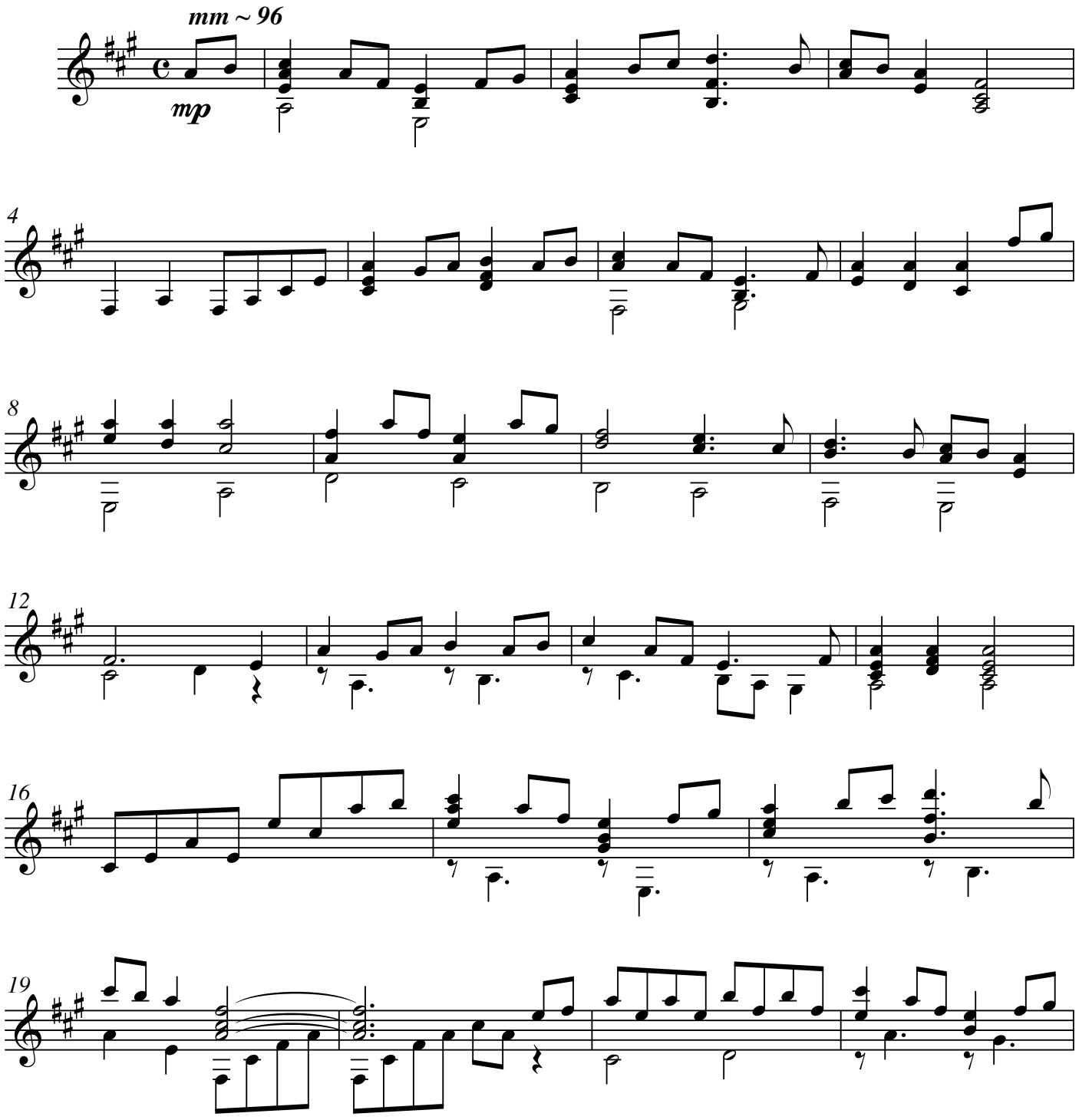
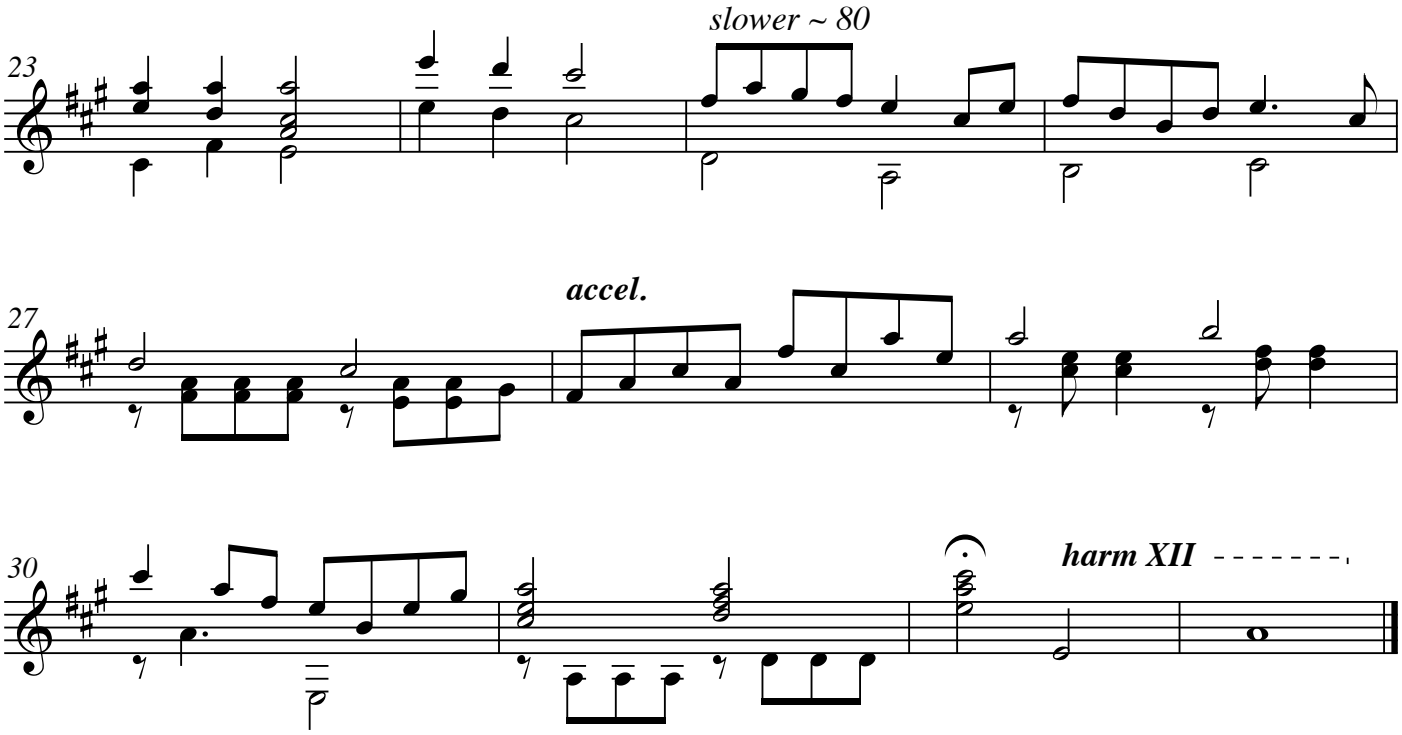
The TWISTING of the ROPE

Casadh an tSugáin

traditional harp tune





“Oh King of Miracles, how did I ever get into this fix?” (my translation of the first line).

The potential suitor of a beautiful young girl sings these plaintive words as her mother - under the guise of letting him hang around to help make rope - moves him further and further out the door away from his beloved. Definitely not a situation to be envied! (As might be expected, there are many other versions of this story.)

This is one of the “amhráin móra” or “big songs” found in the repertoire of most of today’s traditional singers. I have always liked the melody, which even more than in most traditional songs seems ideally suited to the subject matter.

Edward Bunting collected the tune in 1792 from Irish harper Rose Mooney. In fact, “The Twisting of the Rope” appears in Bunting’s *Ancient Irish Music* (1796) in a form not too different from that as it exists today.