
Synopsis

The singer has had a happy childhood but becomes a rambler and ends up working on the Western Railway. He falls out with Green the ganger [team boss], who fines him for breaking a barrow. He goes to Green's lodgings and kills him, but is not found out until he gets drunk one night in Cork and boasts of it. He is arrested, tried and sentenced to be hanged.

Text

My father brought me tenderly it's to the Church of Rome
For I started out a rambling and I left my native home
I started out a rambling and I plundered night and day
Till I became navvy on the western new railway

We had one of the cruellest gangers that ever you had seen
One of the cruellest gangers his name was Edward Green
He charged me for me for four and four pence and kept it off my pay
For the breaking of an old wheel barrow on that great western new railway

It was upon a Saturday when the men all went to town
And Green the ganger did not know that I was going a round
For a loaded pistol I did see and I did quickly take
To green the ganger's hut now I did smartly walk

For Green the ganger went to that hut to light the boiler fire
I quickly followed after him and quickly barred the door
With a loaded pistol in my hand I knocked him to the floor
And I murdered Green the ganger of that great western new railway

But I work away for six long months as happy as could be
Till fifty pound was offered to anyone could swear
Fifty pound was offered to anyone could swear
Who murdered Green the ganger of that great western new railway

But I went down to Cork one night and foolish I did say
That I murdered Green the ganger of that great western new railway
I was quickly followed after and in the jail was flung
In front of judge and jury and sentence to be hung

For murdering green the ganger of the great western new railway

Glossary:

Source of Text: School of Scottish Studies Track ID - 62078 Date Recorded -1954.08
<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/fullrecord/62078/1>

Music. As per recording : *The Wild Colonial Boy*



Source of Music: As per text

Printer: Oral

Where Printed: Oral

Author : Anonymous

Variant Set: No Variants found

Date: c1860 see Notes of the Song and Its Historical Background

Notes of the Song and Its Historical Background

John Green the Ganger was murdered in December 1840 by three navvies working on the Edinburgh and Glasgow railway - Dennis Doolan, Patrick Redding, and James Hickie. Doolan and Redding were hanged but Hickie was recommended to mercy. A report of the execution said that

"Dennis Doolan and Patrick Redding were executed yesterday morning at Crosshill, about three miles north of Glasgow, in pursuance of the sentence of the Justiciary Circuit Court... None of the railway labourers were at their work but few were to be seen either at the execution or in the line of procession" [to the gallows].

<http://digital.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/14743/>

This song moves the action to the Irish Midland Great Western Railway. That line was constructed in stages from 1851 to 1895.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midland_Great_Western_Railway.

The song may well be a variant of an older song set at the original scene of the murder and was probably made closer to 1851 than 1895.

If the "*four and four pence*" mentioned in the song means four shillings and four pence (52p) then Green the ganger did indeed impose a swingeing fine on the murderer – men working on the railway in Cardiff in the late 1840s earned about 2 shillings and 6 pence (30p) per day.