all my trouble I know what to do,
Go up, have a half one with the Laird of Balloo.
Drink it up, men, it's long after ten.

It's Guinness' Porter that has me this way;
It's thicker than buttermilk, it's sweeter than tay.
But when in a morning I'm feeling it rough,
Well, me curse take Lord Iveagh, who brews the damn stuff!
Drink it up, men, it's long after ten.

Side II; Band 2.

CARRICKMANNON LAKE

Apart from the mountainous area of the Mourne, the scenery of County Down is a pattern of rolling hills and small lakes. Carrickmannon is one such lake and it lies but a few miles from the townland in which I was reared.

The story of the ballad is that of unrequited love. The young boy, on being spurned by a maid whom he meets by the lake, vows to cross the ocean, "a pilgrim there to do and dare in North Amerikee." The lady of the piece is likened to a "Venus of the North". This type of classical analogy is very frequently found in songs dating from the eighteenth century, as they were often the work of schoolmasters who were fluent in Irish, familiar with Latin and Greek, but who had only a slight knowledge of English. This did not deter them from writing songs in English to traditional tunes in which they demonstrated their knowledge of classical stories. The Cottage Maid is a splendid example of this type of versifying (Joyce Number 393), and contains the memorable lines:

Had Alcides seen her face before Dejanira's grace,
He would ne'er be consumed in the cedars,
Nor would Helen prove the fall of the Grecian
 leaders all,
Nor would Ulysses be the Trojan invader.

The same type of thing can be seen in Lough Erne Shore, as sung by Paddy Tunney on his Folk-Legacy album (FSE-7).

When out one lovely evening a rambling I did make,
Down by the crystal fountain called Carrickmannon Lake,
Down by the crystal fountain an image I did view,
Sure nature never did design an image such as you.

With courage bold, undaunted I boldly then stood forth,
"Oh my delightful charmer, thou Venus of the North,
Give me my way or else I'll stray, my one and only joy,
For sure 'twould be a pity for to kill a harmless boy."

With flashing eye and ne'er a sigh, she boldly turned on me,
"Young man, depart, for in my heart no place I page for thee."
Unto my further pleadings no answer would she make,
But left me there a-standing by Carrickmannon Lake.

Killinchy is my dwelling place, where first my breath I
 drew;
Drumray it is my parent's place, a thousand times adieu.
It's for her sake I'll passage make and cross the raging
 sea,
A pilgrim there to do and dare in North Amerikee.

So all young lads, a warning take, and shun Killinchy fair,
Likewise sweet Carrickmannon for the cruel one that's there.
When the sun is slow declining below the hills so clear,
The shadow of her dwelling, on the lake it doth appear.

Side II; Band 3. THE HEROIC CRUBEEN

The crubeen, or pig's foot, is a great Irish delicacy. In Munster no "hooly" worthy of the name is complete without the assembled company being feasted on them. In Belfast I've seen crubeens, although not known by that name, being hawked from pub to pub in cardboard boxes by young lads who offer them to the Saturday night drinkers at "ten pence a gnaw".

I wrote this song feeling that good food is worthy of a verse or two — especially when the food is as succulent as a crubeen. Other examples of Irish cooking praised in the song are dulce, or dilish, and carrageen moss, which are edible sea weeds, and panayda (bread, sugar and milk). My grandmother used to tell a story of a man who went mad in her native town in County Armagh. When they came to take him to the asylum they found him leaping up and down in an enamel basin filled to the brim with buttermilk and bread loaves, shouting at the top of his lungs, "Panayda's the quer* man."

Let the praise of panayda be stated,
As eaten in old Portadown,
It's made from the fine granulated
Sugar and crusty bread brown.
Wax poetic on dulce from the ocean
Or the moss by the name carrageen,
But for them I can't feel the emotion
That I do for the noble crubeen.

There's some scorn the swine of the nation,
In our kitchens they swear they do dwell;
But 'twould cause me a great consternation,
If into disfavor they fell.
For there's not a more succulent flavor
In the arts of the gastronomic,
And there's nothing that I'd rather savour
Than a clatter of good old pig's feet.

