Boys that Wore the Green

Boys that Wore the Green
(William Woodburn)

On the twenty-first of July, beneath the burning sun.
McDowell met the Southern troops in battle, at Bull Run;
Above the Union vanguard, was proudly dancing seen,
Beside the starry banner, old Erin's flag of green.

Colonel Corcoran led the Sixty-ninth on that eventful day,
I wish the Prince of Wales were there to see him in the fray;
His charge upon the batteries was a most glorious scene,
With gallant New York firemen, and the boys that wore the green.

In the hottest of the fire there rode along the line
A captain of a Zouave band, crying, "Now, boys, is your time;"
Ah! who is he so proudly rides, with bold and dauntless mien?
'Tis Thomas Francis Meagher, of Erin's isle of green!

The colors of the Sixty-ninth, I say it without shame,
Were taken in the struggle to swell the victor's fame;
But Farnham's dashing Zouaves, that run with the machine,
Retook them in a moment, with the boys that wore the green!

Being overpowered by numbers, our troops were forced to flee,
The Southern black horse cavalry on them charged furiously;
But in that hour of peril, the flying mass to screen,
Stood the gallant New York firemen, with the boys that wore the green.

Oh, the boys of the Sixty-ninth, they are a gallant band,
Bolder never drew a sword for their adopted land;
Amongst the fallen heroes, a braver had not been,
Than you lamented Haggerty, of Erin's isle of green.

Farewell, my gallant countrymen, who fell that fatal day,
Farewell, ye noble firemen, now mouldering in the clay;
Whilst blooms the leafy shamrock, whilst runs the old machine,
Your deeds will live bold Red Shirts, and Boys that Wore the Green!

The author of this lyric used the melody "John Anderson, my Jo," by Scottish poet/composer Robert Burns, of which a version was found in a book entitled "Good Old Songs," Volkwein Bros., Pittsburgh, PA, apparently of the late 19th century vintage. The lyric appeared in the "John Brown

And The Union Right Or Wrong Songster," D.E. Appleton & Co., Publishers, 508 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, 1863. I have not yet run across the name of William Woodburn in any other Civil War period music, and research has not yet yielded any information about him. He was clearly an admirer of Colonel Michael Corcoran's 69th New York State Militia, and their courageous stand at the first major engagement of the Civil War: the battle of Bull Run.

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