

The Praties They Grow Small

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| <p>1. Oh, the praties they grow small,
Over here, over here.
Oh, the praties they grow small
And we dig them in the fall
And we eat them skins and all,
Over here, over here.</p> | <p>3. Oh, we're trampled in the dust,
Over here, over here,
Yes, we're trampled in the dust,
But the Lord in whom we trust
Will give us crumb for crust,
Over here, over here.</p> |
| <p>2. Oh, I wish that we were geese,
Night and morn, night and morn,
Oh, I wish that we were geese,
For they fly and take their ease,
And they live and die in peace,
Eating corn, eating corn.</p> | <p>4. Oh, the praties they grow small,
Over here, over here.
Oh, the praties they grow small
And we dig them in the fall
And we eat them skins and all,
Over here, over here.</p> |

"The Praties They Grow Small", also known as "The Famine Song", is an Irish song referring to the great potato famine of 1845-1848. The first of the blights occurred in 1845; the blight continued to strike for the next three years; it was not until 1849 that there was a decent crop, by which time Ireland's population, which exceeded eight million before the blight (twice the current total), had fallen to about six million; in very round numbers, a million had died and a million had emigrated. The blight was a fungus that arrived from America, which caused potatoes to wither almost instantly. To make matters worse, potatoes were the chief crop of Ireland. There were many reasons for this, including the fact that potatoes were easy to grow, but the basic reason was British rules. The Irish had been forced almost entirely onto small holdings, usually of five acres or less (in 1841, over 80% of Irish farm families had property of 15 acres or less; 45% had five acres or less). Few families could feed themselves on such small fields using other crops. And if they had enough property to improve things, the British landlords took the excess in rent. So the Irish grew potatoes and when the crop failed, they starved. This song is probably a parody of a song, "The Wonderful Song of 'Over There'", published by Atwill in 1844. It is another case of the parody outlasting the original.

The tune is somewhat similar to "Captain Kidd" in the Songs section.

It is in the **Roud Folk Song Index** as #4455 and was printed in **The Burl Ives Songbook**.