

## The Rocks of Bawn



1. Come all ye loyal heroes and listen on to me  
And don't hire with any master till you know what your work will be.  
For you will rise up early in the morning from the clear day light till the dawn  
And you never will be able for to plough the Rocks of Bawn.
2. My shoes they are well worn-out and my stockings they are thin.  
My heart is always trembling for fear they might let in.  
My heart is always trembling from clear daylight of dawn  
And I never will be able for to plough the Rocks of Bawn.
3. Rise up, gallant Sweeney, and get your horses hay  
And give them a good feed of oats before you ride away.  
Don't feed them on soft turnip. Let them out on your green lawn  
Or they never will be able to plough the Rocks of Bawn.
4. My curse upon you, Sweeney, you have me nearly robbed.  
You're sitting by the fireside with your feet upon the hob.\*  
You're sitting by the fireside from clear daylight of dawn  
And you never will be able to plough the Rocks of Bawn.
5. I wish the Queen of England would write to me in time\*\*  
And place me in some regiment all in my youth and prime.  
I'd fight for Ireland's glory, from the clear daylight of dawn  
Before I would return again to plough the Rocks of Bawn.

\*or "You're sitting by the fireside with your dudeen in your gob"

\*\*or "I wish the Sergeant-Major would send for me in time"

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From 1649–50 Oliver Cromwell led a Parliamentary invasion of Ireland. Many Catholic landholders were dispossessed and forced to take their families and belongings beyond the Shannon, to the hard country of Connaught while English and Scottish Protestant newcomers settled on the lush vacated farms, the dispossessed Irish hacked out a thin living among the 'rocks, bogs, salt water and seaweed' of the barren west coast. In the ensuing centuries, to many a farm-hand even the British Army offered better prospects than the stony plough-defying soil of Mayo, Galway and Clare.

The lament of the Connaught ploughman has become a popular Irish folk song. So, basically, whether or not there are actually Rocks of Bawn somewhere, "to plow the Rocks of Bawn" means to struggle tirelessly and thanklessly.

I learned this from the Clancys.