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The Mantle So Green

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Says I, my pretty fair one, if you'll go with me,
I'll join you in wedlock and married we'll be,
I'll dress you in scarlet, you'll appear like the queen,
With your costly fine robes and your mantle so green.

Oh no, kind sir, you must be excused
For I'll wed with no man, you must be refused,
Well since you're not married pray tell me your love's name,
For I've been in many a battle and I might have known the name.

Draw near to my garments and there you'll behold
His name and his surname in letters of gold,
On reaching her garments there I did behold
His name and his surname in letters of gold.

Young William O'Reilly it appeared in my view,
He was my chief comrade at Fenn Waterloo,
We fought so victorious the bullets did fly,
On the plains of Nor Regent I heard his last cry.

We fought for three days until the fourth afternoon,
He received his death summons on the eighteenth of June;
As he lay a-dying I heard his last cry,
Draw near, lovely Nancy, concerning I die.

She stood in amazement and paler she grew,
She flew from my arms with a heart full of woe,
Saying these green hills I've wandered for the lad that I love.
Return, lovely Nancy, your grief I'll remove.'

Lovely Nancy, lovely Nancy, it was I won your heart,
In your father's green garden where last we did part,
When I held you in my arms beneath the shade tree,
With your costly fine robes and your mantle so green.

Now this couple was married I've heard people say,
There were noble entertainments on their wedding day,
Now peace is provided and the wars are all o'er,
You're welcome, lovely Nancy, to my arms once more.

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Laws N38

From Ozark Folksongs, by Randolph, who says:

"This piece was printed by Such in England, is common in English broadsides, and is known in Scotland (Ord, Bothy Songs and Ballads, 1930, pp. 155-156), Newfoundland (Greenleaf, Ballads and Sea Songs from Newfoundland, 1933, pp. 175-177) and Nova Scotia (MacKenzie, Ballads and Sea Songs from Nova Scotia, 1928, pp. 182-184). Mackenzie thinks that "The Mantle So Green" is a modified version of the late eighteenth-century English ballad "George Reilly," this despite the fact that "George Reilly" is about a naval battle between the British and the French, while "The Mantle So Green" refers to the battle of Waterloo. The only texts hitherto reported from the United States are those of Gardner (Ballads and Songs of Southern Michigan, 1939, pp. 157-159), and that of Belden (Ballads and Songs, 1940, pp. 151-152) which came "from the Ozark Mountains" via St. Louis County, Mo.

Sung by Mr. Charles Ingenth

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