

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Slattery's Light Dragoons

Slattery's Light Dragoons
(Percy French)

You've heard o' Julius Caesar, and the great Napoleon, too,
An' how the Cork Militia beat the Turks at Waterloo;
But there's a page of glory that, as yet, remains uncut,
An' that's the Martial story o' the Shlathery's Mounted Fut.
This gallant corps was organised by Shlathery's eldest son.
A noble-minded poacher, wid a double-breasted gun;
An' many a head was broken, aye, an' many an eye was shut,
Whin practisin' manoeuvres in the Shlathery's Mounted Fut.

Cho: An' down from the mountains came the squadrons an' platoons,
Four-an'-twenty fightin' min, an' a couple o' sthout gossoons,
An' whin we marched behind the dhrum to patriotic tunes,
We felt that fame would gild the name o' Shlathery's Light Dragoons.

Well, first we reconnoitered round o' O'Sullivan's Shebeen--
It used to be "The Shop House," but we call it, "The Canteen;"
But there we saw a notice which the bravest heart unnerved--
"All liquor must be settled for before the dhrink is served."
So on we marched, but soon again each warrior's heart grew pale,
For risin' high in front o' us we saw the County Jail;
An' whin the army faced about, 'twas just in time to find,
A couple o' policemin had surrounded s behind.

Still, from the mountains came the squadrons and platoons,
Four-an'-twenty fightin' min, an' a couple o' sthout gossoons,
Says Shlathery, "We must circumvent these bludgeonin' bosthoons
Or else it sames they'll take the names o' Shlathery's Light Dragoons."

"We'll cross the ditch," our leader cried, "an' take the foe in flank,"
But yells of consternation here arose from every rank,
For posted high upon a tree we very plainly saw,
"Threspassers prosecuted, in accordance wid' the law."
"We're foiled!" exclaimed bold Shlathery, "here ends our grand campaign,
'Tis merely throwin' life away to face that mearin' dhrain,
I'm not as bold as lions, but I'm braver nor a hin,
An' he that fights and runs away will live
An' back to the mountains went the squadrons an' platoons,
Four-an'-twenty fightin' min, an' a couple o' sthout gossoons,
The band was playin' cautiously their patriotic tunes;
To sing the fame, if rather lame o' Shlathery's Light Dragoons.

We reached the mountains safely tho' all stiff and sore with cramp
Each took a neat of whiskey straight to dissipate the damp.
And when their pipes were loaded up O'Slattery up and said
Today's immortal fight will be remembered by the dead.

I never will forget said he while this brave heart shall beat
The eager way ye followed when I headed the retreat.
Ye've heard the soldier's maxim when desisting from the fight
Best be a coward for five minutes than a dead man all your life.

So there in the mountains rest the squadrons and platoons
The four and twenty fighting men and a couple of stout gossoons
They march no more so martially to patriotic tunes
But all the same they sing the fame of O'Slattery's light dragoons.

I just picked up a book entitled My Pious friends and Drunken Companions and More Pious

Friends and Drunken Companions, songs and ballads of conviviality, collected by Frank Shay.

(Dover Book of Humor, re issued in 1961, originally two books were issued in 1927 and 1928)

Shay doesn't credit Percy, but he does have more verses.

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