

## The Threshing Machine

The musical notation is written on three staves in 3/4 time. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Chords C, G, C, and G are indicated above the staff. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Chords F, G, F, and C are indicated above the staff. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Chords G and C are indicated above the staff.

1. There once was a farmer who lived in the dell,  
He had but one daughter and her name was Nell.  
She was young, she was pretty, she was only sixteen  
When I showed her the works of my threshing machine.

### Chorus:

Sing too-ra-lie too-ra-lie too-ra-lie-ay  
too-ra-lie too-ra-lie too-ra-lie-ay  
*last two lines of the preceding verse*

2. It was late in the evening way down in the dell.  
I went out walking with our little Nell.  
She worked the throttle and I worked the steam  
And I showed her the works of my threshing machine.

### Chorus

3. Now six months later and all is not well.  
Something is wrong with our little Nell.  
For beneath her apron is sure to be seen  
The dreaded results of my threshing machine.

### Chorus

4. And now nine months later and all is not well.  
A son has been born to our little Nell  
And beneath his diaper is sure to be seen  
A brand new two cylinder threshing machine.

### Chorus

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This is widely popular as a rugby song and likely also in the armed forces. It appears on broadsides from the mid-19th century. There are copies in the Bodleian library.

The tune is the English show tune "Villikins and His Dinah", also known in America as "Betsy from Pike". The tune is also used for the Irish partisan song "The Old Orange Flute" and the Irish War of Independence song "The Bold Black and Tans".

It is related to the jig tune "Paddy Whack".

It is also related to the many variants of the "Derry Down" songs, which were very popular from the mid-17th century onwards. Originally political satires, they devolved into bawdy songs.

It was collected in the early 20th century from tinker Annie O'Neil.

It was printed in the Alan Lomax collection **Songs of Seduction** (2000),

I can't recall where I learned this.