

TRANSCRIPTION

Lizzie Higgins sings “The Fair Flower of Northumberland”

ScottishVoicesProj.0611

[This recording was made in August 1986 at the home of Lizzie Higgins and her husband, Brian Youlden, in Aberdeen. Present were Higgins, John Niles, and three members of Niles's research team. The video camera, which was operated by research volunteer David Kotyk, pans slowly — and not altogether steadily — from closeups of Lizzie singing the song while holding her pet dog Papillon; to John Niles as he listens intently and minds the reel-to-reel tape recorder that simultaneously recorded this part of the session; to research volunteers Eugene Schwartz and his wife Ruth, who fill out the audience and take occasional notes.]

[*Lizzie Higgins sings:*]

1 The provost's ae dochter was walkin her lane
O but her love it was easily won
When she passed a prisoner [makin his mane,
And she was the floor of Northumberland.]¹ [mane: moan, lament]

2 "Oh gin a lassie would marry me
O but her love it was easily won
I'd mak her a lady o high degree,
If she'd loose me oot o ma prison sae strang."

3 She's run down tae her faither's barn stock,
O but her love it was easily won
She's stolen the keys for many a brave lock,
Tae lease him oot o his prison sae strang. [lease: release, loose]

4 She's run down tae her faither's stables,
It's O her love it was easily won
She hes stolen a steed that was baith fleet an able
Tae lease them on tae bonnie Scotland.

5 As they were ridin across the Scots moors
O but yer love it was easily won
"Get doon frae my horse, ye're a brazen-faced hure," [hure: whore]
An ye were the floor o Northumberland.

6 "It's I hae a wife in my ain country
O but yer love it was easily won
An I cannae do naethin wi a lassie like ye,

¹ The video camera cut out here for a few seconds. The words set between brackets are supplied from the reel-to-reel audio recording that recorded this same performance.

Ye'll need tae gae hame tae Nothumberland.”

7 “It’s cuik in yer kitchen I surely will be,
 Although my love it was easily won.

For I cannae gae hame tae my ain country,
Although I’m the floor o Northumberland.”

8 “Oh it’s cuik in my kitchen ye cannae well be,
 O but yer love it was easily won

For my lady she wouldnae hae servents like ye,
Ye'll need tae gae hame tae Northumberland.”

9 When she come in her faither frooned and said,
 O but yer love it was easily won,

[frooned: frowned

But ye’re no the first that the Scots have beguiled,
An ye’re welcome aye back tae Northumberland.

10 Ye winnae want breid an ye winnae want wine,
 Although yer love it was easily won

An ye winnae want silver tae buy a man wi,
An ye’re aye the floor o Northumberland.”

[The interview continues with a few words, not transcribed here, in response to a question posed by Niles as to why Higgins particularly liked this song: “My father loved it an my mother loved it dearly.” The video recording skips and starts a bit here.]