

QUIGLEY & PICCO

Performed by: Ben Nash & Tom Murphy

Composed by: Johnny Quigley

Oh ye sons of Erin please pay attention,
To those few lines that I have in brief,
It's of a hero that is worse than Nero,
A perfect traitor and a cruel thief.

In Newfoundland he was born and reared,
As many an Irishman well may know,
His name I'll mention without hesitating,
His apprehension¹ was John Picco.

Now the winter is fierce in this dreary region,
Where all things fail but the laurel green,
The shady bower and fragrant flower,
Are all decayed that no more are seen.

Now the waves are rolling on the briny ocean,
Where bitter bore though keenly blow,
Now the barren plains of St John's Harbour
Are all decayed with frost and snow.

As I proceeded upon my journey,
The road being dark and it late at night,
When like a mendicant, sick, wet, and weary,
I boldly faced where I saw a light.

With hearty measure,² I humbly ventured,
And the door I entered with hat in hand,
And with humility to implore relief,
From the glooming tyrants of Newfoundland.

Straightway he asked me my name and nation,
From whence I came and where I was bound,
And I told him my relatives were of old Erin,
I was situated near Ferrans town.³

Now, Johnny Quigley it is my name,
And with my parents I dwelled at home,
And a Roman Catholic I was bred and born,
Until death will seek me I'll never disown.

¹ Editor's note: In a variant version of this song, this word is 'appellation' (<http://gestsongs.com/34/quigley.htm>, accessed 5 June 2018).

² Editor's note: In a variant version of this song, this line is 'The door I entered, I only ventured ...' (<http://gestsongs.com/34/quigley.htm>, accessed 5 June 2018).

³ Editor's note: Ferrans is a townland on the Meath/Kildare county border, located along the Royal Canal.

When he found out my name and nation,
He boldly seized me and turned me out,
If I was a haythen,⁴ a Jew, or pagan,
He'd entertain me without a doubt.

With courage failing and tears bewailing,
I went a-knocking from door to door,
But no admittance was for the stranger,
No more than jewels was for the poor.

That night I spent in sad meditation,
Oh thinking of Erin, my native ground,
And next morning I sailed o'er to Bell Isle Harbour,⁵
Where hospitality was to be found.

It's there you'll find relief for strangers,
Let them be haythens that come the way,
May God protect every friendly neighbour,
And safely guard them on land and sea.

Here's a length of days unto Paddy Neary,
Likewise your children and beloved wife,
May the heavens guard them over night and morning,
He entertained me and saved my life.

And now I'll turn to that other heathen,
And I'll wish him neither rich nor poor,
But when hell is full of monstrous creatures,
May he be sported upon the door.

⁴ *Editor's note: Possibly 'heathen.'*

⁵ *Editor's note: Johnny Quigley was a resident of Bell Island, an island in Conception Bay to the west of St John's.*