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FIRST VOLUME.

IRISH COUNTRY SONGS

Edited, arranged,

AND FOR THE MOST PART COLLECTED

BY

HERBERT HUGHES.

Price 3s 6d net
($1.50.)

Folklore

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PREFACE TO VOL. I.

SEVERAL thousand traditional tunes have been recorded in Ireland and published to the world. They are to be found on the shelves of antiquaries, in elusive books long out of print, or circulating in modern form among scholars, expert folklorists, and a small crowd of musical amateurs. Of these tunes comparatively few are familiar to civilized musicians out of Ireland. The greater number are dance tunes, many of which are but variants of one another and, of course, utterly unvocal; broadly speaking, apart from the association of the dance itself, they are quite unimportant as music. Of the melodies not connected with the dance, however, many of those already published are of the rarest beauty and distinction, with more variety of mood than can be found in any other folk-music in Europe. Unfortunately in Ireland, where an alien language has been thrust upon the people, under severe penalty at all times, the original Gaelic words that were sung to these melodies are, in the majority of cases, lost and forgotten. Even in the *beurla*, however, the old Gaelic idiom penetrated through the verse of the ballad writers, and here and there one may come across a song that has a few lines of a quaint, remote beauty not found in those that have been written under a more immediate foreign influence. In such a verse as this:

O, I would climb a high, high tree
And rob a wild bird's nest,
And back I'd bring whatever I do find
To the arms that I love best,
—She said,
To the arms that I love best,

or this:

There's not a gown will go on my back, or a comb will go in my hair,
And neither flame nor candle light shine in my chamber fair;
Nor will I wed with any young man until the day I die,
Since the lowlands of Holland are between my love and me,

one comes in touch with the Gaelic imagination expressing itself strongly, although in a foreign tongue.

But it is in Irish that the poems of real value were wedded to music, for in writing in Irish the ballad-writers were using a language that had served literature for centuries before England had escaped from the barbarism of the Middle Ages; and it is a thousand pities that Petrie, whose complete collection of Irish music was published a few years ago, was not able to obtain the words to which, even in his time, many of his melodies must have been sung. One unfortunate result has been that many very beautiful airs have been set by modern versifiers to words (in English) of appalling banality. Indeed, I know instances where good ballads have been rejected

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in favour of some polite sentiment about willow trees and weeping maidens; and, what is infinitely worse, instances of songs being "improved" without due acknowledgment of their traditional anonymity.

Except where otherwise stated, all the songs in this volume may be considered traditional. As far as I could I have avoided editing these rather fragmentary ballads; they are, I think, far better in their crude, unpolished state than they would be were I to have set myself the task of finding rimes for unrimed verses, or of rendering some impudent thought into reputable language. Occasionally, however, I have thought it necessary to omit some verses of a song altogether, and this because the song had been of undue length and several of the verses superfluous. In "The Fanad Grove," for instance, I pieced two incomplete verses together and supplied a missing line of another, and the simple story is told in three verses instead of the original five or six. This is not a volume for antiquaries and other experts; but to all whom it may concern I offer this explanation of what I mean by adapting or editing.

There are so many tunes, and variants of tunes, to be found in collections of Irish music, that I have not thought it worth while to compare those in this book for the purpose of identification and possible relationship. They may stand as they are quite well, I think, without further credentials; and I might add that while all of these melodies have been gathered in Ireland, I do not claim that they, or their "traditional" words, are of necessity indigenous to Ireland. Some have very doubtful ancestry, and may have emanated from Scotland, or from the border, or from purely English sources. To-day, however, they have so far entered into the consciousness of the people who sing them, that I am content to let them pass as Irish. It has been the most notable achievement of the Irish nation that it has, consistently throughout ten centuries, imposed the quality of its mind upon everything that has tried to usurp its life and "educate" its feeling; and it takes a comparatively short space of time for an imported song to receive the impress of local idiom and characteristic so strongly as to deceive the unwary collector into believing he has alighted on some native and unfamiliar melody. The constant migration between England and Scotland and Ireland during the harvesting season accounts in a very large measure for the continuous importation and exportation of country ballads. In the West Country, for example, many Irish songs have taken root, and only recently "Brennan on the Moor" was published in an English collection—an Irish Ballad that has been familiar in every farm kitchen from Dunluce to Skibbereen for generations.

It is the fashion among many expert musicians in England to label certain folk tunes as belonging to established Greek modes, such as the Dorian, for example, or the Phrygian; and a tune's right to be considered of some antiquity is thereby decided. It may be the case that the Sussex peasant sings his bacchanalian ballads to some formulated ecclesiastical system of musical scales, but it has never been proved (although frequently insinuated) that these modes were ever sung by the peasantry in Ireland; and ecclesiastical Plain Song has never had sufficient vogue or

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influence to affect the daily life of the people so much that they would, even unconsciously, imitate the manner of church chants in their secular music. On the contrary, it has recently been demonstrated that the Irish possessed, and still employ, a series of scales or modes that are only quite distantly related to the Greek modes, and with a much greater variety of intervals. The obvious comment of the academy-nurtured musician is that they are "only singing out of tune," but experience has proved that they have a scale system as delicately and elaborately constructed as the most fastidious modern artist could wish. So-called "quarter tones" are deliberately sung by the unlearned and despised peasant; and if any incredulous person thinks I am exaggerating let him go to Innismurry or the Aran Islands or Connemara or Donegal and if he can persuade a native to sing (generally a most difficult business) he can judge for himself; or as a further alternative let him compare the ease with which the natives of China sing intervals that are unknown (as yet) to the Queen's Hall.

Musical art is gradually releasing itself from the tyranny of the tempered scale. If composers find its restrictions too exacting—well and good; the manipulation of an untempered scale will be found possible as a matter of course. There is no reason why an arbitrarily fixed scale should stand in the way of the musical revolutionary. That it is merely arbitrary history shows clearly enough, and if we examine the work of the modern French School, notably that of M. Claude Debussy, it will be seen that the tendency is to break the bonds of this old slave-driver and return to the freedom of primitive scales.

Musical scholars, as well as political experts, are apt to forget that the history of Ireland is not the history of England. They forget that over a thousand years ago Ireland was the most highly educated country in Western Europe, and that even in her decadence she has retained some of this old knowledge and culture; and, as a consequence, her contemporary literature and folk-music still have qualities that are peculiar to her, and do not quickly respond to the influence of antipathetic forces. In recording her folk-music one is always meeting with this independence—I would almost say, isolation. Over and over again I have found it impossible to write down a tune that has been sung or played to me, for the simple reason that our modern notation does not allow for intervals less than a semitone.

This volume, therefore, includes merely those melodies that approximate to our modern tempered scale, and, in the case of those I have collected myself, exactly as they were sung or played, I have written accompaniments for them, but I have avoided identifying the harmonic treatment with any formal system of alleged modes, for I feel that to do so is to pin one down to a period, to a date almost. The accompaniments are intended to represent improvisations rather than a defined and permanent harmonic code; each was written thus as it appealed to me at one particular moment. I should probably have quite a different scheme for each one to-morrow if I were to re-write them.

HERBERT HUGHES.

London, 1909.

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NOTE

IN this volume there are only two poems that are translated from the original Gaelic—those entitled "My love, oh she is my love" and "I wish I had the shepherd's lamb." I give here part of the original poem of which Dr. Hyde has made a metrical translation in "The Love Songs of Connacht." There are ten verses altogether, but I have only set five to the tune in this book.

An Searc 'gá Diúltuġaḋ

Mo ġráḋ, ón 'sí mo ġráḋ
An ḃean is mó ḃíos 'g am' ċráḋ,
Is annsa í ó m' ḋéanaṁ tinn
Ná an ḃean do m' ḋéanaṁ slán.

'Sí mo stór, ón 'sí mo stór,
bean an roisg uaiṫne mar an rós,
bean naċ g-cuirfeaḋ láṁ fá m'-ċeann
bean naċ luiḋfeaḋ liom ar ór.

Mór mo ċás, ón mór mo ċás
Is iongraḋ ḟad go ḃfáġam bás,
bean naċ dtiúḃraḋ taoḃ liom
dar mo ṁionn is í mo ġráḋ.

'S í mo ṁian, ón 'sí mo ṁian,
bean is annsa liom faoi 'n ngréim,
an ḃean naċ g-cuirfeaḋ orm binn
dá suiḋfinn le na taéḃ.

'Sí do ċráḋaig mo ċroiḋe
A's d'ḟáġḃuiġ osna am' lár
Muna dtóġṫar an t-olc so óm'ċroiḋe
Ní ḃéiḋ mé go deó slán.

Dr. Hyde's translation is in the metre of the original, only more regular. He gives it also literally as follows, including the verses I have left out:

My love, oh! she is my love, The woman who is most for destroying me; Dearer is she from making me ill Than the woman who would be making me well. She is my treasure, Oh, she is my treasure, The woman of the grey (?) eye (she) like the rose, A woman who would not place a hand beneath my head, A woman who would not be with me for gold. She is my affection, Oh! she is my affection, The woman who left no strength in me; A woman who would not breathe a sigh after me, A woman who would not raise a stone at my tomb. She is my secret love, Oh! she is my secret love, A woman who tells us (*i.e.*, me) nothing; A woman

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who would not breathe a sigh after me, A woman who would not (for me) shed tears. She is my shape, Oh, she is my shape, A woman who does not remember me to be out, A woman who would not cry at the hour of my death, It is she ruined my heart to its middle. Great my case, Oh! great my case, It is a wonder how long it is till I find death. A woman who would not give me trust, By my oath she is my love! She is my choice, Oh! she is my choice, The woman who would not look back at me, The woman who would not make peace with me, And who is ever full of hate. Great my grief, Oh! great my grief, At the great disrespect The woman has (working) for my destroying. 'Tis she spoiled me of my life. She is my desire, Oh! she is my desire; A woman dearest to me under the sun, The woman who would not pay me heed, If I were to sit by her side. It is she ruined my heart, And left a sigh for ever in me. Unless this evil be raised off my heart, I shall not be well for ever.

In reference to the phrase "She is my shape," Dr. Hyde gives a note in which he suggests that the word cruth, which he has translated as "shape," may have been intended for crot, meaning riches or cattle. He goes on to say that an old meaning of cruth is destruction, which would make best sense if it were not too obsolete. The poet may have meant to say "She is my riches." The word generally means "shape," which seems to make no sense here, unless, perhaps, like the Latin "forma" and "formosus," it is used in the sense of beauty.

The other song, "I wish I had the shepherd's lamb," is pretty well known all over Ireland, both in Irish and English. The late George Petrie took down two verses from a peasant in the county of Clare, and Dr. Joyce, whose version I have set to the music, has added one stanza (the second) to those given by Dr. Petrie.

Ar truaigh gan peata'n maoil agum
Ar truaigh gan peata'n maoil agum
Ar truaigh gan peata'n maoil agum
'Sna caoile beagha bána.

Chorus

Is ó goilim, goilim tú
Is gradh mo chroidhe gan ceilg tú
Is ó goilim, goilim tú
'S tú peata beag do máthar.

Ar truaigh gan maoilín bán agum
Ar truaigh gan maoilín bán agum
Ar truaigh gan maoilín bán agum
Ar fáilte ó mo gradh geal.

Ar truaigh gan bólacht bainne agum
Ar truaigh gan bólacht bainne agum
Ar truaigh gan bólacht bainne agum
Ar Cáitín o na máthair.

Dr. Joyce gives the following translation of the chorus:

And oh! I hail thee, I hail thee
And the love of my heart without deceit thou art,
And oh! I hail thee, I hail thee,
And thou art the little pet of thy mother.

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TO MY SON

PATRICK CAIRNS HUGHES

I DEDICATE

This Volume of our National Melodies.

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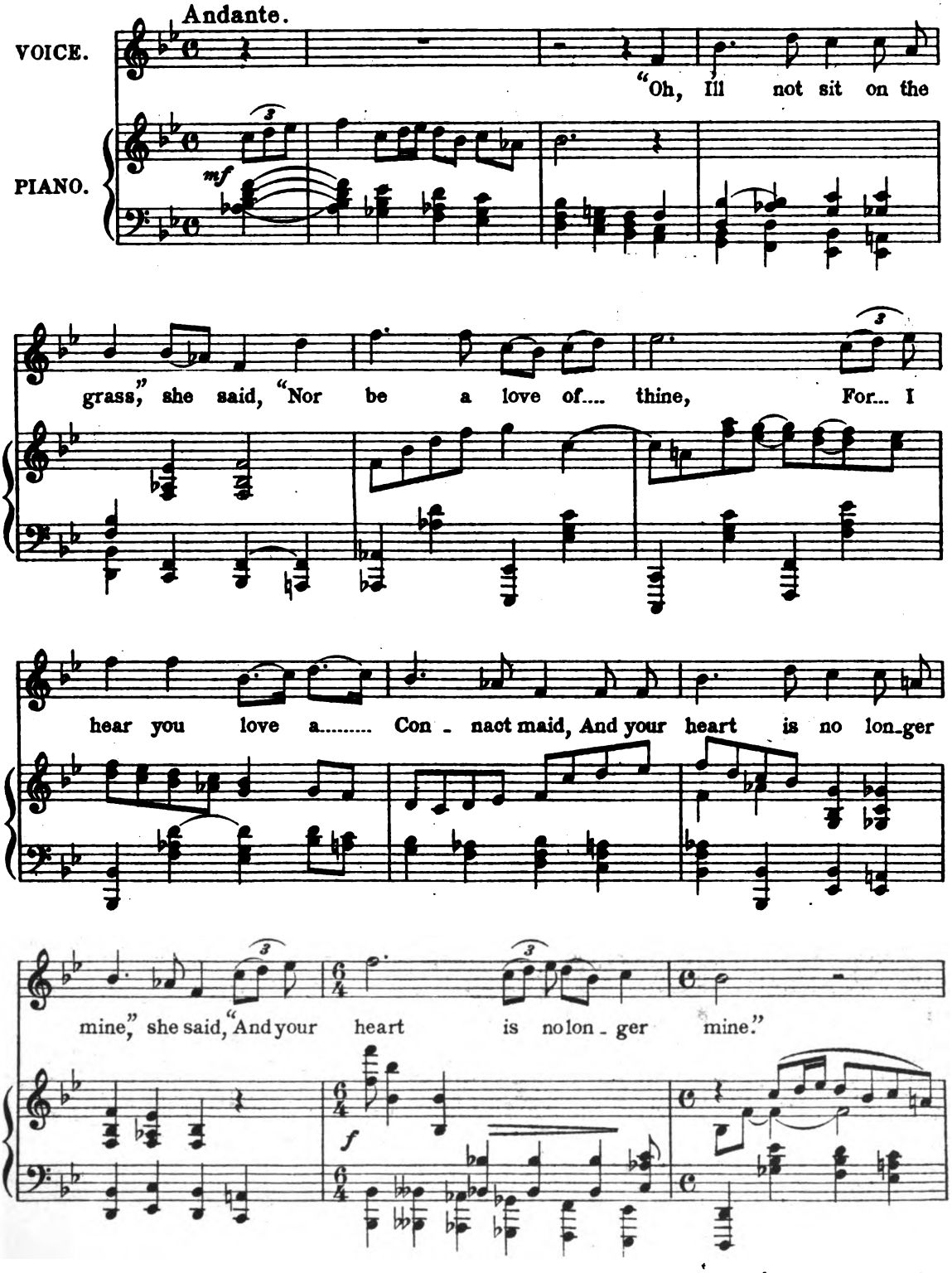
The verdant braes of Skreen.

From an old Ballad.

COUNTY DERRY.



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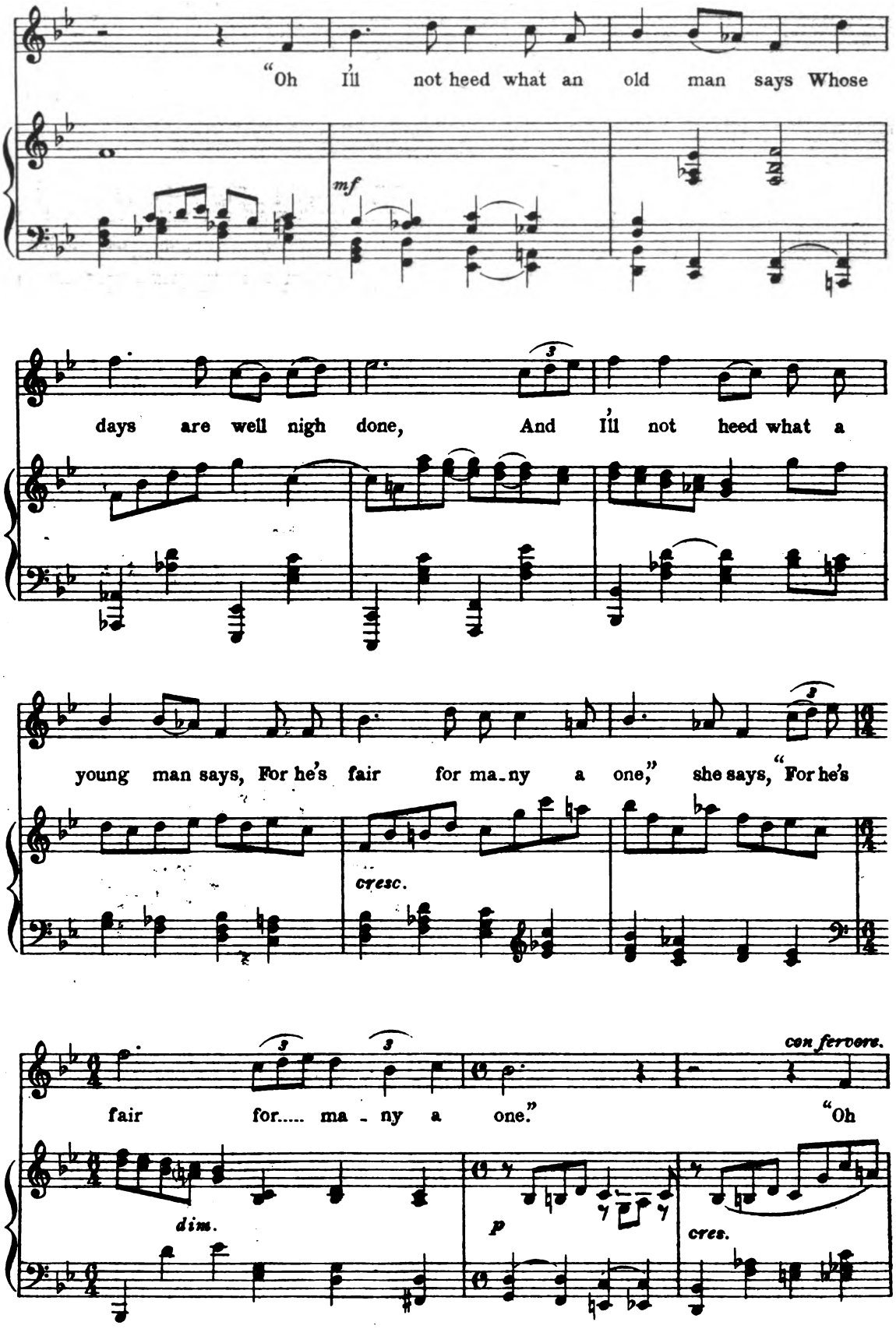

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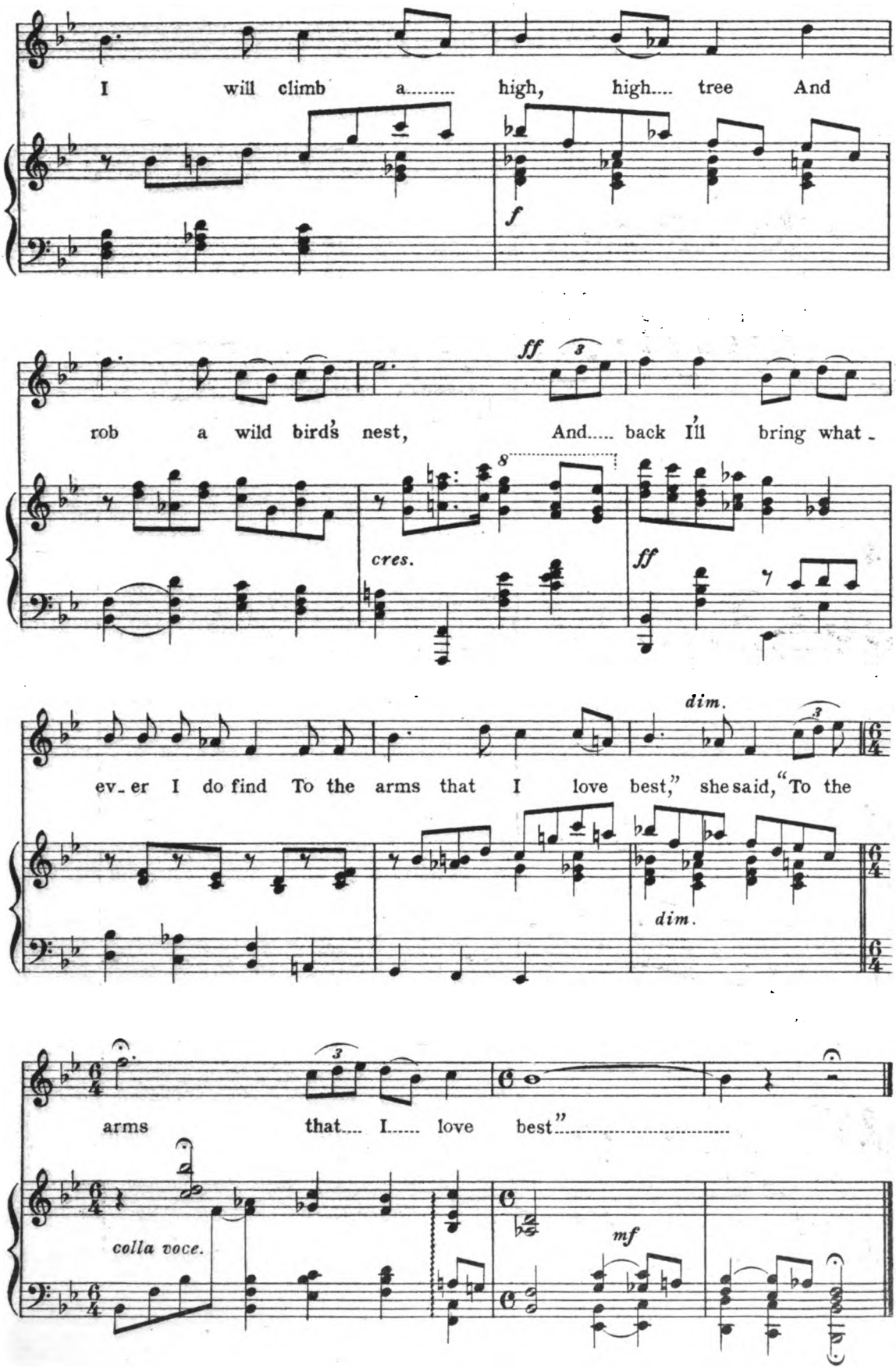

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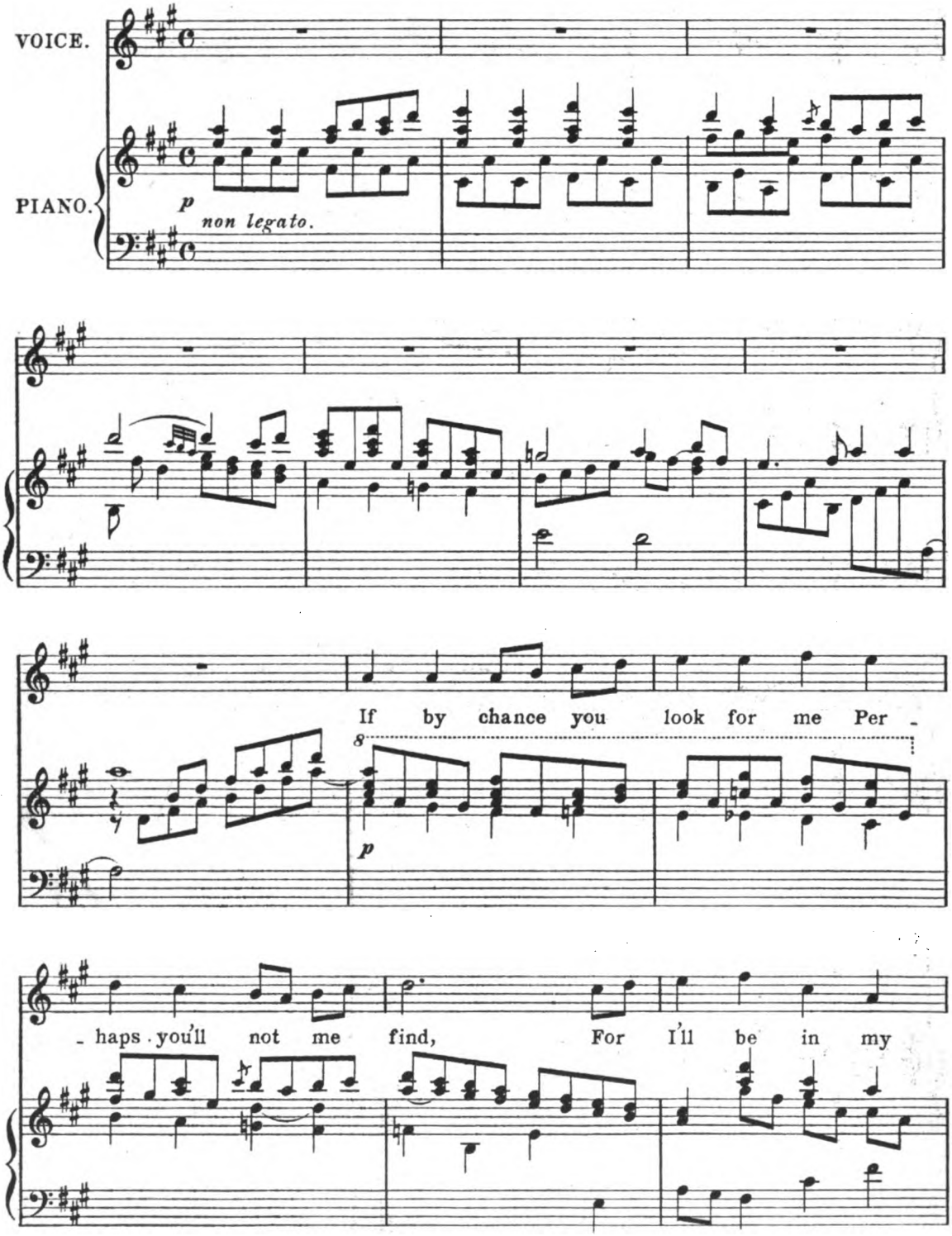
*Reynardine.

Fragment of Ulster Ballad. **Donegal version.**



*In the locality where I obtained this fragment Reynardine is known as the name of a faery that changes into the shape of a fox.—Ed.

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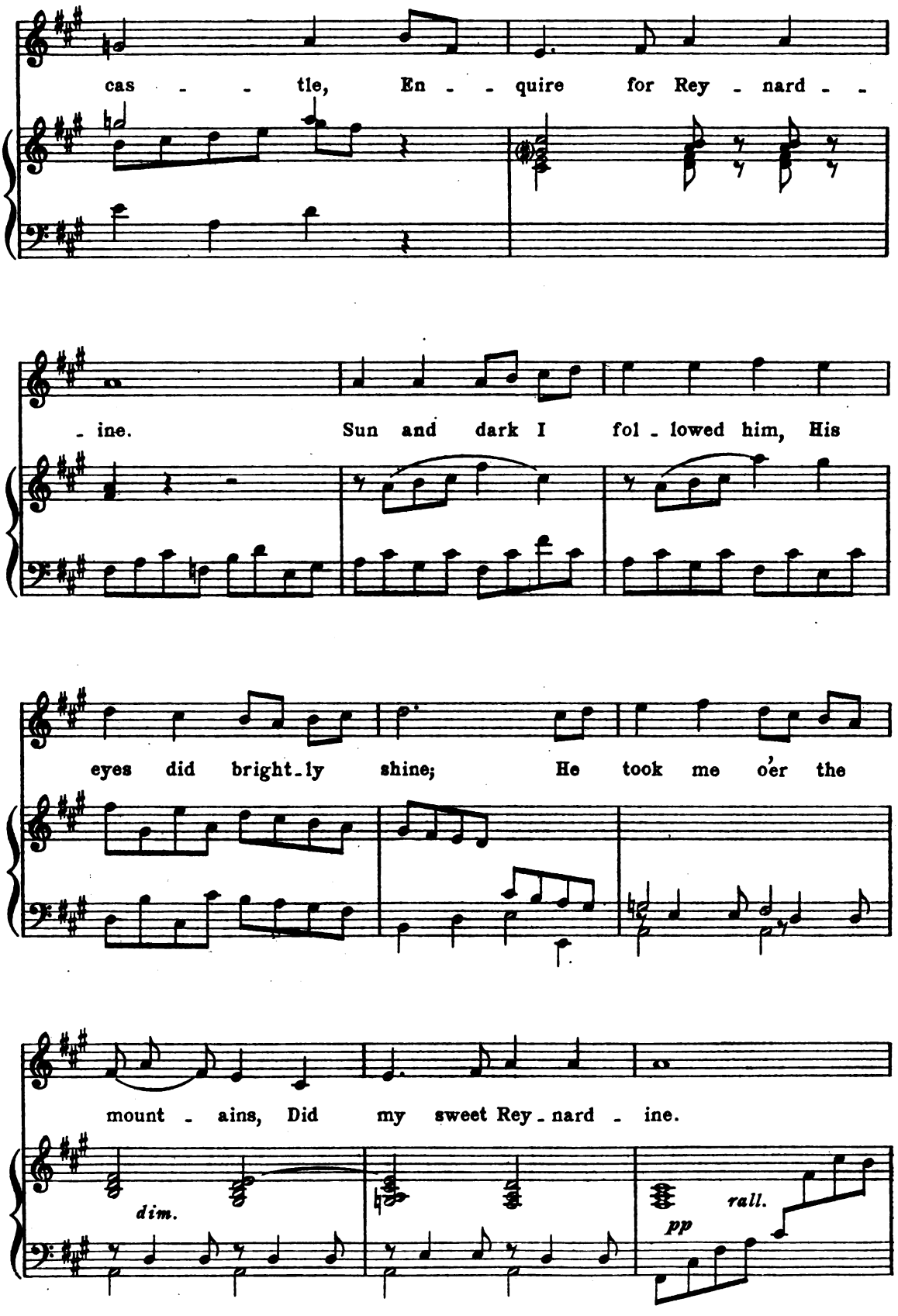

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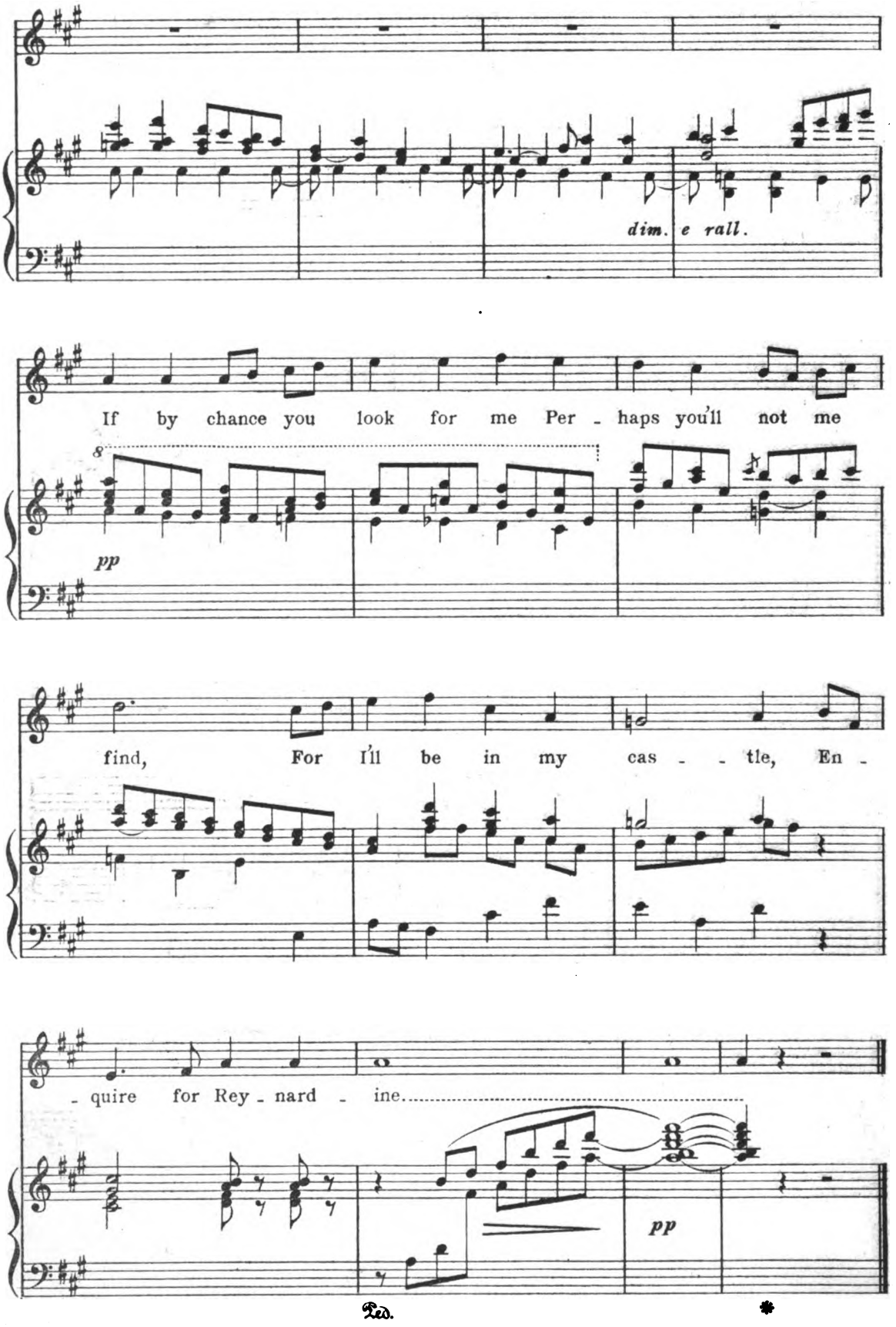

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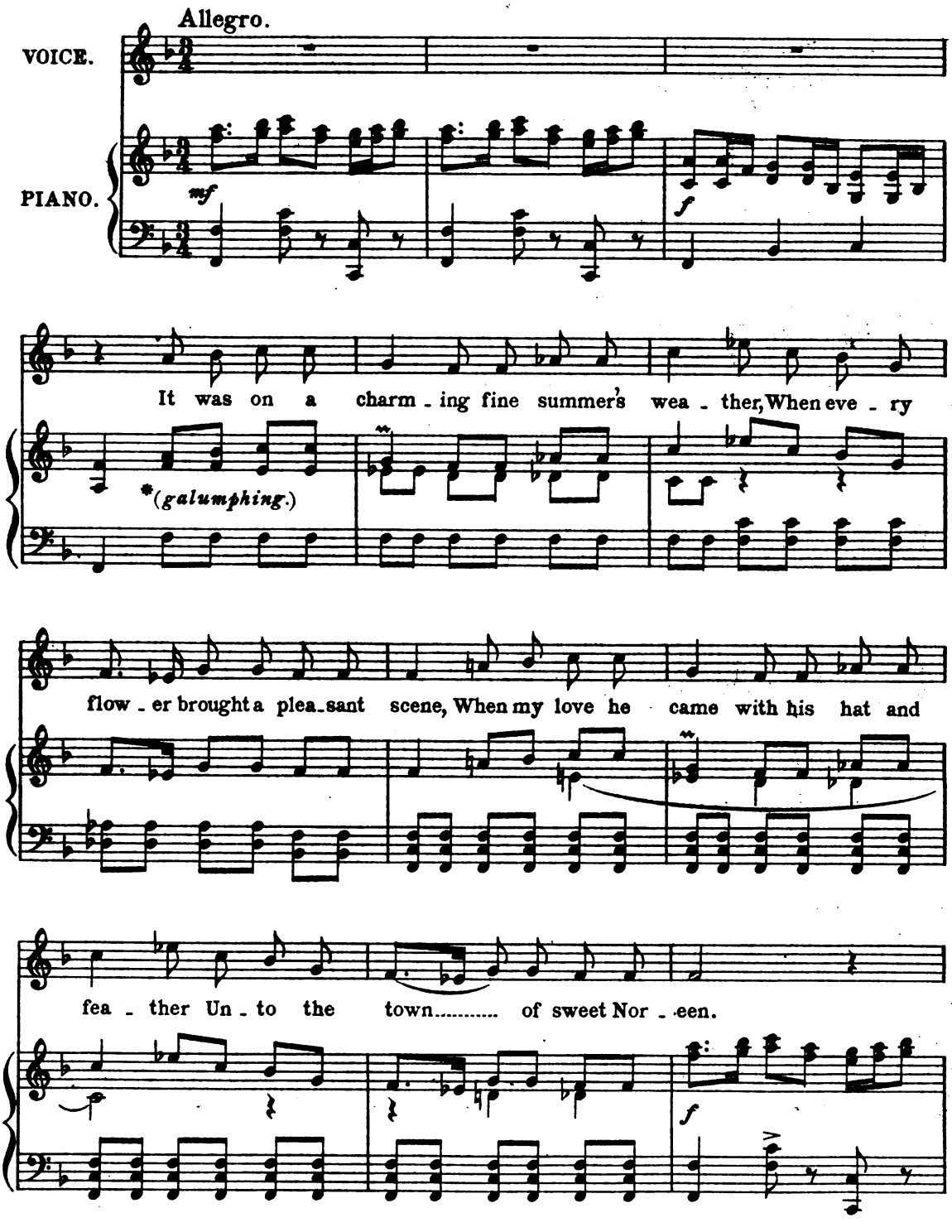
The Weaver's Daughter.

