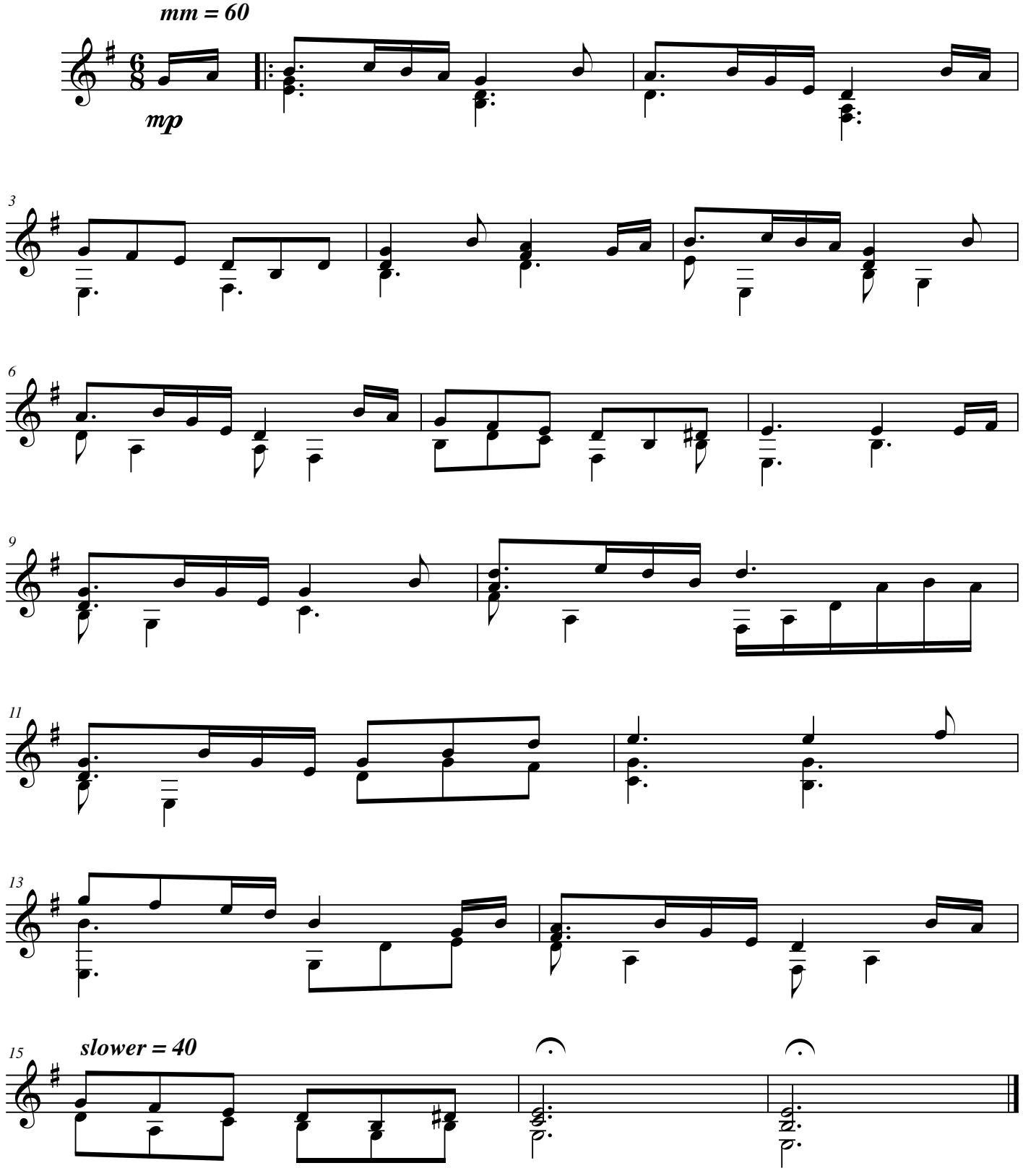
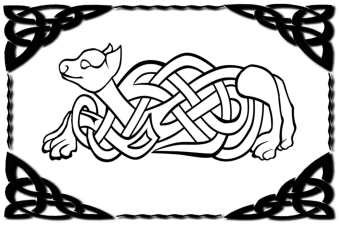
The BEND of the RIVER

O'Neill collection



From *Music of Ireland* (1903), the first tune collection assembled by Capt. Francis O'Neill (1849 - 1936). Since "the Chief" provides no further information on its source, we can only guess that it might have originally been a harp piece.

However, in his introduction to the reprint of O'Neill's *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, the eminent tune collector and expert on traditional music Breandan Breathnach proposes a theory that at least some of the more obscure pieces contained in *Music of Ireland* were new compositions and not "traditional" at all. There may be a hint of this when the Chief (on page 398 of *IMM*) alludes to his assistant Sergeant James O'Neill's being "endowed with a faculty for composing original airs to a degree unsuspected by any but his most intimate friends".

While he finds no problem (from a musical standpoint) with their inclusion, Breathnach does fault O'Neill for not advising his readers of the fact. One is left to wonder if this is the situation concerning "Bend of the River", which remains a lovely tune regardless of its pedigree (or lack thereof).