And once before battle's great melee,
'Twas said by the late Bonaparte,
That an army must march on its belly
If it's hoping to win from the start.
But Napoleon kept dining on French Beans,
You'll know that my reasoning is true;
If he'd eaten a clatter of crubeens,
Then he'd not have met his Waterloo.

*Cure

So success to the sows of Old Erin,
May your numbers be never deplete,
And the fine, handsome bonhams keep bearing,
With your delicate, flavorsome feet.
And bad luck to the ones that deplore you,
May they stay from this land of the Green;
For myself, I will always adore you,
You're my darling, heroic crubeen.

Side II; Band 4.

FOOTBALL CRAZY

As far as I know, this song became known to the public at large from the singing of Seamus Ennis who collected it in County Galway. However, my grandfather Rowan, who was born in the city of Belfast of parents who came from the Mountains of Mourne, used to sing a version to a different air, which he learnt in the music halls of the last century when he patronized them as a boy.

In recent years the song has swept England and Scotland, and the names of local sporting heroes have been introduced with each new version. When the Gaelic Football Team of my native county of Down won the All Ireland Championship, I'm afraid I jumped aboard the band waggon; and so, with apologies to Seamus, I present my own adaptation which celebrates the deeds of the "Mourne Men".

Oh you all know my young brother
And his name is Paul.
He joined the local football club
'Cause he's mad about football.
He's two black eyes already
And no teeth in his gob,
Since Paul became a member
Of the Gaelic Football Club.

He's football crazy,
He's football mad,
And football it has taken away
The little bit of sense he had.
And it would take a dozen lassies
His clothes to wash and scrub,
Since Paul became a member
Of the Gaelic Football Club.

When they can't afford a football
They'll use an old tin can,
A biscuit tin turned upside down,
It makes a Hogan Stand.
They played a match the other day,
'Twas played at Cavan's Ground.
He kicked the ball to Moscow
And Kruschev yelled, "Up, Down."

His wife she says she'll leave him
If he doesn't keep
Away from football kicking
At night time in his sleep.
He'll cry, "Come on, MacCarten,"
And other names so bold.
Last night he kicked her out of the bed
And he shouted, "It's a goal."

Now things were blue in '62
But just you wait and see;
The Red and Black they will be back
In 1963.
As for that Muskery hero,
He'll quickly get his fill.
If he ventures forth through the Gap o' the North
Then God help Thady Quill.

Side II; Band 5.

THE ORANGE LILY-O

The Orange Order is an organization that was started in County Armagh in the late eighteenth century to ensure the Protestant succession to the throne and the maintenance of the union between Britain and Ireland. The order was named after King William III, Prince of Orange, who was the Protestant victor at the Battle of the Boyne — an event in history that I once heard described as the time when a Dutchman fought a Scotsman on an Irish river for the throne of England. To this day on the twelfth of July the Orangemen parade in their full regalia, carrying banners depicting scenes and heroes in the history of the order, to the music of fifes, war pipes, and the huge Lambeg drums. Although there are Orange chapters throughout the world, the main activities of the institution are centred in the six counties of Northern Ireland, whose very existence is partially due to the opposition to the "Home Rule" movement that was organized by the order.

I have from time to time read articles by collectors in the United States complaining of the lack of "right wing" folk music. In Ireland we have a wealth of such music in the Orange songs which in many cases have a much more "folk" background than many of the "progressive" songs. This is explained by the fact that, whereas the Irish movement for independence was strongly influenced by the current cultural movements on the continent of Europe, the Orange Order remained stoically isolationist, and its attempts to go literary are remembered only as fine examples of unabashed Victorianism. The real Orange ballads, such as The Bright Orange Heroes of Comber or The Boyne Water (based on the old Gaelic melody Seoladh nan-gamhan) are truly in the Irish tradition of ballad making, even though their sentiments are contrary to the aspirations of the vast majority of Irishmen.

The Lily-O has always been a great favorite of mine. It is written in praise of the Orange Lily, the floral symbol of the order, and tells how the lily is more exalted than all other flowers. The sentiments of the song are less venomous than many other Orange songs, for example:

We'll buy a rope and hang the Pope
All on the twelfth day of July,
If that won't do we'll cut him in two
And give him a taste of the Orange and Blue.

or the refrain from the hymn-like Relief of Derry:

Poor rebel knaves, Vatican slaves
Fly from the wrath of the Orange and Blue.

