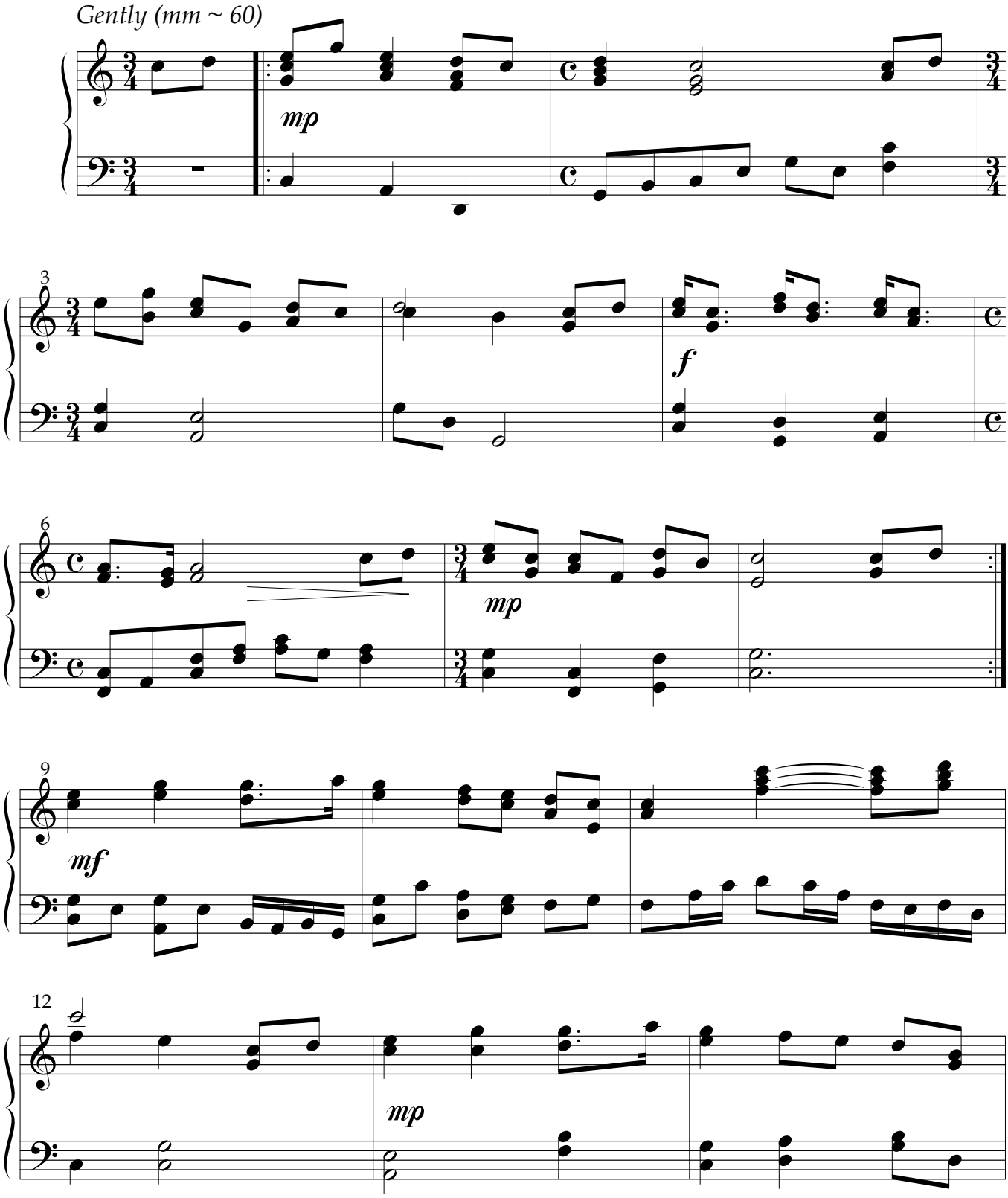
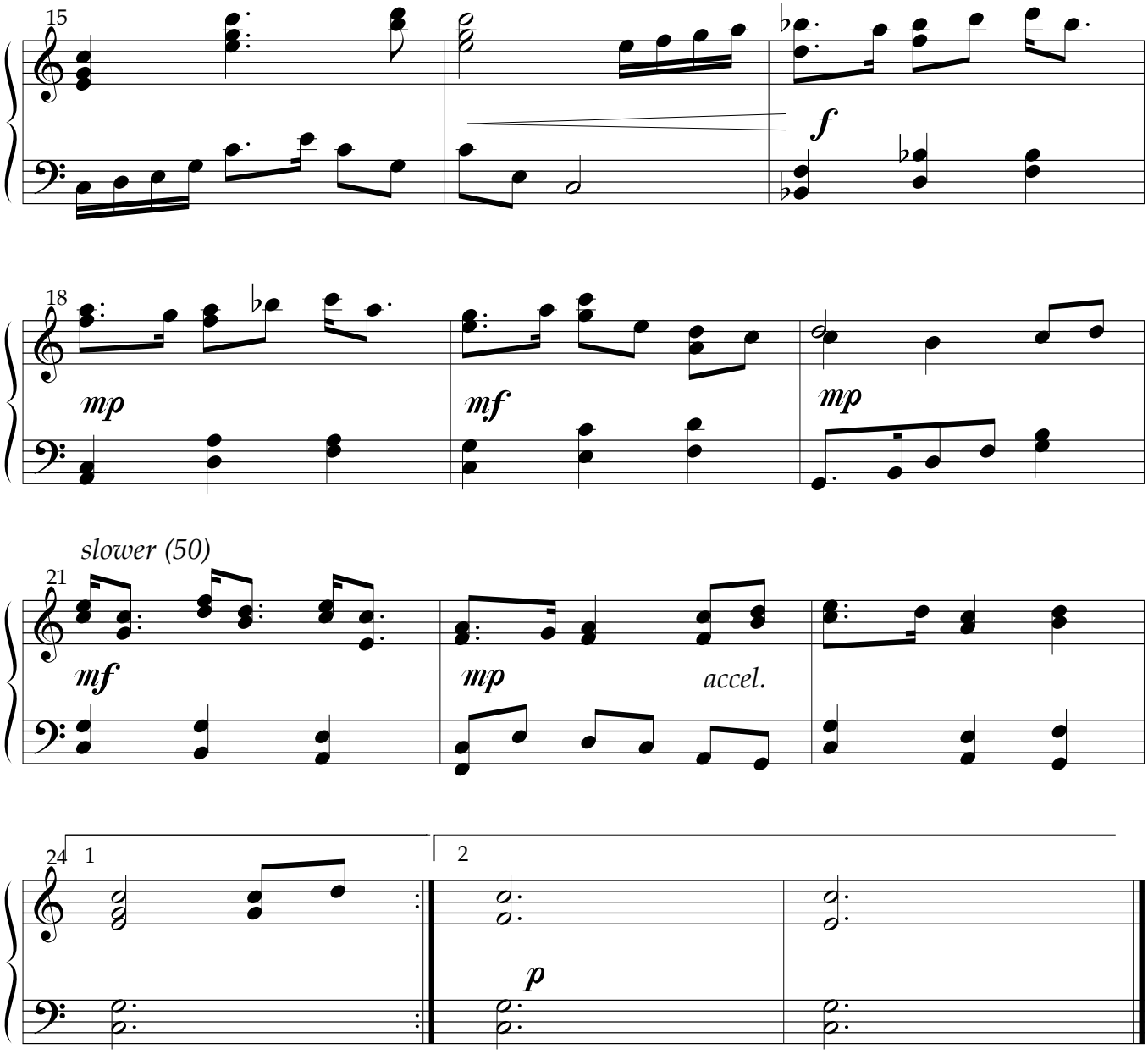
LIMERICK'S LAMENTATION

