

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Noble Lads of Canada

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Come all ye British heroes, I pray you lend your ears,
Draw up your British forces, and then your volunteers;
We're going to fight the Yankee boys, by water and by land,
And we never will return, till we conquer sword in hand,
We're the noble lads of Canada, come to arms boys come.

O now the time has come, my boys, to cross the Yankee's line,
We remember they were rebels once, and conquer'd John Burgoyne.
We'll subdue those mighty Democrats, and pull their dwellings down,
And we'll have the states inhabited with subjects to the crown.
We're the noble lads, &c.

We've as choice a British army as ever crossed the seas,
We'll burn both town and city, and with smoke becloud the skies,
We'll subdue the old green mountain boys, their Washington is gone,
And we'll play them Yankee Doodle, as the Yankees did Burgoyne.
We're the noble lads, &c.

Now we've reached the Platsburgh banks, my boys and here we'll
make a stand,
Until we take the Yankee fleet, McDonough doth command;
We've the Growler and the Eagle, that from Smith we took away,
And we'll have their noble fleet that lies anchored in the bay.
We're the noble lads, &c.

O our fleet is hove in view my boys, the cannon loudly roar,
With death upon our cannon balls, we'll drench docks with gore
We've water craft sufficient to sink them in an hour,
But our orders is to board and the Yankee's flag destroy.
We're the noble lads, &c.

Now the battle's growing hot, my boys, I don't know how `twill turn,
While McDonough's boats on swivels hung continually do burn,
We see such constant flashing that the smoke beclouds the day,
And our larger boats they've struck and our smaller run away.
O, we've got too far from Canada, run for life boys, run.

O Provost he sigh'd aloud and to his officers he said,
I wish the devil and those Yankees could but sail alongside.
For the tars of France and England can't stand before them well.
For I think they'd flog the devil and drive him back to hell.
O, we've got too far, &c.

Now prepare for your retreat, my boys, make all the haste you can,
The Yankees are surrounding us, we'll surely be Burgoyne'd,
Behind the hedges, and the ditches and the trees, and every stump;
You can see the sons of b-----s, and the cursed Yankees jump.

O, we've got too far, &c.

Now we've reached the Chazy Heights my boys we'll make short delay,
For to rest our weary limbs and to feed our beasts on hay,
Soon McDonough's cocks began to crow, was heard at Stark's barn,
And a report throughout the Camp was the general alarm.

O, we've got too far, &c.

O Provost sighed aloud and to his officers did say,
The Yankee troops are hove in sight and hell will be to pay,
Shall we fight like men of courage, and do the best we can,
When we know they will flog us two to one, I think we'd better run.

O, we've got too far, &c.

Now if ever I reach Quebec alive I'll surely stay at home,
For McDonough's gained a victory, the devil fight Macombe,
I had rather fight a thousand troops as good as ever crossed the seas,
Then fifty of those Yankees behind the stumps and trees.

O, we've got too far, &c.

They told us that the Federalists were friendly to the crown,
They'd join our army and the Democrats pull down,
But they all unite together as a band of brothers joined,
They will fight for independence till they die upon the ground.

O, we've got too far, &c.

The old '76's have sallied forth, upon their crutches they do lean,
With their rifles leveled on us with their specks they take good aim,
For there's no retreat in those my boys who'd rather die than run,
And we make no doubt that these are those that conquered John Burgoyne.

When he got too far from Canada, run for life boys, run.

Now we've reached the British ground, my boys, weAll have a day of rest,
And I wish my soul that I could say 'twould be a day of mirth,
But I've left so many troops behind, it causes me to mourn,
And if ever I fight the Yankees more, I'll surely stay at home,

Now we've got back to Canada, stay at home, boys stay.

Here's a health to all the British troops, likewise to general Provost,
And to our respective families, and the girls we love most,
To McDonough and Macombe, and to every Yankee boy.
Now fill up your tumblers for I never was so dry.

Now we've got back to Canada, stay at home, boys stay.

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The events occurred 9/11/1814. The British had done well along most of the American coast and troops were now pouring into North America from Spain, since Napoleon had fallen. Nevertheless, the US was well-organized by this time and the action along the Canadian border went unexpectedly badly for Britain. Sir George Prevost had attacked American forces at Champlain. His naval force, however, was ill-prepared for battle and was roundly defeated at Plattsburg. Prevost faced court-martial for incompetency, but died instead.

I find a few phrases interesting:

"Burgoynd" makes a useful & obvious verb. Not much used these days.

"The old '76's have sallied forth, upon their crutches they do lean."

Again, an obvious reference but not one you hear much today. Still, it shows great respect to the Revolutionaries nearly 40 years later.

The verse beginning "They told us that the Federalists were friendly" tells us British intelligence was just as intelligent as US intelligence was in April of 1961. AJS

AJS

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