

## Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms (1808)

### Meaning of Thomas Moore's lyrics

We perform "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms" each year at our annual St. Patrick's Day Celebration at the Piedmont Center for the Arts in Piedmont, California.

"Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms" is a popular song written by the Irish poet Thomas Moore, setting new lyrics to a traditional Irish air that can be traced back into the 18th century. The melody was first printed in a London songbook in 1775. Moore published his new lyrics to the melody in 1808.

#### First verse

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms  
Which I gaze on so fondly today  
Were to change by tomorrow, and fleet in my arms  
Like fairy-gifts, fading away!  
Thou wouldst still be ador'd as this moment thou art  
Let thy loveliness fade as it will;  
And, around the dear ruin, each wish of my heart  
Would entwine itself verdantly still!

The last two lines of the first verse **need to be explained**:

"And, **around the dear ruin**, each wish of my heart  
Would entwine itself verdantly still!"

One might think that the phrase "**around the dear ruin**" refers to the ruins of a historic and cherished home or building. However, this is not what Moore meant.

In "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms," Thomas Moore uses the phrase "around the dear ruin" to mean that his love and devotion will remain steadfast even if his wife's physical beauty (the "ruin") is destroyed by aging or disease. He promises his affection will cling to her character just as fondly, regardless of external changes.

- **Context:** The song was written for his wife, Elizabeth, who was scarred by smallpox and feared losing his affection.
- **Meaning of "Dear Ruin":** This refers to her face or beauty, which she felt was ruined, but he still cherished as deeply as before.
- **"Entwine itself verdantly":** This imagery implies that his love remains alive, green, and growing, even when her youthful charms have withered.

The phrase emphasizes that true love surpasses physical beauty, focusing on a lasting, spiritual connection that stays true to the end.

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### **In the Tradition Piano Trio**

Bill Jackman, piano

Albert Brooks, M.D., drums

Marshall Perry, bass