

The poem of Robert Dwyer Joyce—*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*—has been set to hauntingly beautiful music. This rendition is performed by [Lisa Gerrard](#).

Born in Glenosheen, County Limerick, Joyce studied at Queen's College (in Cork). He graduated with honors and became a medical doctor in 1865.

The next year, he emigrated to America where he settled in Boston. That Massachusetts city, at the time, was home to a very large Irish-immigrant population. Many of the people in Boston knew about Dr. Joyce before he arrived since they had read his poems and articles in the Irish press.

After settling in America, Robert Dwyer Joyce continued to write, even while he was a very successful medical doctor. [Library Ireland tells us](#) that he published the following works in the US:

- 1868 - *Legends of the Wars in Ireland*, consisting of "a number of prose stories, founded on traditions preserved by the peasantry of the northern counties of Ireland."
- 1871 - Another volume, of the same type of works, entitled *Irish Fireside Tales*.
- 1872 - *Ballads of Irish Chivalry*, his next work, "includes most of the pieces in his first work, but contains many others of greater power, the results of more careful elaboration and of a more mature judgment."
- 1876 - *Deirdrè*, "the finest and most successful of his poems"—also according to Library Ireland—is "a free poetical version of one of the old romances of Ireland, *The Fate of the Children of Usna*."

Robert Dwyer Joyce (1830-1883) penned *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* about the 1798 rebellion in Ireland. The following are its lyrics:

*I sat within a valley green
I sat me with my true love
My sad heart strove to choose between
The old love and the new love
The old for her, the new that made
Me think on Ireland dearly
While soft the wind blew down the glade
And shook the golden barley*

*Tw'as hard the woeful words to frame
To break the ties that bound us
But harder still to bear the shame
Of foreign chains around us
And so I said, "The mountain glen
I'll seek at morning early
And join the bold United Men
While soft winds shake the barley"*

*While sad I kissed away her tears
My fond arms 'round her flinging
The foeman's shot burst on our ears
From out the wildwood ringing
A bullet pierced my true love's side
In life's young spring so early
And on my breast in blood she died
While soft winds shook the barley*

*I bore her to some mountain stream
And many's the summer blossom
I placed with branches soft and green
About her gore-stained bosom
I wept and kissed her clay-cold corpse
Then rushed o'er vale and valley
My vengeance on the foe to wreak
While soft winds shook the barley*

*But blood for blood without remorse
I've taken at Oulart Hollow
And laid my true love's clay-cold corpse
Where I full soon may follow
As 'round her grave I wander drear
Noon, night and morning early
With breaking heart when e'er I hear
The wind that shakes the barley*

In 1883, Dr. Joyce returned to Ireland where he died, in Dublin, that same year.

See, also:

Trailer, *[The Wind That Shakes the Barley](#)*

Credits:

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