

THE TWO TAILORS

In a village somewhere in Scotland two tailors sat at their work sewing clothes. One was a tall thin man; the other was a little deformed man, and could only walk with difficulty. As they sat sewing they talked about ghosts and the churchyard and body-snatching, so their talk drifted to what one could do and another could do. The big tailor thought he would try the little man's courage, so he bet him a pound he would not sit in the middle of the churchyard among the tombstones for an hour in the middle of the night. The little tailor sat for a while thinking about the pound which he would like very much, so he said to his mate he would not mind sitting for an hour but how was he to get there as he was so lame and could not walk that distance. The big [one] said "I'll give you a chance, I'll carry you there, and when the time[s] up I'll come and carry you back". So they agreed to the bet. And that night at 11 o'clock the big tailor would carry the little tailor to the churchyard.

It so happened that another two men were to meet in the churchyard. One was to steal a sheep and the other was to steal a bag of potatoes, and they were to meet at a flat headstone in the middle of the churchyard. So the man with the bag of potatoes was there first and was waiting on his mate coming with the sheep. So the big tailor came carrying the little tailor on his back; he had just got over the steps into the churchyard when the man who was sitting waiting on his mate and thinking this was him with the sheep he called out "I hope he is a fat yin". The little tailor heard him and that was enough and he sprawled off his mate's back, and he could not walk but he never crawled as quick in his life as he got clear of the kirkyard and he told his mate it would be a long time or he took a bet on with him again.

This tale (Aa.-Th. 1791) was written down in 1954 by Mr. John Elliot, Hangingshaws, Yarrow, who heard it as a young man about 1890. The spelling is normalised. Other Scottish versions in the School's archives are from Benbecula (two), Morar, Lochaber, and Aberdeenshire (one each). For Irish versions see *Bealoideas* V, pp. 221-2, (269); XVIII, pp. 125-6, (127). For a Manx version see *Bealoideas* XVIII, pp. 50-1, (56-7).