

A legend of the Shannon

Air - Cold and rough the North wind blows

1. On Shannon's fair majestic tide
The moon with queenly splendour,
Looks down in her meridian pride,
While vassal stars attend her ;
Light zephyrs dancing o'er the wave
Scarce break its peaceful slumbers,
While echo from each rock and cave
Sings forth her magic numbers.
2. But why doth yon frail shallop bear
Across the Shannon water,
At such an hour, Teresa fair,
De Burgo's only daughter ?
Why flies she thus, alone and free ;
From home and kindred speeding ?
Why seeing, sigh, yet, sigh to see
Portumna's tower receding ?
3. Ah ! sure 'tis love alone could teach
The maiden thus to wander ;
Yes ! see upon the moonlit beach
A youth awaits her yonder ;
With bounding heart and eager glance
He views Clanrickarde's daughter
Like some aerial being dance
Across the rippling water.
4. The brave O'Carroll, he for years
Had dared the Saxon power,
And taught the force of Irish spears
On battlefield and tower ;
But one sad day saw fall his best
And bravest kerns around him-
Insatiate for revenge, the next
'Mid Burgo's clansmen found him
5. 'Twas then Teresa's soft blue eye
First wrought its magic power ;
Teresa's love now bids them fly
For aye from yonder tower.
“ Now, hie thee, love,” O'Carroll cried,
“ By yon fair moon I swear thee,
Far, far away from Shannon's tide
This faithful steed shall bear thee.”
6. For this I braved thy father's wrath,
He swore my heart should sheen thee
But I had plighted thee my troth
And I had died or won thee.
Then hie — but, hark ! Teresa fair,

What peril now hath found her ?
Oh ! see, 'mid shrieks of wild despair,
The waters close around her.

7. As to the serpent's witching eye
The victim bird is borne—
Quick as from out the warring sky
The lightning flash is torn,
So dashed into the dark cold wave
Teresa's frantic lover ;
But while with hands outstretched to save
The tide rose calm above her !

8. Though Time has since flown fast away
The Shannon rolls as ever ;
And oft upon a moonlit bay
That hems the noble river,
The midnight wanderer has espied
A steed, while o'er the water
The tiny bark is seen to glide
That wafted Burgo's daughter.

B. C.

Songs of the Gael

An t-Athair Pádraig Breathnach

1922

In collecting and editing the Irish songs and airs contained in the little volume entitled "Fuínn na Smól," which was published by Messrs. Browne and Nolan in 1913, I became acquainted with many beautiful airs and versions of airs which are known and sung in the Irish-speaking districts of Cork, Waterford, and Kerry. It occurred to me that I would be rendering a valuable service to the cause of Irish music if I could bring the knowledge of these bits of traditional music home to those who do not understand Irish sufficiently well to sing an Irish song. With that object in view I have tried to select suitable Anglo-Irish songs to match the traditional airs which have been taken down from living Irish singers. Another thought guided me in this compilation. In looking through other published collections of Irish music with songs, I was forcibly struck by the fact that we have a large number of most beautiful songs which have never been wedded to Irish airs. I have matched several songs of this class with airs. In addition, I have collected into this volume a number of beautiful songs with their airs which are scattered in various collections. Promoters of Concerts and Feiseana, teachers and pupils and singers alike, will thus have at hand a cheap and accessible collection of songs that breathe the true spirit of Irish nationality and Irish home-life and Irish sentiment.

I have to say in reference to the airs here found that I have jealously excluded from their number all modern compositions. I have admitted nothing to these pages but genuine old traditional Irish airs. I calculate that there are in this volume about forty-five old traditional airs, taken down from living singers, which are here linked to Anglo-Irish songs and ballads for the first time. Other traditional airs which I have used are taken from Petrie and Joyce. A few were given to me by Mr. McCall.

As to the songs I have aimed at selecting those which have in them the true national ring. We want in the Ireland of to-day an antidote to the spirit of Anglicisation which is abroad. I know no more effective barrier against the encroachment of that spirit, next to the Irish Language and Irish Song, than the general singing at concerts and gatherings of good Anglo-Irish ballads and songs. The music hall and concert room may be made a very powerful agency in denationalising and even in debasing our people. From a national and moral point of view what effect can empty, vulgar, mawkishly sentimental songs have ? And such songs are only too often heard at our so-called Irish Concerts. Or the song whose lewd allusions are thinly veiled ? Or the songs that ignore and deliberately eschew the glories and noble deeds and sacrifices of our past heroes what effect can such songs as these have on Irish youth ? It has been truly said that in a nation's ballads we find the history of its struggles and progress and triumph. A nation's habits, too, and its traditions and recollections are enshrined in its ballads. The wandering bards and minstrels became the keepers of the records of the nation ; and hence they were hunted down by the oppressors.

A well-known collector of Irish ballads claims for Ireland as high a rank in ballad literature as that of any other nation. In this collection which I now give to the public, Irish men and women will find songs which are all racy of the soil.

There are nearly two hundred songs in the twelve penny numbers of this collection. I would remark that of these I have here set to old Irish airs nearly a hundred songs which are not found wedded to music in any collection that I know. Of the remainder about thirty-five were written for certain airs by their authors, but in these cases mention only of the air was made. The airs themselves were not given. The words and airs have never appeared together until now. There are a dozen additional songs which I found already wedded to airs, but these airs I have not adopted ; I have changed them for others. One reason that weighed with me for doing so was that I found in some cases that the songs were sung by the people to the airs which I have here selected, Kickham's beautiful song, " She lived beside the Anner," is one such.

Another remark I would like to make is this. I have excluded all hackneyed songs and songs which can otherwise be easily got, such as Moore's. Of his I have put in about half a dozen which are looked upon as the most popular. My entire selection has been guided by the principle which may be expressed in the words of Gavan Duffy in his " Ballad Poetry" : " The ordinary effect of native poetry is to cherish love of home and homely associations, which, elevated and spiritualized, becomes love of country."

The love of home and country ; the struggles, the sacrifices, and the glories of the past ; the purity of Irish love, as expressed in the sentimental songs of our ballad writers these things will, I feel, be found worthily reflected in the pages of this collection.

Songs of the Gael, first series : a collection of Anglo-Irish songs and ballads wedded to old traditional Irish airs (1922)

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