The Prairie Harvester's Song
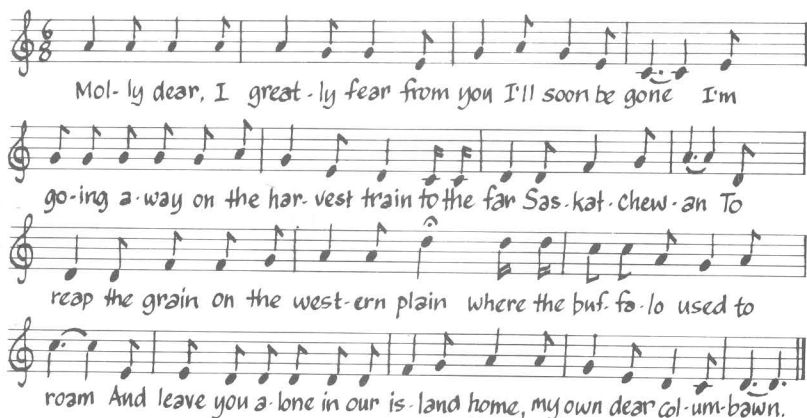

Mol-ly dear, I great-ly fear from you I'll soon be gone I'm going a-way on the har-vest train to the far Sas-kat-chew-an To reap the grain on the west-ern plain where the buf-fa-lo used to roam And leave you a-lone in our is-land home, my own dear col-um-bawn.

Molly dear, I greatly fear
From you I'll soon be gone.
I'm going away on the harvest train
To the far Saskatchewan,
To reap the grain on the western plain
Where the buffalo used to roam,
And leave you alone in our island home,
My own dear columbawn.* *(P.E.I. Irishism for "sweetheart")*

Chorus
Hark, now listen
To the whistle of the train:
It's pulling from the station
To the land of the golden grain.
And when I do return again
To our dear native land,
We'll make the old home flourish
With the money we command.

Molly dear, I have no fear
When I am far away,
With a willing heart you'll do your part
And for me you will pray.
At the setting sun when the work's all done
And the kids play on the lawn,
You'll heave a sigh for your absent boy
In the far Saskatchewan.

Molly dear, come dry your tears,
I'll soon be back again,
With pockets lined with the gold I'll find
In the fields of the golden grain.
And when I do return again
To our friends we'll drink their health,
For there's no place here where there is such cheer
As the land of the silver pelt.

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This past June I recorded in Vancouver a fragment of this song from Joe MacIsaac recalling his father singing it on Prince Edward Island. In response to my appeal for further words in a letter sent to the Charlottetown *Guardian* in August, I recorded this set from Mrs. Bertha MacDonald of Johnston's Landing, P.E.I. The tune is transcribed from a tape of her singing it for me over the telephone on September 14.

Dr. Edward D. ("Sandy") Ives of the University of Maine at Orono published a set in his book *Lawrence Doyle: The Farmer Poet of P.E.I.* (University of Maine at Orono Press, 1971), pp. 210-11, attributing the authorship to Dan Gowers.

Mrs. MacDonald recalls it from about 1914 when she was five years of age. The practice of taking men west by train to assist in harvesting wheat seems to have started in the early years of this century and was again in use for a few years after World War I.

Phil Thomas