

TRANSCRIPTION

Lizzie Higgins sings a traditional ballad, “The Twa Britthers”

ScottishVoicesProj.0604

[This recording was made in August 1986 at the home of Lizzie Higgins and her husband, Brian Youlden, in Aberdeen. Present were Lizzie Higgins, John Niles, and three members of Niles's research team.]

[The excerpt begins with a few words, not transcribed here, with which Higgins introduces the song as a great ballad “sung pipe style.” It was “one of my father’s beautiful gems.”]

[*Lizzie Higgins sings:*]

- 1 There wes twa britthers at the skowle
And when they got awa,
There is, “Will ye play at the stane chuckin,
Or will ye play at the baa?
Or will you gang up to yon bonny green hill
And there we’ll wrastlin faa?”
[skowle: school
[baa: ball
[wrastlin faa: wrestle]
- 2 “I winnae play at the stane chuckin
Or will I play at the baa.
But Ah’ll gang up tae yon bonny green hill
And there we’ll wrastling faa.”
- 3 They wrastled up and they wrastled down
Til John fell to the ground.
A dirk fell out of William’s pooch
Gave John a deadly wound.
- 4 “Lift me, lift me on yer back,
Tak me tae yon well sae fair.
Wash the blood frae off my wound
So I may bleed nae mair.”
- 5 “Ye’ll tak off yer holland sark,
Reive it frae gare to gare,
Ye’ll stap it in that bloody wound
That I may blood na mair.
[sark: shirt
[reive it: tearit ; gare: seam
[stap: steep, soak]
- 6 He’s taen off his holland sark,
Reived it frae gare to gare,
He’s stapped it in that bloody wound
But it aye bled mair an mair.

7 “Lift me, lift me on your back,
Tak me to Kirkland fair.
Dig a grave baith wide and deep
An lay my body there.”

8 Lay my arrows at my head,
My bent bow at my feet,
My sword and buckler by my side
Like I was wont tae sleep.”

LH: I sung it exactly as he teached me, the last part in a crescendo, when the great warrior died as he was wont tae sleep.