Fragment of Ulster Ballad. COUNTY DONEGAL.



*An Ulsterism.

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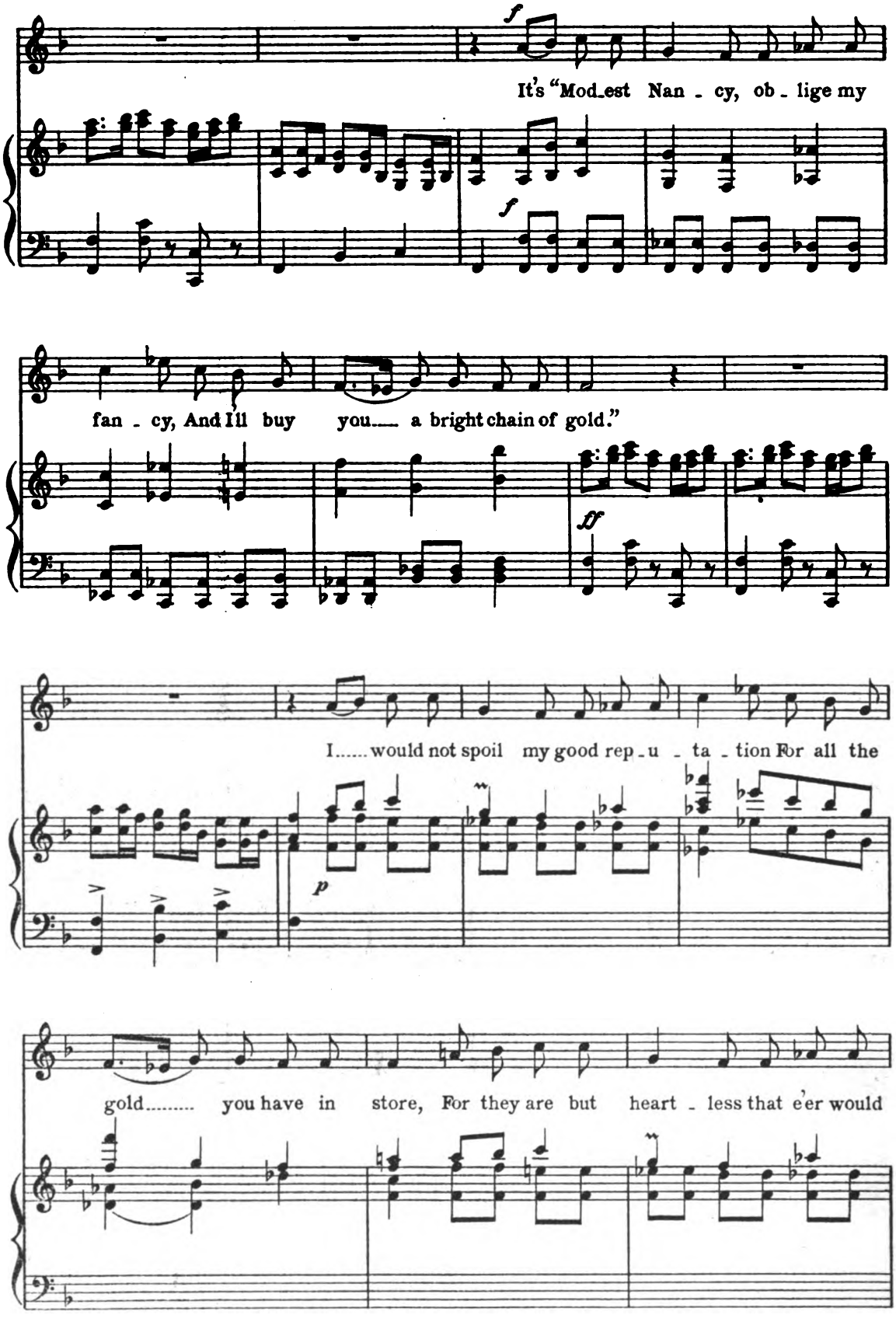

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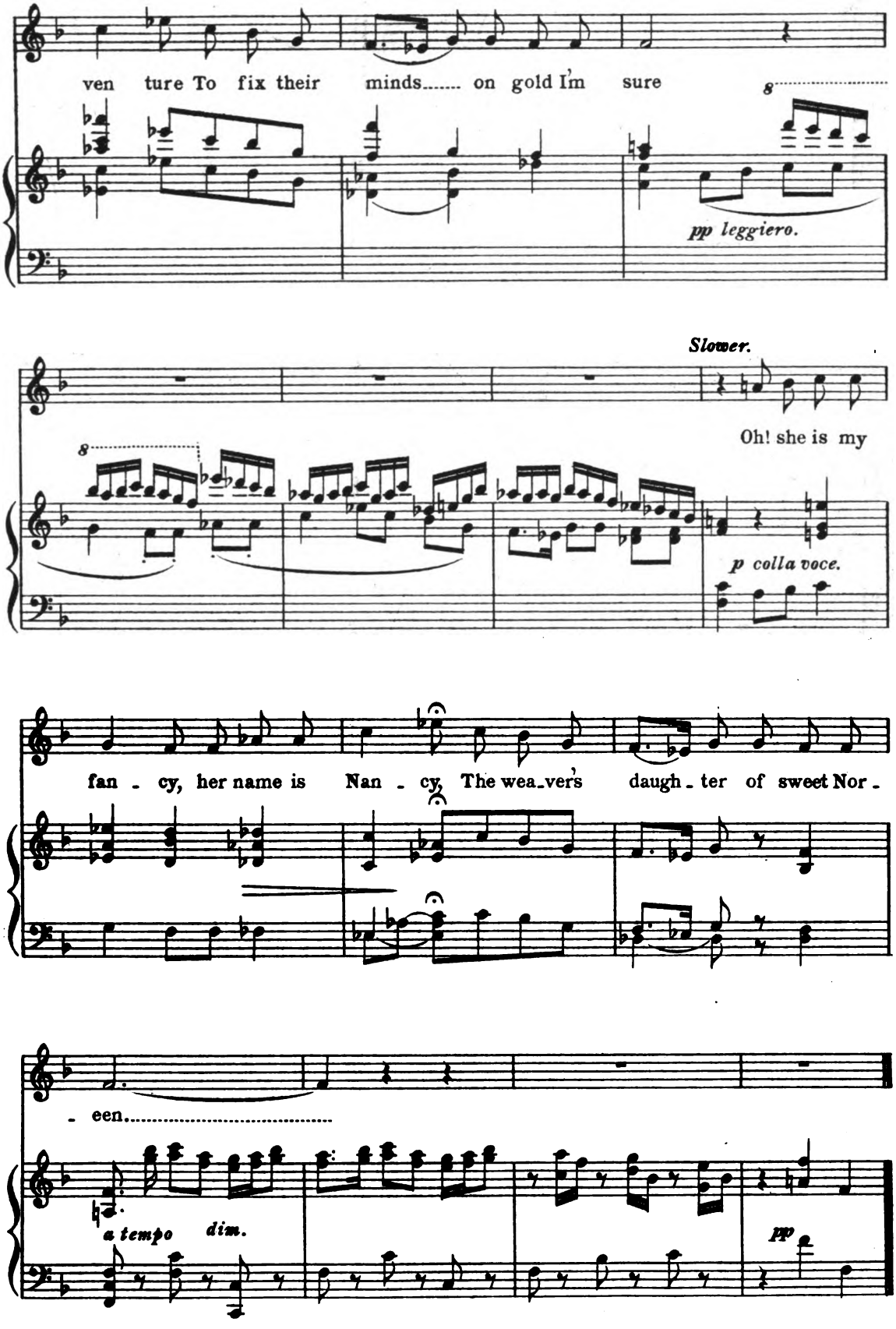

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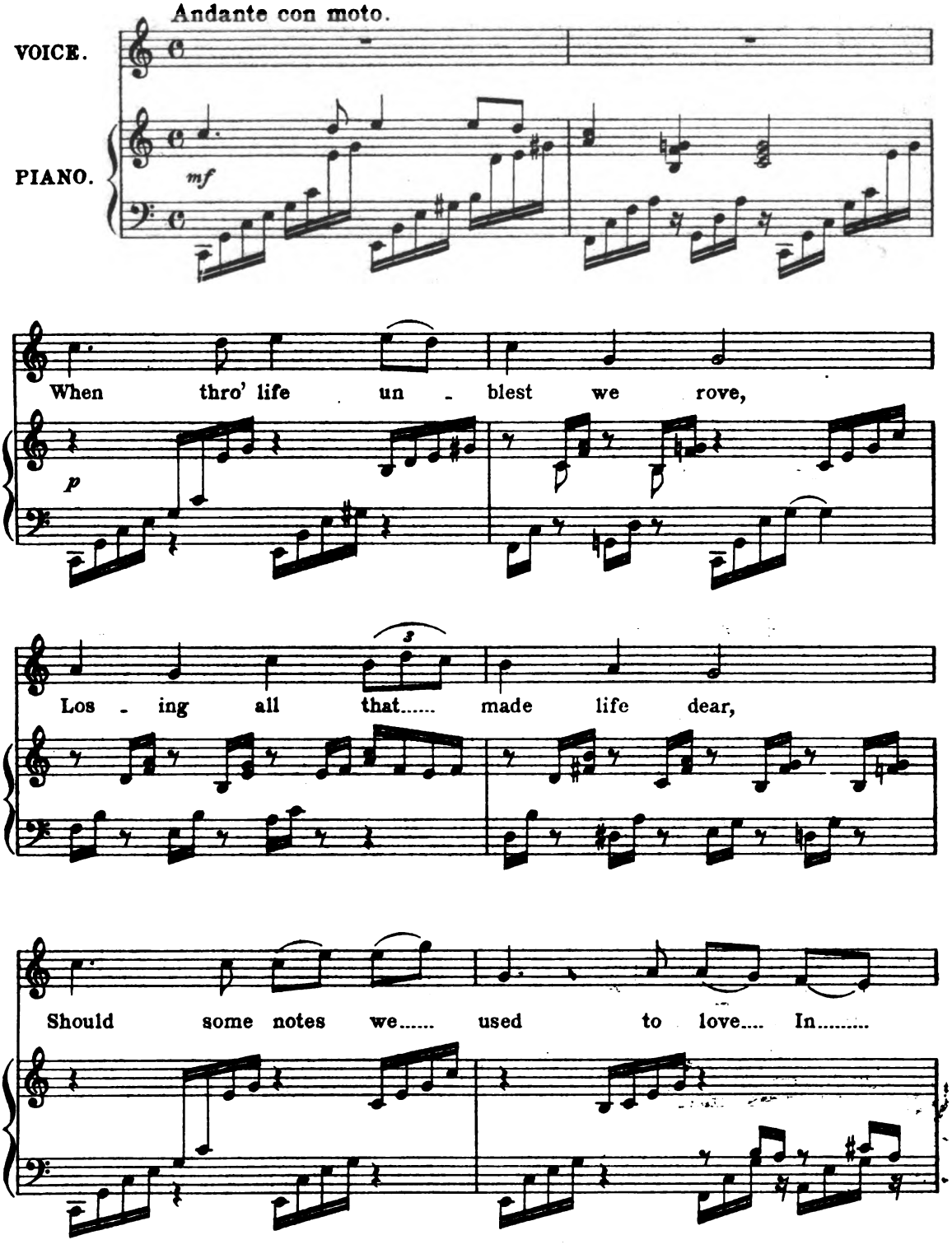
When thro' life unblest we rove.

Words by
THOMAS MOORE

OLD AIR.



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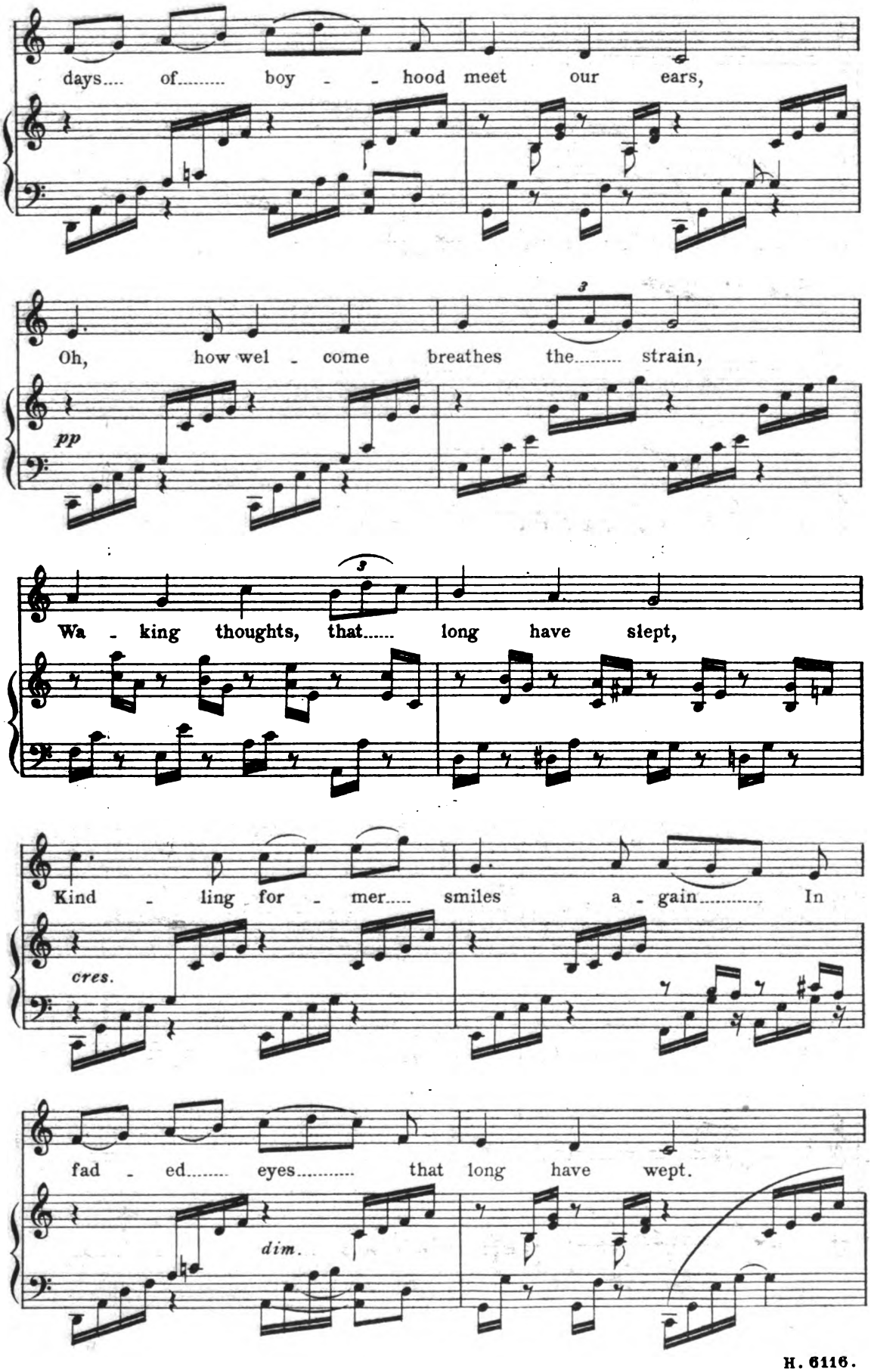

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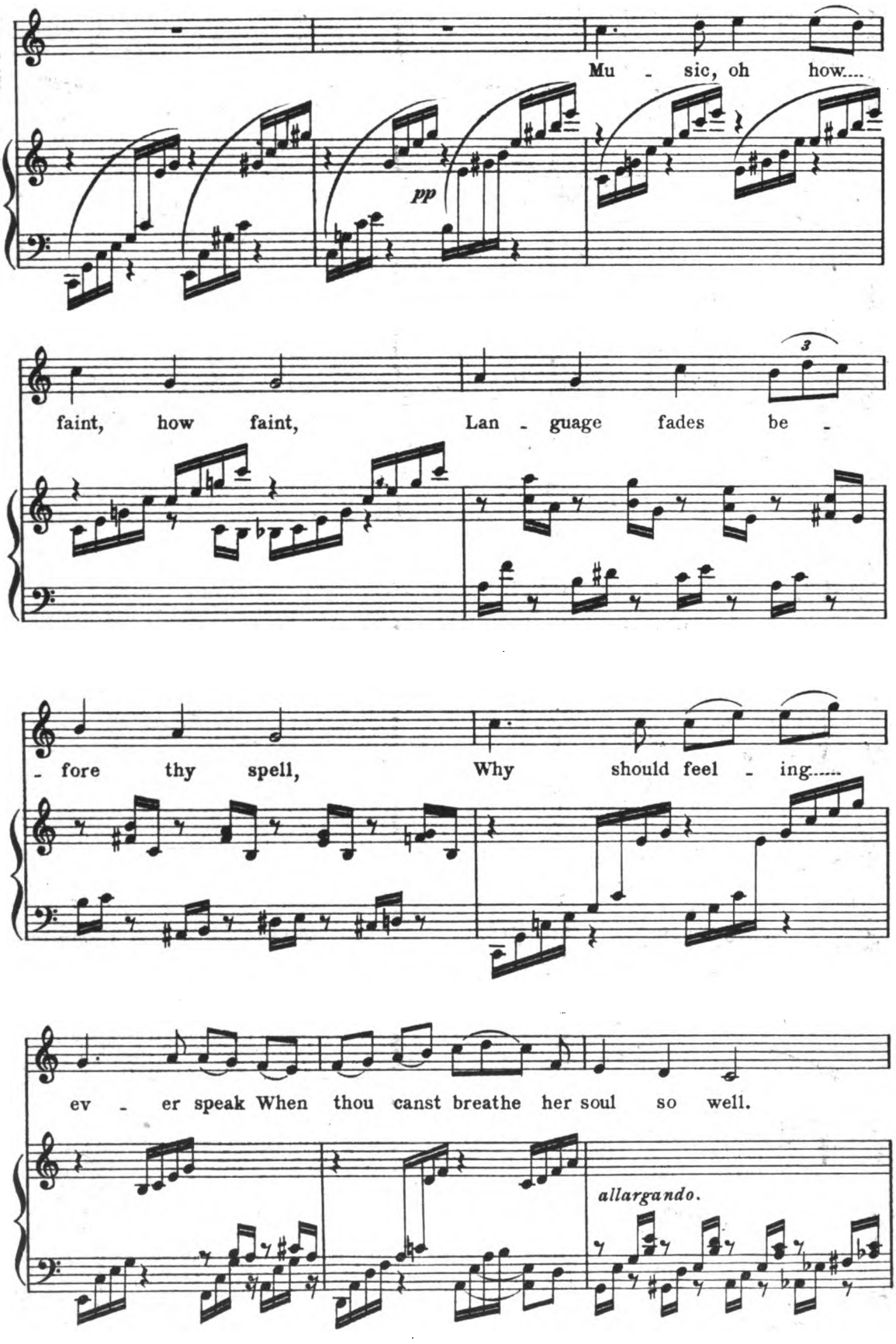

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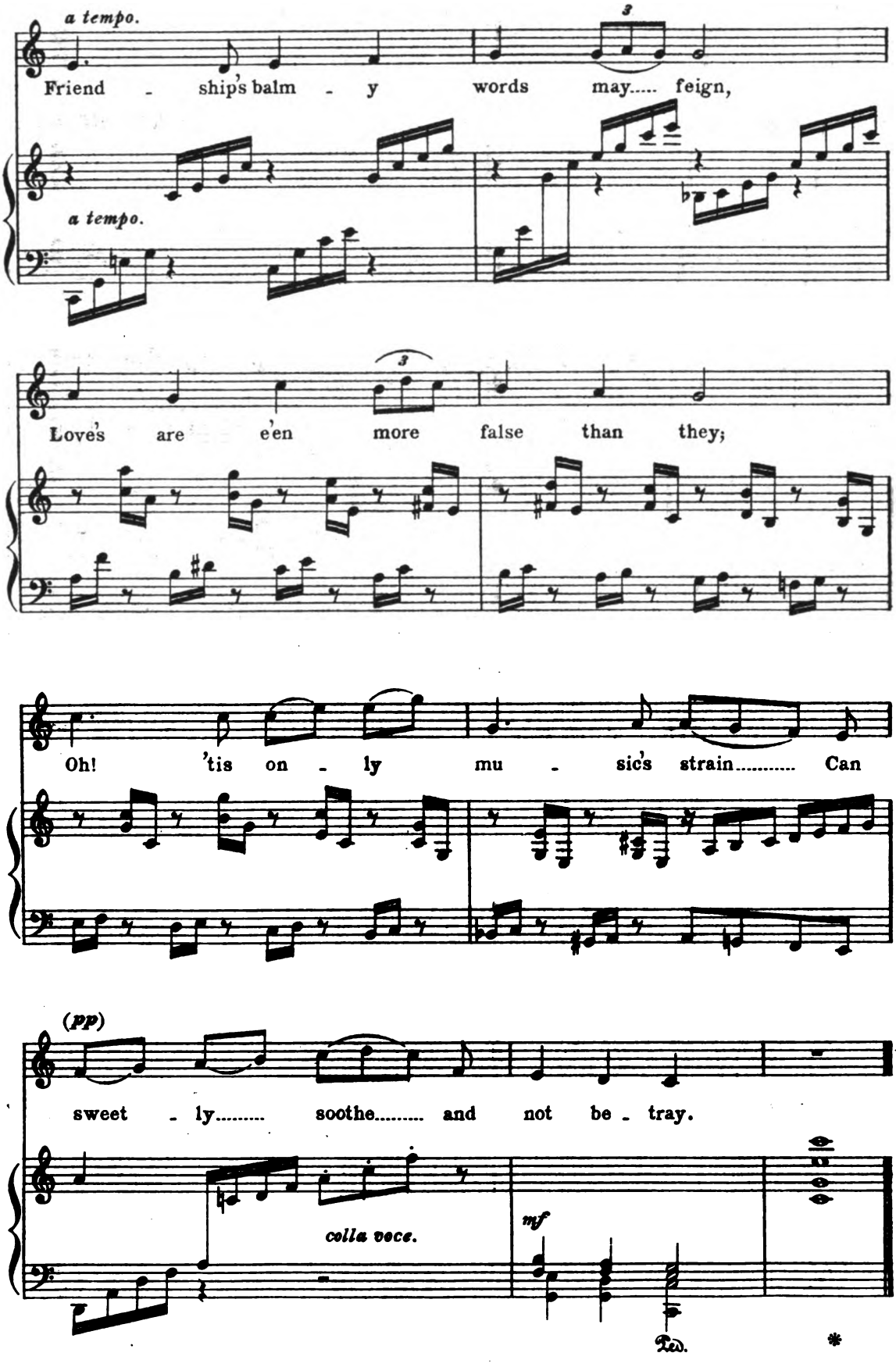

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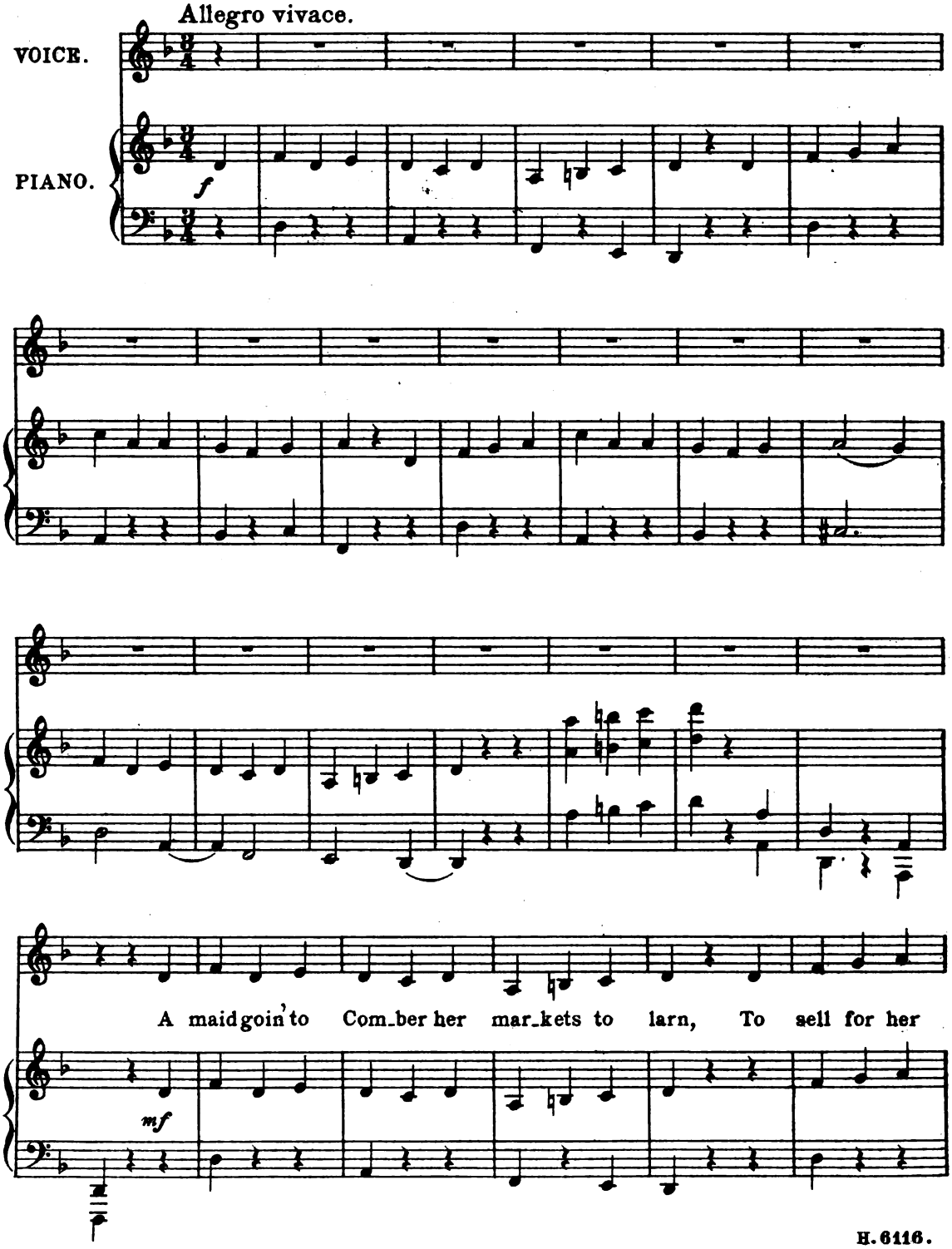
The next market day.

Fragment of Tyrone Ballad, adapted. ULSTER MELODY.



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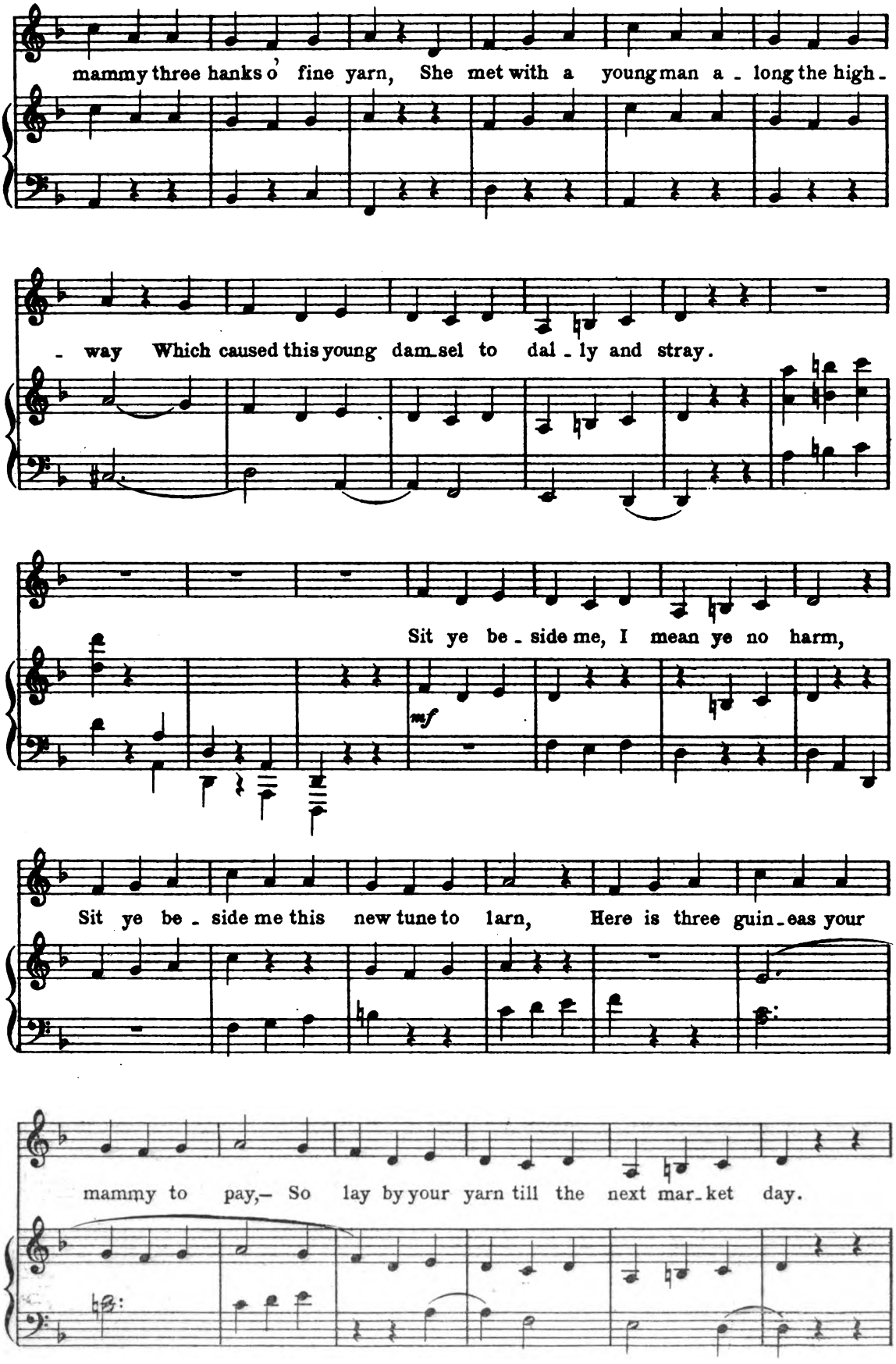

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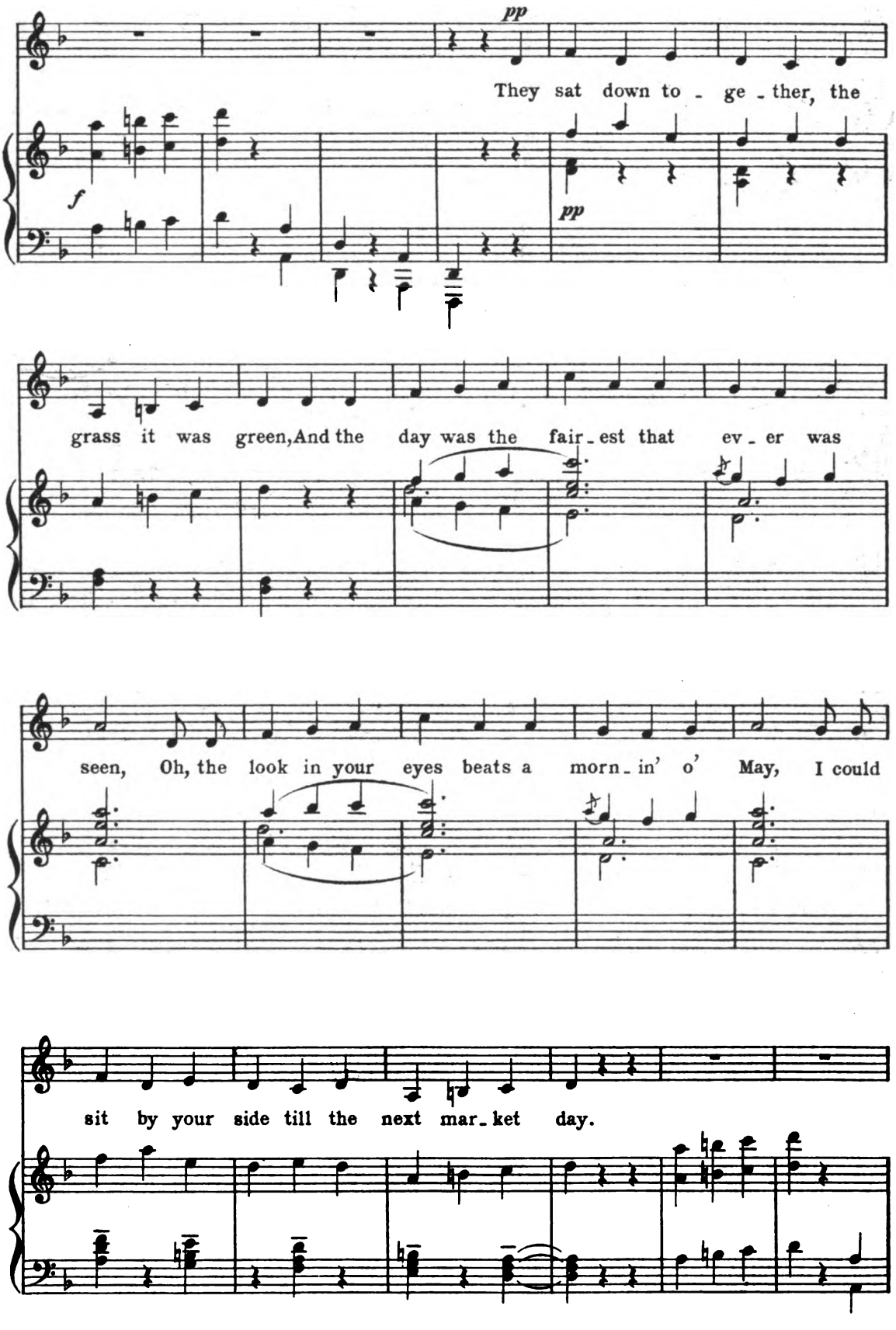

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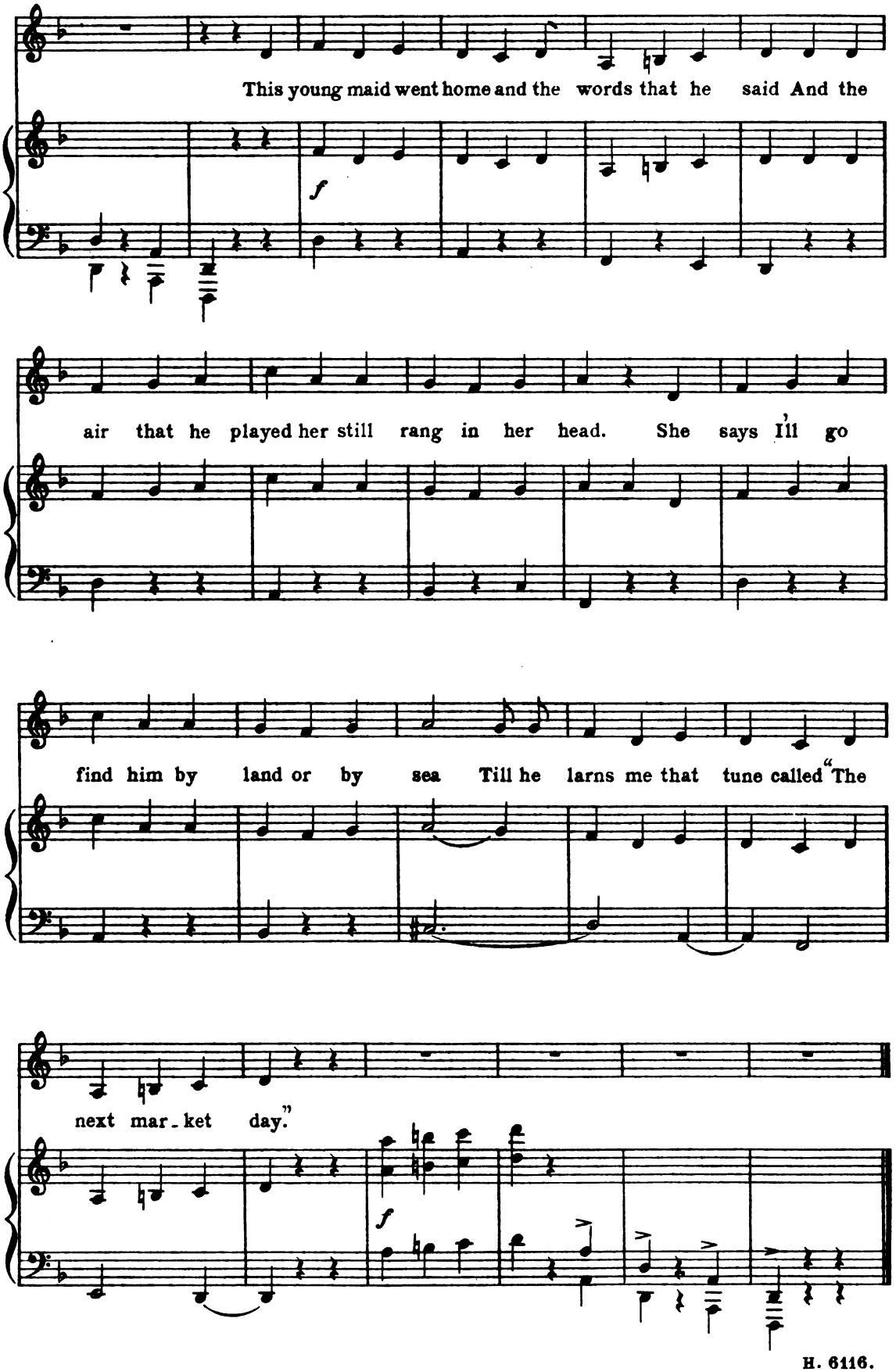

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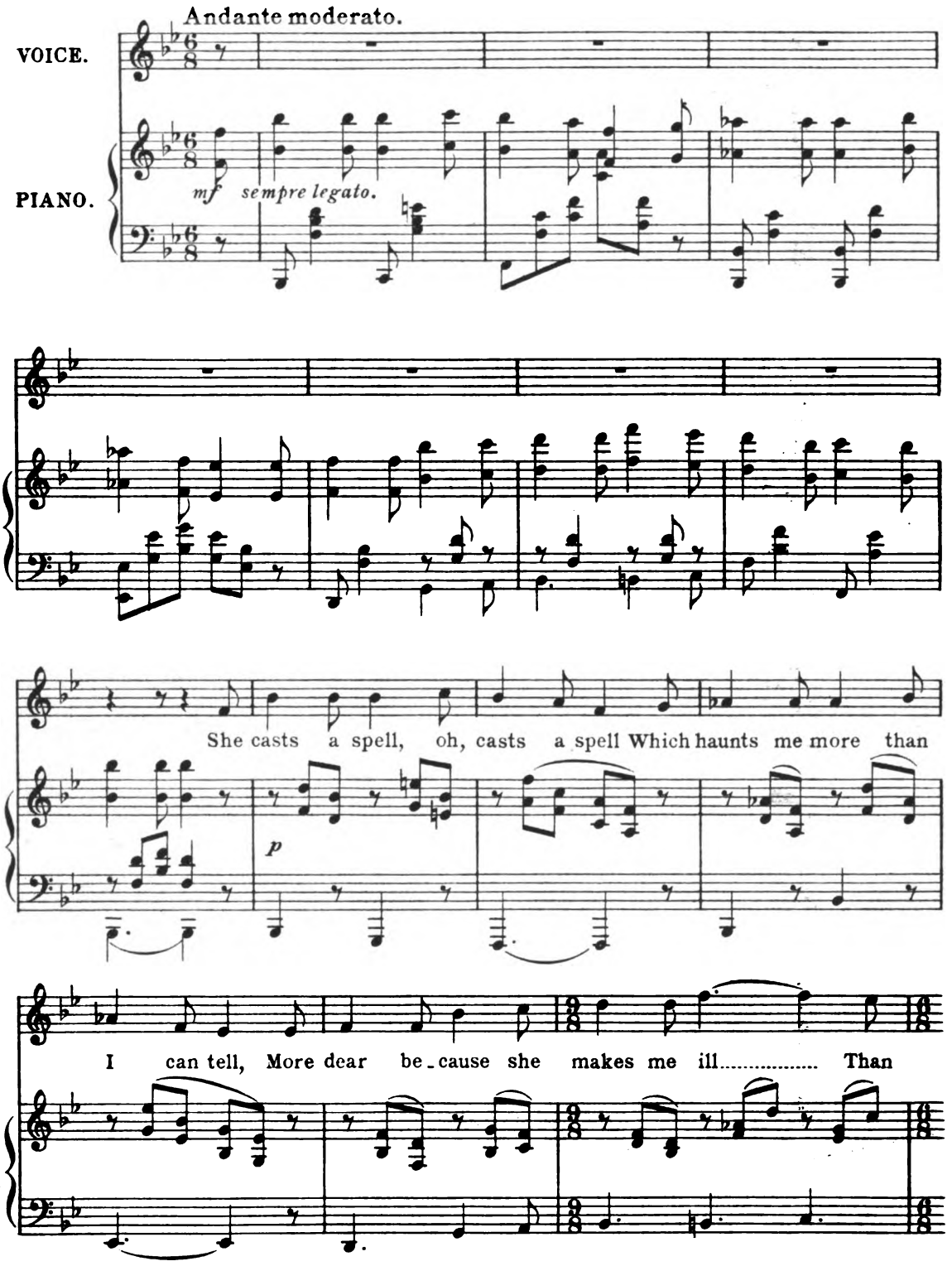
My love, oh, she is my love.

