

## PARTIAL TRANSCRIPTION

### Duncan Williamson sings and tells a song from the 1930s, “The Judge’s Decision”

ScottishVoicesProj.0434

[This recording was made in August, 1986, at a rented house in Auchtermuchty, Fife. Present in addition to Williamson were John Niles and four members of his research team. The cassette tape recorder was not turned on in time to catch the first lines of this song, but the words were captured on another recorder that was running concurrently. The words missing at the start of this recording are supplied between square brackets.]

As Williamson sings it, this song is not readily resolved into quatrains, so it is set here in couplets.]

[DW: [*Sings:*]

1       The judge was set, the jury too, and people from afar—

DW: [Noo you were right, ladies and gentlemen, this music is very strange. It's not like the music you get nowadays. [*Resumes singing:*]

A fair young lad with golden hair was a prisoner at the bar.]

2       —The great courtroom was crowdit with {main ten inches strang},  
And many’s a heart was aching for the boy accused of wrong.

3       A maiden fair with golding hair was {wurpling} through the crowd,  
The people gazed in wonder with not one word allowed.

4       Then turning to the judge, she said, “Remember, judge,” said she;  
“Remember, judge, it would break my heart to take my boy away.”

5       The people gazed in wonder, with not one word allowed;  
The judge rose slowly from his seat, a tear stood in his eye.

6       She says, “Judge, your mind must wander back to long, long years gone by,  
And see yourself it's in the street, just like this little boy.”

7       Then turning to the judge, she said, “Remember, judge,” said she.  
“Remember, judge, it would break my heart to take my boy away.”

8       The great courtroom was crowded, for {main ten inches stang},  
And mony’s the heart was aching for the boy accused of wrong.

9       The judge rose slowly from his seat, a tear stood in his eye,

The tears was trinkling down his cheeks, just for this little boy.

10     The jury did not leave the room their verdict to pronoun,  
For a maiden fair with golden hair came {whurstling} through the crowd.

DW: That's a wonderful story, and it tells a story of someone who took ye to court tae take the child from the woman who really loved him, ye know? And this — this song was away back in 1936 — '32, '33, '35, '36 — was a wonderful story among the travelling people, and it tells the condition, when a lone child wis caught and took to court, and mother and father wants possession of the child, ye know. And it was up to the judge tae decide who should get the child. And the woman had pleaded her case so much that the judge stood up really crying — which rarely happens but judges do — but he was really cryin in court, and he gave the possession of the child to the young lady who was the mother of the child. And the father had nothing to say about this because the judge had made the decision final.

HT: Yeah.

DW: It's a very old song, and I don't think you'll ever find it anywhere in the world, except — You won't find it, Holly, it's true. [*Sings again.*]

A maiden fair with golding hair was {wurpling} through the crowd,  
The people gazed in wonder with not one word allowed.

Then turning to the judge, she said, "Remember, judge," said she;  
"Remember, judge, it would break my heart to take my boy away."

She said, "Judge, your mind must wander back to long, long years gone by,  
And see yourself just in your street, just like my little boy."

So she — she'd put a good case for herself, ye know? And she made the judge so sad that the judge rose from his chair, and she got through to the judge and the judge was cryin, and the rest of them. And the jury said, "We cannae make up a decision." So the woman got her child, ye know? That was this wonderful story. It's a very very old song. I don't suppose you could find it anywhere.

HT: What's the name of that song?

DW: [After some thought.] —It's called "The Judge's Decision."

[Two minutes of this excerpt are not transcribed at this point. Williamson comments on what is meant by "main ten inches strang": the people in the courtroom are packed together tightly.]

DW: So that's a very old song, and I don't think you'll find it anywhere — Not one person is alive today — It's something you'll get from the past. And it's a wonderful st— I hope you learn it someday.

DW = Duncan Williamson  
HT = Holly Tannen