Mick Ryan's Lament

Tim O'Brien

Well my name is Mick Ryan, I'm lyin still
In a lonely spot near where I was killed
By a red man defending his native land
In the place that they call Little Big HornAnd I swear I did not see the irony
When I rode with the Seventh Cavalry
I thought that we fought for the land of the free
When we rode from Fort Lincoln that morningAnd the band they played the Garryowen
Brass was shining, flags a flowin
I swear if I had only known
I'd have wished that I'd died back at VicksburgFor my brother and me, we had barely escaped
From the hell that was Ireland in forty eight
Two angry young lads who had learned how to hate
But we loved the idea of AmerikayAnd we cursed our cousins who fought and bled
In their bloody coats of bloody red
The sun never sets on the bloody dead
Of those who have chosen an empireBut we'd find a better life somehow
In the land where no man has to bow
It seemed right then and it seems right now
That Paddy he died for the unionAh, but Michael he somehow got turned around
He had stolen the dream that he thought he'd found
Now I never will see that holy ground
For I turned into something I hatedAnd I'm haunted by the Garryowen
Drums a beating, bugles blowin'
I swear if I had only known
I'd lie with my brother in VicksburgAnd the band they played that Garryowen
Brass was shin, flags a flowin'
I swear if I had only known, I'd lie with
my brother at Vicksburg

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