Words by
DOUGLAS HYDE.
(From the Irish.)

SOUTH IRISH.



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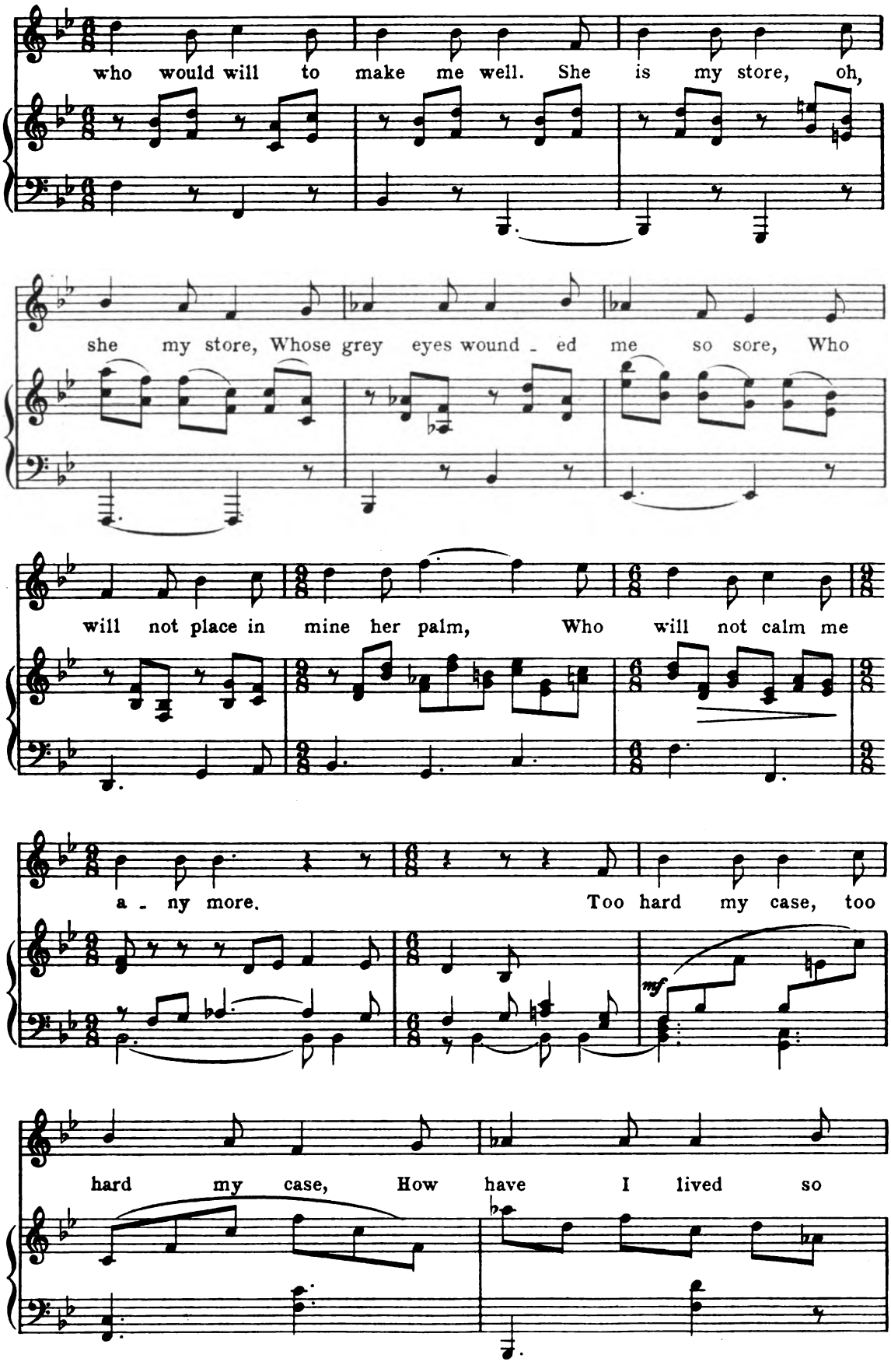

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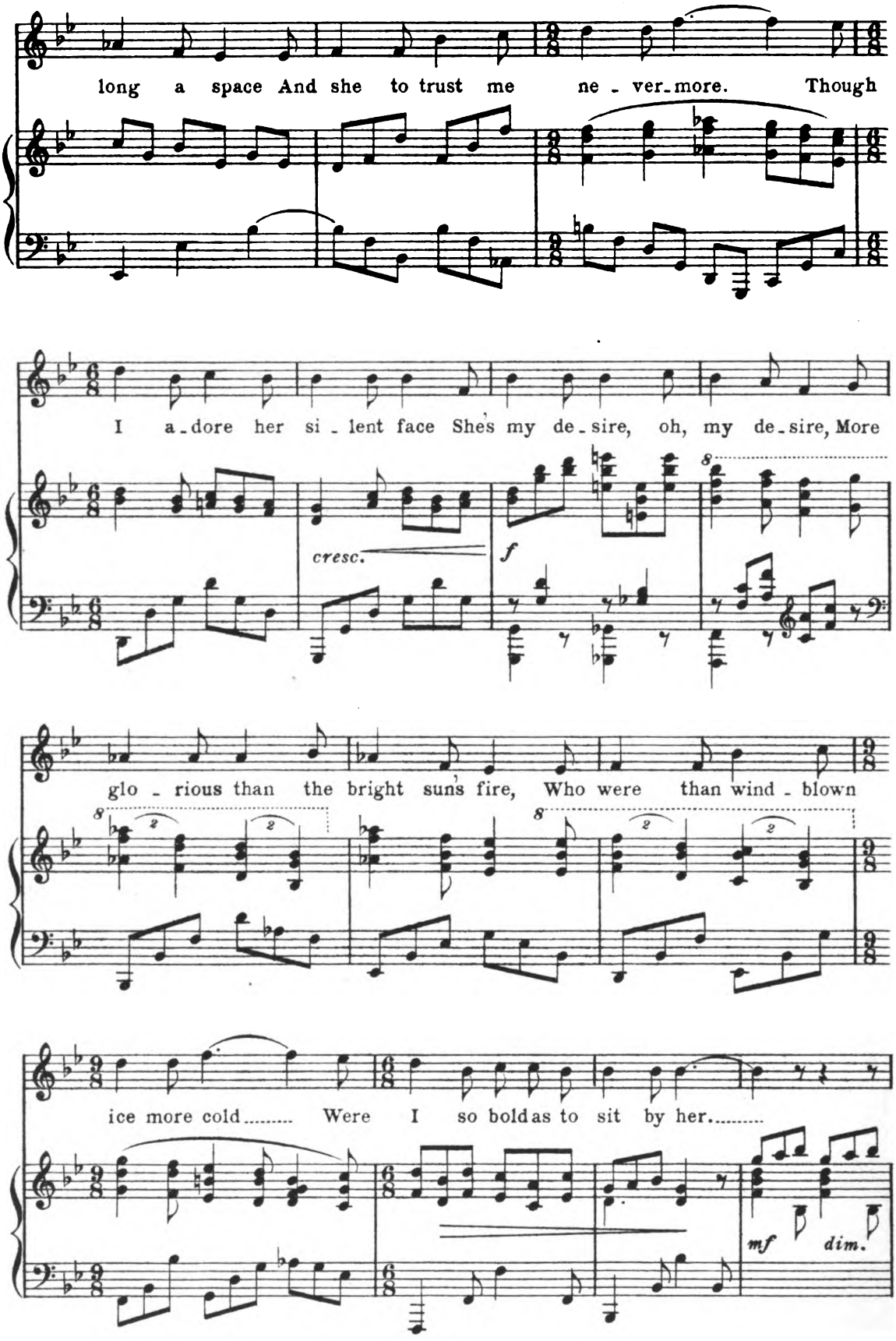

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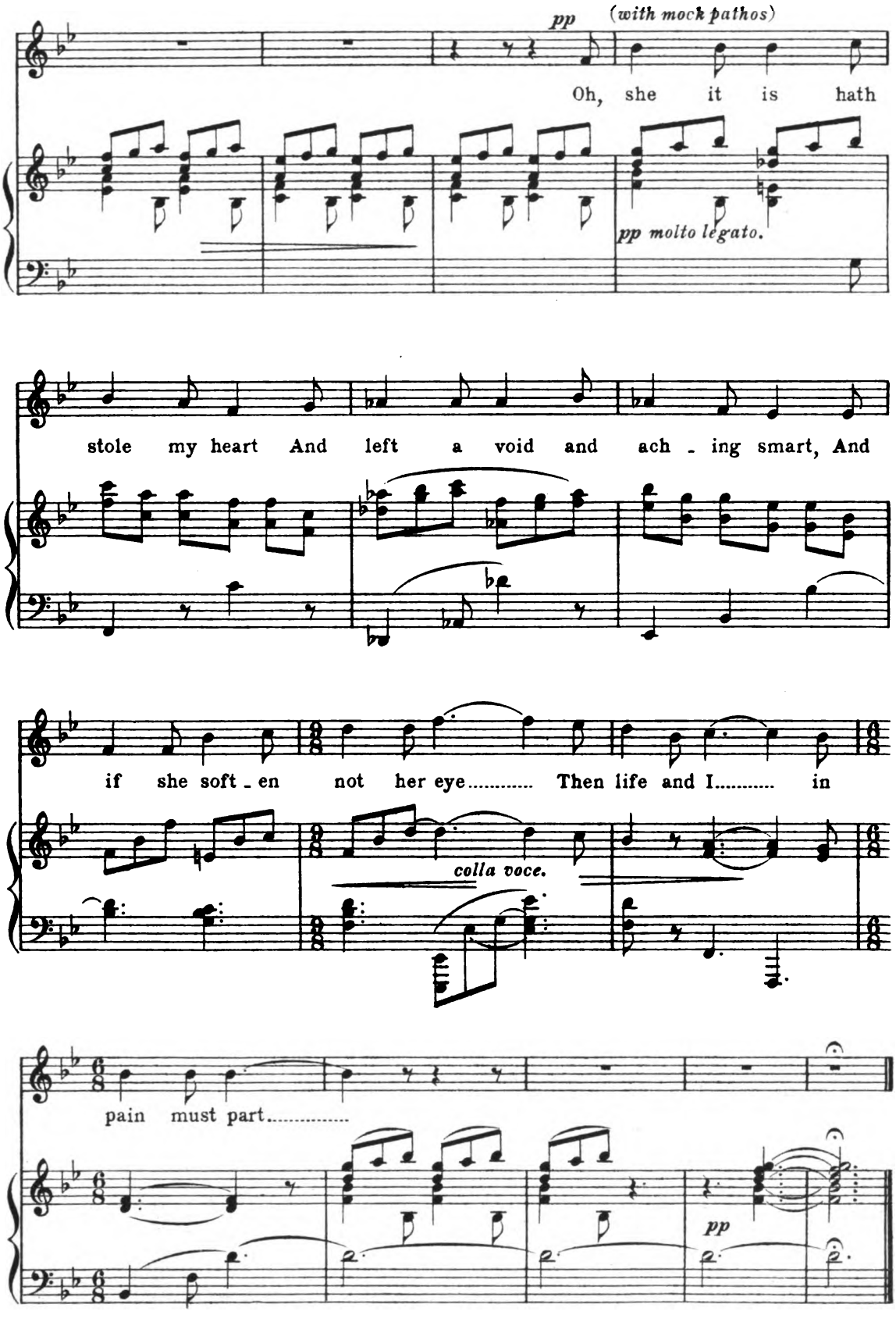

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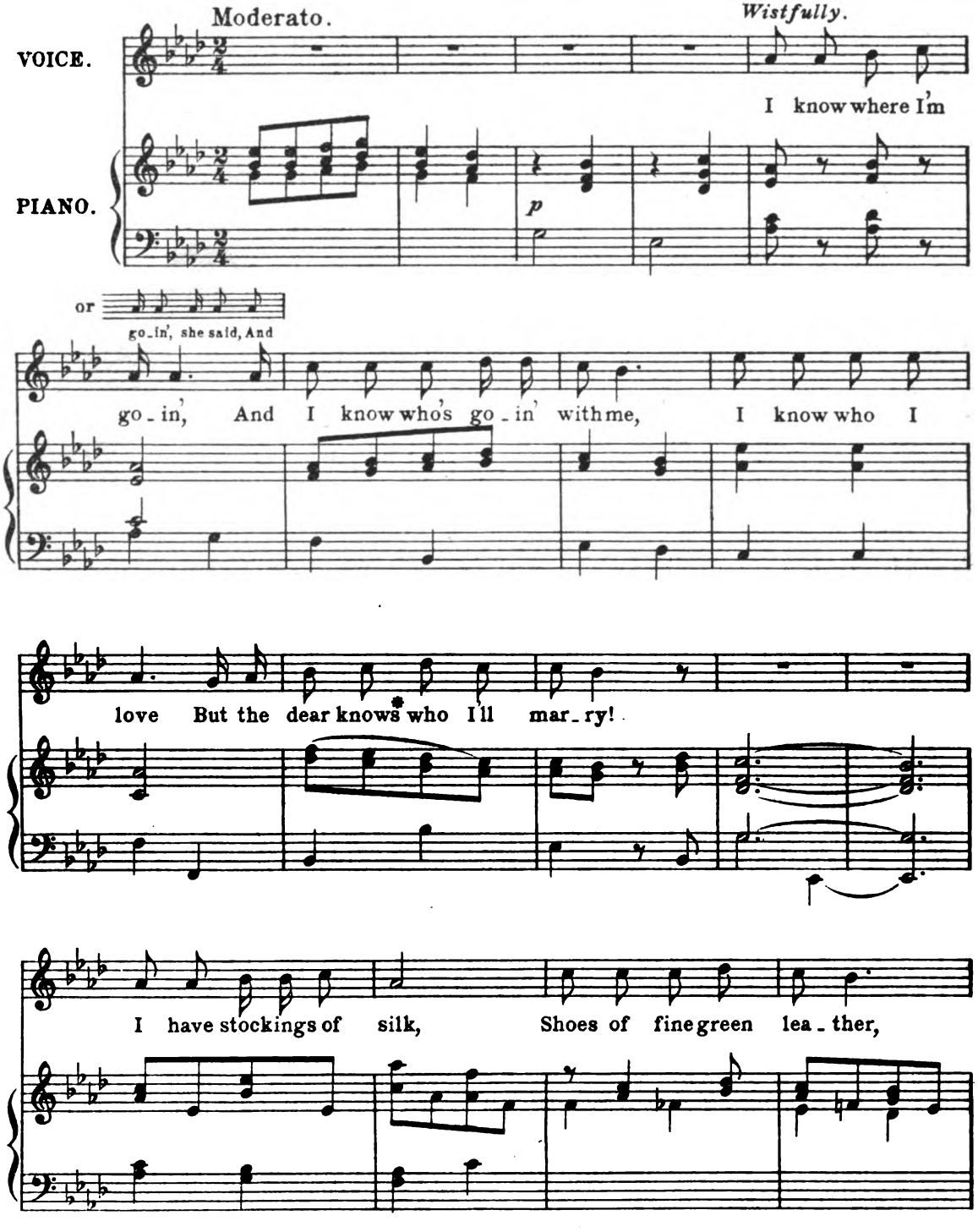
I know where I'm goin'.

OLD SONG. COUNTY ANTRIM.



*Dear knows: the Ulster equivalent of "Goodness knows".

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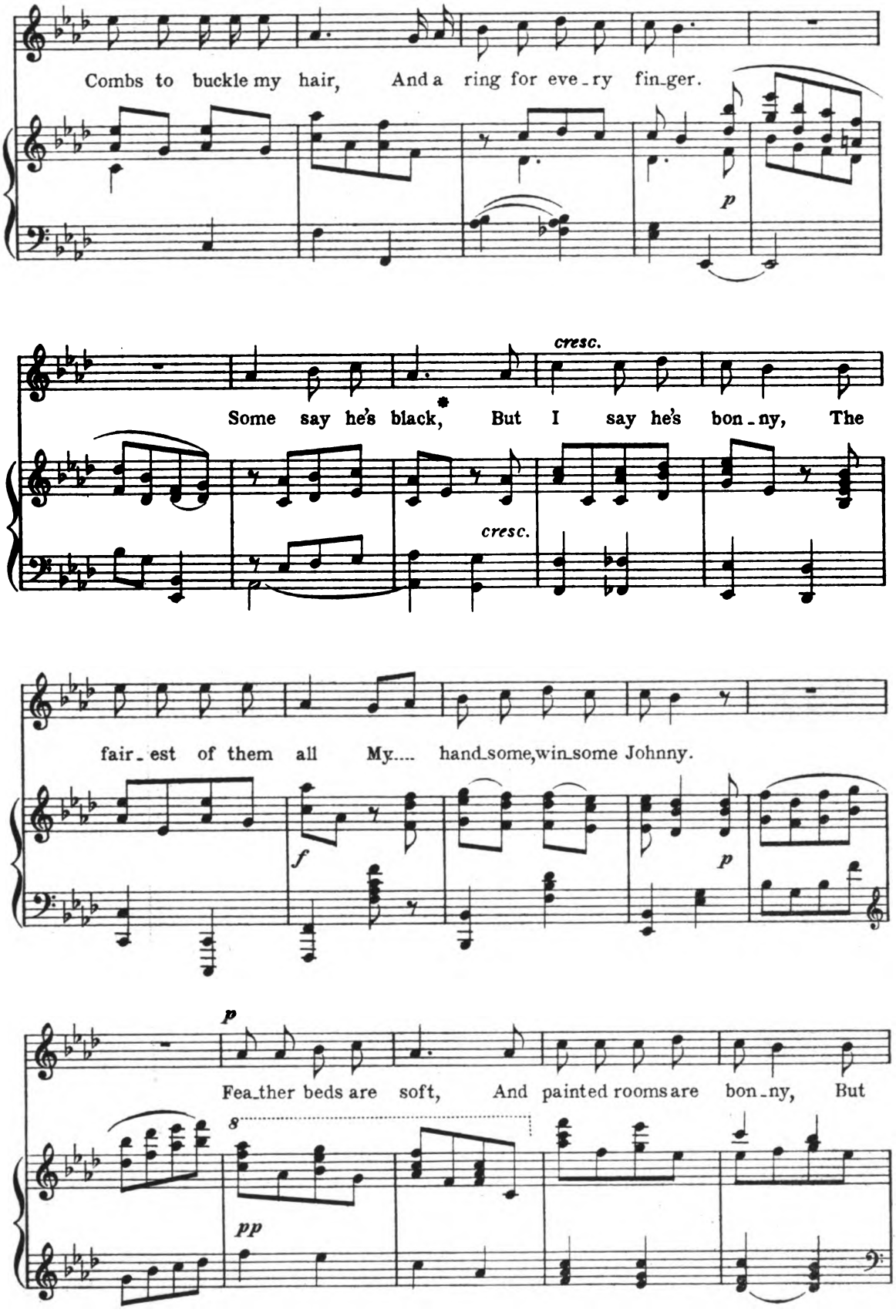

*Black: dour, ungracious.

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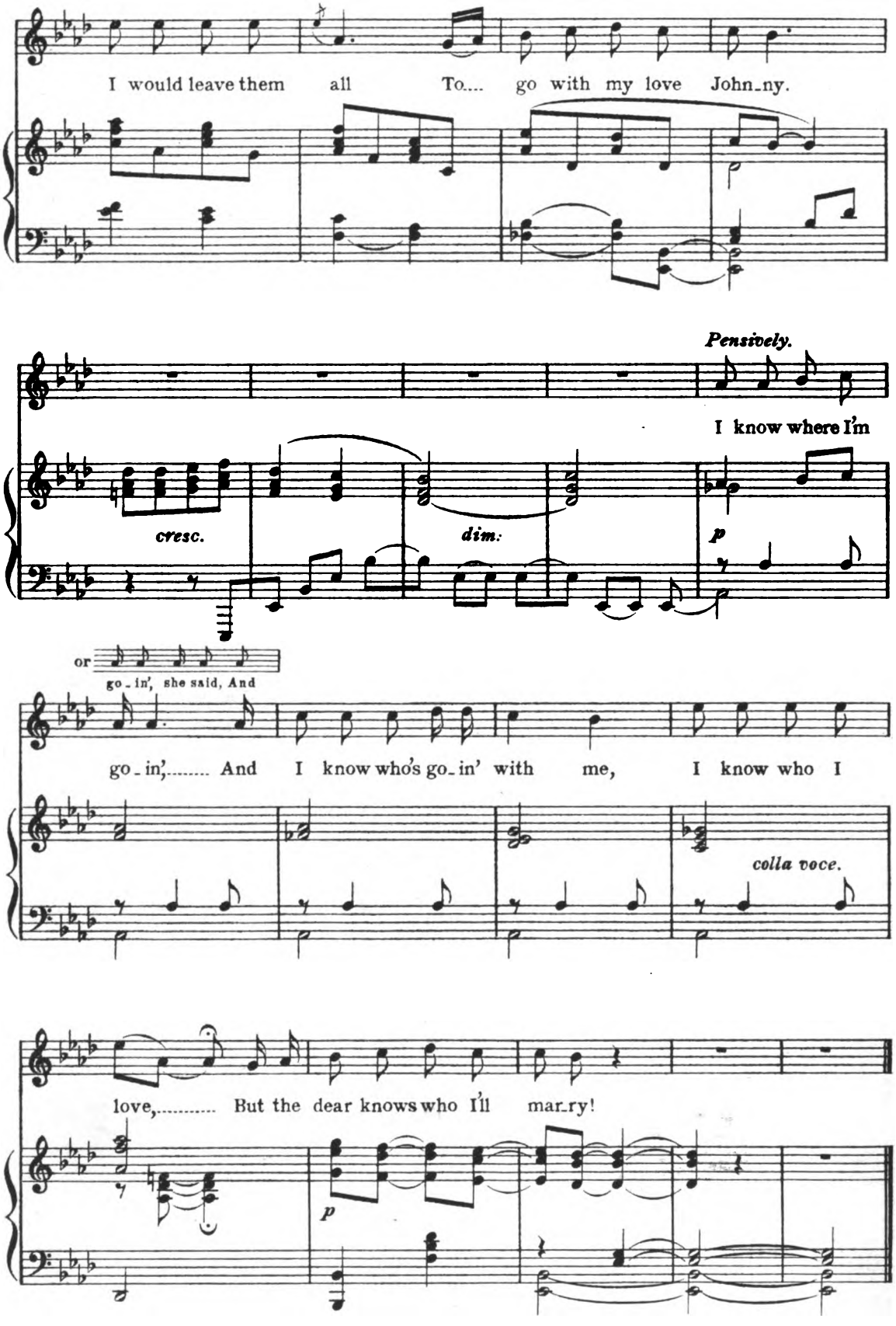

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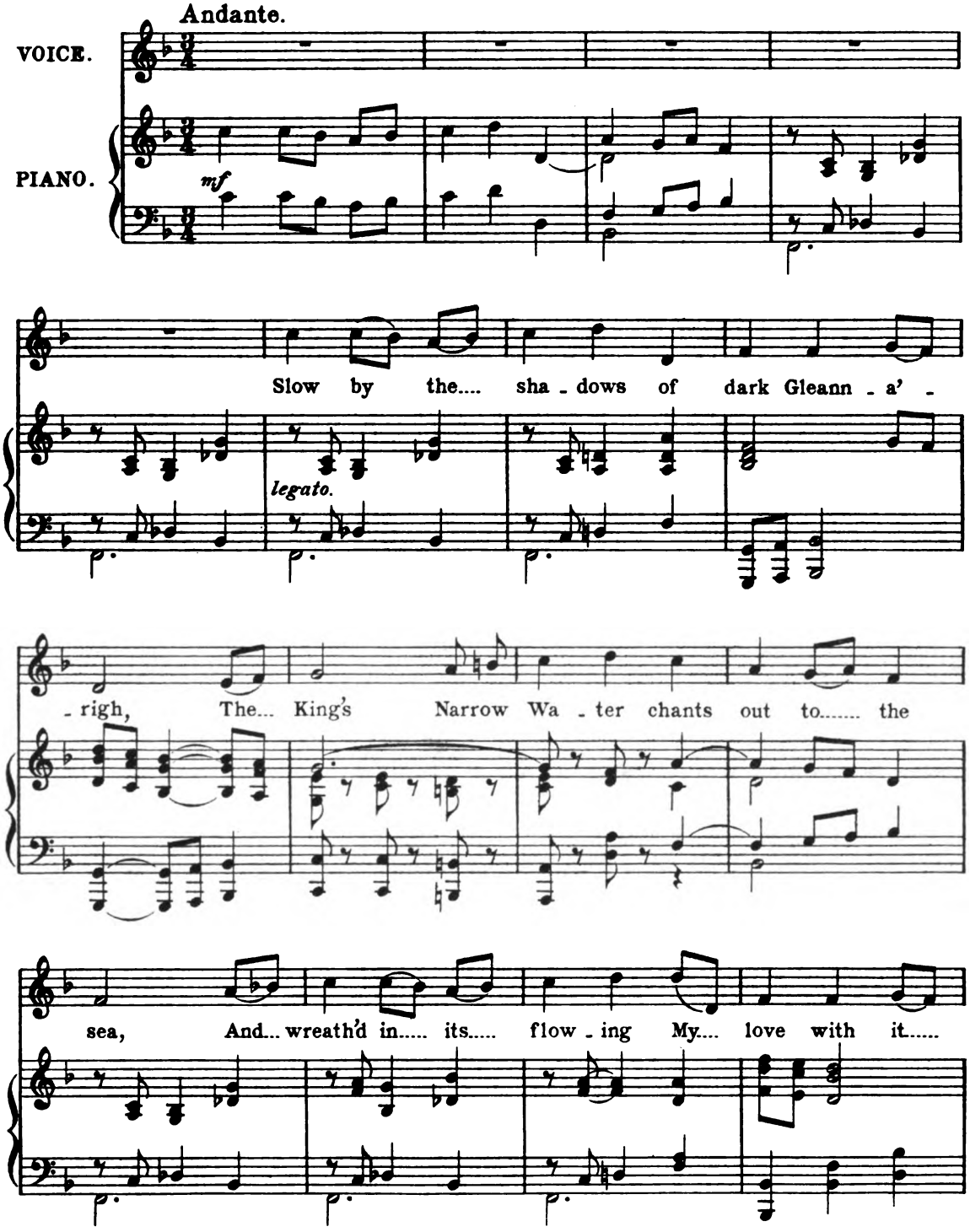
Slow by the shadows.

Words by
SEOSAMH MacCATHMHAOIL.

COUNTY DONEGAL.



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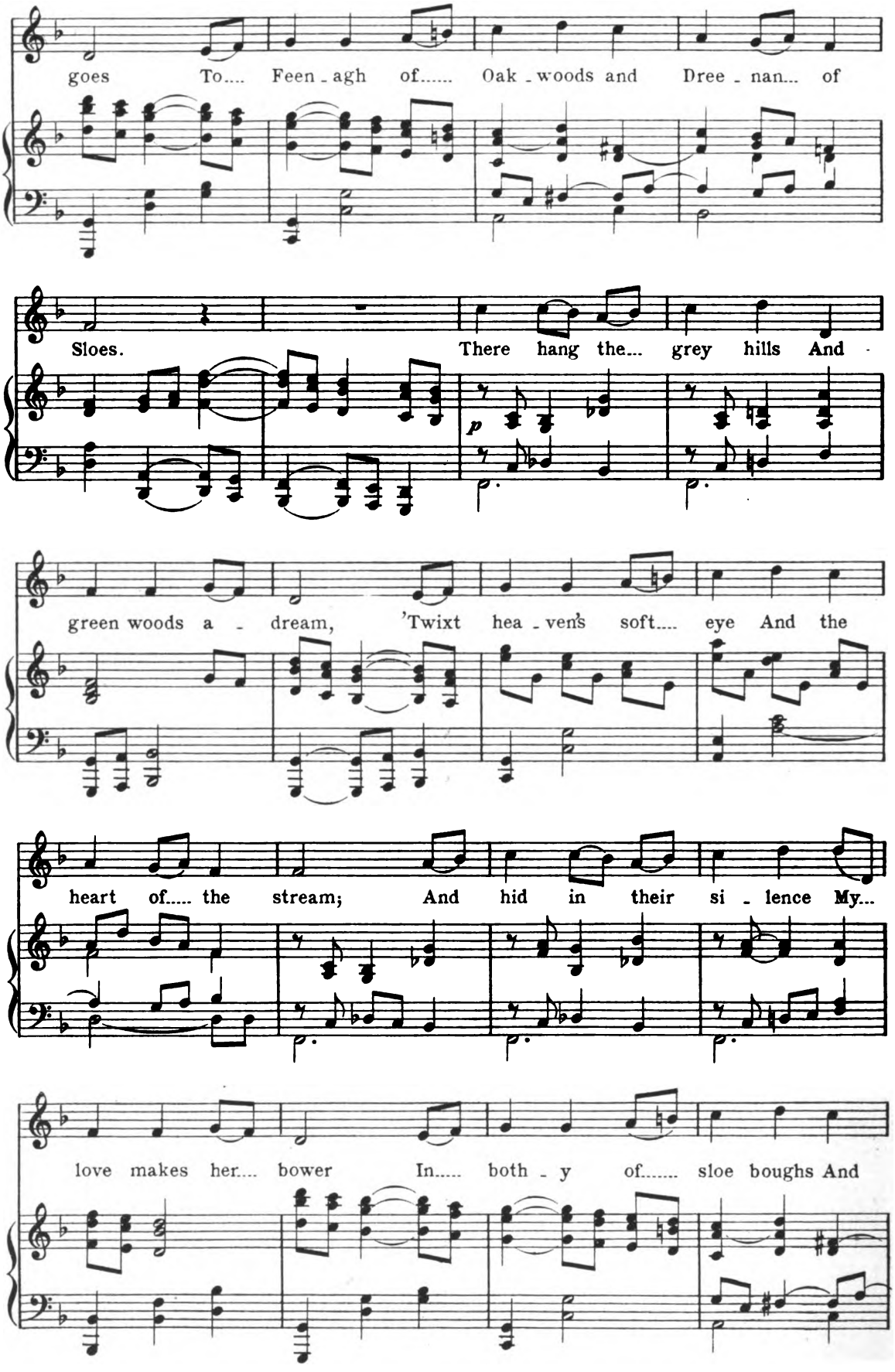

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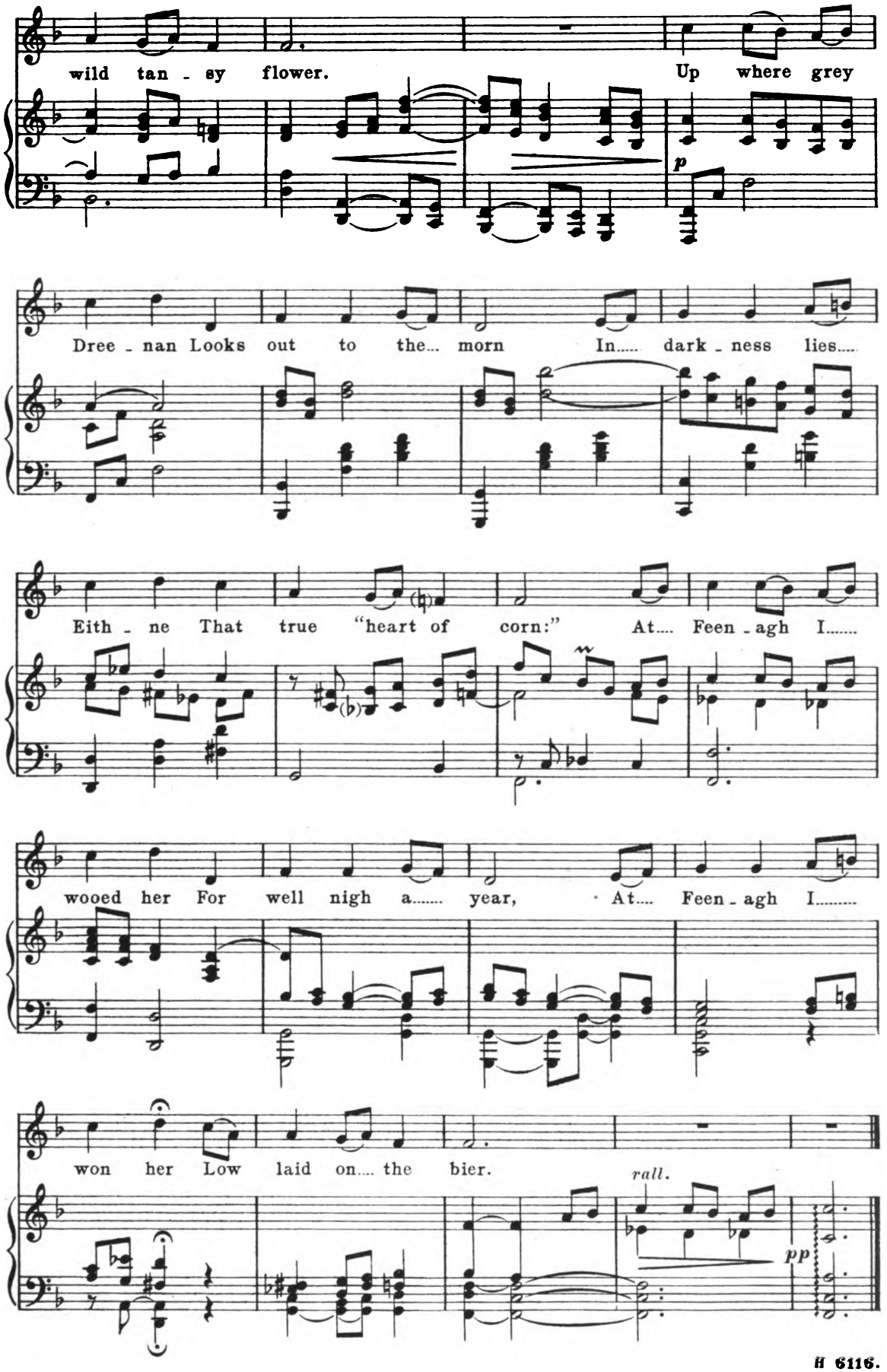

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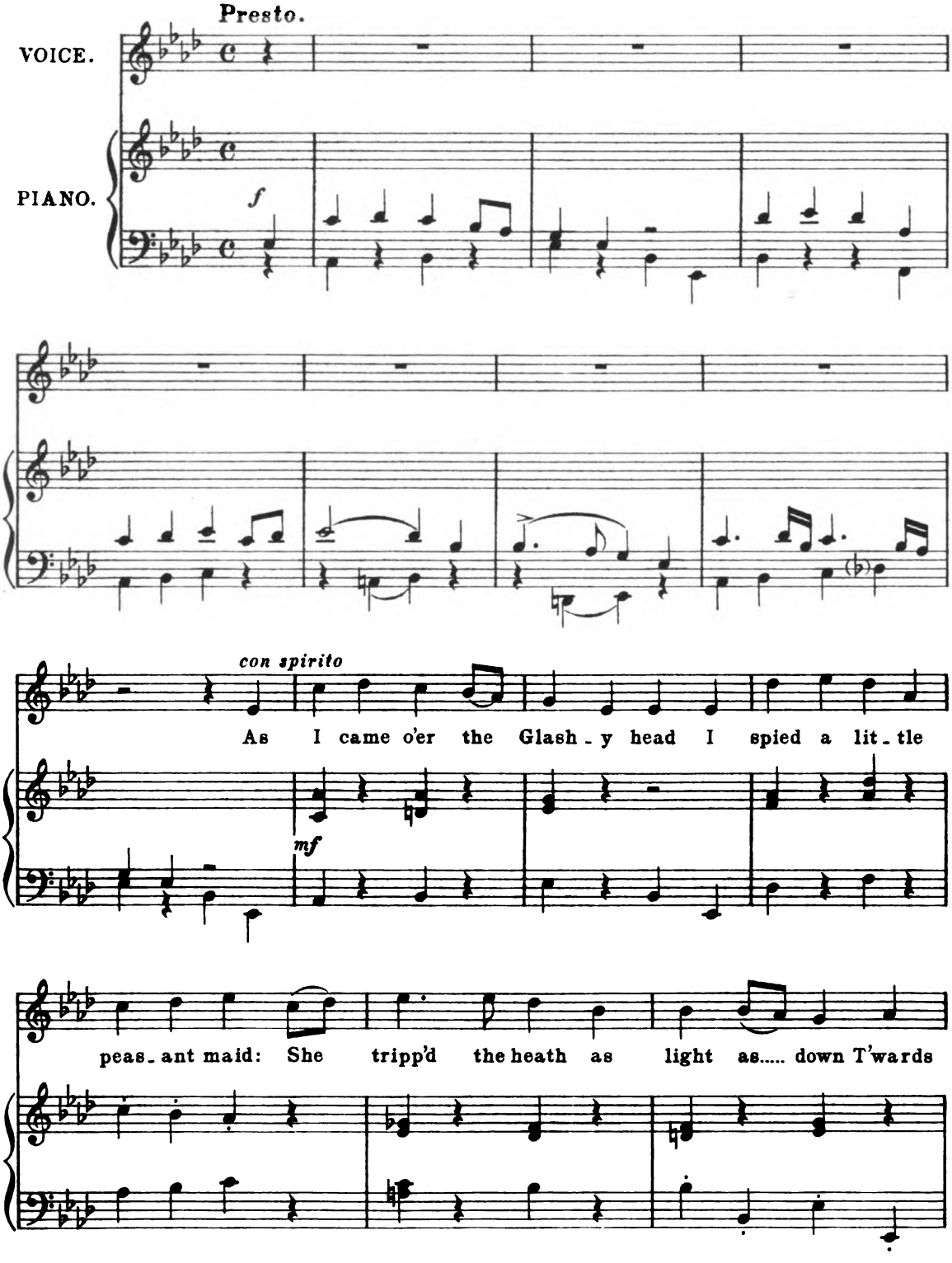
The Little Rose of Gartan.

