

## PARTIAL TENTATIVE TRANSCRIPTION

### Lizzie Higgins sings a traditional ballad, “Proud Lady Margaret”

ScottishVoicesProj.0610

[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. This video recording breaks off abruptly in the midst of stanza 5 as the batteries failed on the video recorder at the end of a long recording session.]

The excerpt begins with a few prefatory words as Higgins relates that as she sings the song, she is going through it herself: “I am the heroine.”

[*Lizzie Higgins sings:*]

1       It was on a night, and an evening bright  
          When the dew begun tae faa,  
          Lady Margaret was walkin up and doon  
          Looking ower the castle waa.  
          She luiket east, she luiket west  
          Tae see what she could spy,  
          When a gallant knoght came in her sight,  
          Unto her gates drew nigh.

2       “God mak ye safe an free, fair maid,  
          God mak ye safe an free.”  
          What is yer will wi me, sir knight,  
          Oh what’s yer will wi me?”  
          “My will wi you is nae smaa, lady,  
          My will wi you nae smaa.  
          And syne there is nane your bower within  
          You’ll hae my secrets aa.

4       “‘It is I am come tae this castle  
          Tae seek the love of thee.  
          An if you do not grant me love  
          All for your sake Ah’ll dee.”  
          “‘If you should dee for me, sir knight,  
          It is few for you will mean.  
          There’s many a better has died for me  
          Whas graves are growin green.”

[mean: moan, lament

[whas: whose

5       “‘What is the flooer, the ae first flooer  
          That grows on moor and dell?  
          What is the bird, the bonniest bird

That sings next the nightingale?  
What is the color — —”

**Note:**

As Higgins continues singing the song in an additional four-and-a-half stanzas (as was recorded concurrently on a reel-to-reel tape recorder), the riddle dialogue continues: Lady Margaret answers correctly that the primrose is the flower, the mavis (or thrush) is the bird, while yellow (that is, gold) is the bonniest color that king or queen can wear. The knight then reveals himself to be a revenant: one who has come back from the dead. He can get no peace because of Lady Margaret's excessive pride. If she does not mend her ways, he tells her, she will end up in the lowest seat in hell. The knight then vanishes from her sight.