

The Juice of the Barley

Traditional

In the sweet coun - ty Lim - 'rick one cold win - ter's night, All the
turf fires were burn - ing when I first saw the light, And a drunk - en old mid - wife went
tip - sy with joy, As she danced round the floor with her slip of a boy, Sing - ing
bain - ne na mo is an - gan - na, And the juice of the bar - ley for me!

This sample song did not make the cut as I was unable to date it and most sources suggest that it is actually a mid-19th century song, which is out of the time-frame encompassed by the book. It is a traditional Irish drinking song that is still popular today and was recorded a few years ago by the Clancey Brothers. The song was included as a sample page to offer you some idea of the format of the songbook. Each song is laid out across two pages as this one is, with the music, chords and first verse as shown above, historical notes and anecdotes as below and additional verses on the right-hand page.

You will note that the chorus contains a phrase that is a bit awkward. “Bainne na mó is an ganna” is Gaelic and is pronounced roughly as “ban-ya na moe is an-ga-na” Loosely translated it means “we’re out of milk!” The other word, “gassoon” or, more properly, *garsún*, is a small boy.

The Juice of the Barley is traditionally performed in a slow, reflective manner with the tempo picking up for the last line of each verse and the chorus.

The Juice of the Barley (Traditional)

In the sweet country Lim'rick, one cold winter's night,
All the turf fires were burning when I first saw the light;
And a drunken old midwife went tipsy with joy,
As she danced round the floor with her slip of a boy,
Singing bainne na mó is an ganna
And the juice of the barley for me!

Well when I was a gossoon of eight years old or so,
With me turf and me primer to school I did go,
To a dusty old school house without any door,
Where lay the school master blind drunk on the floor,
Singing bainne &c.

At the learning I wasn't such a genius I'm thinking,
But I soon bet the master entirely at drinking,
Not a wake or a wedding for five miles around,
But meself in the corner was sure to be found.
Singing bainne &c.

One Sunday the priest read me out from the altar,
Saying you'll end up your days with your neck in a halter;
And you'll dance a fine jig between heaven and hell,
And his words they did frighten me the truth for to tell.
Singing bainne &c.

So the very next morning as the dawn it did break,
I went down to the vestry the pledge for to take,
And there in that room sat the priests in a bunch,
Round a big roaring fire drinking tumblers of punch!
Singing bainne &c.

Well from that day to this I have wandered alone,
I'm a jack of all trades and a master of none,
With the sky for me roof and the earth for me floor,
And I'll dance out my days drinking whiskey galore,
Singing bainne &c.