Words by
SEOSAMH MacCATHMHAOIL.

COUNTY DONEGAL.



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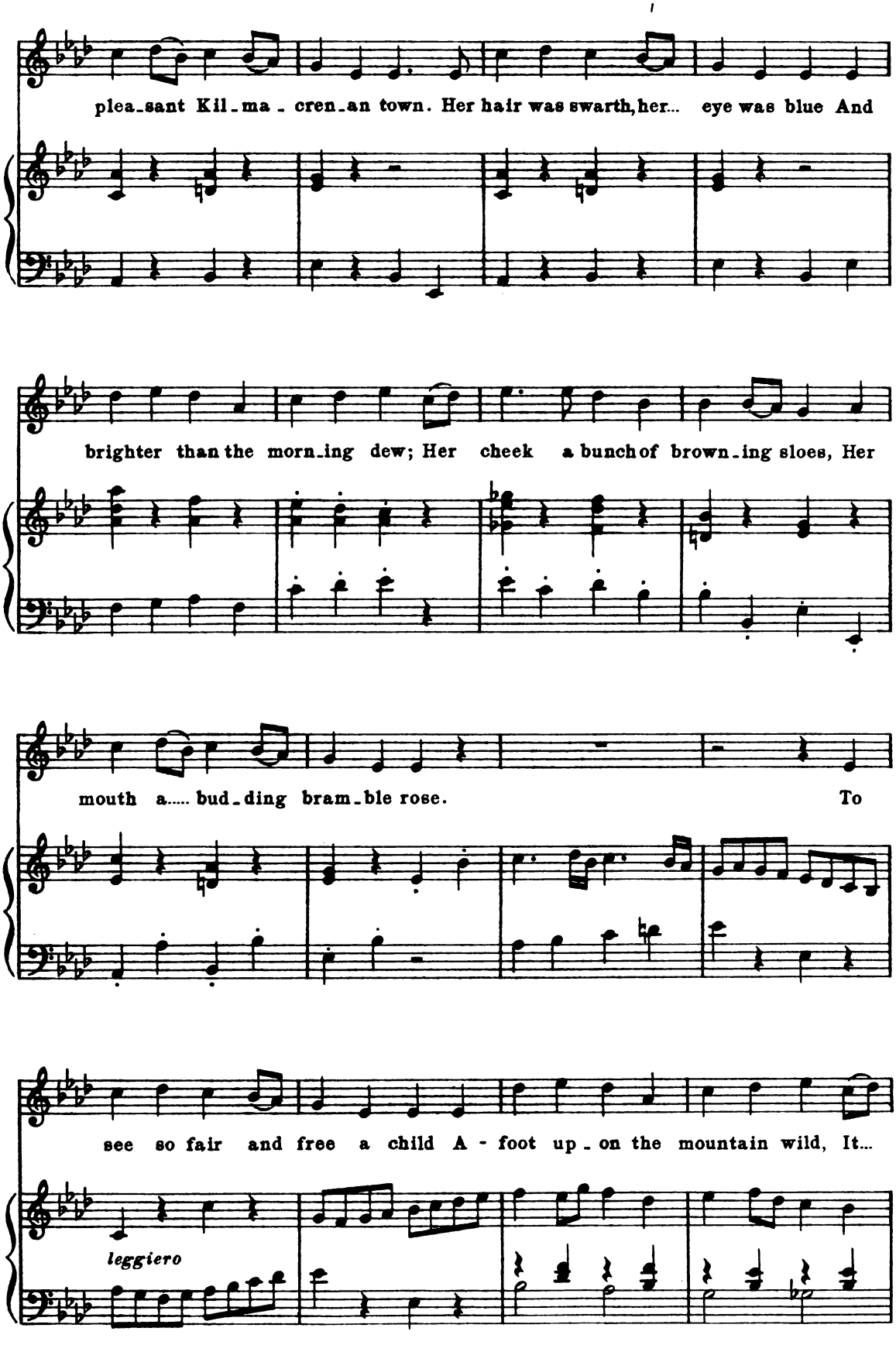

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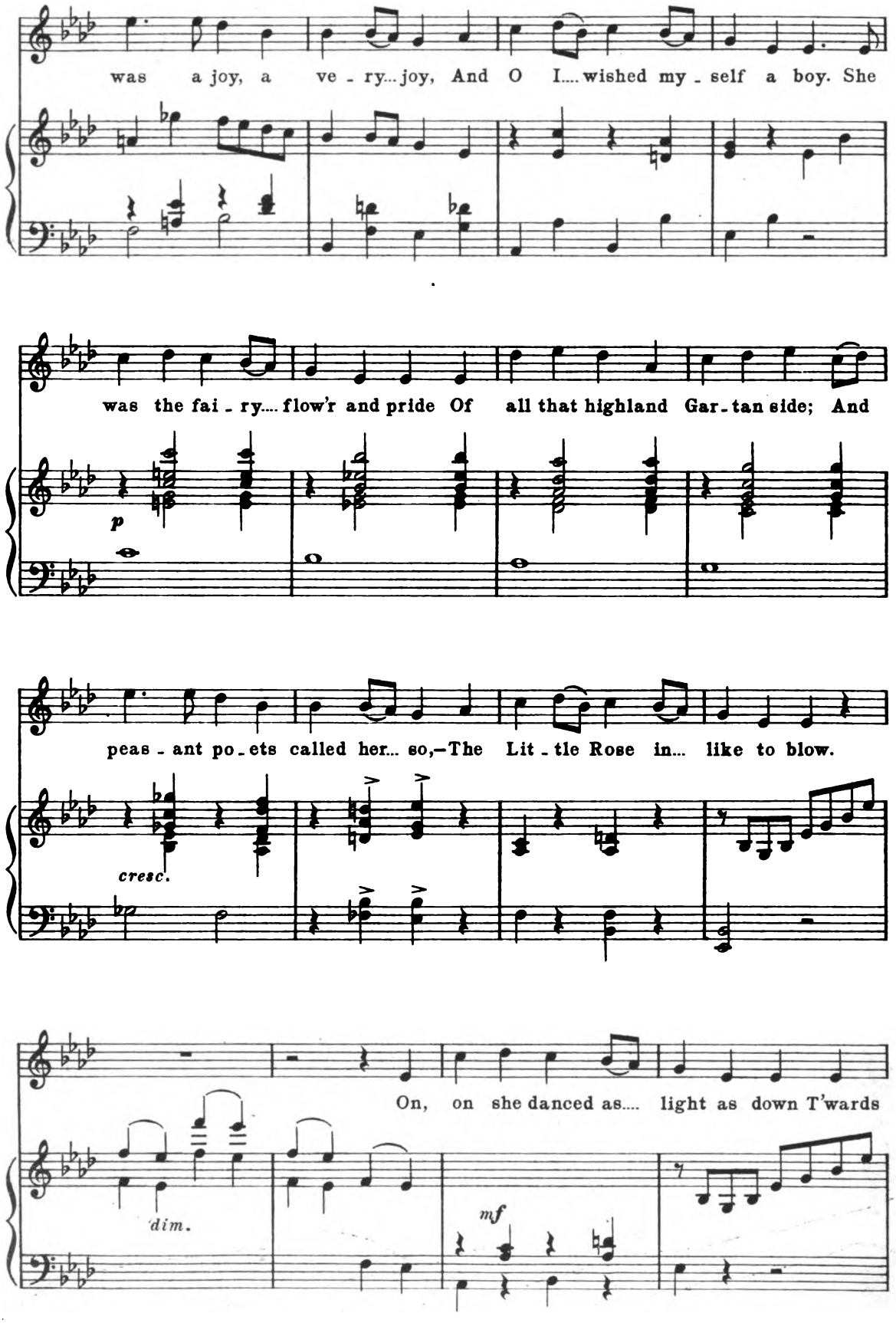

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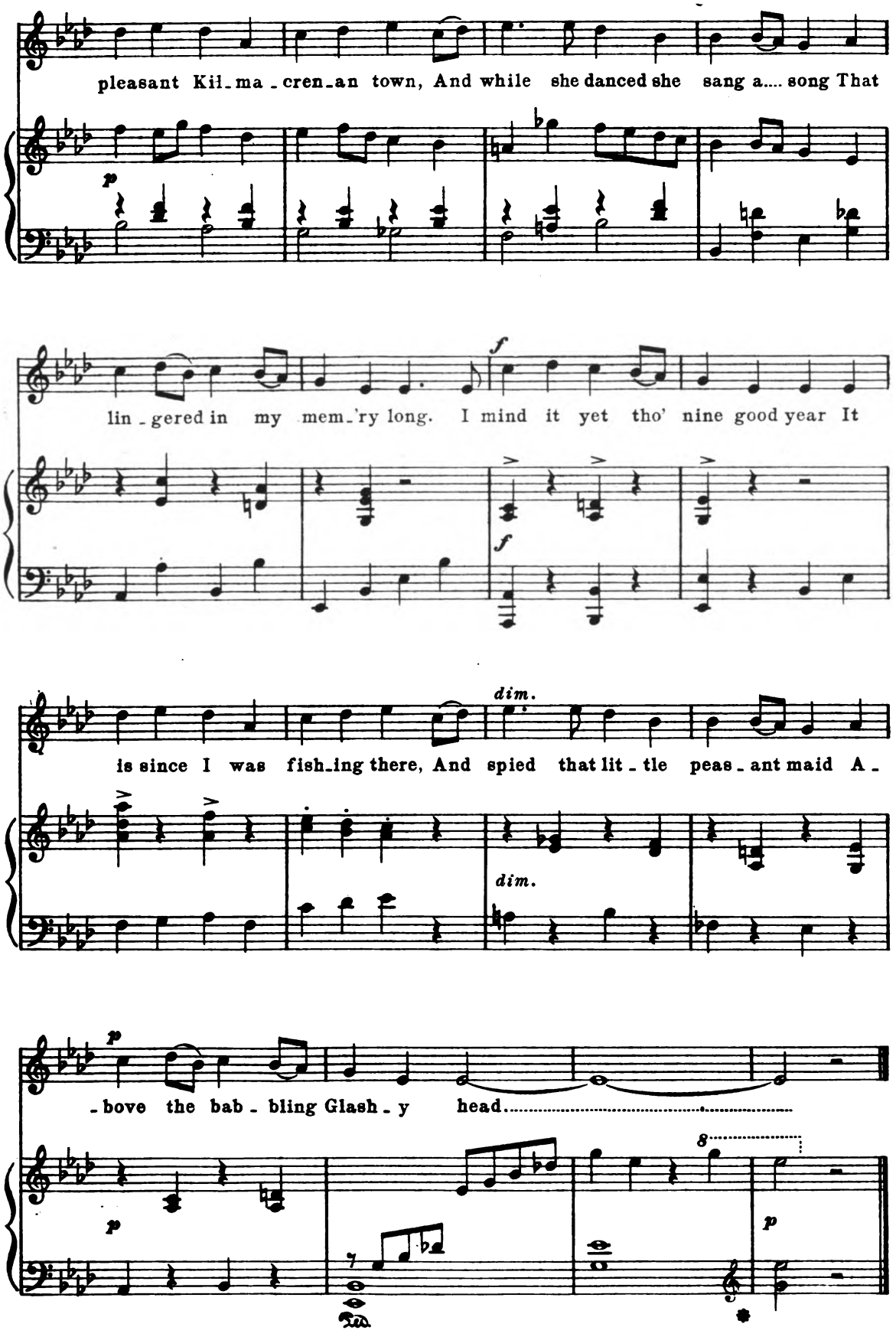

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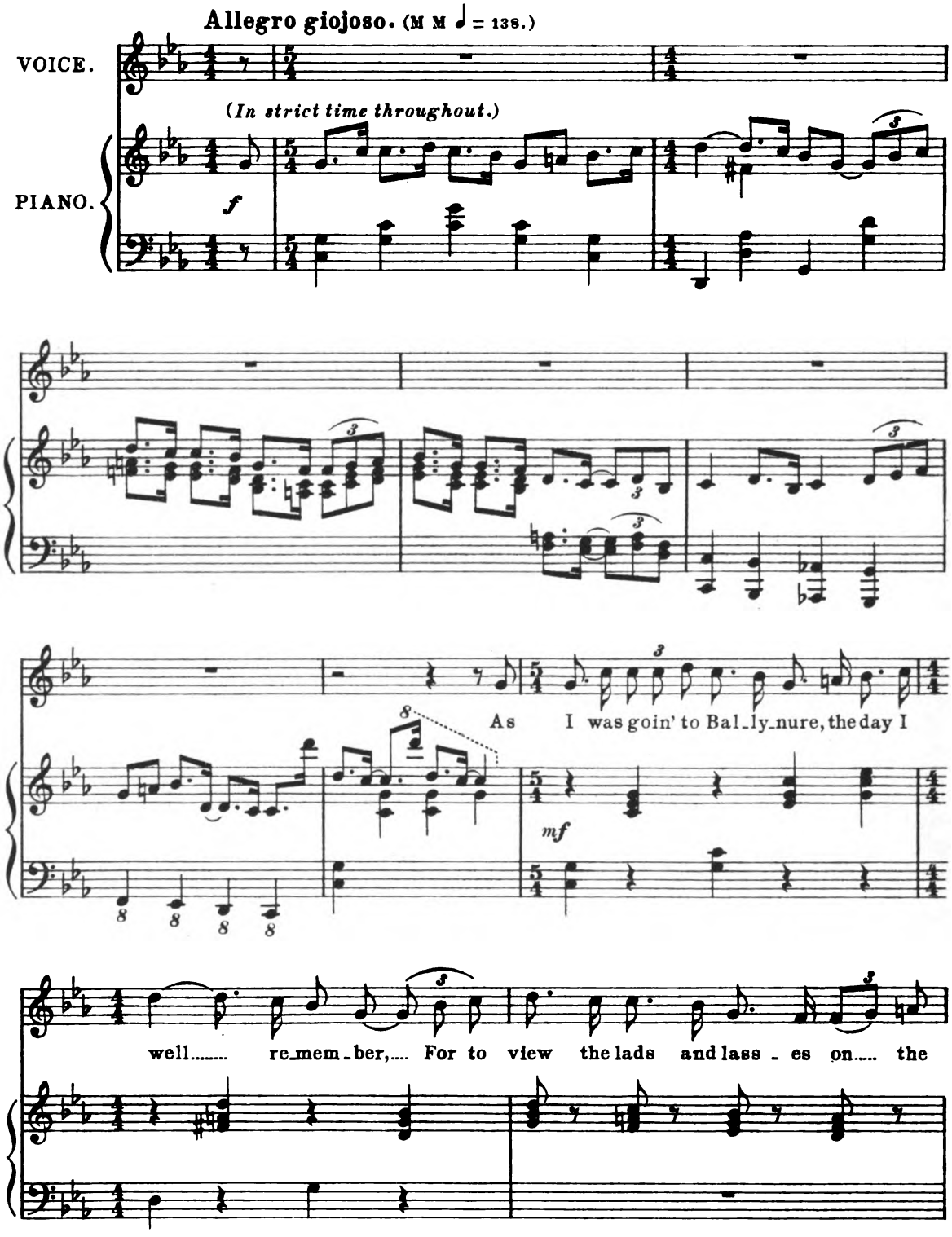
A Ballynure Ballad.

Fragment of an old Ballad. **COUNTY ANTRIM.**



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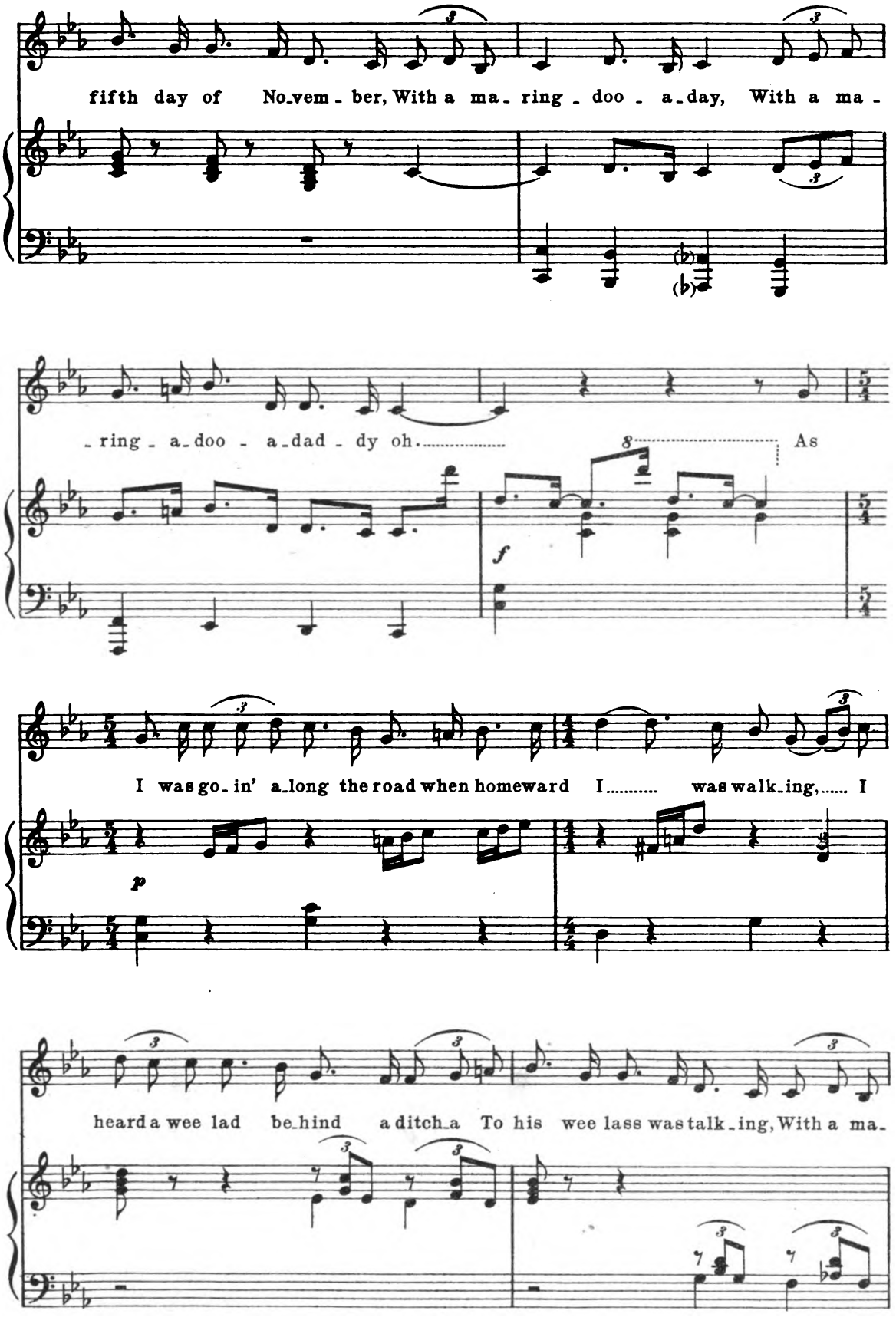

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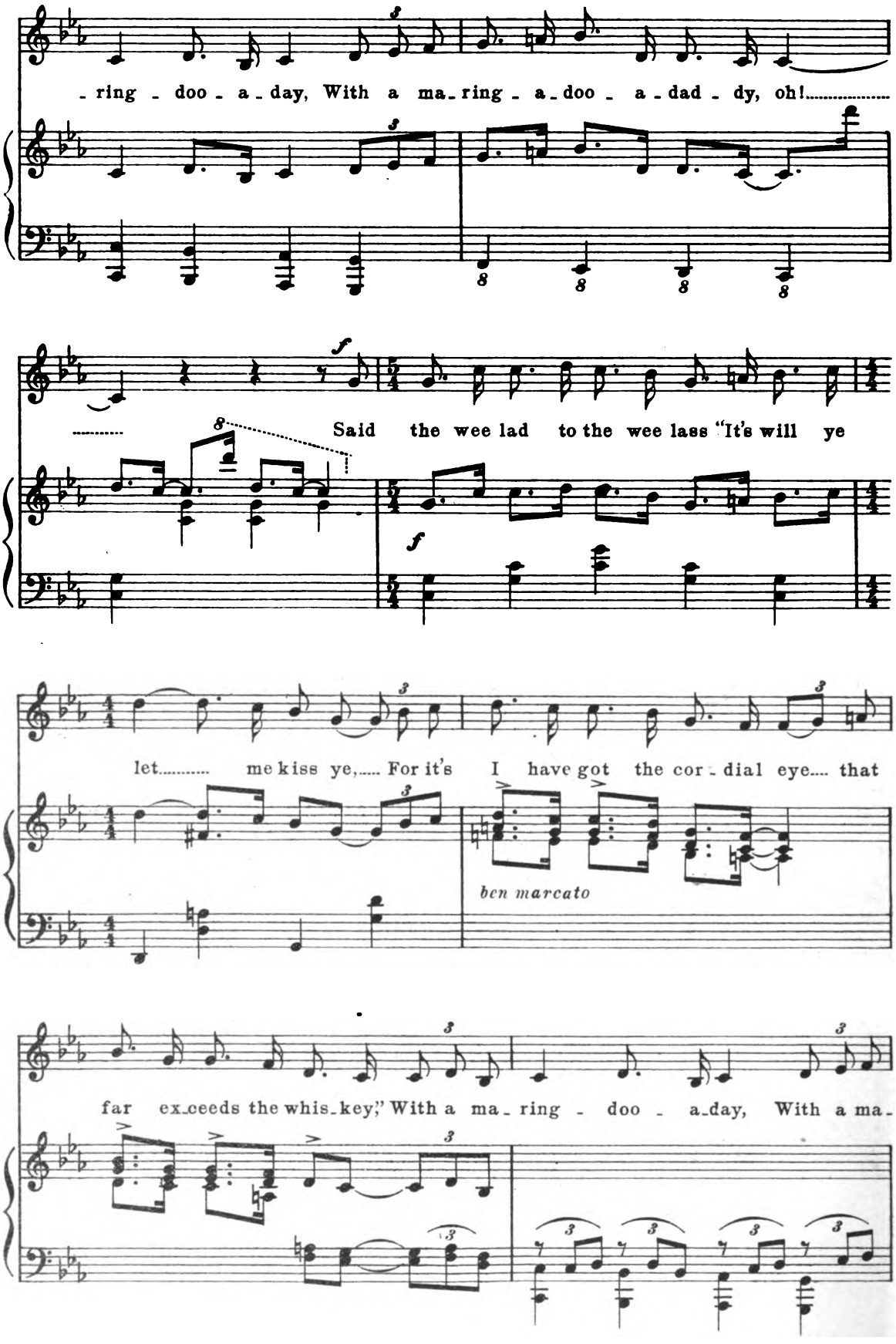

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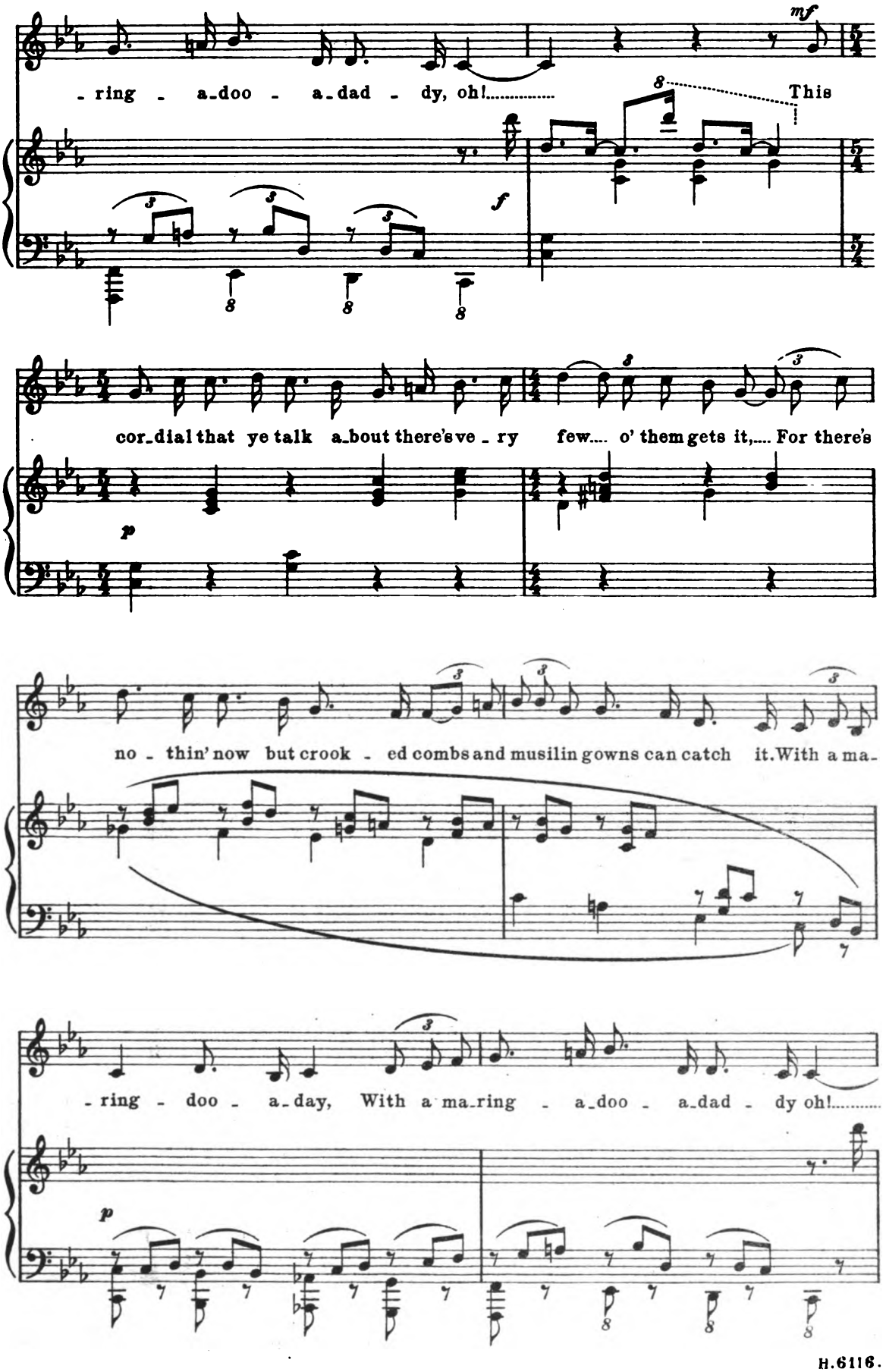

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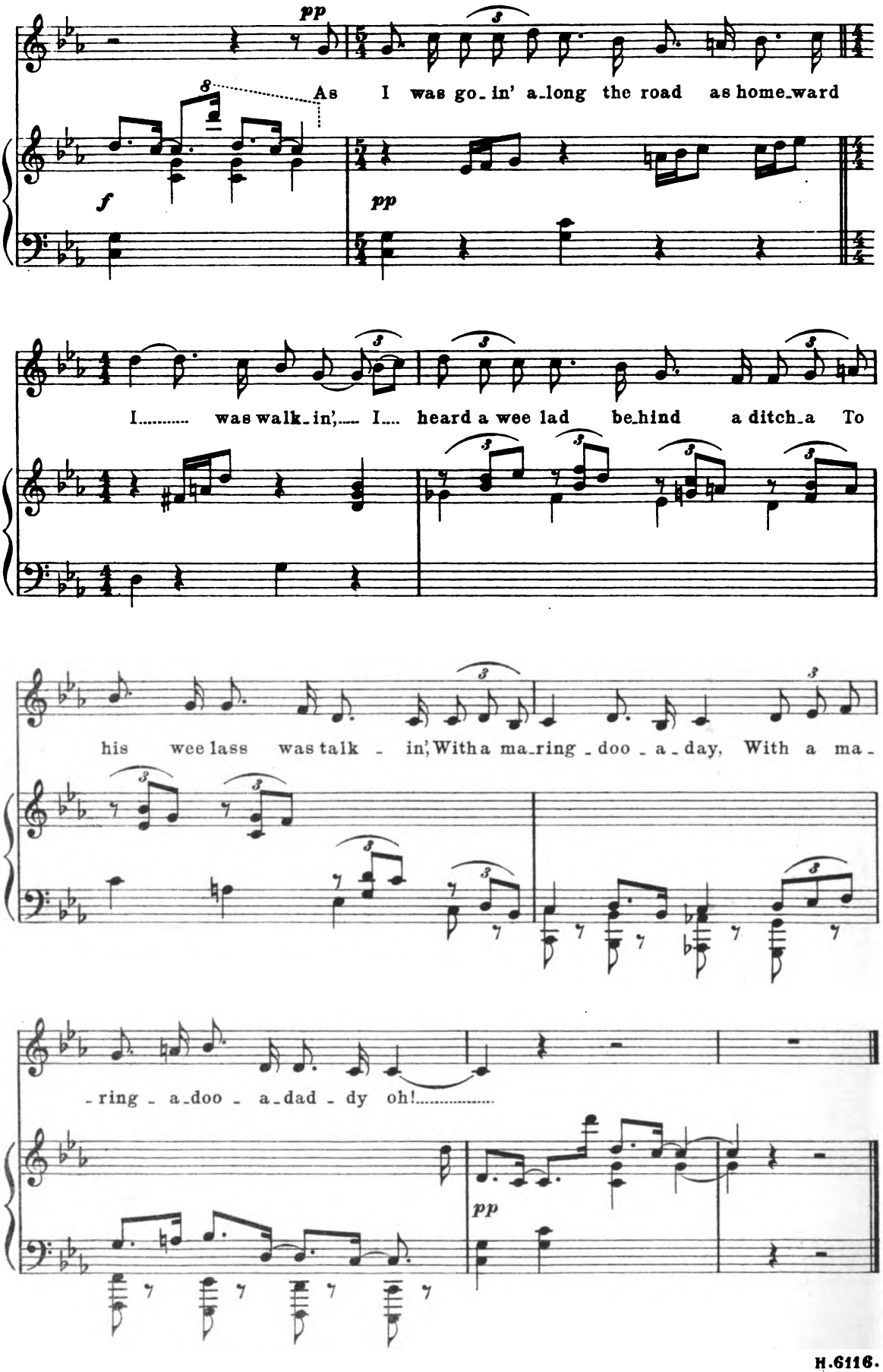

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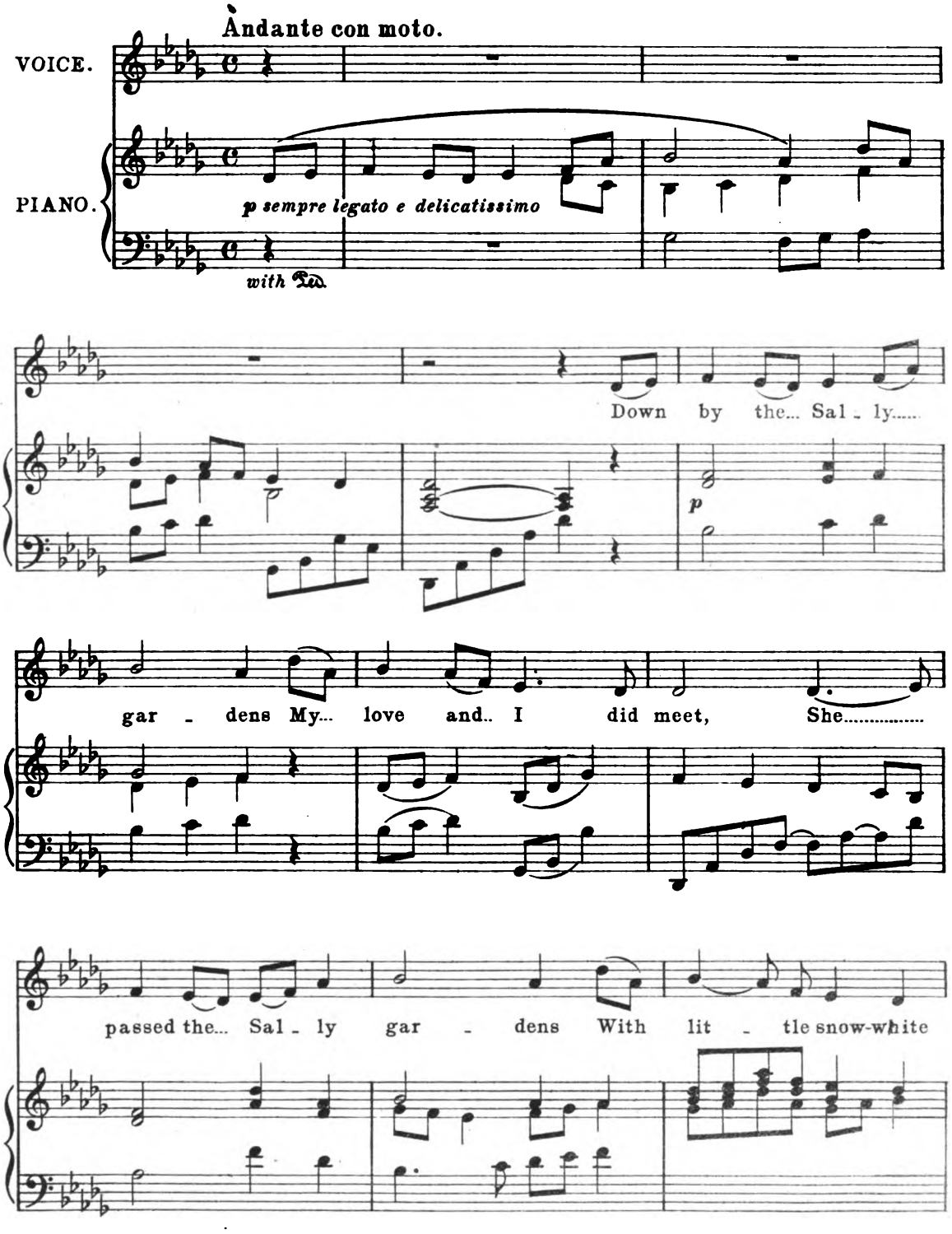
Down by the Sally Gardens.

