

The Humours of Whiskey (song)

The musical score is written in 6/8 time on a single treble clef staff. It consists of five lines of music, each with a measure number (1, 5, 10, 15, 20) at the beginning. Chord symbols (C, F, G7) are placed above the notes. The melody is a simple, rhythmic tune with a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

1. Let your quacks and newspapers be cutting their capers
About curing the vapors the scratch and the gout
With their medical potions, their serums and their lotions
Upholding their notions, they're mighty put out.
Who can tell the true physic to all that's pathetic
And pitch to the divil, cramp, colic and spleen
You'll know it I think if you take a big drink
With your mouth to the brink of a jug of poteen
 So stick to the cratur' the best thing in nature
 For sinking your sorrows and raising your joys
 Oh what botheration, no dose in the nation
 Can give consolation like poteen me boys.
2. No liquid cosmetic to lovers athletic
Or bodies pathetic can give such a bloom
As the sweet by the powers in the garden of flowers
Ever gave their own bowers such a darling perfume
And this liquid so rare if you willingly share
To be taking your hair when it's frizzled and dead
Oh the sod has the merit to yield the true spirit
So strong it will shake all the hairs from your head
 Then stick to the cratur' the best thing in nature
 For sinking your sorrows and raising your joys
 Oh since its perfection, no doctor's direction
 Can cleanse the complexion like poteen me boys

3. While a child in me cradle, me nurse with her ladle
 Was filling my mouth with a notion of pap
 When a drop from her bottle fell into my throttle
 I stumbled and capered clean out of her lap
 On the floor I lay crawlin' and screaming and bawling
 'Til me mother and father were called to the fore
 All sobbing and sighing they feared I was dying
 But soon found I only was crying for more.
 So stick to the cratur' the best thing in nature
 For sinking your sorrows and raising your joys
 Oh lord how they'd chuckle if babes in their truckle
 They only could suckle on poteen me boys

4. Through my youthful aggression, through times of depression
 My childhood's impression still clung to my mind
 And at school or at college the basis of knowledge
 I never could gulp 'til with whiskey combined
 And as older I'm growing times ever bestowin'
 On Erin's potation, a flavor so fine
 And how ere they may lecture on jove and his nectar
 Itself is the only true liquid divine
 So stick to the cratur' the best thing in nature
 For sinking your sorrows and raising your joys
 Oh lord, 'tis the right thing for courting and fighting
 There's nowt so exciting as poteen me boys.

5. Come guess me this riddle, what beats pipes and fiddle
 What's hotter than mustard and milder than cream
 What best wets your whistle, what's clearer than crystal
 What's sweeter than honey and stronger than steam
 What'll make the lame walk, what will make the dumb talk,
 The elixir of life and philospher's stone
 And what helped Mr. Brunnell to build the Thames Tunnel
 Wasn't it poteen from ould Inisowen
 So stick to the cratur' the best thing in nature
 For sinking your sorrows and raising your joys
 Oh lord, it's no wonder, if lightning and thunder
 Weren't made from the plunder of poteen me boys.

6. You maidens pathetic, with lovers athletic
 For liquid cosmetic, you can't beat the drop
 With a glow to your cheek, it will make your heart leap
 It'll quiet a stallion or cure an old cob
 At the mouth you would drool, be reduced to a fool
 You'd kick up your heels and you'd peel to the buff
 Then 'tis he'd be pathetic while you'd be athletic
 If only you'd take a few drops of the stuff
 So stick to the cratur' the best thing in nature
 For sinking your sorrows and raising your joys
 For there's nothing like whiskey to make maidens frisky
 It soon separates all the men from the boys.

There are three different tunes called "The Humors of Whiskey": a double jig, a slip jig this one, a song. The Gaelic title is "*Sugra na Uisce-Beata*". It is also known as "Paddy's Panacea".

Cratur, cray'tur, pep, poteen (also spelled poitin and pronounced paw-CHEEN) are all words for illegal whiskey. The Irish words *uisce beatha* (pronounced ish-ka bah-ha) means "water of life" and this is thought to be the origin of the word "whiskey," which is spelled either whiskey or whisky. Legal whiskey in Ireland was sometimes called "Parliament Whiskey" because the taxes paid on it went to the British parliament.

This song probably dates no earlier than 1825 because that's when construction began on the "Thames Tunnel" by Marc Brunel who is mentioned in the 5th verse. The "Thames Tunnel" was only called the Thames Tunnel until the second one was built, then it became known as the Rotherhithe Tunnel.

Folklorist Tom Munnely collected songs from Tom Lenihan over many years. Lenihan learned the song from an American songbook **617 Irish Songs and Ballads** sent to him by his sister in America. He fitted the jig tune "Larry O'Gaff" to it and its this version everyone sings. The earliest version Munnely could find was in **The Emerald Isle Songbook** published in 1899 in Dublin. The words are credited to one Joseph Lunn (no dates) and a tune called "Ireland so Frisky" is recommended.