? Myles O'Reilly (c.1636 - ?)



LIMERICK'S LAMENTATION



Unfortunately the beauty of this piece is in direct proportion to the amount of confusion surrounding its exact origins. That there is a close relationship of some sort to the Scots tune "Lochaber No More" seems not to be in dispute, but the origin of the work that is the common source for "Lochaber" and "Lamentation" is not clear.

Bunting states that "Lochaber" derives from a piece composed by the Irish harper Myles O'Reilly (born c.1635/6), while O'Neill says that the harper Thomas Connellan of Cloonmahon, County Sligo, added introductory and concluding phrases and re-named it "The Breach of Aughrim", and that it was introduced to Scotland after his death in 1698 by his brother Laurence Connellan, who was also a harper.

The references to Limerick and to Aughrim connect this moving piece with the unsuccessful 1691 attempt by Sarsfield's Irish troops to remove the English occupation forces from Connacht (western Ireland), providing a context if not an exact date for this piece.

LIMERICK'S LAMENTATION

It is sad and lone I am today, far from dear Erin's shore
I may never, never, never see her again; I may never see her more.
In grief I think of my sweet land under cruel slave-laws that bind
I am always, always thinking of her, she is in my heart and mind.

Although the lyrics to "Limerick's Lamentation" are seldom if ever heard these days, the melody remains one of the finest in the traditional repertoire.

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The *South Reading Tune Book*, referring to Andrew Kuntz' fine online reference work "Fiddler's Companion", says the following:

"Bunting (*Ancient Music of Ireland*, 1840, p. 69) states that 'Lochaber' derives from a piece composed by the Irish harper Myles O'Reilly (born c.1635/6) ... O'Neill (*Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 1913) states that the harper Thomas Connellan of Cloonmahon, County Sligo, added introductory and concluding phrases and re-named it 'The Breach of Aughrim', and that it was introduced to Scotland after his death in 1698 by his brother Laurence Connellan, who was also a harper."

The references to Limerick and to Aughrim connect this moving piece with the unsuccessful 1691 attempt by Sarsfield's Irish troops to remove the English occupation forces from Connacht (western Ireland).

The historical reference however does not establish an exact date of composition, and it is quite conceivable that the title was applied to an existing composition of O'Reilly's whose melancholy mood would have been entirely suitable to commemoration of such a tragic setback to the cause of Irish freedom.