Words by
W. B. YEATS.

Air: "The Maids of Mourne Shore."



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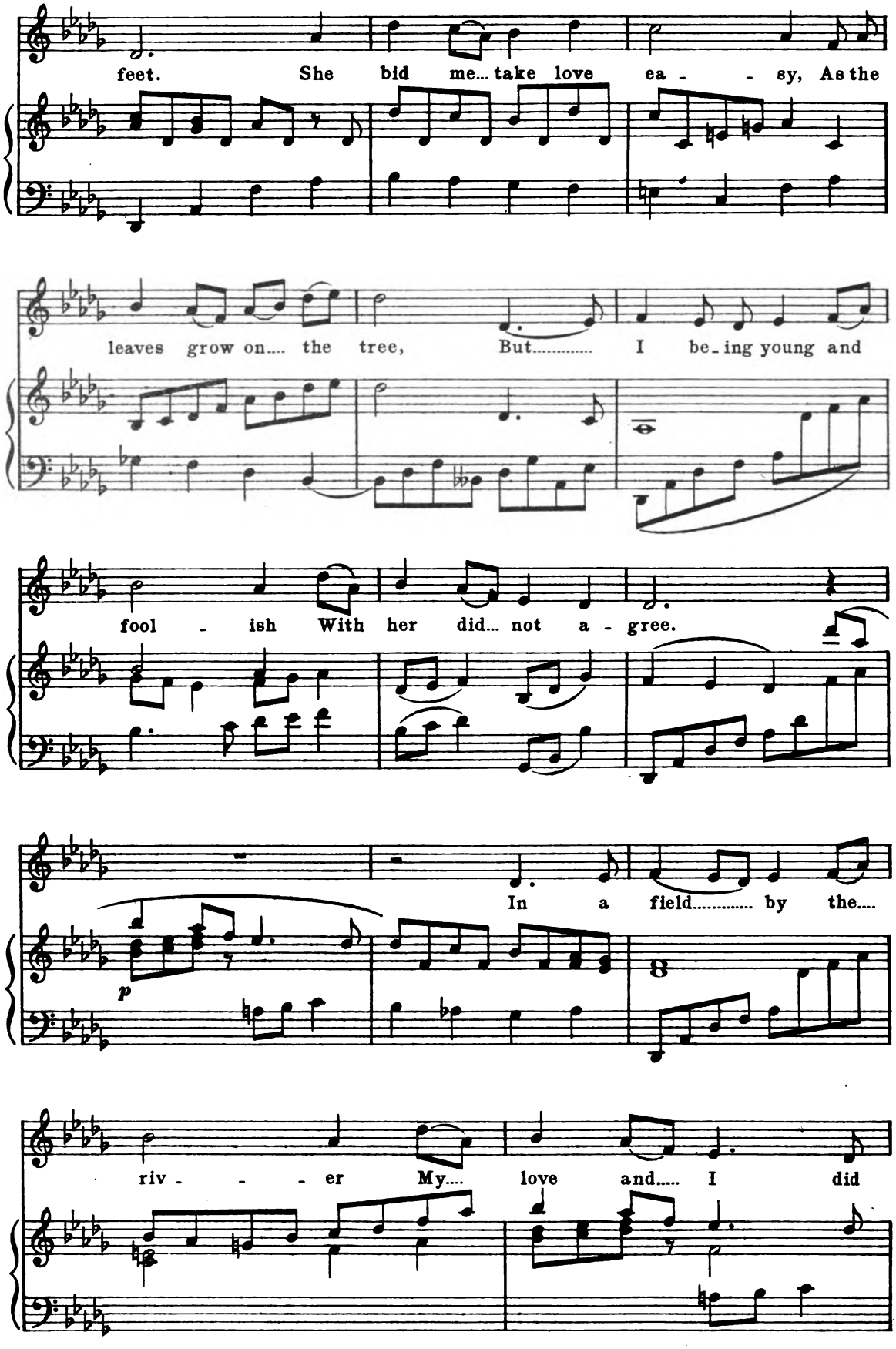

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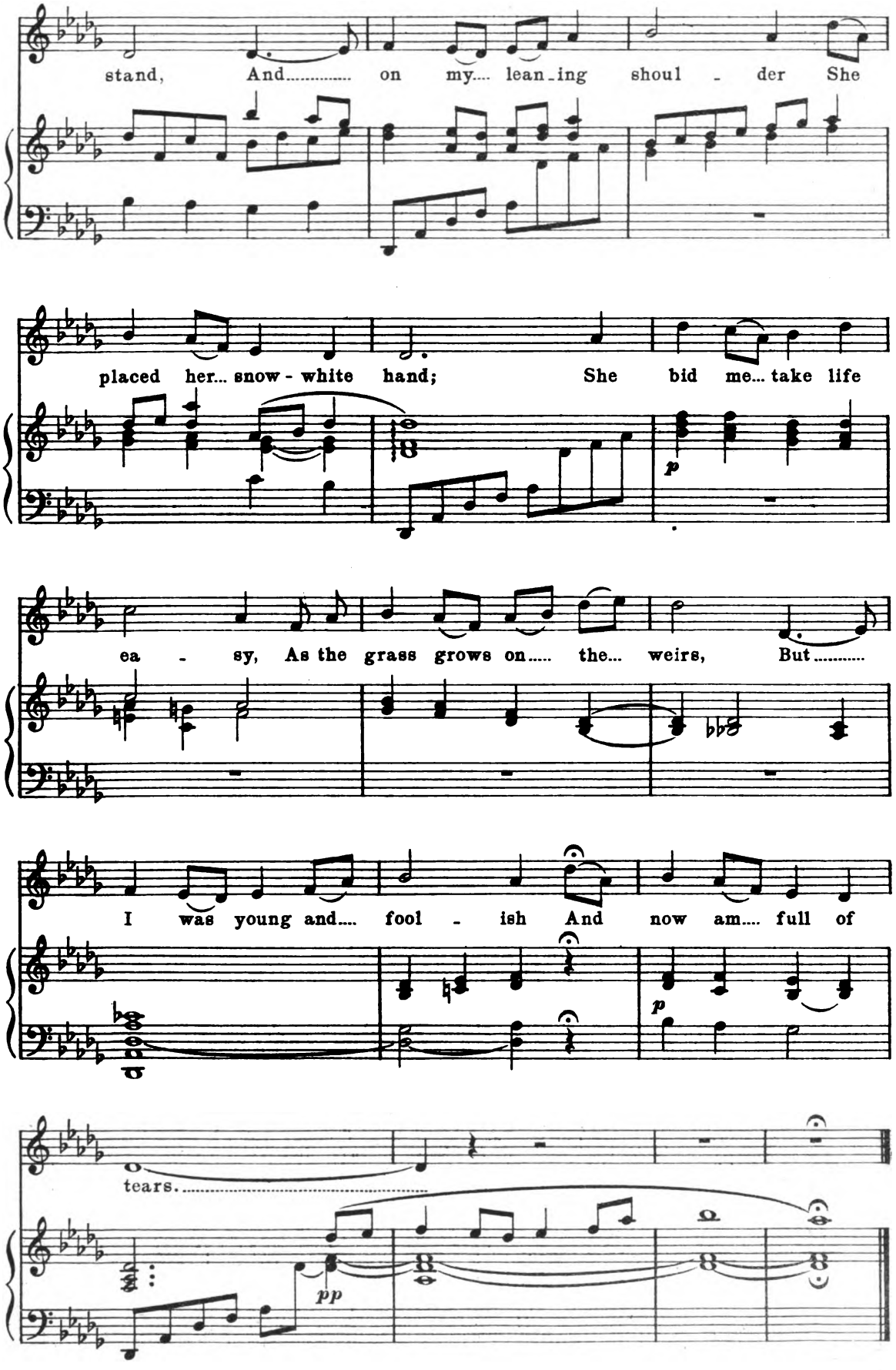

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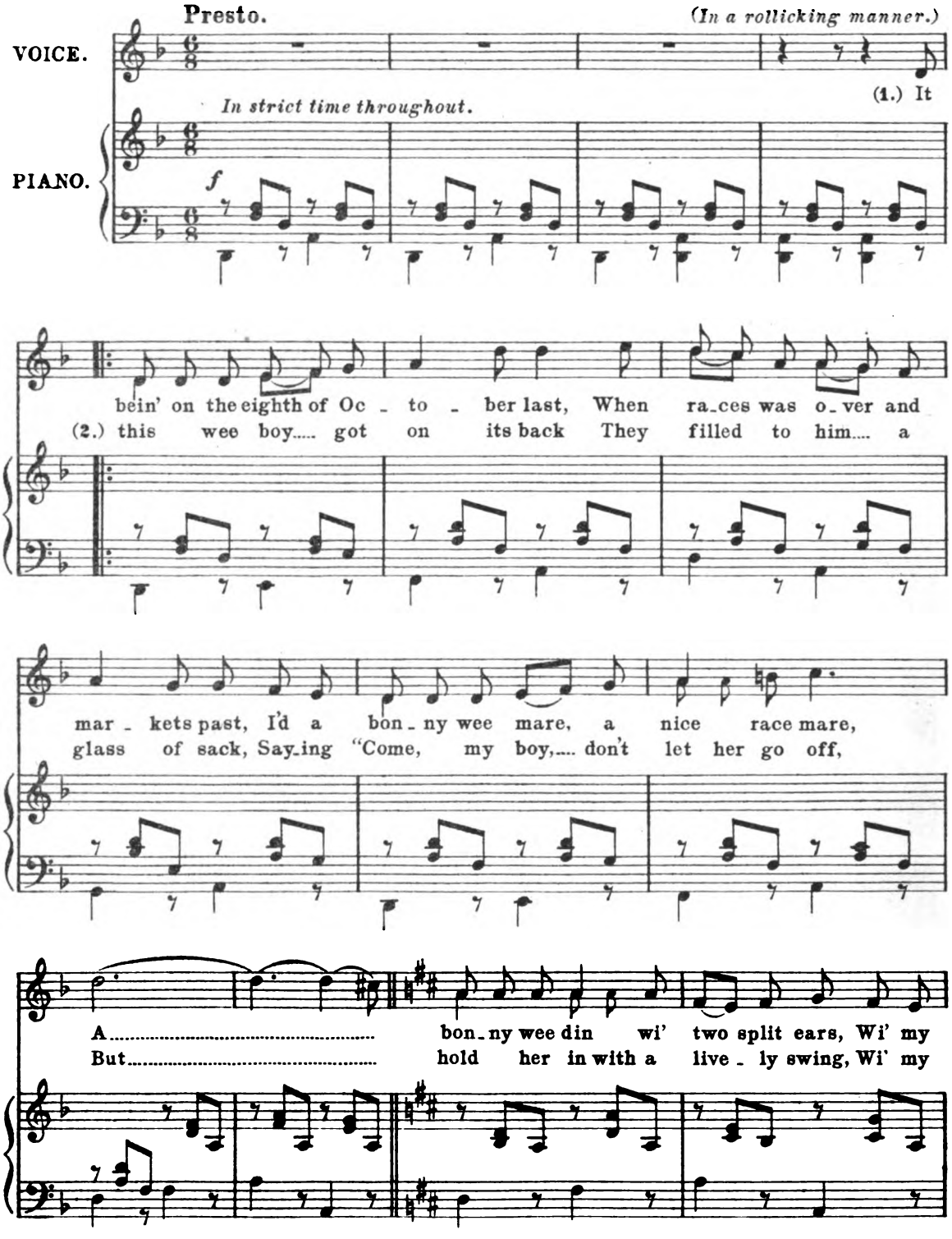
The Bonny Wee Mare.

(A ballad of a horse-race.)

COUNTY DONEGAL.



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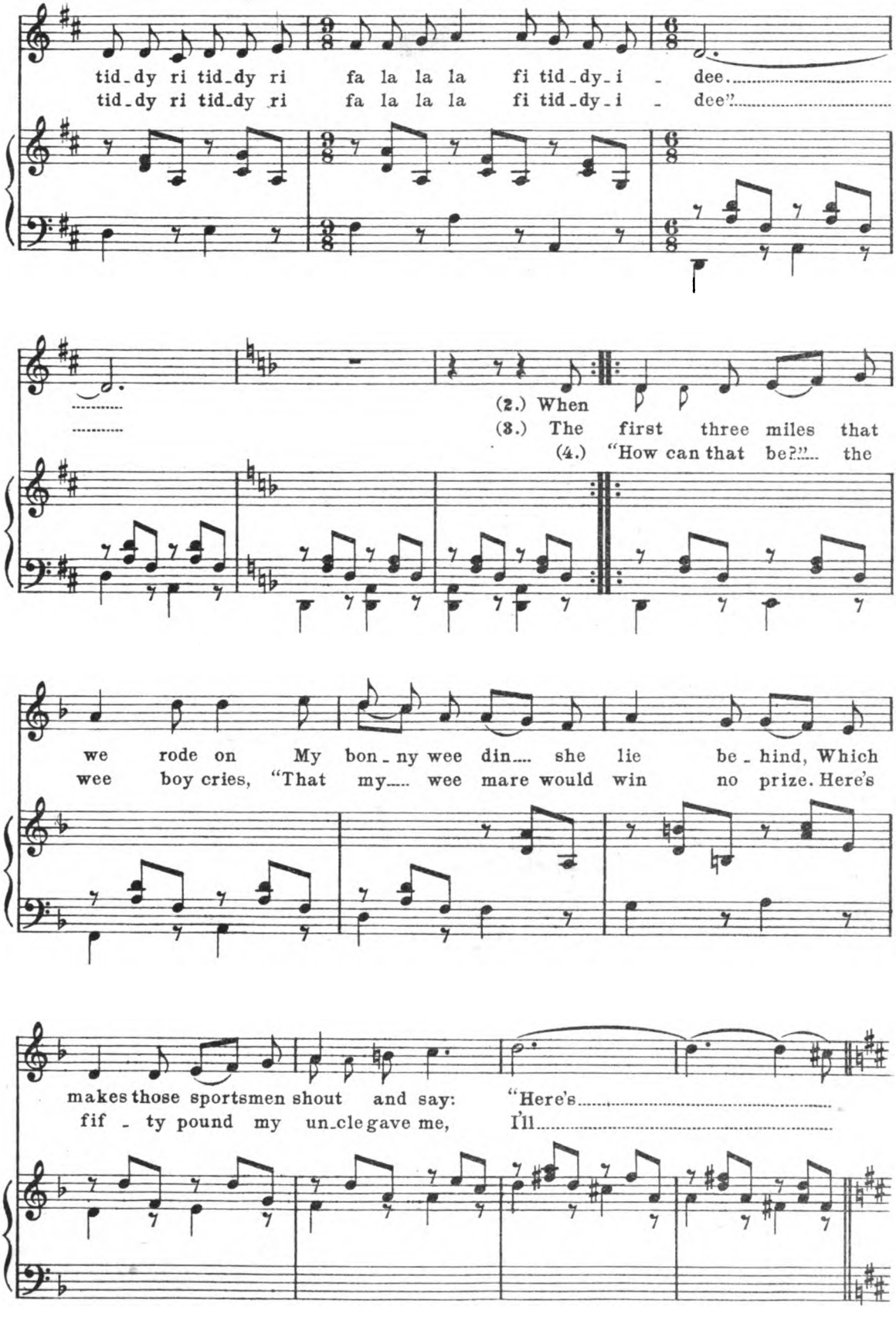

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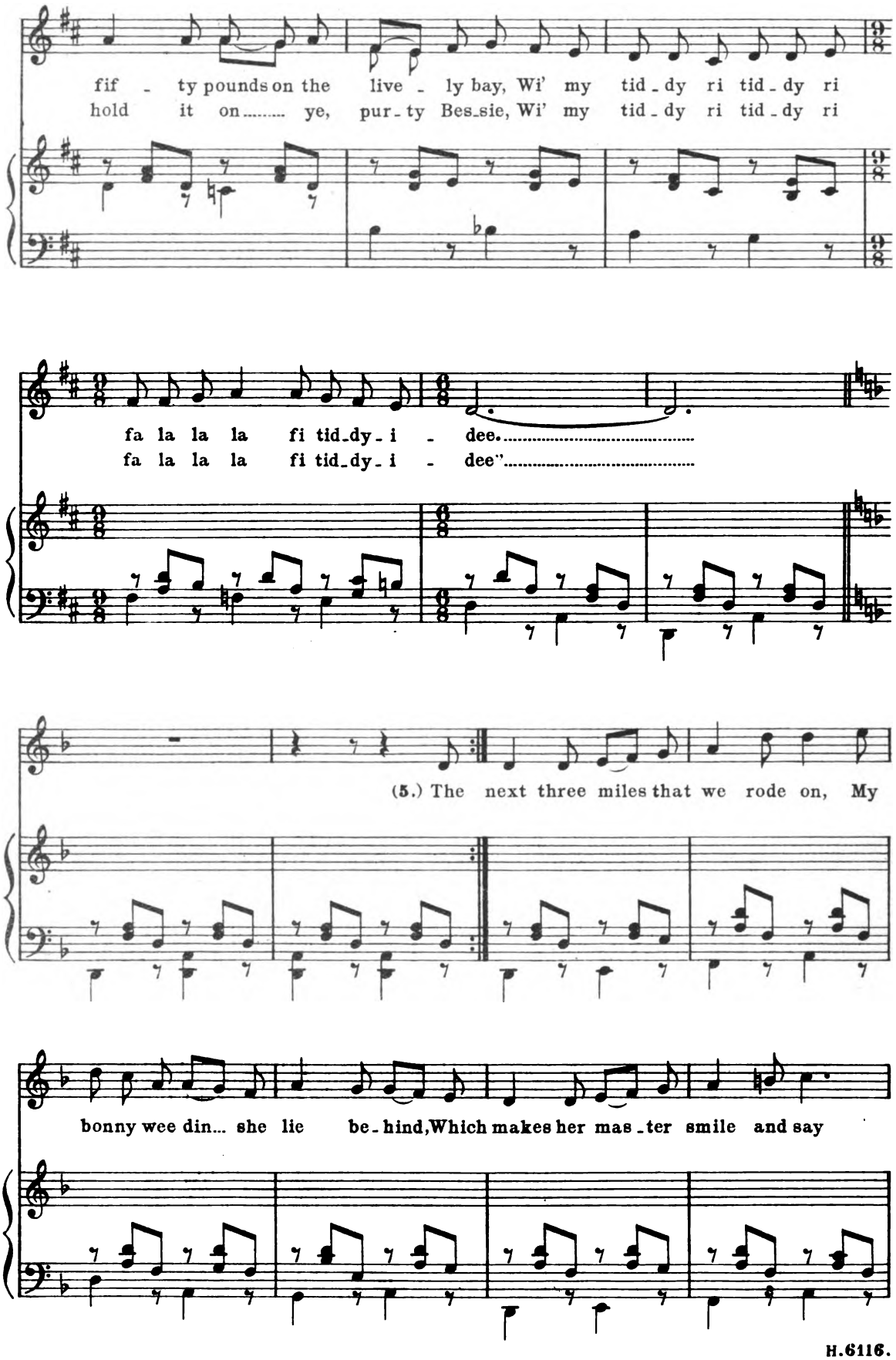

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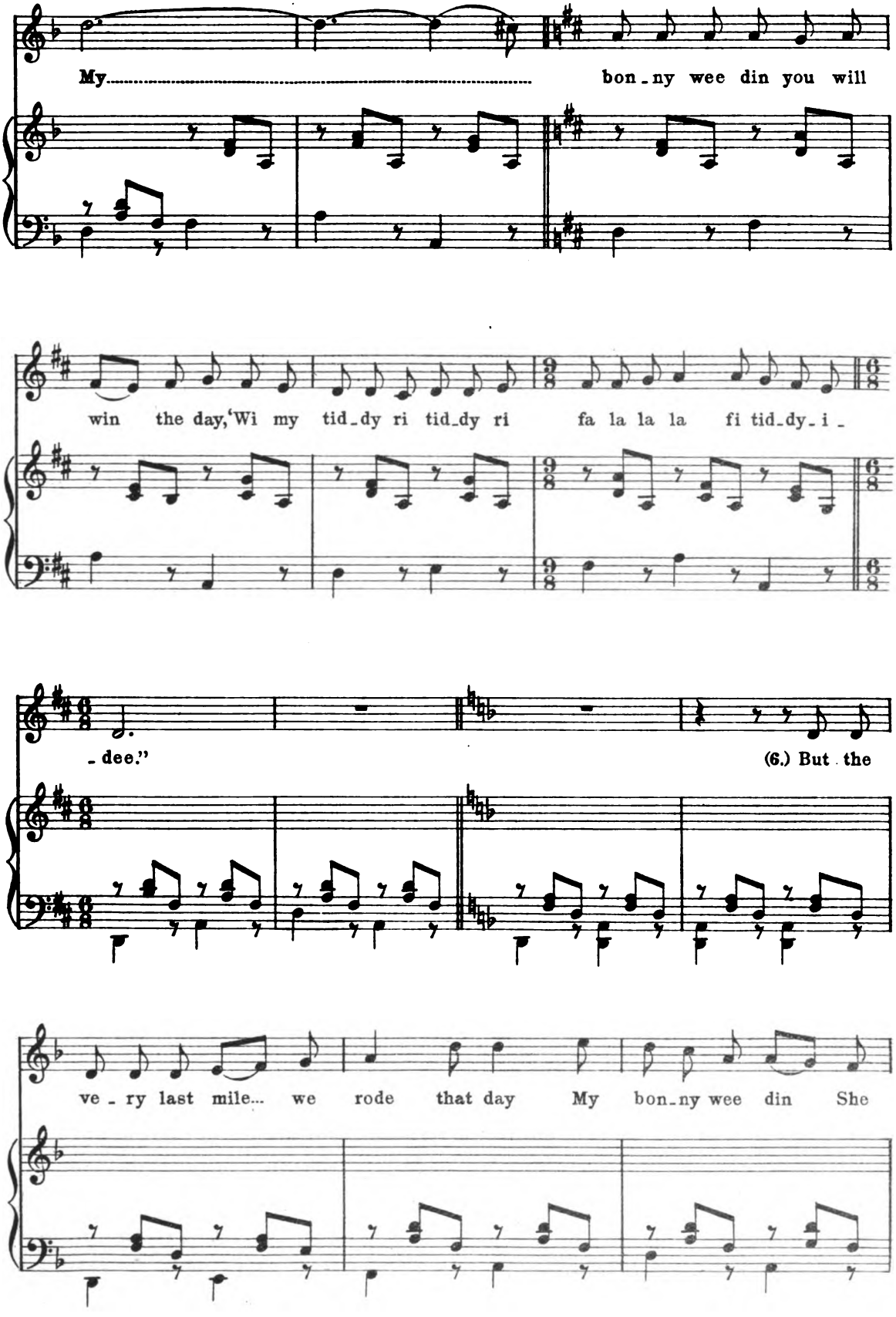

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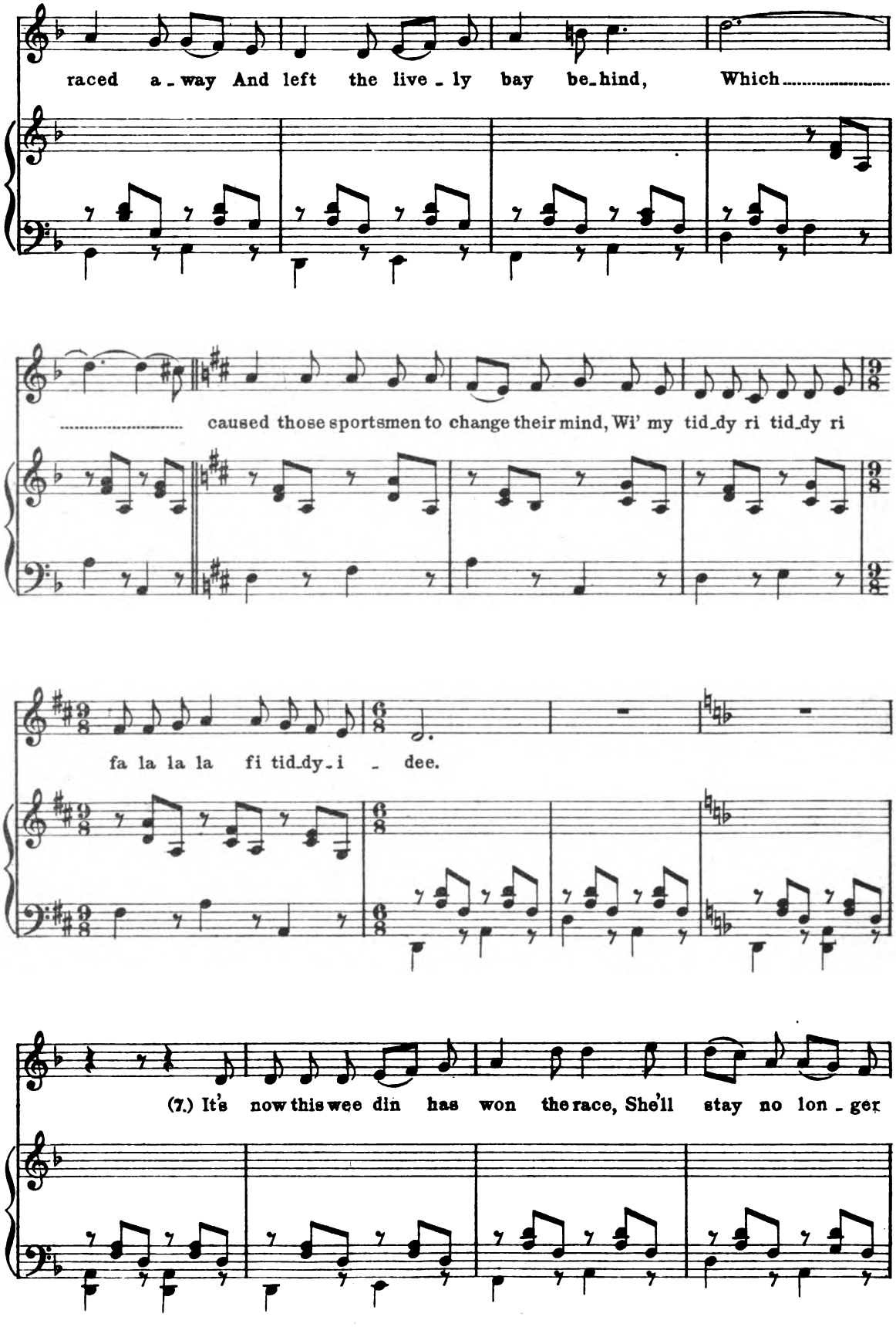

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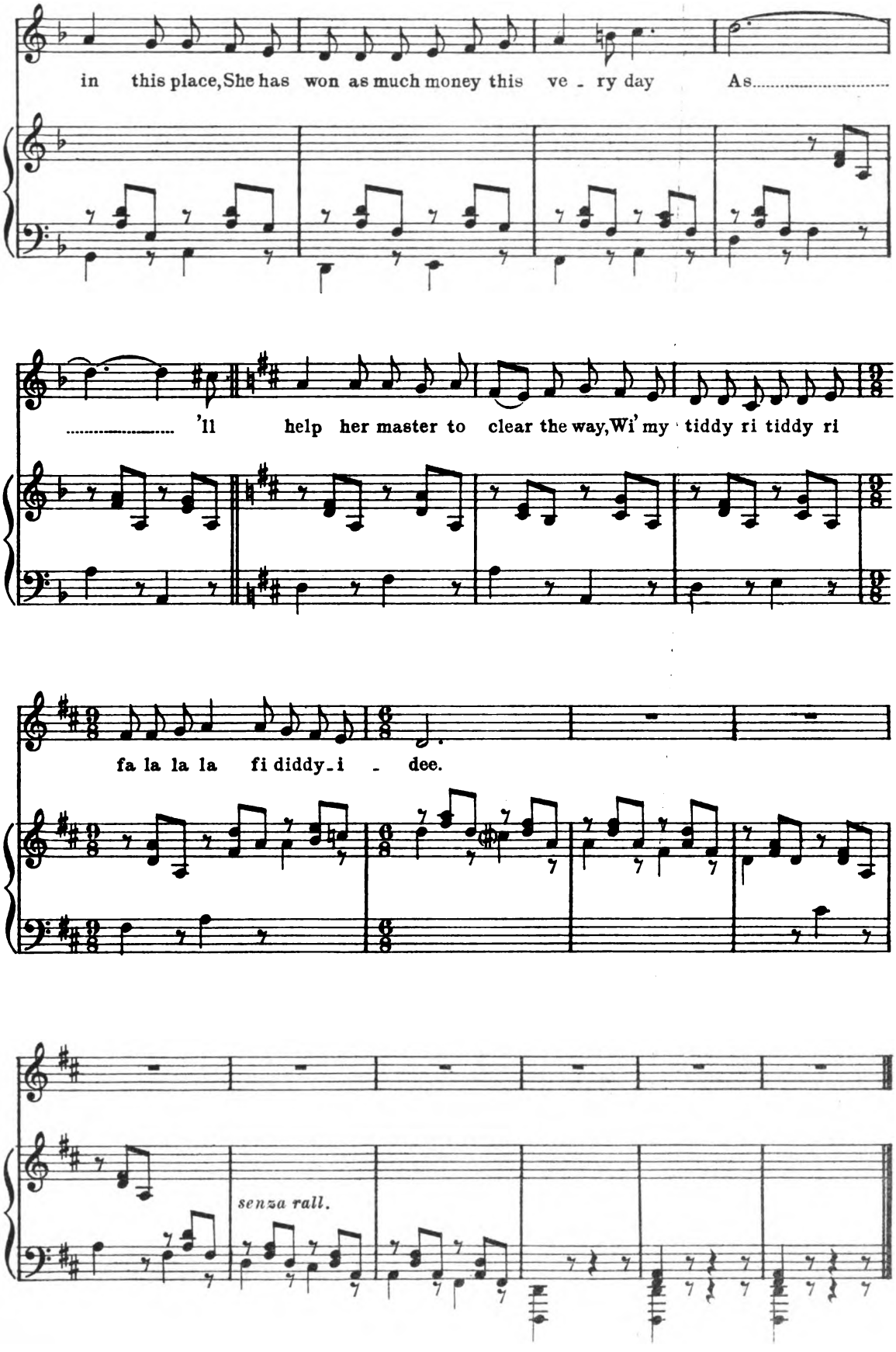

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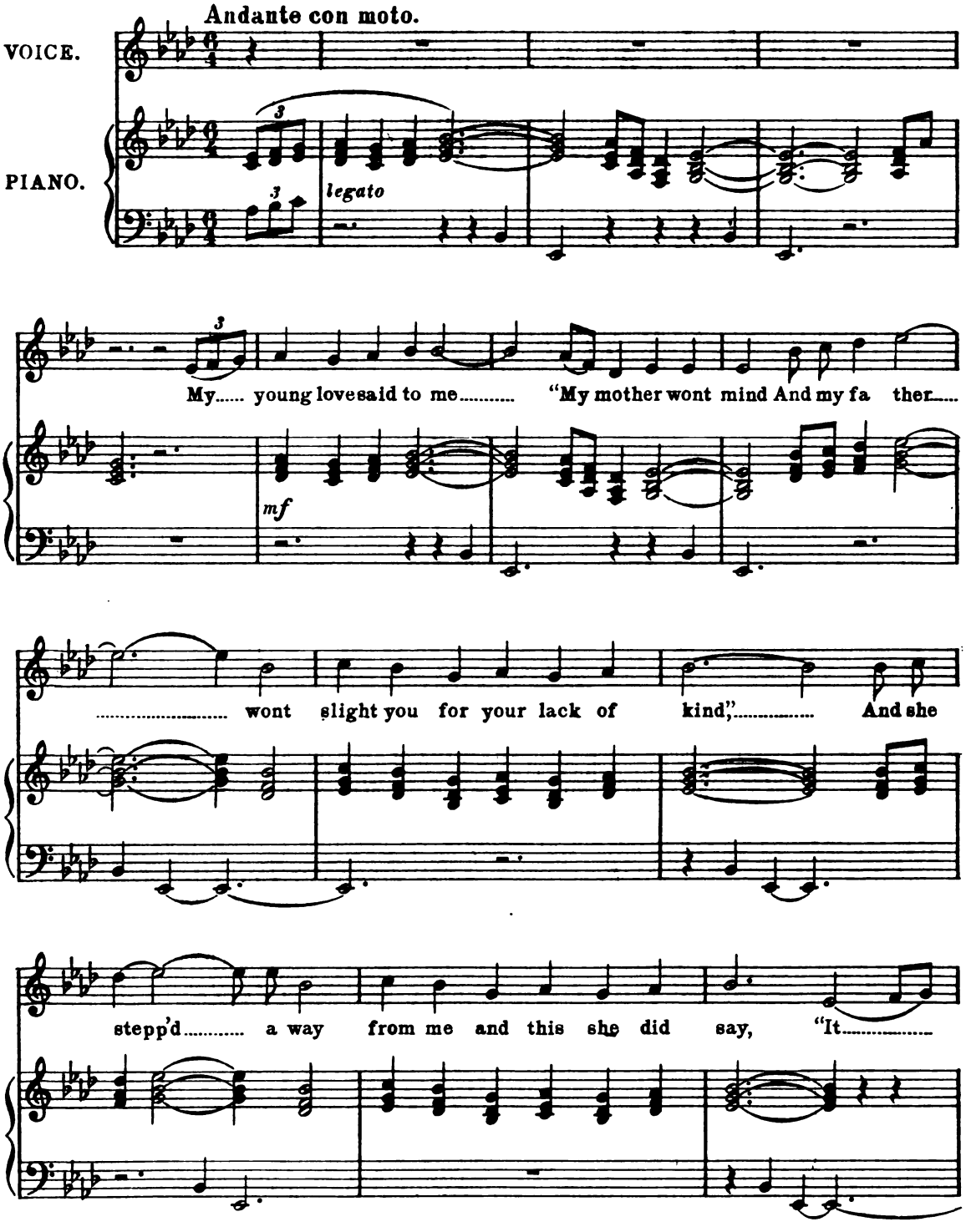
She moved thro' the fair.

PÁDRAIC COLUM.
Adapted from an old ballad.

COUNTY DONEGAL.



