

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Patrick O'Neal

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Ye sons of Hibernia, who sung on dry land,  
Round your smoaking turf fires, and whiskey in hand,  
Drink kaid-milk, full rough, and ne'er think of the boys,  
Who are fighting your battles thru' tempest and noise,  
Attend to my ditty -- 'tis true, I declare,  
Such swimming and sinking would make you all stare;  
For stortns, squibs, and crackers, have sing'd my tail,  
Since the press-gang laid hold on poor Patrick O'Neal.

'Twas the first day of April, I sat off, like a fool,  
From Kilkenny to Dublin, to see Lawrence Tool,  
My mother's third cousin, who oft' had wrote down,  
And begg'd I'd come to see how he flourish'd in town;  
But I scarce had set foot in this terrible place,  
'Ere I met with a sharper who swore to my face;  
He beckon'd a press-gang that came without fail,  
And neck and heels dragg'd off poor Patrick O'Neal.

Then they scamper'd away, as they said, with a prize,  
(For they thought me a sailor run off in disguise)  
But a terrible blunder they made with their strife,  
For I'd ne'er seen a ship, or the sea in my life;  
And away to a tender they bade me to steer,  
But of tenderness devil a morsel was there;  
O! (I) roar'd and I curs'd, tho' it did not avail'  
Then down in the cellar cram'd Patrick O'Neal.

We set off from Dublin the very next day,  
'Twas half-starv'd and sea-sick the rest of the way;  
Not a mile-stone I saw, nor a house, nor a bed,  
'Twas all water and sky 'till we came to Spithead;  
Then they call'd up all hands--- hands and feet soon obey'd,  
O (I) wish'd myself home cutting turf with a spade;  
For the first thing I saw made my courage to fail,  
Was a great floating castle for Patrick O'Neal.

This huge wooden world roll' about on the tide,  
With a large row of teeth stuck fast to her side,  
They put out the boat, and they told me to keep  
Fast hold with my trotters for fear I should slip--  
I let go with my hands to stick fast by my toes,  
The ship gave a roll and away my head goes,

I plung'd in the water and dash'd like a whale,  
'Till with boat-hooks they fish up poor Patrick O'Neal.

Midsts shouts, jests, and laughter they hoisted me in  
To this huge wooden world full of riot and din;  
Such ropes, and such pullies, such sighs (sights) met my eye,  
And so large were the sheets that they hung up to dry:  
And I thought it was Noah's ark, stuff'd full of queer guests,  
Hogs, pedlars, geese, sailor, and all other beasts--  
Some drinking bladders of gin, some drank pitchers of ale,  
And they sung, curs'd, and laughed at poor Patrick O'Neal.

All confounded with bother I began to look queer,  
When the boatswain's shrill pipe made all hands appear,  
Up the ropes like monkees they singing did swear,  
Then like gibbets and rope-dancers swung in the air;  
They clapt sticks in a capstan, (as I afterwards found)  
The chap sat and fif'd as they turned him around;  
The ship run her anchor, spread her wings, and set sail,  
With a freight of live lumber, and Patrick O'Neal.

Then to go down below I exprest a great wish,  
Where they live under water like so many fish;  
I was put in a mess with some more of the crew,  
And, it being banyan-day, they gave me burgue:  
For a bed they'd a sack, hung high as my chin,  
They call'd it a hammock, and bade me get in,  
I lay hold, took a leap, but my footing being frail,  
It swang me clean over!\_\_\_ poor Patrick O'Neal.

With some help I got in, where I rocked all night,  
The day broke my rest in a terrible fright;  
'Up hammocks, down chests,' was cry'd from all parts,  
'There's a French ship in sight!' -- up and down went my heart!  
To a gun I was station'd, they cry'd with an oath,  
To pull off his breeches, unmuzzle his mouth!  
They took off the apron that cover'd his tail,  
And the leading-strings gave to Patrick O'Neal.

Our thick window shutters we pull'd up with speed,  
And we run out our bull dogs of true English breed:  
The Captain cry'd England and Ireland, my boys,  
When he mention'd old Ireland my heart made a noise!  
Our sweet little guns did the Frenchman defy,  
We clapt fire on his back and bade him let fly;  
His voice made me leay (?), tho' I'd hold by his tail,  
The beast then flew bock (sic) and threw Patrick O'Neal.

Then we lather'd away, by my soul, hob and nob,

'Till the Frenchmen gave up what they thought a bad job;  
Then to tie him behind a long cord they did bring,  
And we led him along, like a pig in (sic) a string!  
So home to Old England we led the French boy,  
O the sight of the land made me sea-sick with joy;  
They made a new peace when the war was too stale,  
And set all hands adrift, and poor Patrick O'Neal.

Now safe on dry land a carousing I'll steer,  
Nor cat-head, nor cat-block, nor boatswain's cat fear;  
While there's shot in the locker I'll sing and be bound,  
That Saturday night shall last all the year round:  
But should peace grow too sleep (?), and war come again,  
By the piper of Leinster I'd venture again---  
Returning I'll bring you, good folks a fresh tale,  
'Till you'll cry, 'till you laugh at poor Patrick O'Neal.

This excellent Irish sea song is in two undated songbooks without music, published by Wm. Lane in London, <<The London Songster, Or Musical Boquet>>, c 1793, and <<The Polite Songster; or, Vocal Melody>>, c 1795. This twelve verse version is also in one of the numbers of the periodically issued <<The Charms of Melody>>, Dublin, n.d. (c 1804). A condensed eight verse version, without title, noted to have been sung by a Mr. Norman is in <<The Whim of the Day for 1795>>. The eight verse version commences with the second verse of the longer text. This text is also in <<The Musical Banquet>>, 2nd. edit. p. 119, n.d. (c 1801). Early 19th century chapbooks containing the song are in the White Collection, Newcastle Univ. Library, and at Philadelphia, the latter an American edition.

An Irish traditional tune, subsequently identified as "The Fine Old Irish Gentleman," with eight verses of "Patrick O'Neal" from a songbook, <<The Northern Minstrel>>, 1829, is in Huntington and Herrmann's <<Sam Henry's Songs of the People>>, 1990, p. 102. The text there is identical to that in The <<Universal Songster>>, II, p. 82-3, London, 1826.

Another tune is given from the Broadwood Papers, Cecil Sharp House, along with a text of twelve four-line verses in Roy Palmer's <<The Valiant Sailor>>, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973. Palmer mentions the text in <<The Northern Minstrel>>, but doesn't say from where his text (derived from the short form) is taken.

A third tune, that given here, 'Patrick O'Neil,' is from a manuscript collection of dance tunes, compiled c 1795-1800.

("The Fine Old Irish Gentleman" must date from the mid 1820's at the earliest, as the song is a reworking of Thomas Hudson's "The (Fine) Old English Gentleman" published without tune direction in his Comic Songs by Thomas Hudson, Collection the Fourth, London, 1821. (There was another reworking of the song about 1860-70, that I have not traced). I give for comparison a tune set to "The Fine Ould Irish Gentleman" in Howe's Songs of Ireland, 1864.)

Play: PATNEAL1, from Sam Henry's Songs of the People  
PATNEAL2, tune from MS

WBO  
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