

Canty Ball (Ballincanty Spree)

Come old and young I pray attend and listen unto me,
For well I knew 'tis long ago you've heard of Canty spree,
And while I sing two baronies ring the truth I tell to you,
For in that night we had a fight exceeding Waterloo.
But bear in mind that woman kind she was the cause of all.
It was a shame for some that came the way they spoiled the ball
From drinking punch a tidy wench forgot to mind her boy
'Twas jealousy that spoiled the spree for Mrs John Conroy.

For a month before the great uproar it would your heart delight
To go the road by her abode, it was so clean and white
For upon my soul she used a trowel as large as any spade
And made a floor, that would stand before the famous Light Brigade.
With brush and lime the walls did shine, the kitchen, room and hall
She had all complete and went to sleep the night before the ball.
All prayed sincere that heaven might hear, and grant her peace and joy,
And that Morris soon might meet his doom said Mrs John Conroy.

I may say 'twas 18th day of the glorious month of June
As Mrs John came walking on one sunny afternoon,
She was so wise, I am not surprised at how she struck the plan,
For all left home as she was going to meet the clergyman
She rolled back her shawl and told him all about what Morris wrote
And to stop the law he greased her paw with a handsome English note
She bent the knee respectfully, and then she bade goodbye
But he changed the plea to a higher key for Mrs. John Conroy

Now she was bent on paying no rent and she began to smile
For to hell she says she with poverty, let Morris wait a while
She knew her friends would well attend she invited thirty four
From the lovely shades of Pallas to the groves of Annamore
The number there I do declare including great and small
Was ninety four, there was and more, that night at Canty Ball,
Each lad and lass with flowery glass all drank her health with joy
And they gave three cheers for Canty spree and Mrs. John Conroy.

Both old and young enjoyed the fun that night at Canty Ball
They danced and sung, the shanty rang I thought 'twould surely fall.
Without a lie the barrel went dry but still they had their fill
And they stacked their clothes, with words and blows, each others blood to spill
When the fight began, the women ran for battle to prepare
You wouldn't know your friend or foe for clouds of skin and hair
Among the lot a half stone pot, Miss Berry she let fly
She meant to take the precious life of Mrs John Conroy.

But Mrs John being mighty strong secured an iron spade
And upon Miss Berry's lovely head two halves of it she made,
Miss Berry's boy was standing near and saw his true love fall

With a piercing cry that reached the sky, for mercy he did call
He did his best, to stop the rest but his efforts were in vain
From bad to worse they fought and cursed and the blood did spill like rain
This lovely maid oh! I'm afraid her temper rose too high
I will, says she, transported be for Mrs John Conroy.

With stones and sticks, those lunatics were fighting through the dawn
The informer then came from her den just as the day came on
And like a spy with searching eye for news she did come down
And wrote away without delay into Kilcormac Town.
She told the tales of sad travails that night at Cauty Spree
Of wars and fight and awful sights she spoke with wanton glee
Although she keeps the best side out to all that passes by,
She is not great, nor does not speak to Mrs. John Conroy.

Miss Berry, she got married since I'm happy to relate
T'was in Mountbolus Chapel she made her vows complete,
Although she suffered sorely for the lad she does adore,
The honeymoon is now being spent not far from Annamore.
The clergyman with Mrs. John was very much displeased,
And to satisfy the Lord on high he put her on her knees.
She made a vow and will keep it now on that you may rely
So the dance is o'er forever more for Mrs. John Conroy.

The event took place in the early 1890s in Ballincanty and the house still stands today
although it is used nowadays as a farm shed.

Composed by Michael Fox