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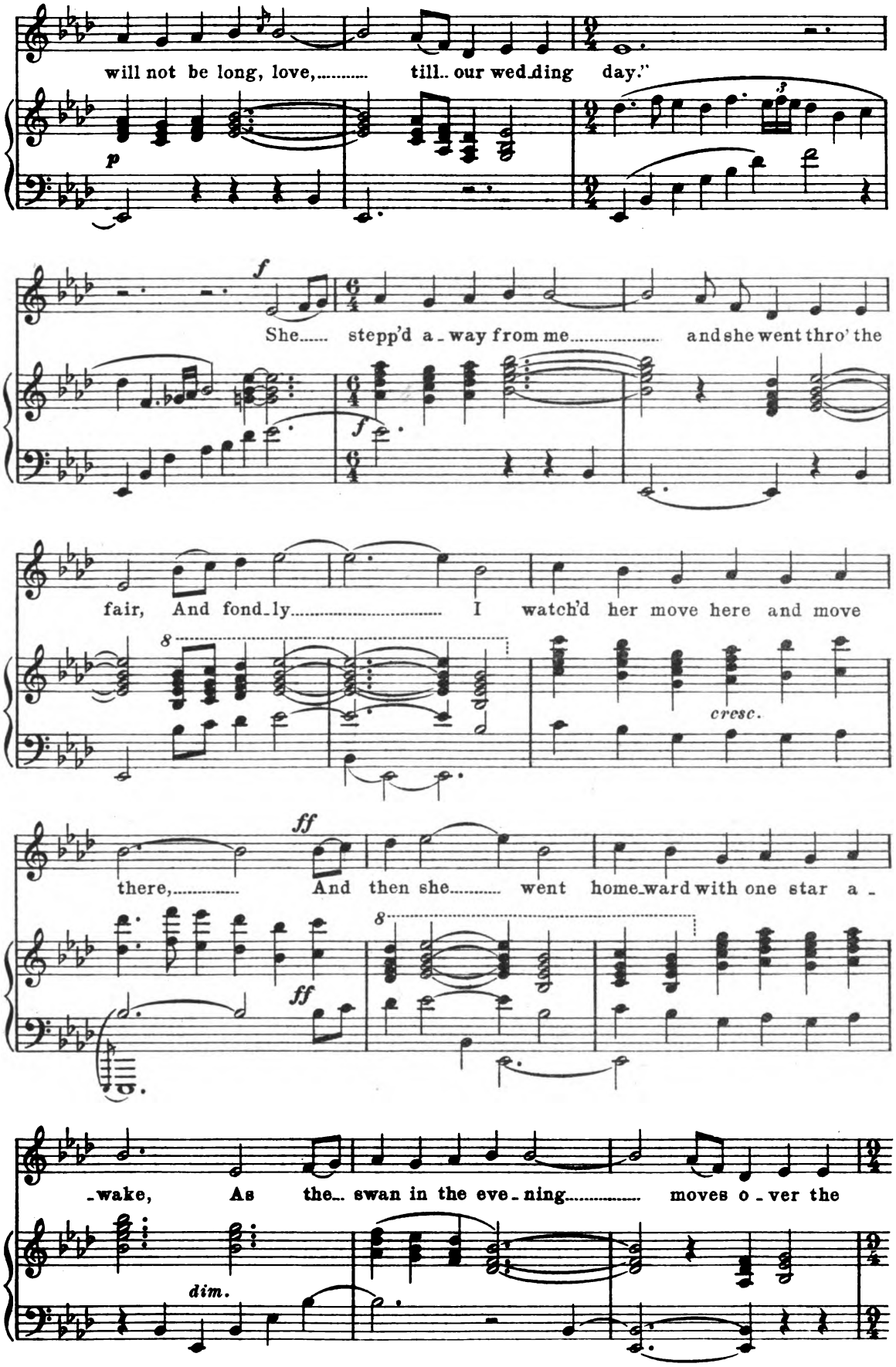

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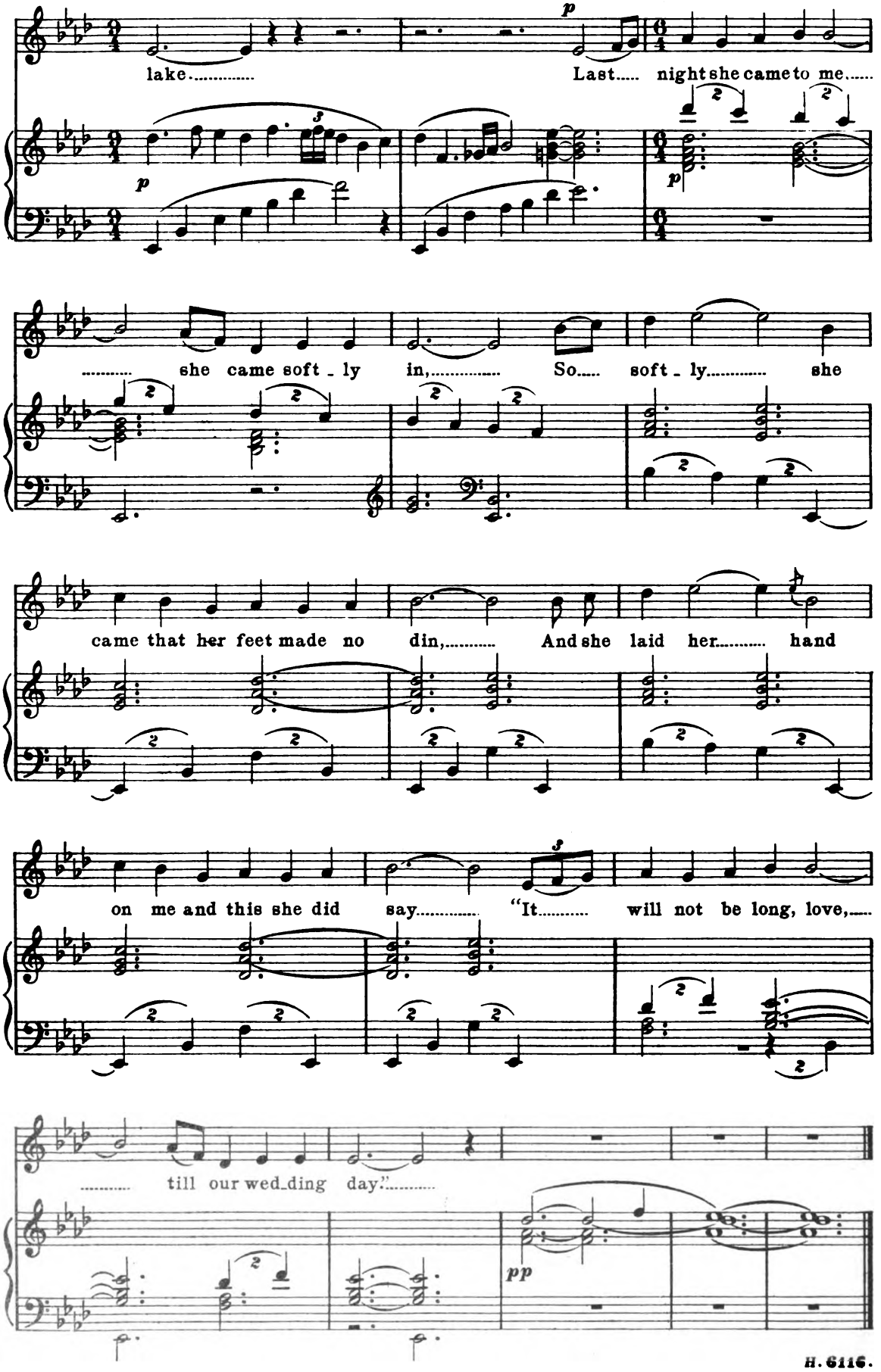

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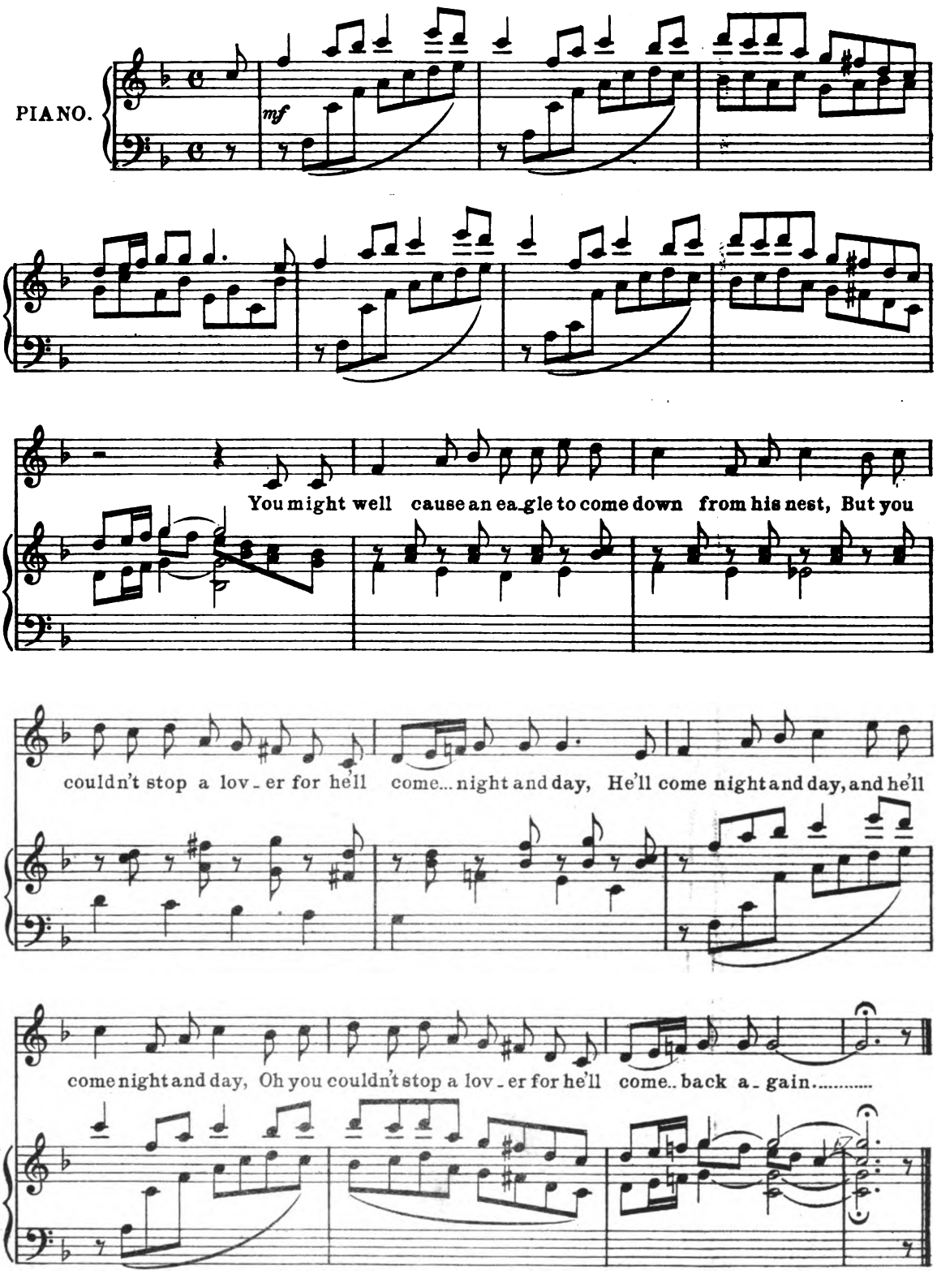
You couldn't stop a lover.

(A FRAGMENT.)

COUNTY DONEGAL.



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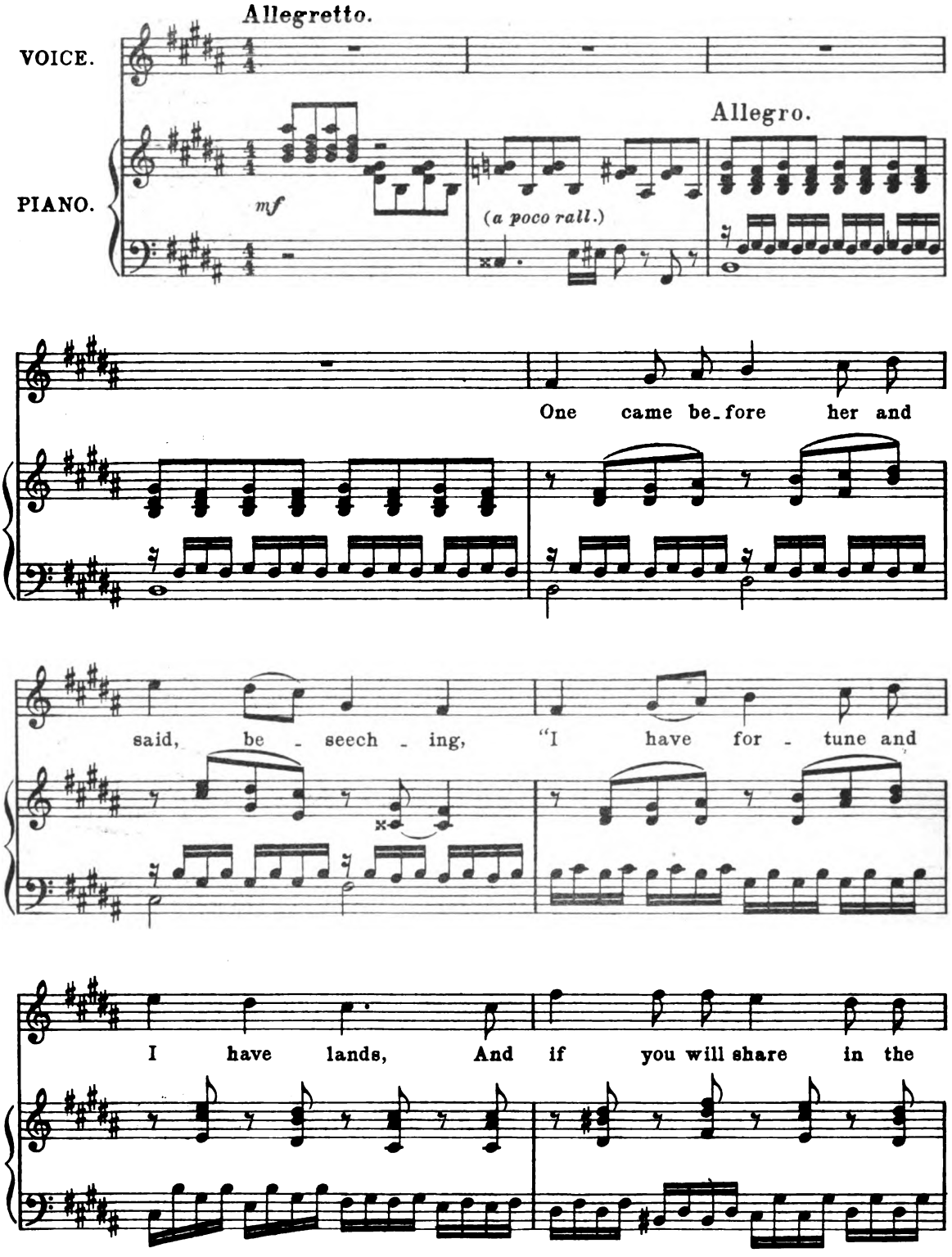
An Island Spinning Song.

PÁDRAIC COLUM. INNISMURRY.

Adapted from an old ballad.



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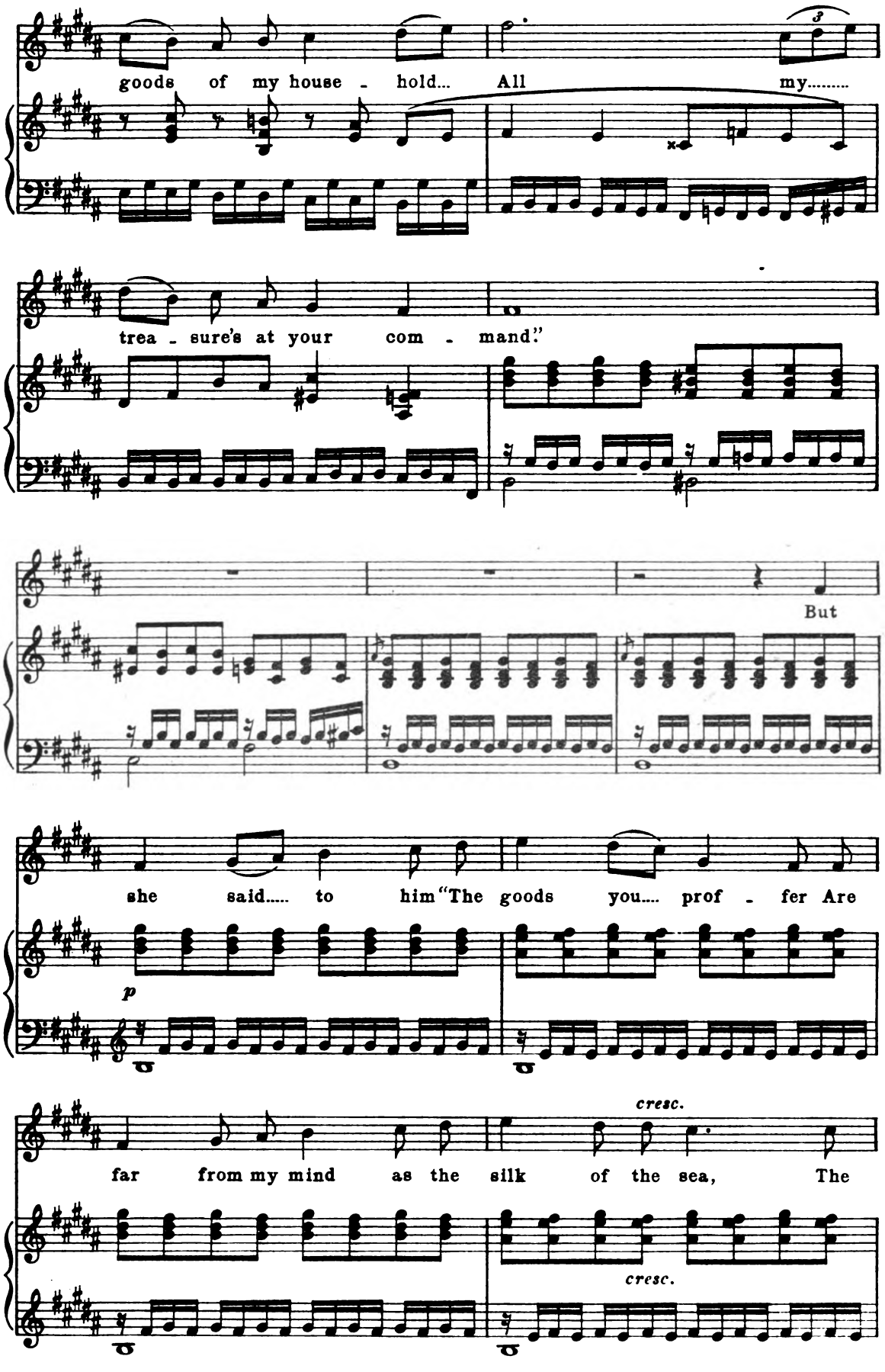

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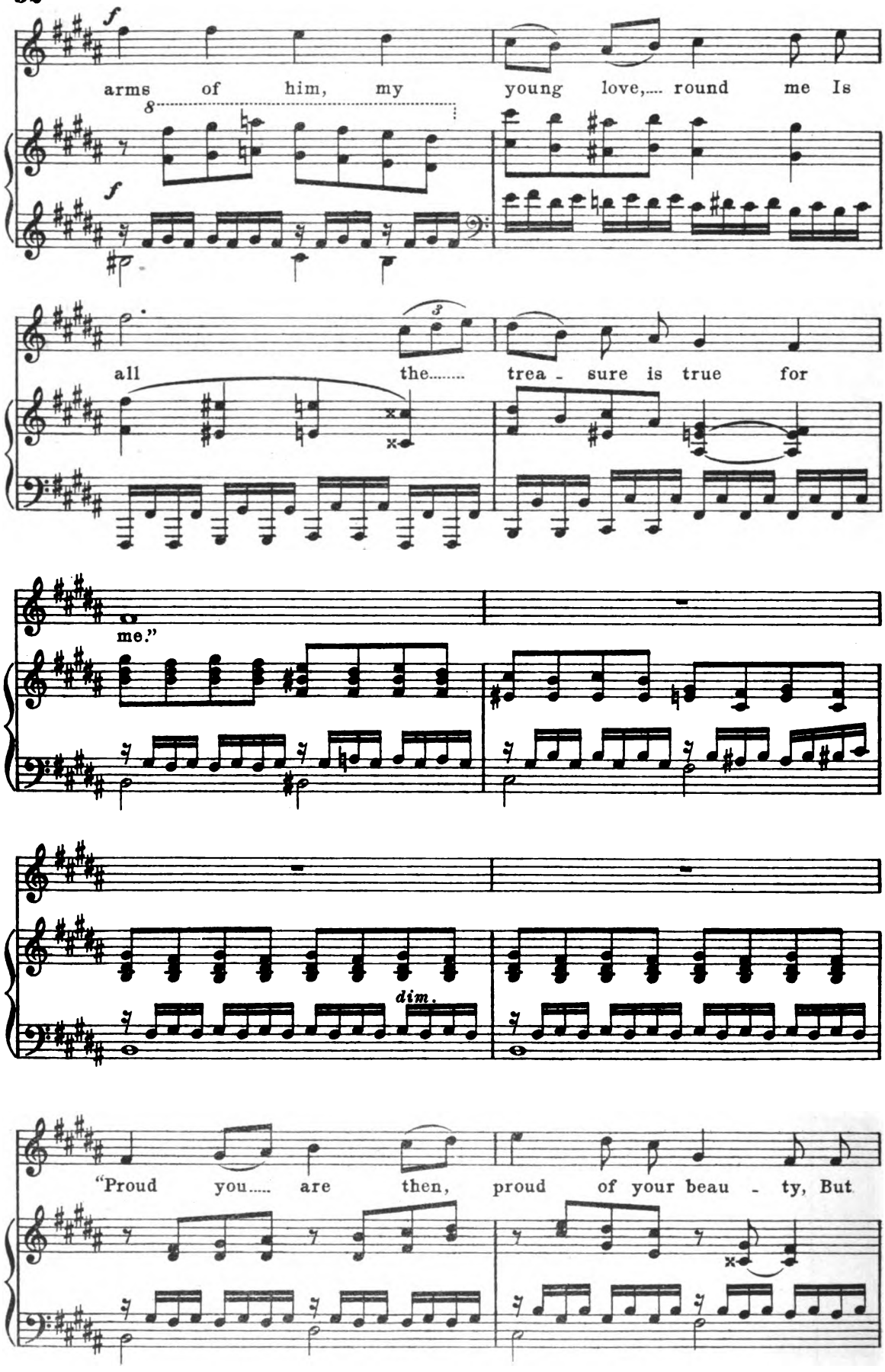

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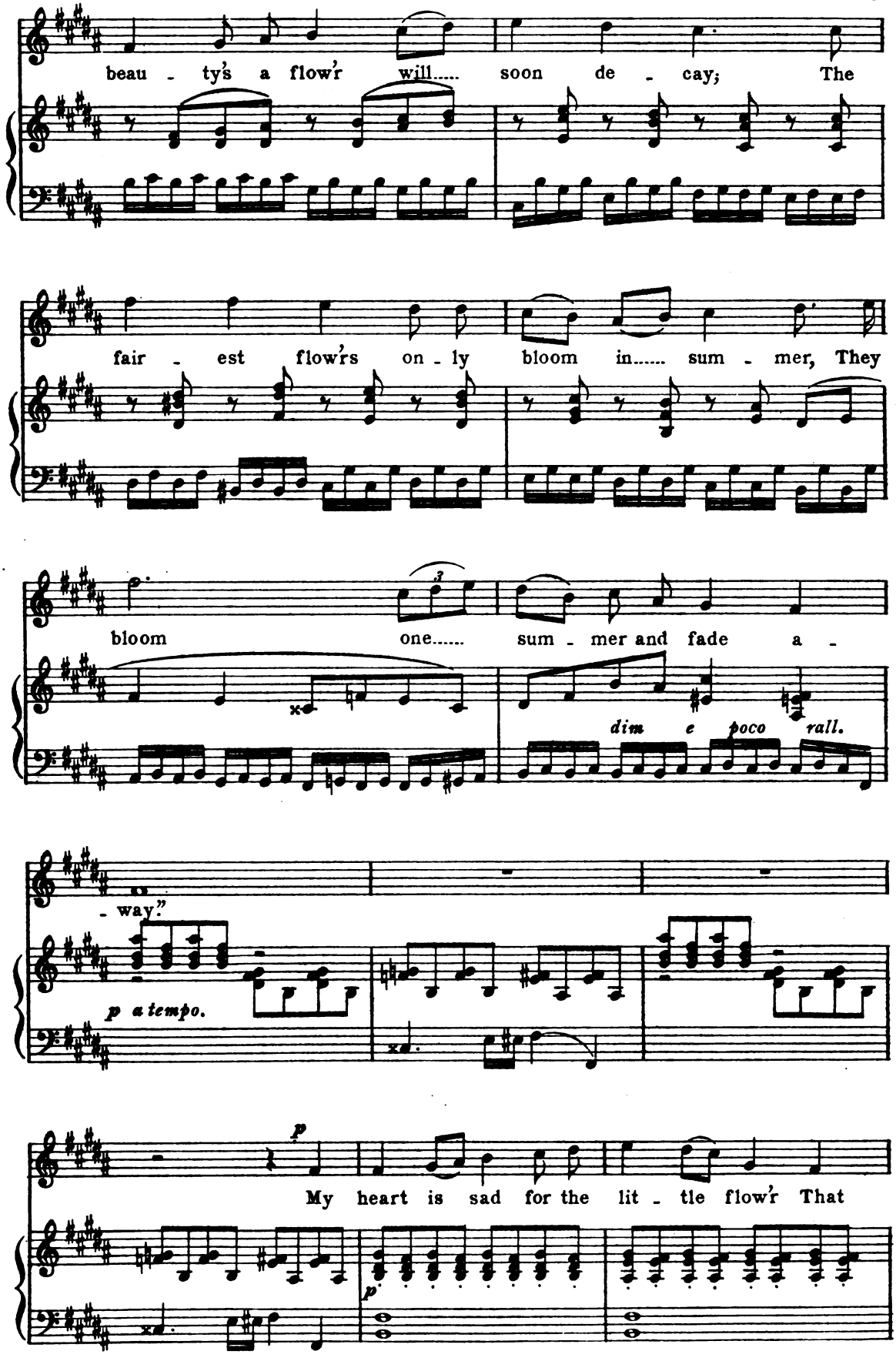

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must soon wi - ther where it grew,..... ff He.....

molto cresc.

..... who has my heart in..... keep - ing I

ff

would he..... had my..... bo - - dy

dim.

too.

rall - en - tan - do - e -

- dim - in - u - en - do. pp

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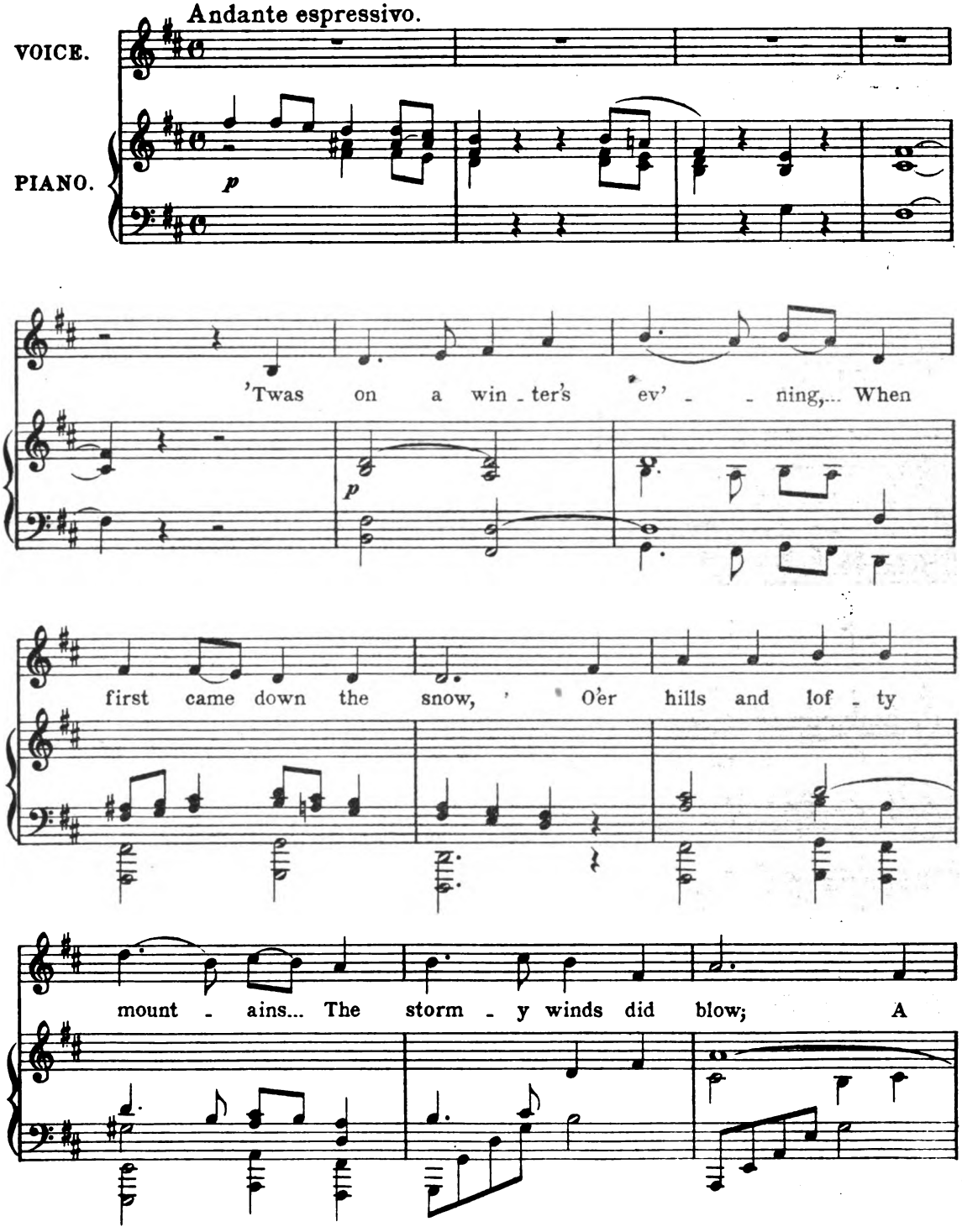
The Fanaid Grove.

Old Ballad
Adapted by the Editor.

COUNTY DONEGAL.



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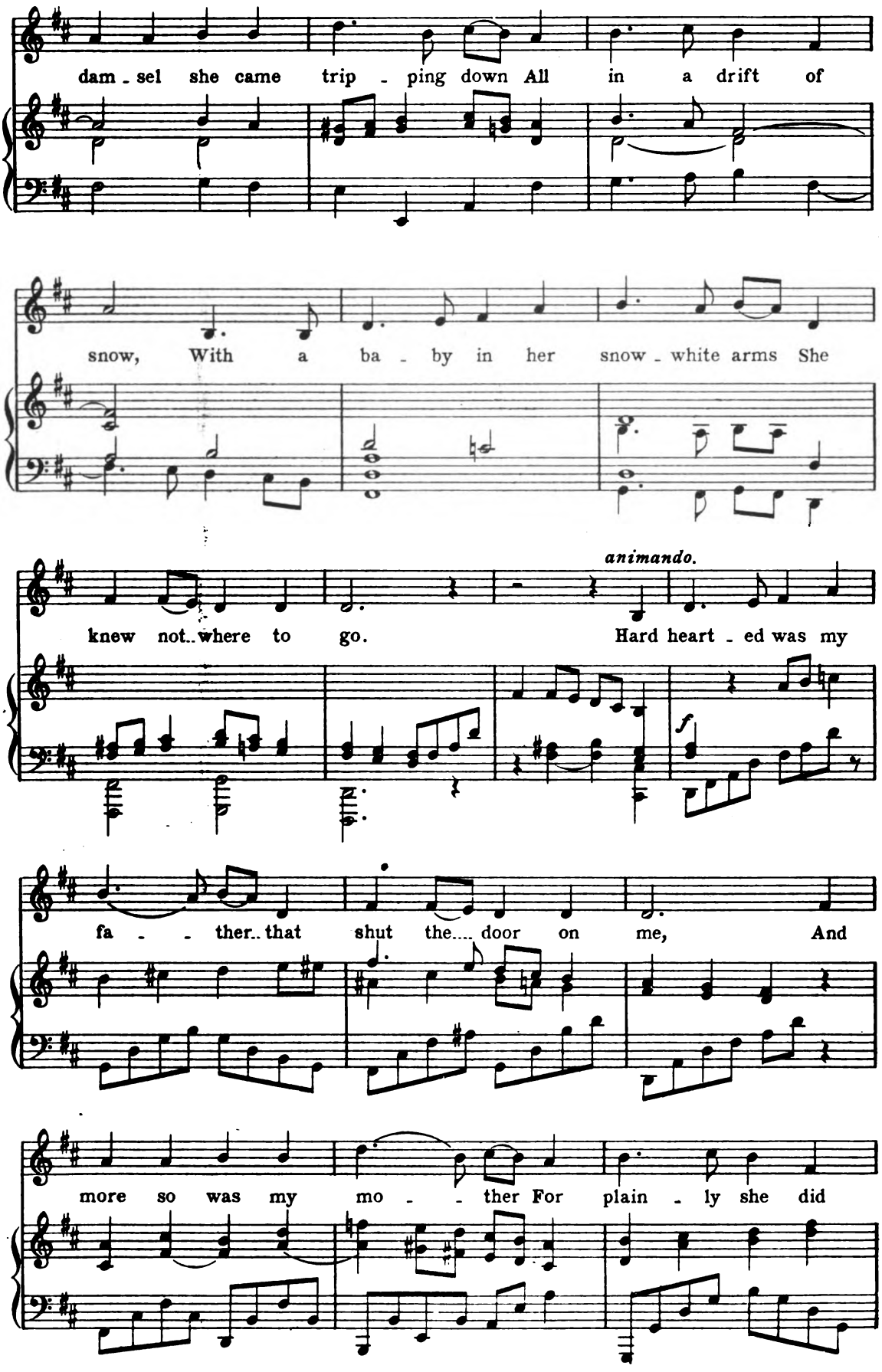

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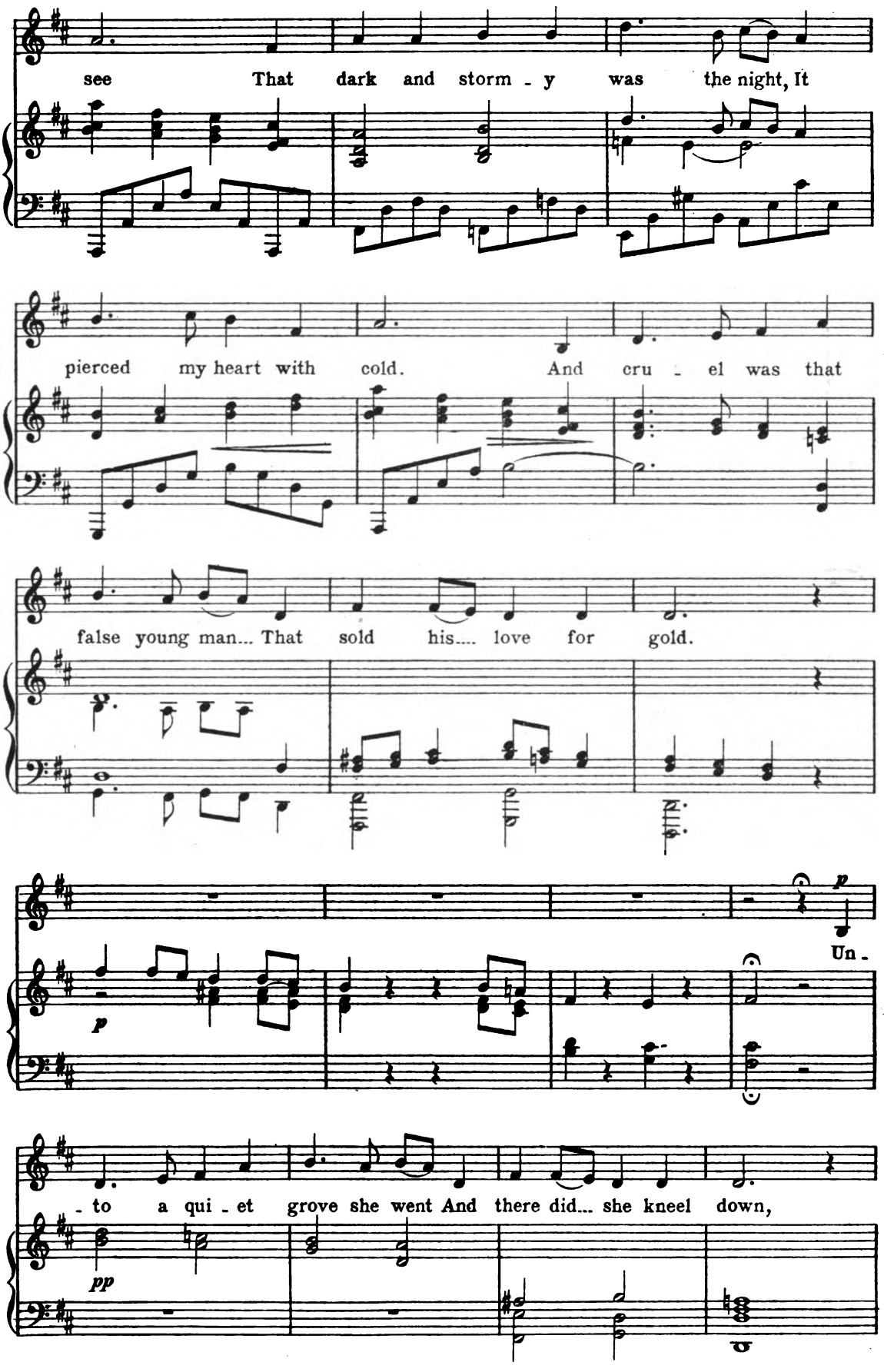

