

The Wearing Of The Green

Words & Music:
Traditional Irish

This is a traditional street ballad that is believed to date to the 1798 Revolution. West Point's unofficial song, "Benny Havens, Oh!", is based upon this tune. Most people only know the tune and that it is called the "Wearing Of The Green". Not many modern American listeners are aware that it is a protest song that clearly outlines the oppression the Irish people suffered under British Rule in the 1700s-1800s. The following is but one of many variations on the words, tune & chords.

D Bm A
O, Paddy dear, and did you hear the news that's going round?
G D A D
The Shamrock is forbid, by laws, to grow on Irish ground!
D Bm A
No more St. Patrick's Day, we'll keep his color last be seen;
G D A A7 D
For, there's a bloody law agin The Wearing Of The Green!

Oh, I met with Nabertancly, and he took me by the hand,
And he says: How is Poor Ould Ireland, and does she stand?
She's the most distressed Country that ever I have seen:
For, they are hanging men and women The Wearing Of The Green!

And since the color we must wear, is England's cruel red,
Ould Ireland's sons will ne'er forget the blood that they have shed.
Then take the Shamrock from your hat, and cast it on the sod:
It will take root, and flourish still, tho' under foot 'tis trod.

When the law can stop the blades of grass from growing as they grow.
And when the leaves, in Summer time, their verdure does not show.
Then, I will change the color I wear in my cabbeen:
But, till that day, plaze God! I'll stick to The Wearing Of The Green!

But if, at last, her colors should be torn from Ireland's heart;
Her sons, with shame and sorrow, from the dear old soil will part.
I've heard whispers of a Country that lies far beyond sea,
Where rich and poor stand equal, in the light of Freedom's day!

O Erin! Must we leave you driven by the tyrant's hand?
Must we ask a Mother's blessing, in a strange but happy land?
Where the cruel Cross of England's thralldom never to be seen:
But where, thank God! we'll live and die, still Wearing of the Green!

Farewell, for I must leave thee, my own, my native shore,
And doomed in foreign lands to dwell, may never see thee more.
For laws, our tyrant laws, have said that seas must roll between
Old Erin and her faithful sons, that loved to wear the green.

Oh, we love to wear the green! Oh, how we love the green!
On native land we cannot stand for wearing of the green,
Yet wheresoe'er the exile lives, tho' oceans roll between,
Thy faithful sons will fondly sing "The Wearing Of The Green."

My father loved his country, and sleeps within her breast.
While I that would have died for her, may never be so blest.
Those tears my mother shed for me, how bitter they'd have been
If I had proved a traitor to "The Wearing Of The Green."

There were some that wore the green, who did betray the green.
On native land we cannot stand thro' traitor to the green.
Yet whatsoe'er our fate may be, when oceans roll between,
Her faithful sons will ever sing "The Wearing Of The Green."

Remember Father Murphy and Emmett that was brave;
Not forgetting Dan O'Connell, that now lies in his grave.
If those heroes were alive, boys, their country they'd redeem;
And shortly have the union back once more in College Green.

One blessing on my native Isle! One curse upon her foes!
While yet her skies above me smile, her breeze around me blows.
Now, nevermore my cheek be wet, nor sigh, nor altered mien
'Til the dark tyrant I regret The Wearing Of The Green.

Sweet land, my parents loved you well; they sleep within your breast.
With theirs, for love no words can tell, my bones must never rest.
And lonely must my true love stray, that was our village queen
When I am banished far away for The Wearing Of The Green.

But, Mary, dry that bitter tear; 'twould break my heart to see.
And sweetly sleep, my parents dear, that cannot weep for me.
I'll think not of my distant tomb, nor seas rolled wide between.
But watch the hour that yet will come for The Wearing Of The Green.

O, I care not for the thistle and I care not for the rose;
For when the cold winds whistle, neither down nor crimson shows.
But like hope to him that's friendless where no gaudy flower is seen,
By our graves, with love that's endless waves our own true-hearted green.

O, sure God's world was wild enough and plentiful for all!
And ruined cabins were so stuff to build a lordly hall.
They might have let the poor man live yet all as lordly been.
But Heaven it's own good time will give for The Wearing Of The Green.