No, the Lily-O has gentler sentiments that are unlikely to give offense to any Irishman.

Many of the Orangemen have more than a dash of Scots blood in their veins, so it is hardly surprising that the Lily-O is very much based on Robbie Burns' Green Grow the Rashies-O.

And did ye go unto the show,
Each rose in pink a dilly-o,
To set your eyes upon the prize
Won by the orange lily-o.
The viceroy there so debonair,
Just like a daffydilly-o,
While Lady Clark blithe as a lark
Approached the orange lily-o.

Then hey-ho the lily-o,
The royal, loyal lily-o.
Beneath the sky no flower can vie
With Ireland's orange lily-o.

The estatic muse to hear the news
Leapt like a Connacht filly-o,
While gossip fame did loud proclaim
The triumph of the lily-o.
The lowland field may roses yield,
Gay heath the highland hilly-o,
But high or low no flower can grow
To match the orange lily-o.

Then hey-ho the lily-o,
The royal, loyal lily-o.
Through Erin's bower there is no flower
To match the orange lily-o.

The dandies fine in Bond Street shine,
Gay nymphs in Piccadilly-o,
But fine or gay must yield the day
To Erin's orange lily-o.
So come, brave boys, and share her joys
And drink a toast to Willy-o,
Who proudly wore on the Boyne's royal shore
The glorious orange lily-o.

Then hey-ho the lily-o,
The royal, loyal lily-o.
Beneath the sky no flower can vie
To match the orange lily-o.

Side II; Band 6. NEWRY MOUNTAIN

A similar version of this song titled Gra Geal Mo Chroi appears on page 26 of "Irish Street Ballads", by Colm O Lochlainn. The air and one verse can be found in Joyce's "Old Irish Folk Music and Songs".

Gra Geal Mo Chroi means, literally, "Bright love of my heart" or true love.

At the foot of Newry Mountain cool waters they do flow.
There dwells a fair young lassie with skin as white as
snow,
And she's tender in the waist for all young men to see
And her name in plain Irish is my Gra Geal Mo Chroi.

'Twas out one lovely morning as I did ride along,
'Twas down by thonder valley I heard a sweet song.
And it was that fair maiden and her voice was loud
and clear,
Saying, "Oh how blessed would I be if my true love
was here."

"Oh, the moon above may darken and give us no light,
And the bright stars in the heaven fall down from
their height,
Or the rocks they all may melt and the mountains all
remove,
The day I should prove false to the dear one I love.

"Were I but an empress with charge of a crown
And all of the money that's for it put down,
I would freely return it to the dear one I love
And my heart I would resign to the great God above."

Like a sheet of white paper, her neck and her breast,
And her bright eyes a-shining, they've robbed me of rest.
She's a pattern of virtue wherever she goes
And her lips I can compare to the bright, shining rose.

All the ships of the ocean will go without sails
And the smallest of the fishes will turn to great whales,
In the middle of the ocean there will grow an apple tree
The hour I do prove false to my Gra Geal Mo Chroí.

Side II; Band 7. I'M A POOR STRANGER

The version to this song that can be found on page 200 of "Old Irish Folk Music and Songs", by P. W. Joyce, is to a slightly different air. Another variation of the air is used for the fine County Antrim ballad Bonny Wood Green, and also to a song that I once learnt that started off "As I went a-walking one morning in May" but which I have forgotten.

The last verse, which commences, "I will build my love a cottage at the end of this town," contains a certain amount of social comment on the times, although the point is by no means laboured. The song is a simple one dealing with the compassion that a young man feels for a fair maiden who, in her own words, is, "a poor stranger and far from her own." Versions of this song are to be found in Britain and America as well as in Ireland.

As I went a-walking one morning in spring
To hear the birds whistle and the nightingales sing,
I heard a sweet maiden and sad was her moan,
"Oh I'm a poor stranger and far from my own."

I went up beside her and I made a low jee,
I asked for her pardon for being so free.
My heart did relent when I heard her sad moan,
"Oh I'm a poor stranger and far from my own."