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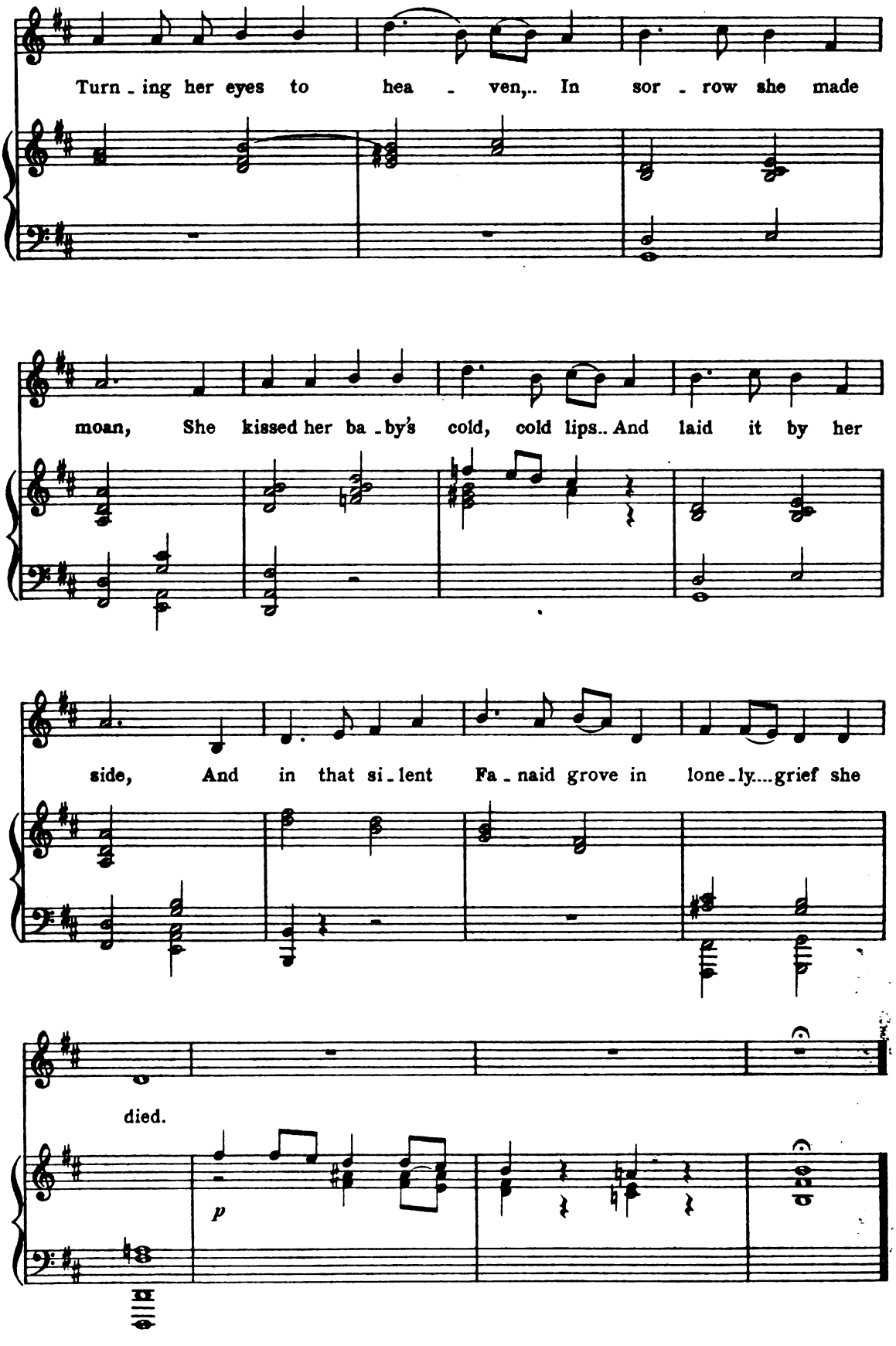

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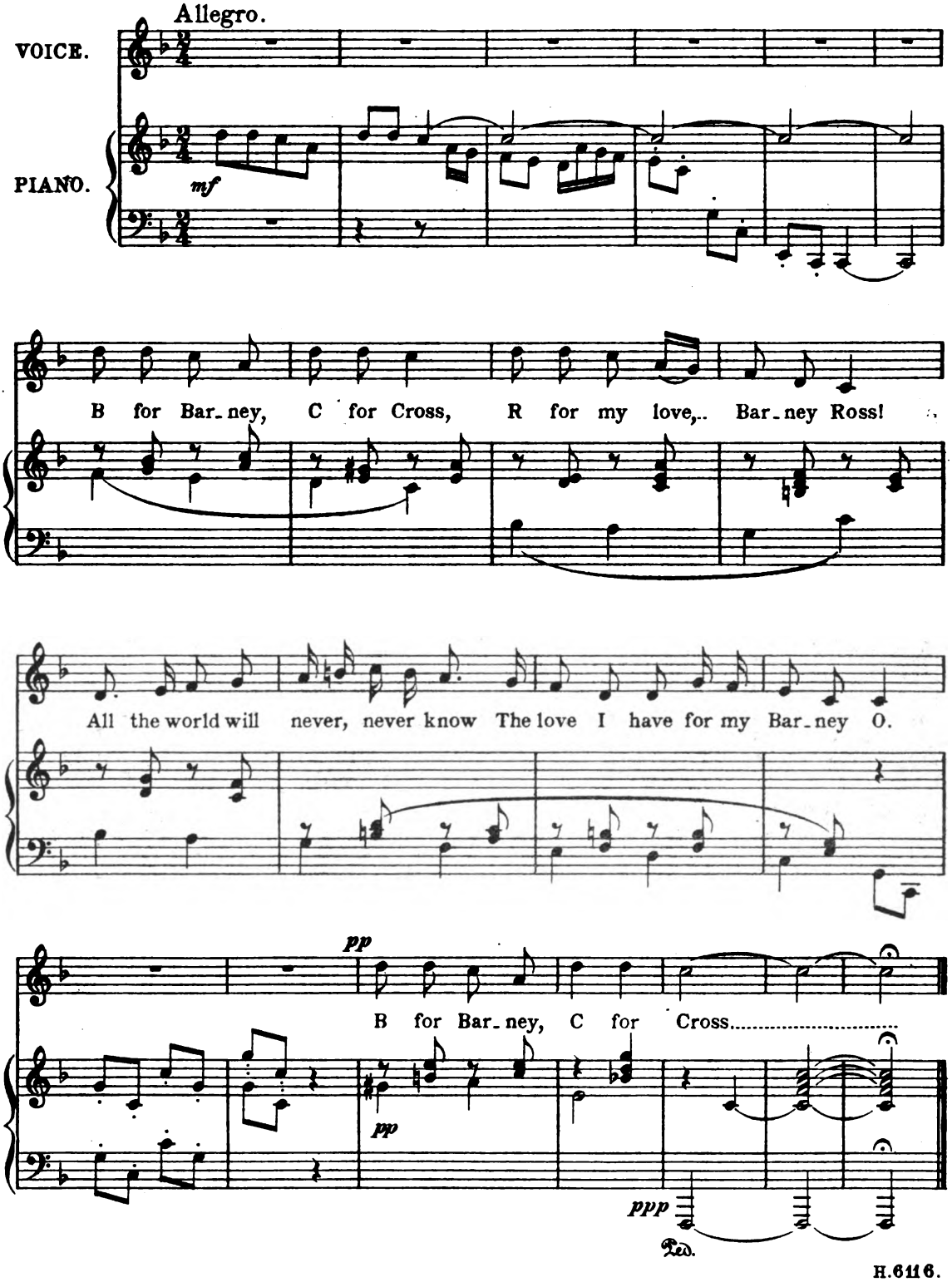
B for Barney.

(A FRAGMENT.)

Belfast Street Song. COUNTY ANTRIM.



H.6116.

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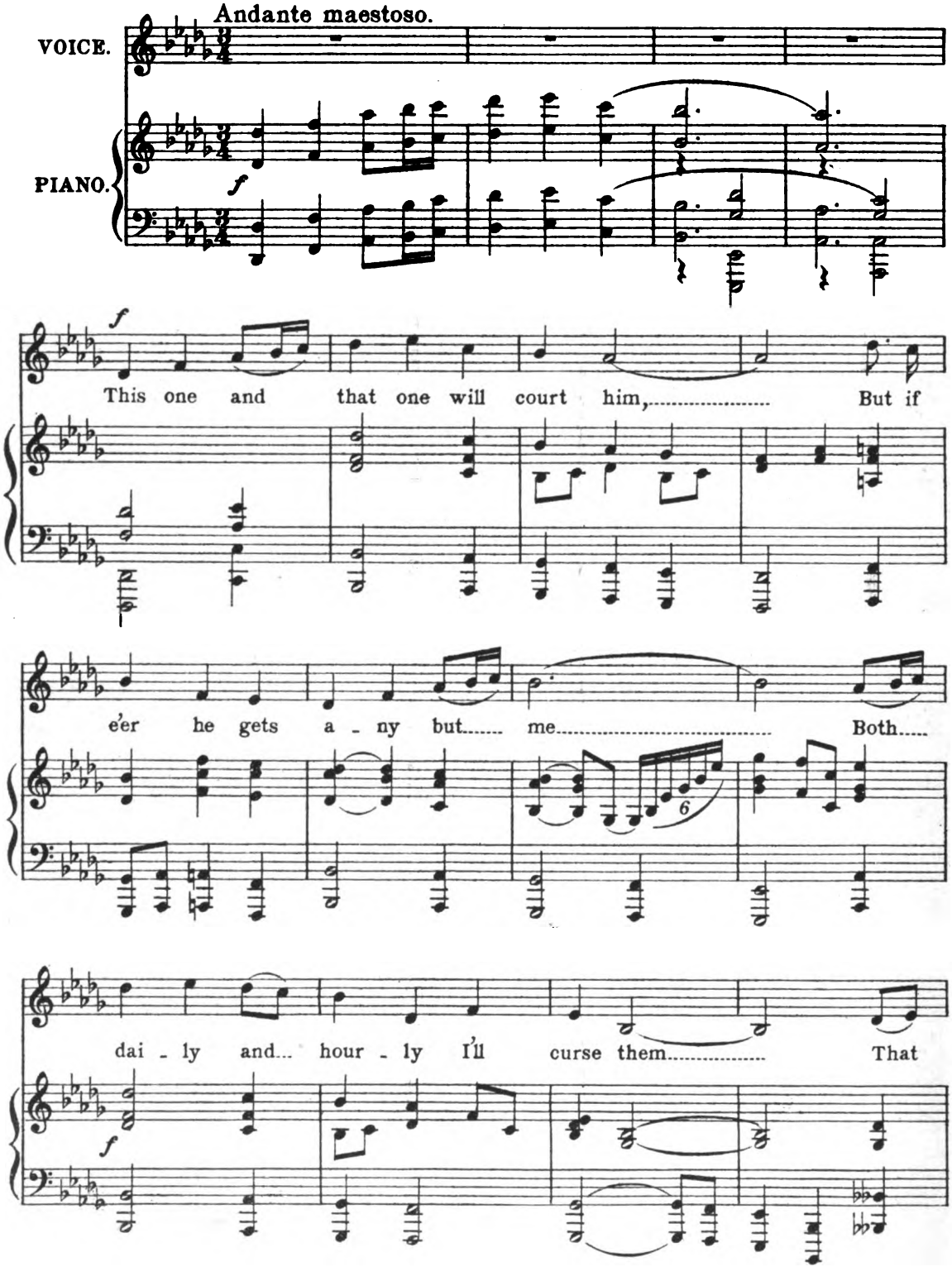
The Lover's Curse.

Old Ballad.
Adapted by the Editor.

COUNTY DONEGAL.



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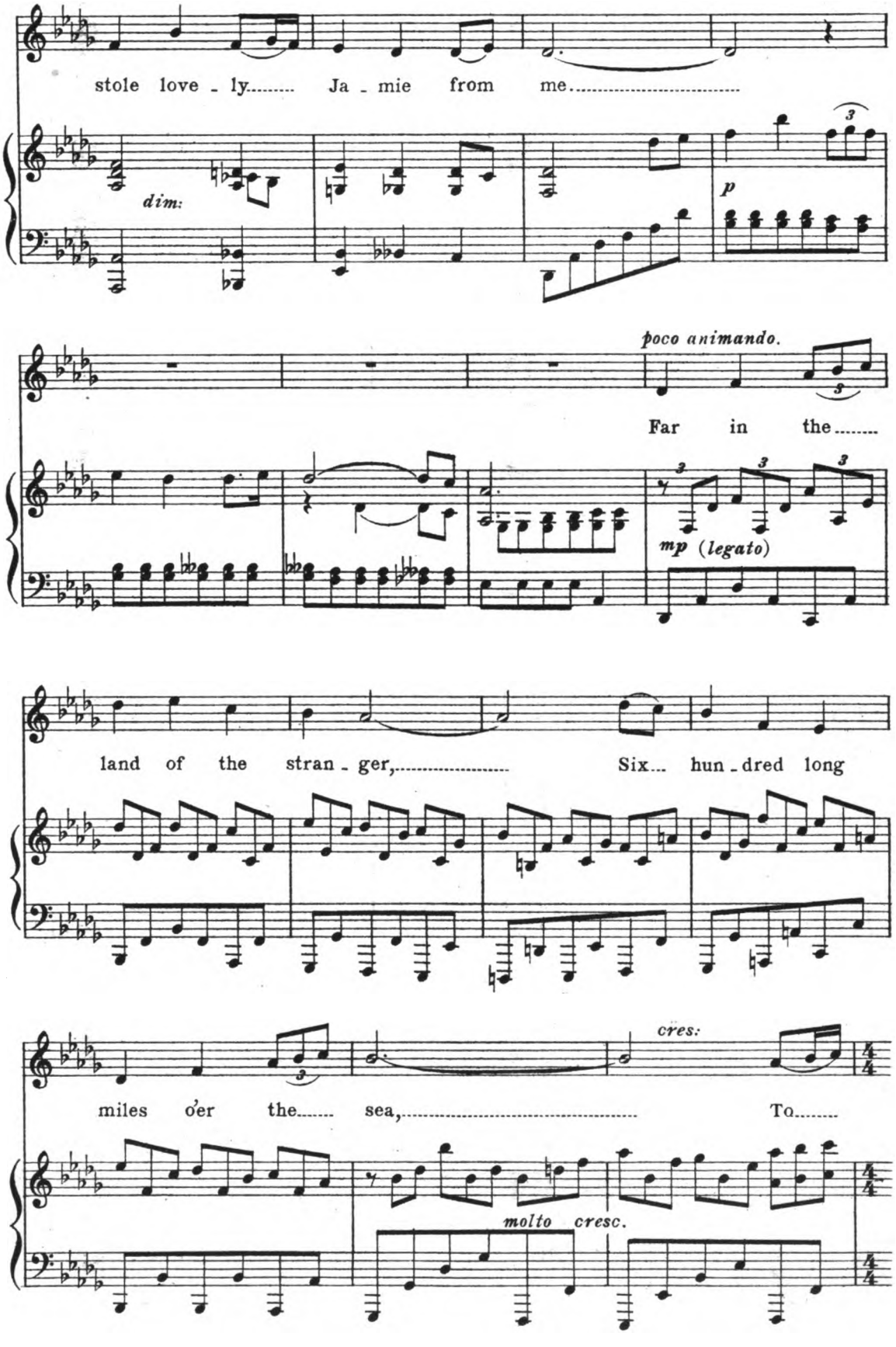

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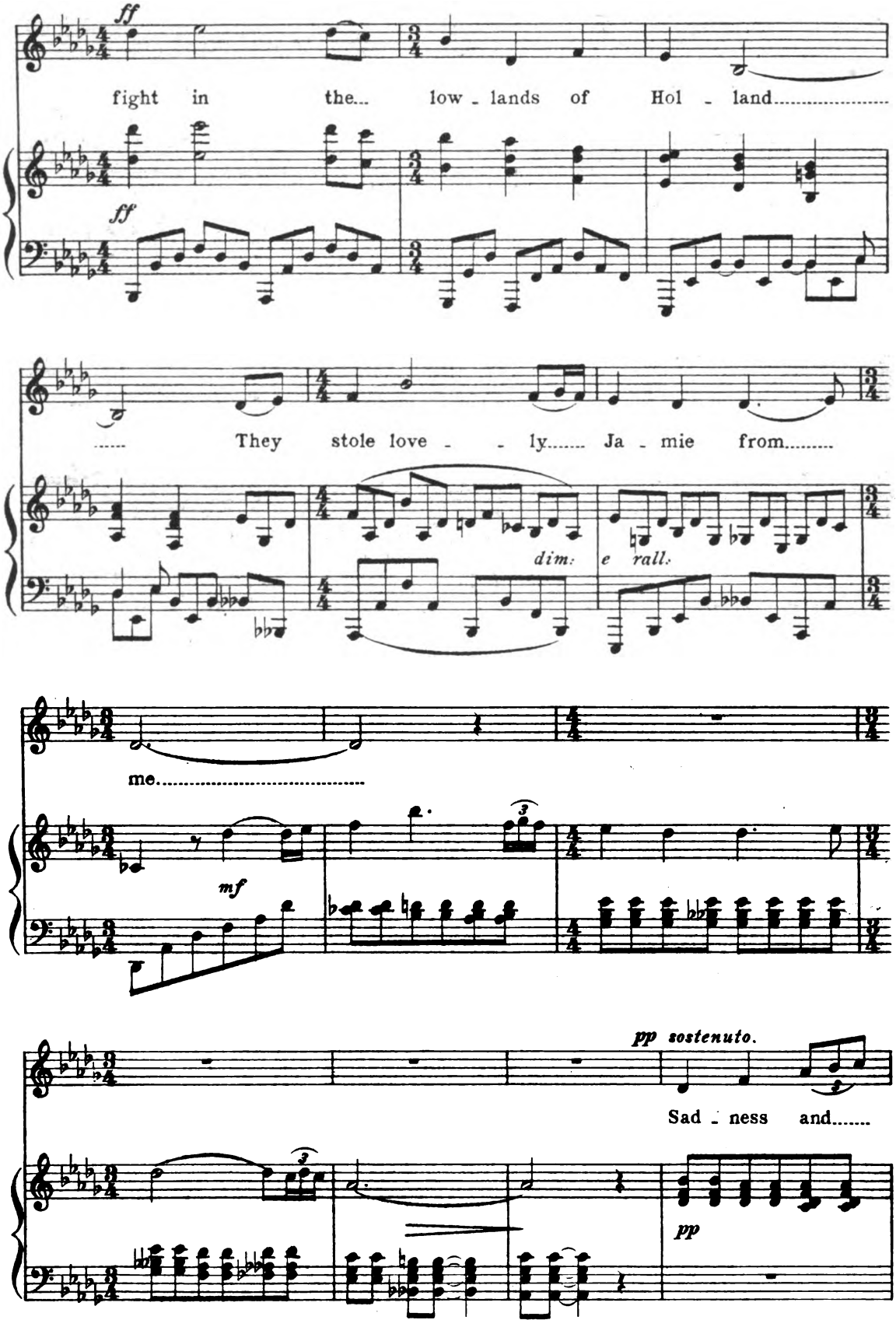

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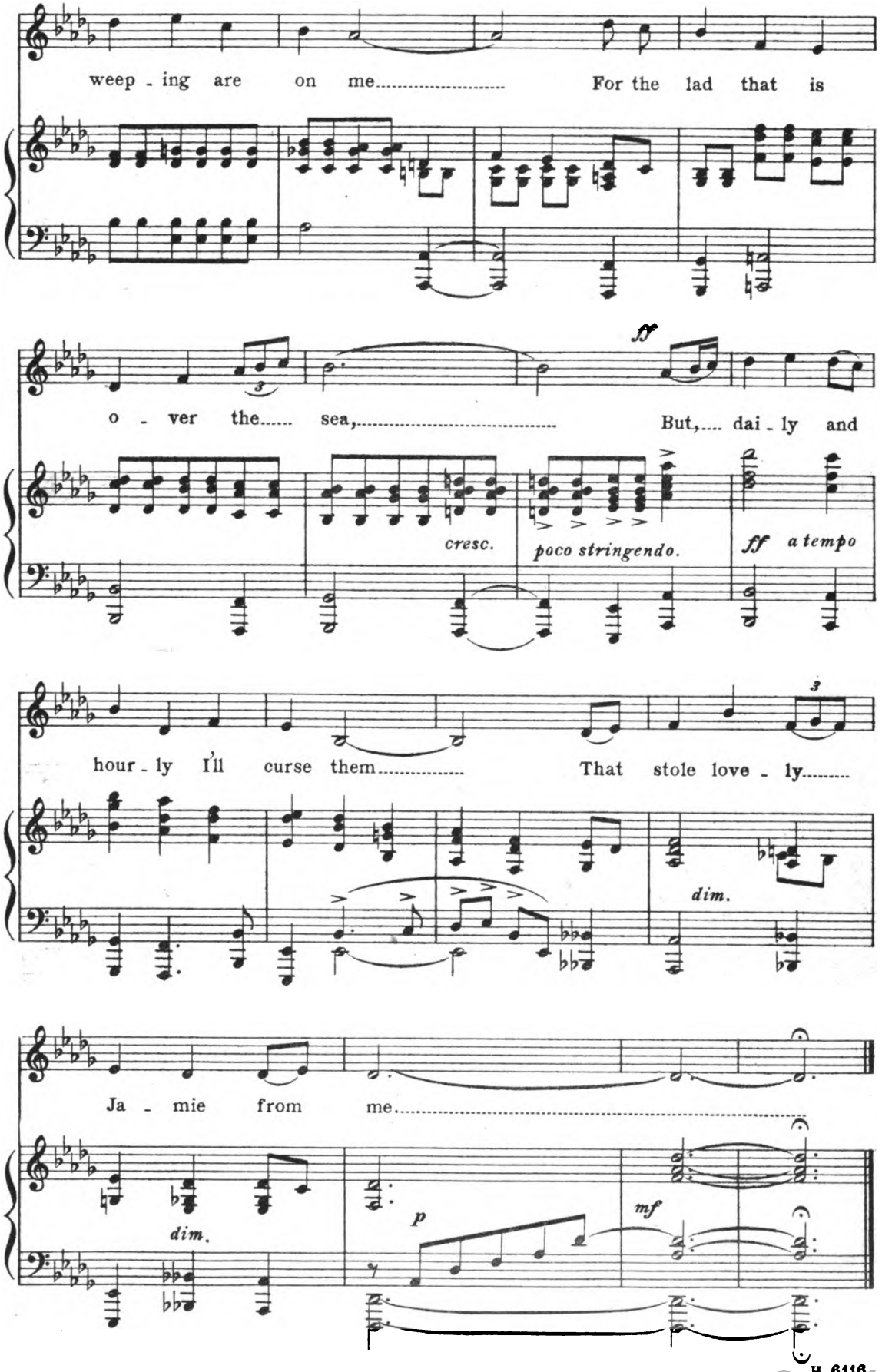

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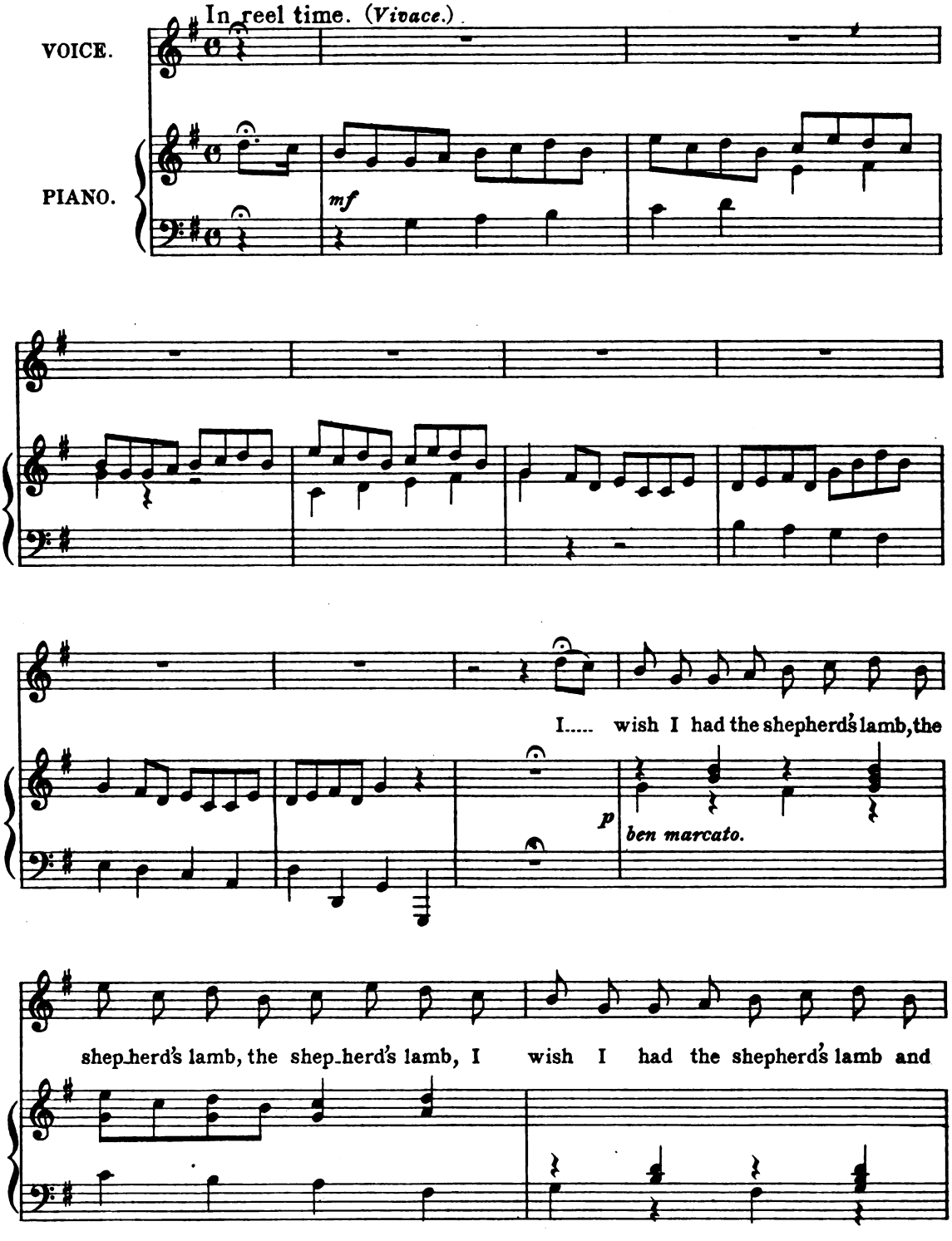
I wish I had the shepherd's lamb.

Words by permission from
Joyce's "Irish Music & Song."
(Translated by P. W. Joyce.)

The Glens of Antrim.



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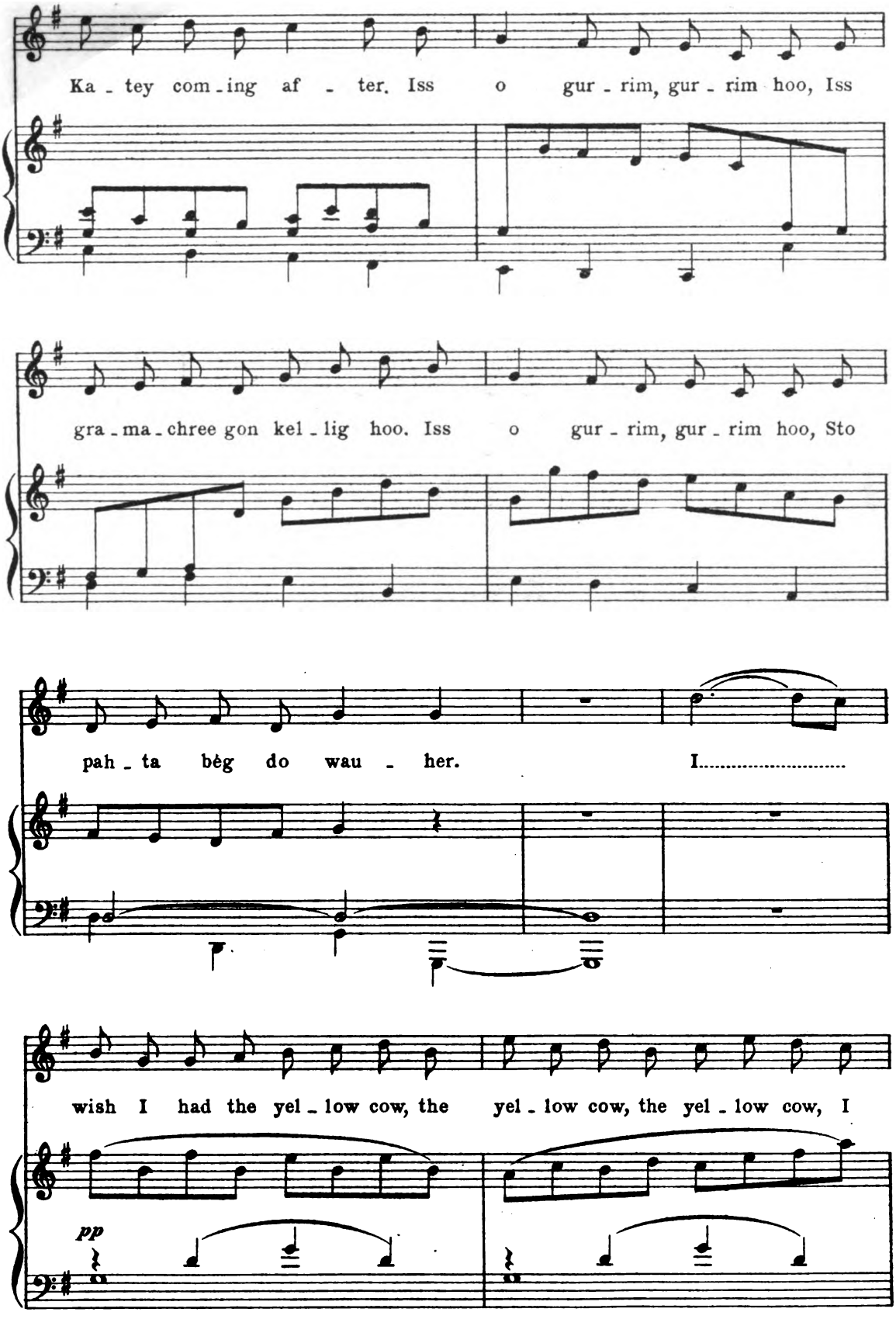

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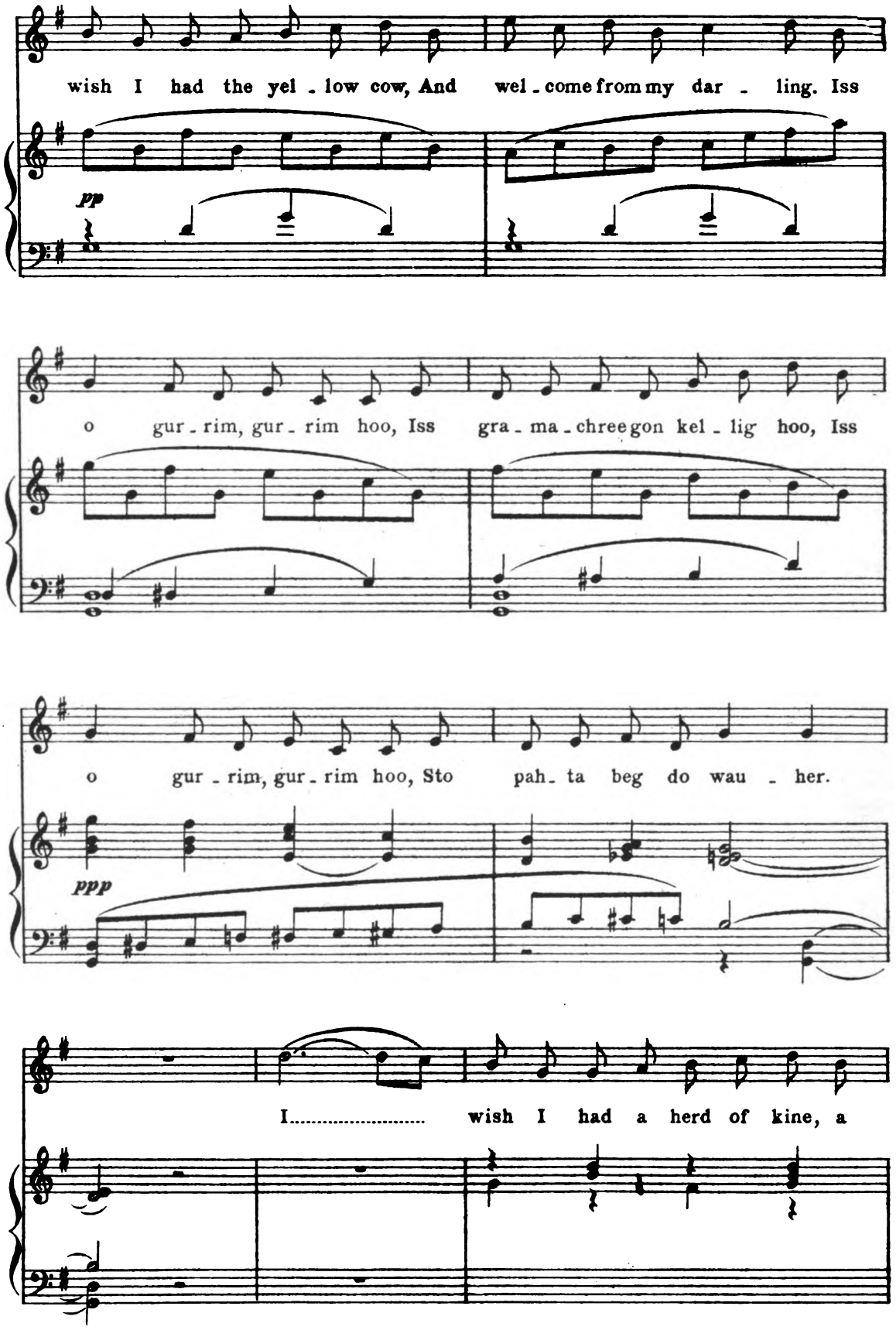

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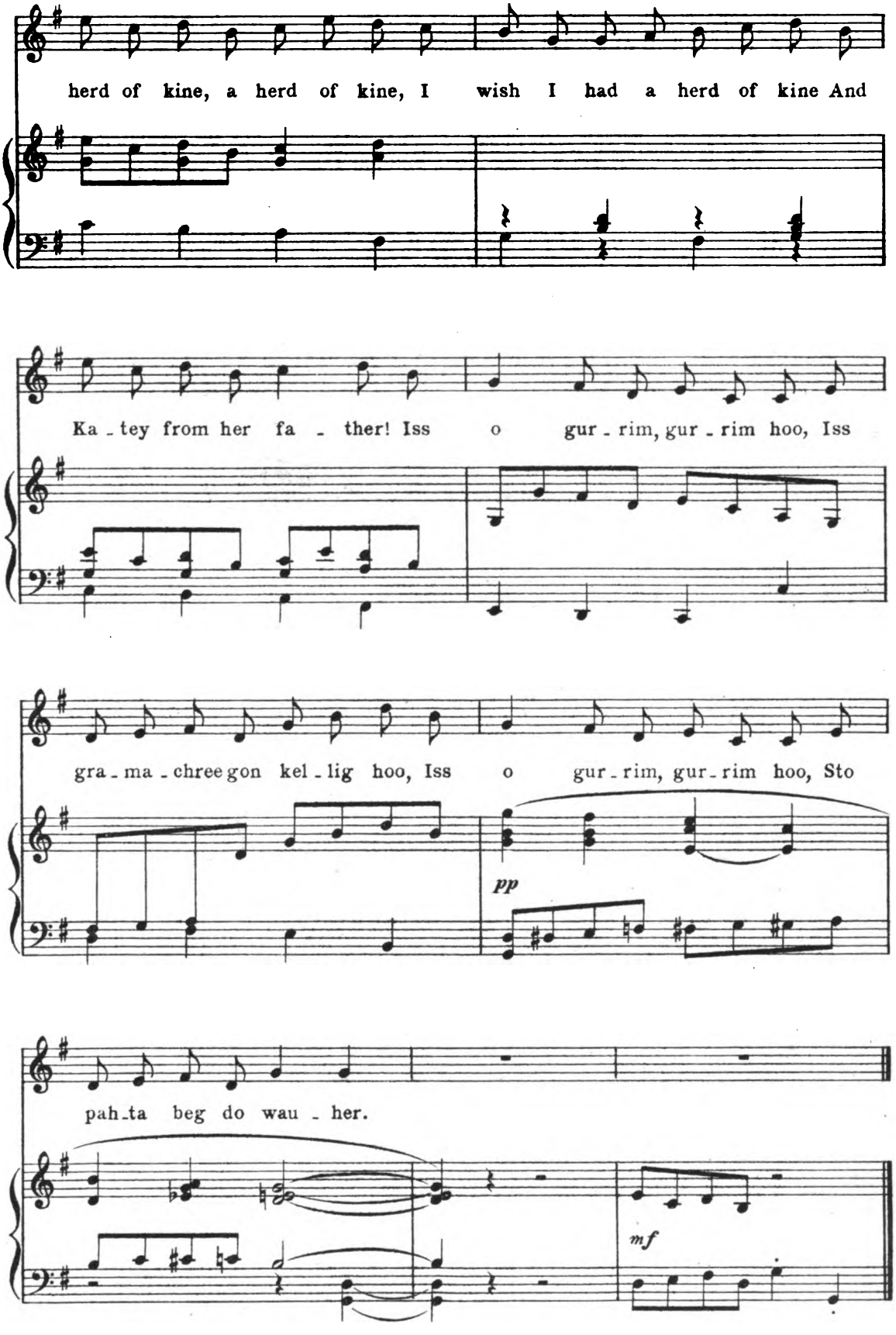

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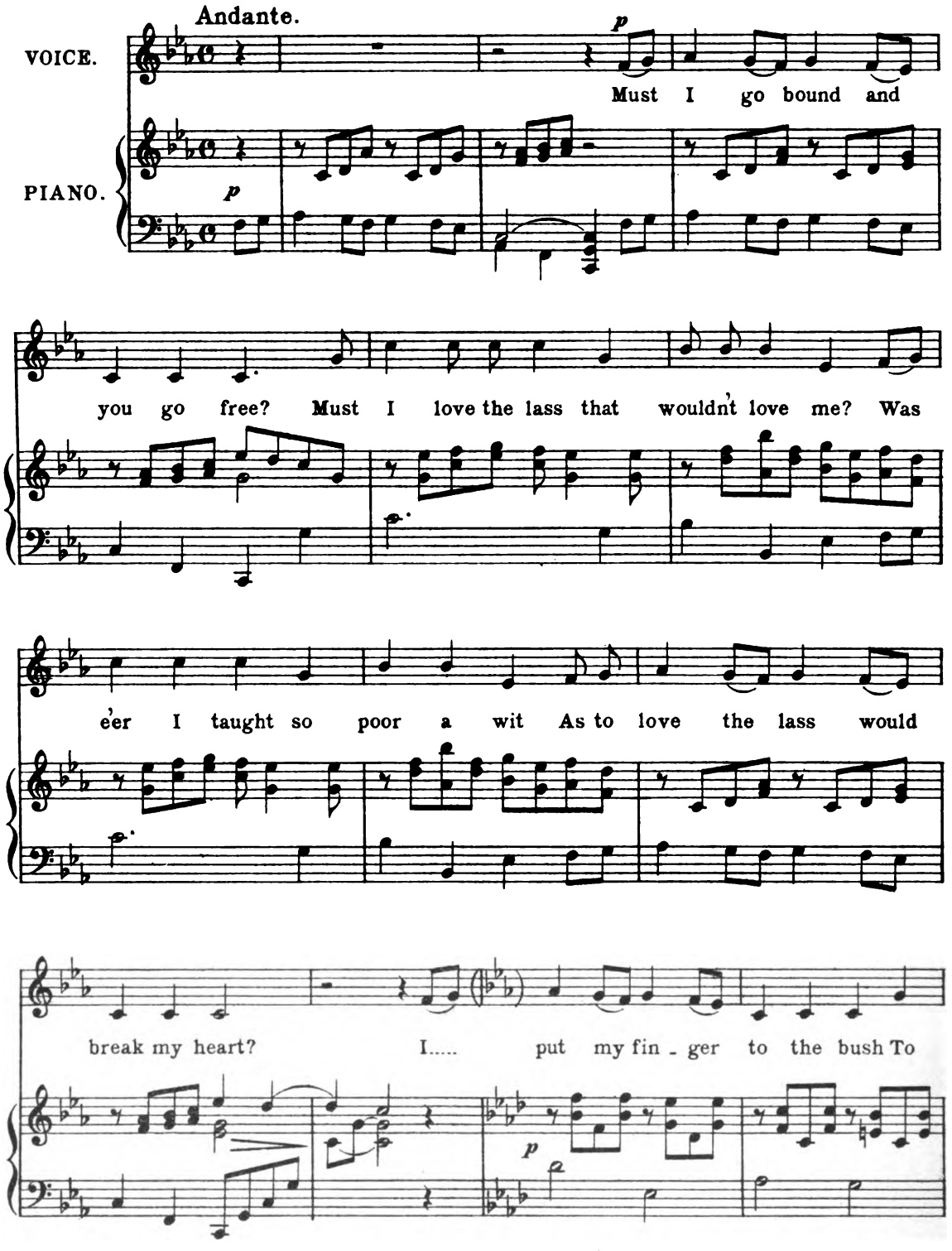
Must I go bound?

