

## Rakes of Mallow

c. 1740

Beau - ing bel - ling danc - ing drink - ing Break - ing win - dows  
 swear - ing sink - ing Ev - er rak - ing nev - er think - ing  
 Live - the - rakes - of - Mal - low, Spend - ing fast - er  
 than it comes, Beat - ing wait - ers bail - iffs duns, Bacch - us - 's true be -  
 got - ten sons, Live - the - rakes - of - Mal - low.

THIS wonderful old Irish drinking song first appeared as a broadside in about 1740 and was published in various song collections between the 1750s and 1790s. A version called “The Rakes of London” was also popular around 1756, and various adaptations of the song appeared throughout the latter half of the 18th and first part of the 19th centuries. A few sources claim that the melody is from an old dance tune; either “The Northumberland Gypsy” or “Sandy Lent the Man His Mule,” although the latter tune is sometimes said to have taken its melody from “The Rakes of Mallow”—go figure!

Mallow is a town located about 20 miles north of Cork on the River Blackwater in south-central Ireland. As if you couldn't tell from the song, a “Rake”—which is short for “Rakehell”—was an young man of low character who lived a life of drunken debauchery. The notorious 18th-century diarist James Boswell, though probably not a rake in the strictest sense, definitely had some rakish qualities, and *Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763* (edited by Frederick A. Pottle) is a must-read for any 18th-century enthusiast.