I will build my love a cottage at the edge of this town,
Where the lords, dukes, and earls they cannot knock it
down.

"If the boys they should ask you why you live all alone,
Tell them you're a poor stranger and far from your own."

Side II; Band 8.

SKIBBEREEN

I think it is evident that this song was in all probability written in the United States. It is a dialogue between a father and a son in which the son questions the father as to his reasons for leaving his native Skibbereen, a town in the south of County Cork. The father has a sad tale to tell of victimization, failure of crops and how he finally joined the abortive "Young Ireland" insurrection of 1848. The son declares that the day of vengeance will surely come and vows that:

"Loud and high we'll raise the cry,
REVENGE for Skibbereen."

Many Irishmen who had left their country because of economic or political pressure to come to the United States enlisted in both the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War. After the war, numbers of them organized themselves into the "Fenian Brotherhood" with the object of driving the British authorities from Ireland. Some of them even made the journey back across the Atlantic, where they raised a serious though unsuccessful revolt. As a postscript to this song, it is interesting that one of the places where the Fenians first became active in Ireland was Skibbereen.

The words and music to Skibbereen can be found in "Irish Songs of Resistance", by Patrick Galvin.

"Oh father dear, I've ofttimes heard ye speak of Erin's
Isle,
Her mountains green, her wooded scene, her valleys rude
and wild.
I've heard it is a pleasant place wherein a prince might
dwell;
Then why have you forsaken her, the reason to me tell."

"My son, I loved our native land with energy and pride,
And then a blight fell on the land and sheep and cattle
died.
The rents and taxes were to pay, I couldn't them redeem,
And that's the cruel reason why I left old Skibbereen."

"It's well I do remember on a cold November's day,
The landlord and his agent came to drive us all away.
He set my house on fire with his demon, yellow spleen,
And that's the cruel reason why I left old Skibbereen."

"It's well I do remember in the year of '48,
We all arose with Erin's boys to fight against our fate.
I was hunted through the mountains as an outlaw to the
queen,
And that's another reason why I left old Skibbereen."

"Oh father dear, the day will come when vengeance loud
will call,
And we'll arise with the Erin boys and we'll rally one
and all.
I'll be the man to lead the van beneath our flag of green,
And loud and high we'll raise the cry, 'REVENGE for
Skibbereen.'"

Side II; Band 9.

SLIEVE GALLEN BRAES

There can be few Ulster singers of the old songs who, sooner or later, do not give a rendering of Slieve Gallen Braes. I feel that this is one of the greatest of all "protest" songs; and yet it is thoroughly traditional and in no way does the powerful social background to the song take away from its simplicity and natural artistry. It deals with the utter sadness of emigration and the inhumanity of landlordism. The singer tells of the great love he has for his own native country, Slieve Gallen in the county of Derry, but mourns that, "the rents are getting higher and I can no longer stay." The singer shows a deep feeling for the beauty of nature which is perhaps unusual for this type of Irish song. The very title once again demonstrates how the speech of the people of northeast Ireland has been influenced by the Scots planters, for SLIEVE (or in its unanglicized form SLIABH) is the Gaelic word for a mountain and BRAE is the Scots Lallands word for a hill.

I am thankful to Robert Cinnamond, a great traditional singer from County Antrim, who taught me the verse in which the singer identifies himself as "young MacGarvey" and which I had never heard sung before.

As I went out a-walking all on the month of May
To view all your mountains and valleys so gay,
I was thinking on the flowers all a-going to decay
That bloom around your bonny, bonny Slieve Gallen Braes.

Full oft-times have I wandered with my dog and my gun
To view all your mountains and valleys for fun.
But those days they now are gone and I am far away,
So farewell unto you bonny, bonny Slieve Gallen Braes.

My name is young MacGarvey and you will understand
I have a fine farm and it's very good land.
But the rents are getting higher and I can no longer
stay,

So farewell unto you bonny, bonny Slieve Gallen Braes.

It isn't just the lack of employment alone
That causes the sons of old Erin to roam,
But it is the cruel landlords that drive us all away,
So farewell unto you bonny, bonny Slieve Gallen Braes.