Fragment of an old Song.

COUNTY DERRY.



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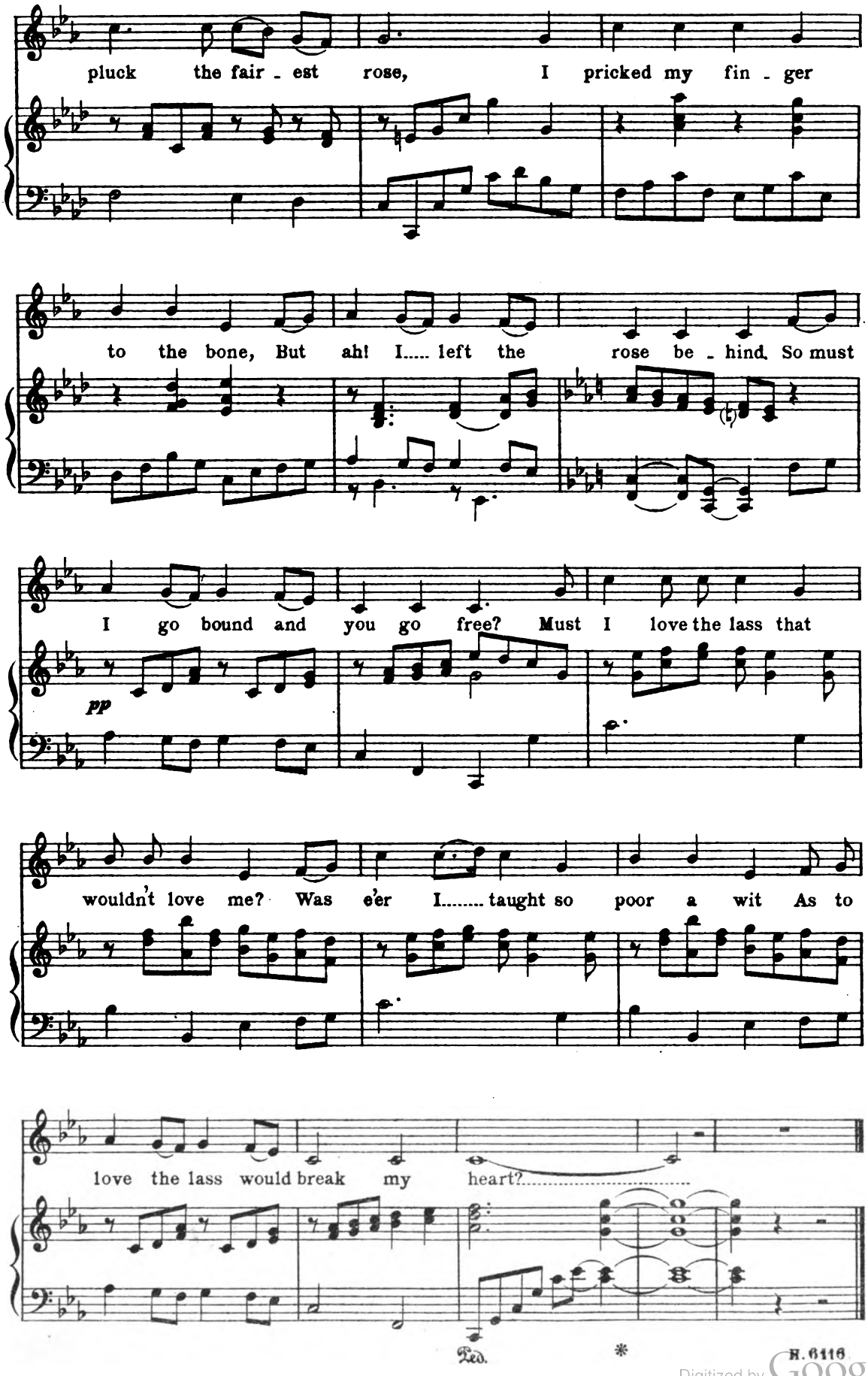

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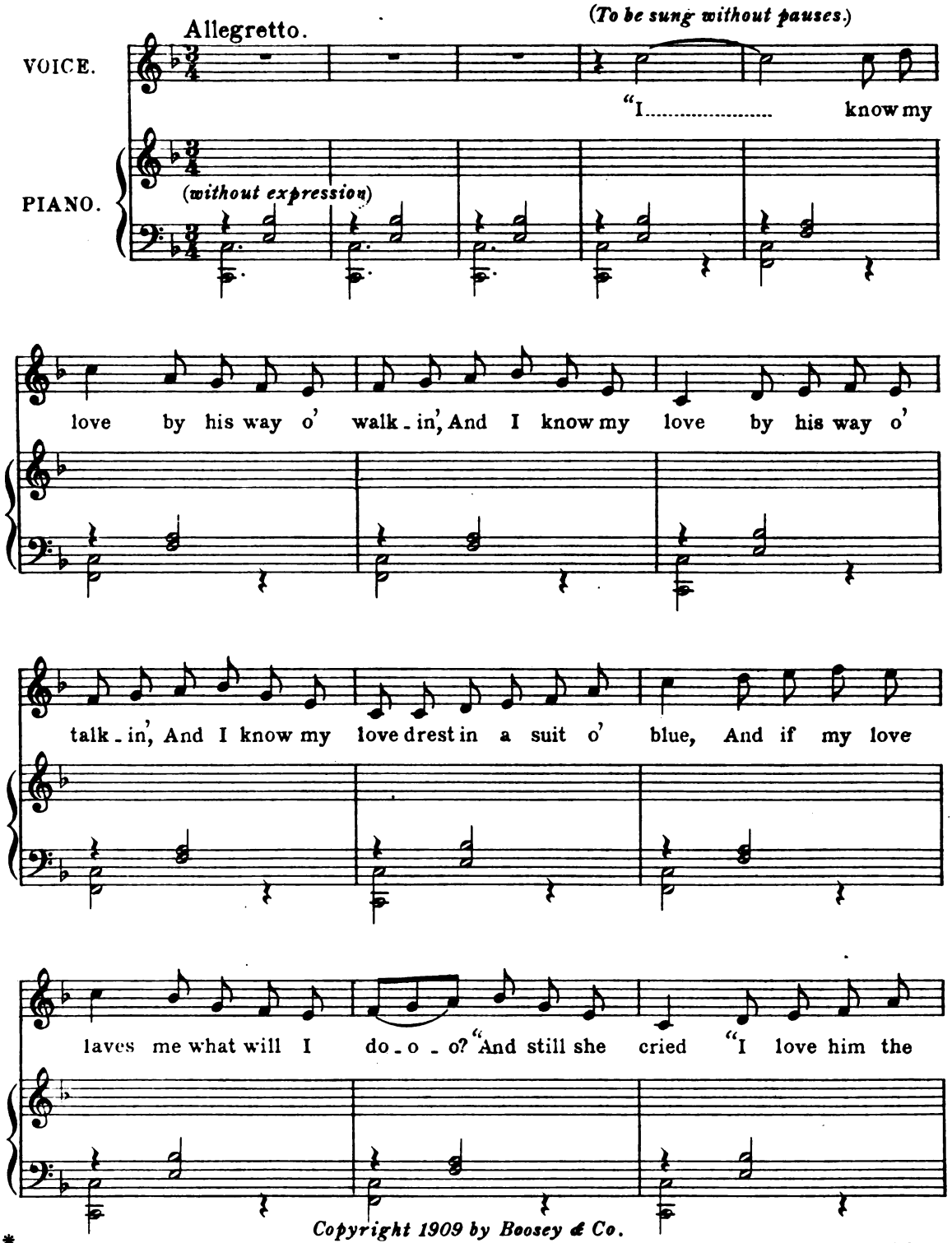
I know my love.

* OLD SONG. WEST IRISH.



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* In Galway and Clare this song was sometimes sung in alternate verses of Irish and English, but I have been unable to obtain the Irish words. The version here given forms part of the song as it is known in Limerick.—Ed.

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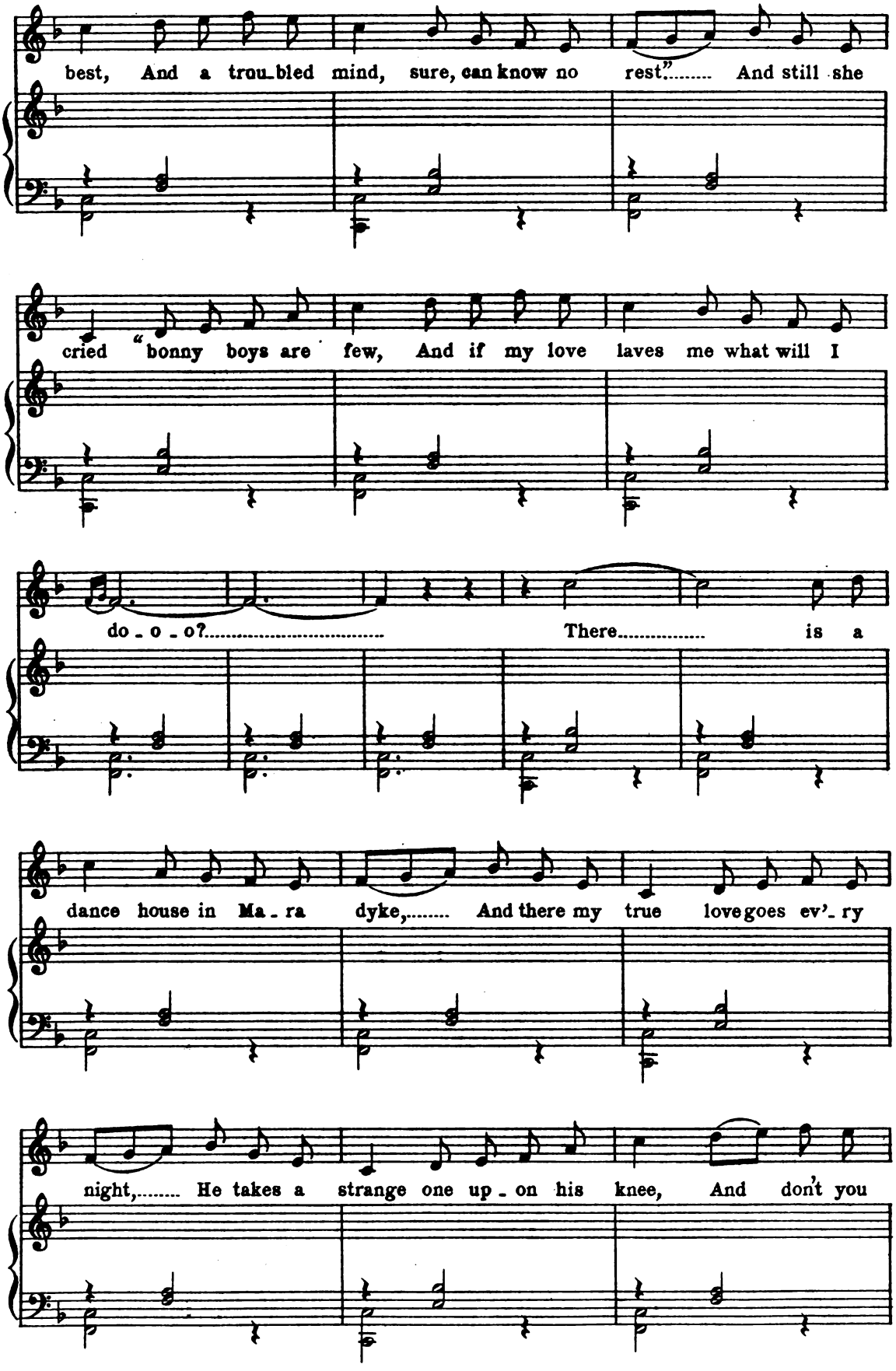

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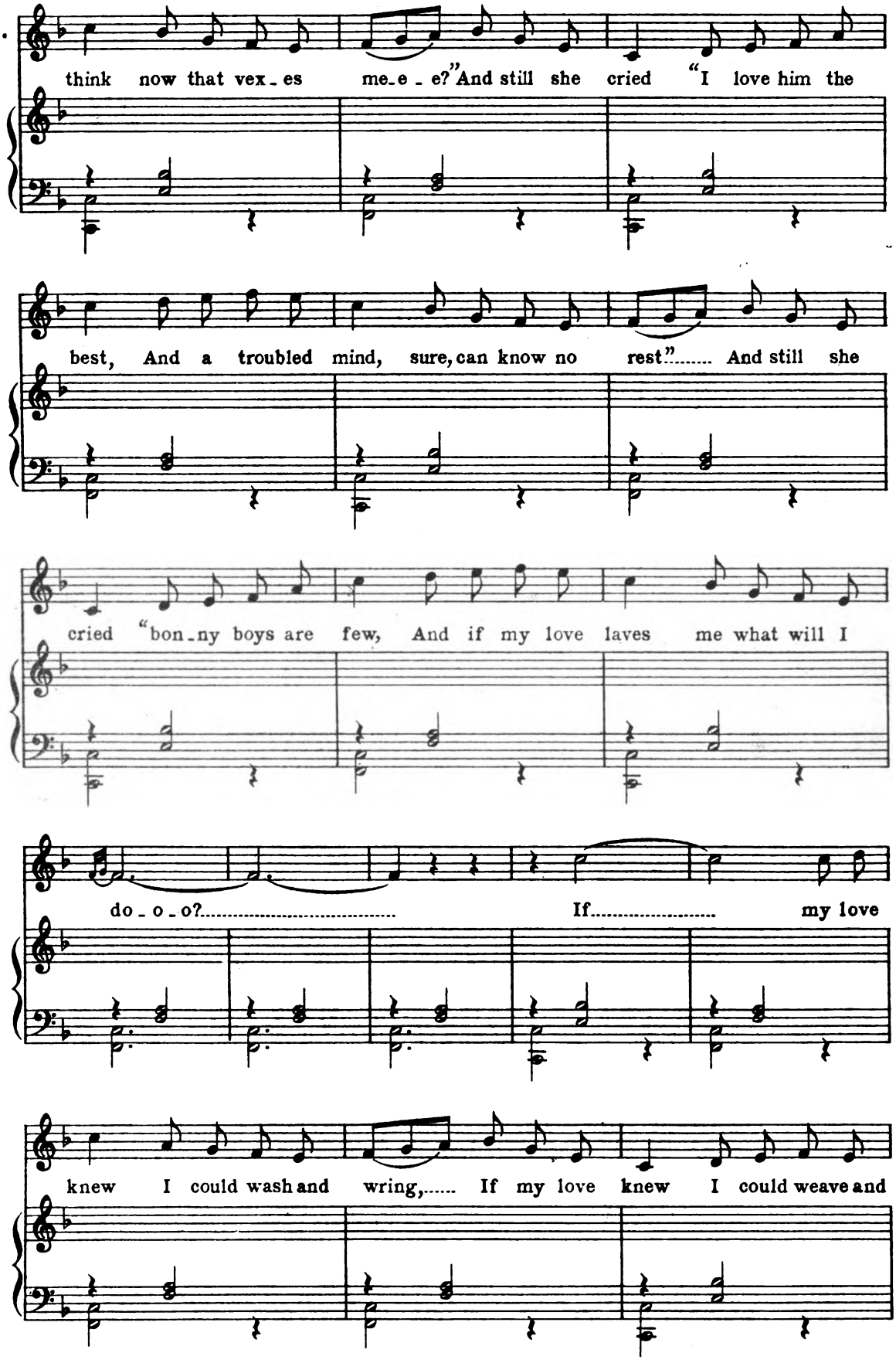

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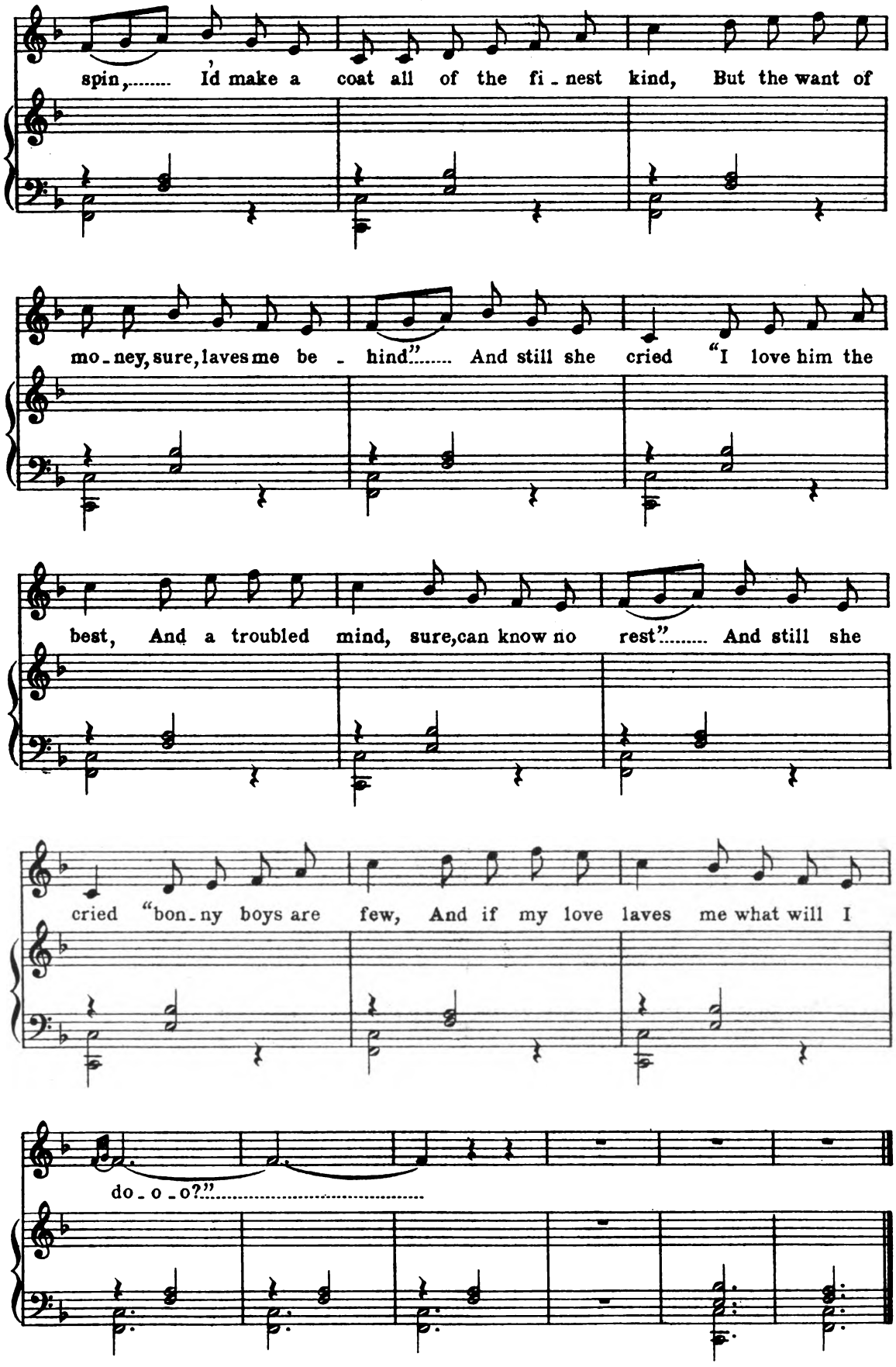

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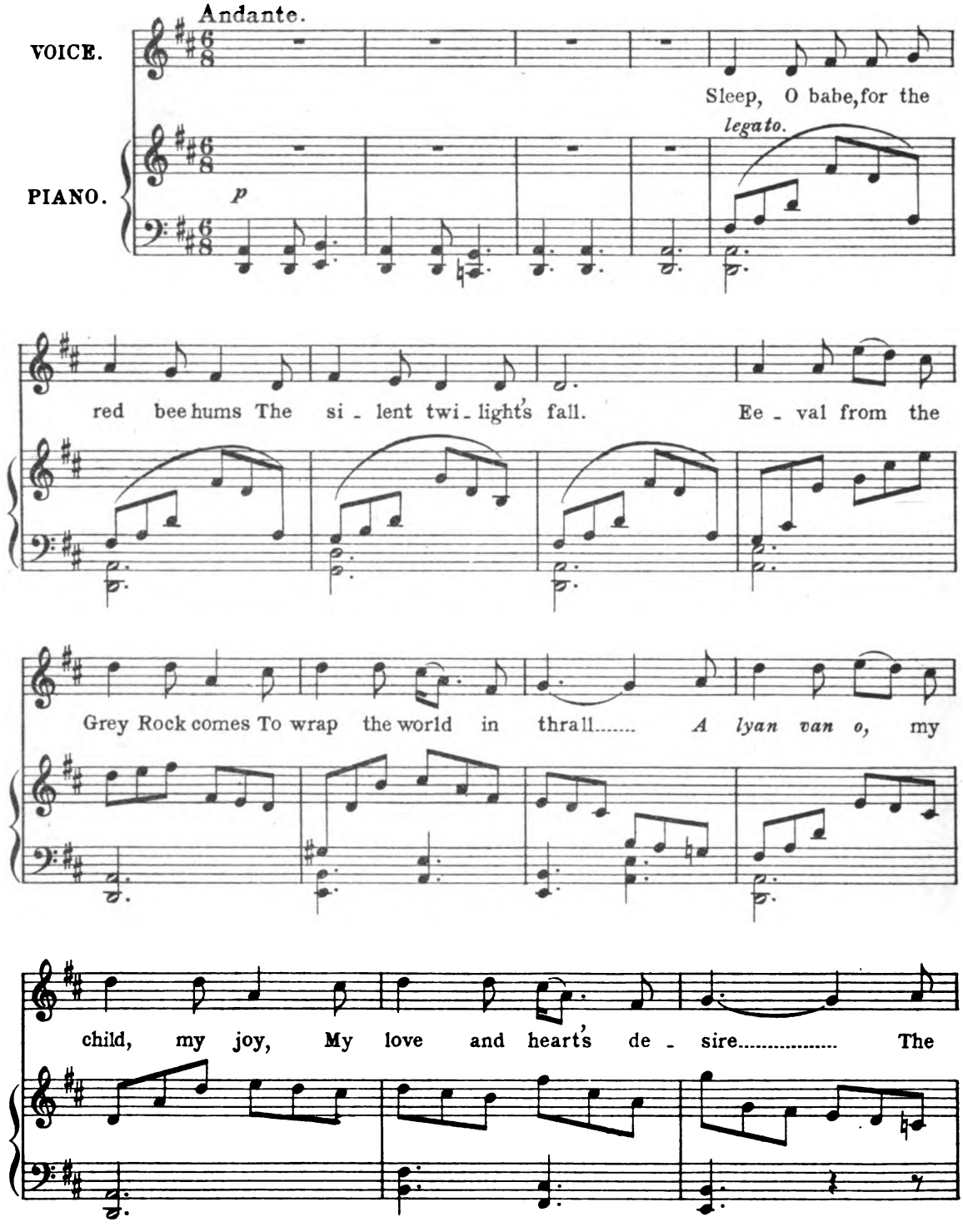

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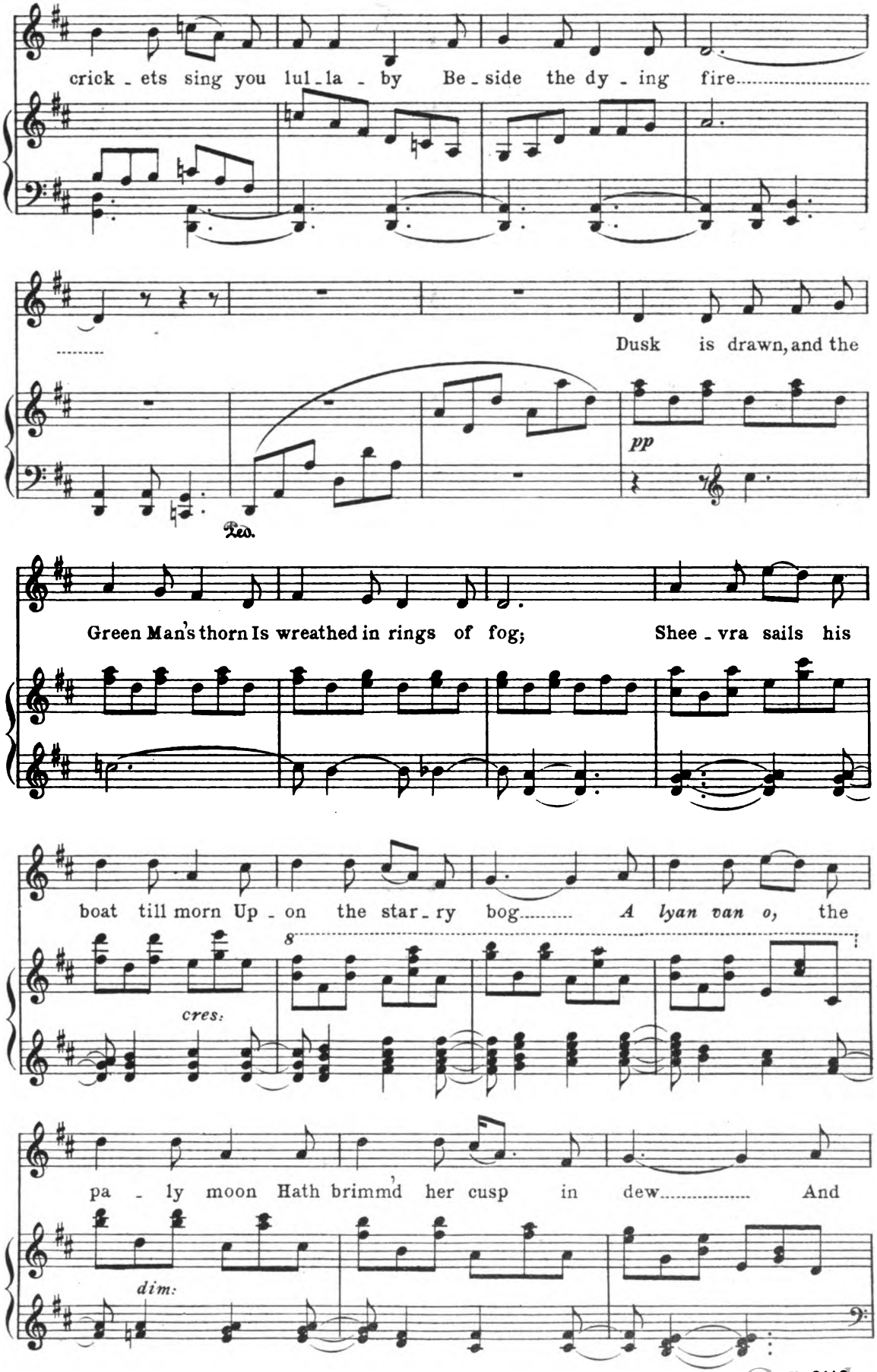

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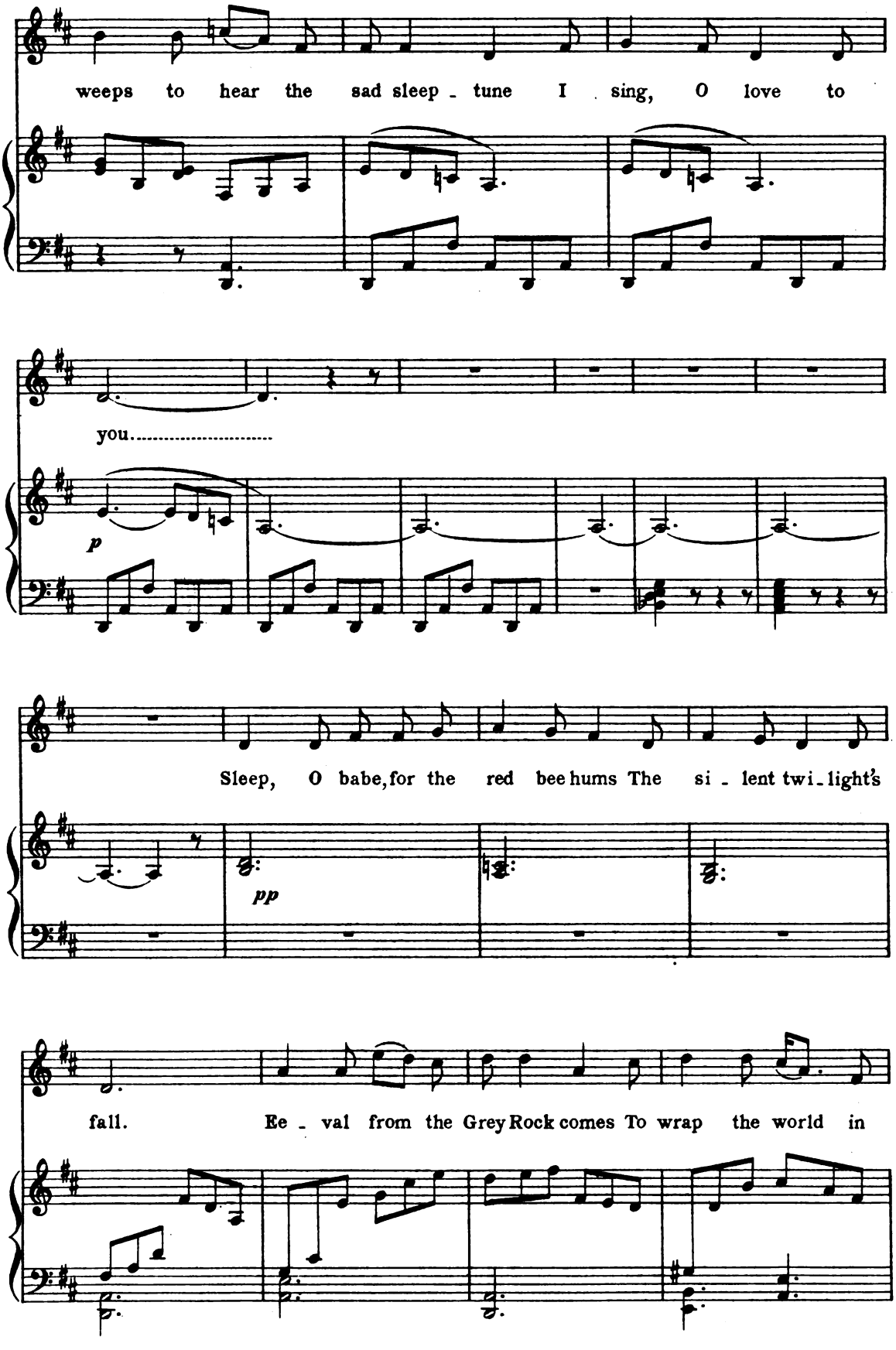

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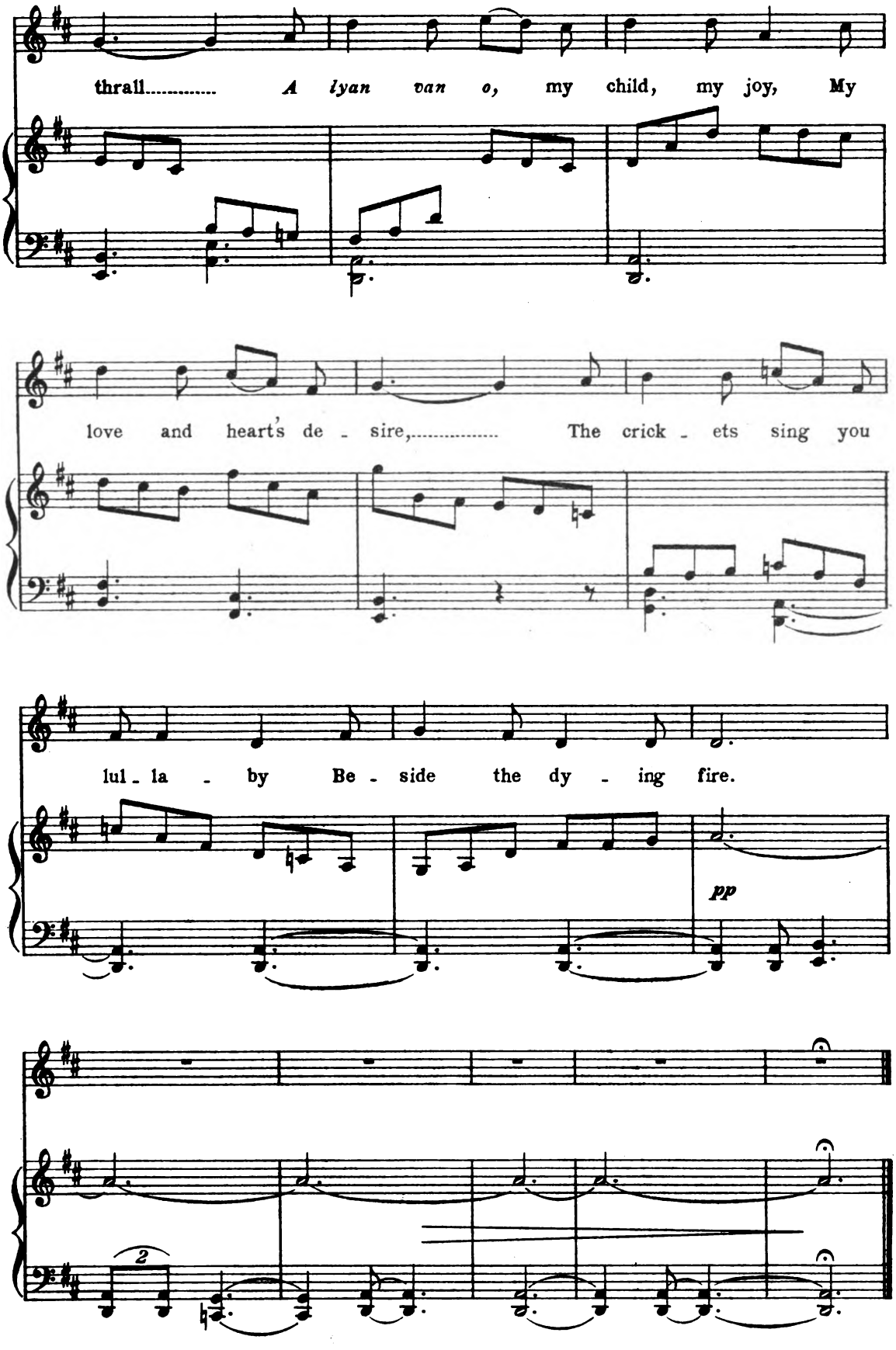

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