

Traditional & Folk Songs with lyrics & midi music

www.traditionalmusic.co.uk

Tom O'Neil

Tom O'Neil

There was a widow lived in this place
Who had three darling sons
Their father died and left them
When they were very young.
A long time she endeavoured
To maintain her darling sons,
Her youngest one became a man
At the age of twenty-one.

He discoursed with his mother one night
And unto her did say,
"I think it will fall to one of our lots
For to go far away;
Our land is too small to support us all
And if you will agree,
I am fully bent and well content
A clergyman to be."

His mother being glad to hear
Such thoughts come in his mind,
Says she, "I will do all I can
To help my darling child;
She discoursed with his brothers,
And they did soon agree,
And sent him off to college
A clergyman to be.

He was not long in college
When the Reverend Bishop Brown
Came a-viewing those collegians,
He viewed them all around.
He espied this clever young man,
Marked him above them all,
He was the first he did discourse ,
And on him he did call.

He says, "Young man, where are you from?
Come, tell to me your name."
"I am from the county of Armagh,
They call me Tom O'Neil.
My mother she's a widow

And of a low degree,
She has done her best endeavours
To make a priest of me."

Since Tom O'Neil it is your name,"
The bishop he did say,
"Go study hard both night and day,
I'll soon have you ordained.
To help your tender mother
Who done so well for thee,
I'll send you home a credit
Your country boys to see"

When this young man came home ordained
The neighbours were glad to see,
And all that came to welcome him
They came by twos and three,
Especially his own dear friends
To welcome him did run,
And you never saw such a welcome
As there was for the widow's son.

There was a man lived in that place
Was as rich as a duke or knight,
He had one only daughter,
She was a beauty bright.
She says unto her father,
"This young man I'll go see,
Before he went to college
He was a schoolboy along with me."

She was brought unto a parlour
Where she drank ale and wine,
She says, "You are a clever young man,
I would have you resign.
What made you be a clergyman?
You know you are astray,
A clergyman must ride by night
And travel hard by day.

"Come, take some noble lady
Whose fortune it is grand,
You may have men to wait on you
And be a gentleman.
Come take myself just as I stand,
You know my fortune's great,
I have 10,000 pounds a year,
At death the whole estate."

He says, "My honoured lady,
Do not explain your mind,
If you were to offer ten times more
I would not resign;
For in this holy station
I mean to lead my life,
So say no more, my dearest child,
I'll never take a wife."

When he did deny her
This villain she went home,
And into eight weeks after
The secret she made known.
She swore before the magistrate
That he had her beguiled,
And for eight long weeks before she came
By him she proved with child.

The morning of this trial
Would grieve your heart full sore,
To see his tender mother
Would grieve you ten times more,
To see her son a clergyman
His age about twenty-three,
To be cut down all in his prime
By cruel perjury.

"Now, Tom, what is the reason
You don't marry this fair!
I think she is a companion
For a duke I do declare.
And what are you but a widow's son,
A man both poor and mean!
You ought to think it a great honour
Such a lady to obtain.

Then Father Tom stood up and said,
"I have no witness here,
I'll call on the Almighty
And He will set me clear.
I never said I'd marry her
Or yet make her my wife,
For I never knew a female
From a male all in my life."

"Now, Tom, since you won't marry her
I'll give you to understand
Seven long years transportation
Unto a foreign land."

"O that is bad, but it might be worse,"
Father Tom did say,
"Our Saviour suffered worse than that
When He died on Calvary."

Those words were hardly spoken
When a horse came as swift as wind,
And on him came a rider
Saying, "I was not here in time;
I call that trial o'er again,
I'm here and can reply,
She wants two fathers for her child,
That is Father Tom and I.

"I can tell to the very moment
Likewise to the very spot,
A thousand pounds she gave me
The night the child was got,
And a thousand more she offered me
Never to let on,
She thought to make a husband
Of Right Reverend Father Tom."

Then Father Tom put on his hat
And he began to smile,
He says unto his mother,
"You see God assists your child."
They looked at one another
And they found it perjury,
The villain was found guilty
And the Right Reverend came home free.

DT #534
Laws Q25
From Creighton, Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia, no. 87
Collected from Ben Henneberry of Devil's Island, NS
SOF
oct96