

My Son John

A traditional song that appears under a lot of names, but most prominently "My Son John", "My Son Tim", and its original title "Mrs. McGrath". The earliest noted variant of Mrs. McGrath as My Son John occurs in a 1961 anthology assembled by Cyril Tawney entitled A Soldiers Life for Me. The song originated during the Napoleonic Wars in the late C18 but surged in popularity during World War I as a popular march for Irish Volunteers. The toll of maiming injuries and deaths in His Majesties Navy during the days of sail was colossal - but primarily due to bad weather, sickness, shipwreck, poor living conditions and accidents. Battle was however also brutal as reflected in the arid humour of this forebitter.

My son John was tall and slim
with an arm or a leg on ev'ry limb <thump, thump, thump, thump>
But now he's got no legs at all
For he ran a race with a cannon ball

Chorus

*To me roo dun da, fadda riddle da
Whack fo' the riddle. To me roo dun da.*

Well was ya drunk or was ya blind
When ya left your two foine legs behind. <thump, th .., th.., th..>
Or was it sailin' on the sea
Wore your two foine legs right down to the knee

I was not drunk, I was not blind
When I left my two foine legs behind. <thump, th .., th.., th..>
Nor was it sailin' on the sea
Wore me two foine legs right down to the knee

Each foreign war I'll now denounce
'Tween the King of England and the King of France. <th, th, th, th>
For I'd rather my legs as they used to be
Than the King of Spain and his whole navy

I was tall and I was slim
with an arm or a leg on ev'ry limb. <thump, th .., th.., th..>
But now I've got no legs at all
They was both shot away by a cannon ball

Well, I was tall and I was slim
with an arm or a leg on ev'ry limb <thump, th .., th.., th..>
But now I've got no legs at all
They done come off on a cannon ball
Chorus x2 - second time slow

