

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Durham Field

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LORDINGES, listen, and hold you still;
Hearken to me a litle;
I shall you tell of the fairest battell
That euer in England beffell.

For as it befell in Edward the Thirds dayes,
In England, where he ware the crowne,
Then all the cheefe chiualry of England
They busked and made them bowne.

They chosen all the best archers
That in England might be found,
And all was to fight with the king of france,
Within a litle stounde.

And when our king was ouer the water,
And on the salt sea gone,
Then tydings into Scotland came
That all England was gone.

Bowes and arrowes they were all forth,
At home was not left a man
But shepards and millers both,
And priests with shauen crownes.

Then the king of Scotts in a study stood,
As he was a man of great might;
He sware he wold hold his parlament in leeue London,
If he cold ryde there right.

Then bespake a squier, of Scotland borne,
And sayd, My leege, apace,
Before you come to leeue London,
Full sore you'le rue that race.

Ther beene bold yeomen in merry England,
Husbandmen stiffe and strong;
Sharpe swords they done weare,
Bearen bowes and arrowes longe.

The King was angrye at that word;
A long sword out he drew,

And there befor his royall companye
His owne squier hee slew.

Hard hansell had the Scottes that day,
That wrought them woe enoughe,
For then durst not a Scott speake a word
for hanging att a boughe.

`The Earle of Anguish, where art thou?
In my coate-armor thou shalt bee,
And thou shalt lead the forward
Thorrow the English countrye.

`Take thee Yorke,' then sayd the King,
`In stead wheras it doth stand;
I'll make thy eldest sonne after thee
Heyre of all Northumberland.

`The Earle of Vaughan, where be yee?
In my coate-armor thou shalt bee;
The high Peak and Darbyshire
I giue it thee to thy fee.'

Then came in famous Douglas,
Saies, What shall my meede bee?
And I'll lead the vawward, lord,
Thorow the English countrye.

`Take thee Worster,' sayd the King,
`Tuxburys, Killingworth, Burton vpon Trent;
Doe thou not say another day
But I haue giuen thee lands and rent.

`Sir Richard of Edenborrow, where are yee?
A wise man in this warr!
I'll giue thee Bristow and the shire
The time that wee come there.

`My lord Nevill, where beene yee?
You must in this warres bee;
I'll giue thee Shrewsburye,' saies the King,
`And Couentrye faire and free.

`My lord of Hambleton, where art thou?
Thou art of my kin full nye;
I'll giue thee Lincolne and Lincolneshire,
And that's enoughe for thee.'

By then came in William Douglas,

As breeme as any bore;
He kneeled him downe vpon his knees,
In his hart he sighed sore.

Saies, I haue serued you, my louelye leege,
This thirty winters and four,
And in the Marches betweene England and Scotland
I haue beene wounded and beaten sore.

For all the good service that I haue done,
What shall my meed bee?
And I will lead the vanward
Thorrow the English countrye.

`Aske on, Douglas,' said the king,
`And granted it shall bee:'
`Why then, I aske litle London,' saies William Douglas,
`Gotten giff that it bee.'

The King was wrath, and rose away,
Saies, Nay, that cannot bee!
For that I will keepe for my cheefe chamber,
Gotten if it bee.

But take thee North Wales and Weschaster,
The cuntrye all round about,
And rewarded thou shalt bee,
Of that take thou noe doubt.

Fiue score knights he made on a day,
And dubbd them with his hands;
Rewarded them right worthilye
With the townes in merry England.

And when the fresh knights they were made,
To battell the buske them bowne;
Iames Douglas went before,
And he thought to haue wonnen him shoone.

But the were mett in a morning of May
With the comminaltye of litle England;
But there scaped neuer a man away,
Through the might of Christes hand.

But all onely Iames Douglas;
In Durham in the feild
An arrow stroke him in the thye;
Fast flinges he towards the King.

The King looked toward litle Durham,
Saies, All things is not well!
For Iames Dowglas beares an arrow in his thye,
The head of it is of steele.

`How now Iames?' then said the King,
`How now, how may this bee?
And where beene all thy merry men
That thou tooke hence with thee?'

`But cease, my king,' saies Iames Douglas,
`Aliue is not left a man!'
`Now by my faith,' saies the king of Scottes,
`that gate was euill gone.

`But I'll reuenge thy quarrell well,
And of that thou may be faine;
For one Scott will beate fiue Englishmen,
If the meeten them on the plaine.'

`Now hold your tounge,' saies Iames Douglas,
`For in faith that is not soe;
For one English man is worth fiue Scotts,
When they meeten together thoe.

`For they are as egar men to fight
As a faulcon vpon a pray;
Alas! if euer the winne the vanward,
There scapes noe man away.'

`O peace thy talking,' said the King,
`They bee but English knaues,
But shepards and millers both,
And preists with their staues.'

The King sent forth one of his heralds of armes
To vew the Englishmen:
`Be of good cheere,' the herald said,
`For against one wee bee ten.'

`Who leades those ladds?' said the king of Scottes,
`Thou herald, tell thou mee'
The herald said, The Bishopp of Durham
Is captaine of that companye.

`For the Bishopp hath spred the King's banner,
And to battell he buskes him bowne:'
`I sweare by St. Andrewes bones,' saies the King,
`I'll rapp that preist on the crowne.'

The King looked towards litle Durham,
And that hee well beheld,
That the Earle Percy was well armed,
With his battell-axe entred the feild.

The King looket againe towards litle Durham,
Four ancients there see hee;
There were to standards, six in a valley,
He cold not see them with his eye.

My Lord of Yorke was one of them,
My Lord of Carlile was the other,
And my Lord fluwilliams,
The one came with the other.

The Bishopp of Durham commanded his men,
And shortlye he them bade,
that neuer a man shold goe to the feild to fight
Till he had serued his God.

Fiue hundred preists said masse that day
In Durham in the feild,
And afterwards, as I hard say,
They bare both speare and sheeld.

The Bishopp of Durham orders himselfe to fight,
With his battell-axe in his hand;
He said, This day now I will fight
As long as I can stand!

`And soe will I,' sayd my Lord of Carlile,
`In this faire morning gay;'
`And soe will I,' said my Lord fluwilliams,
`For Mary, that myld may.'

Our English archers bent their bowes
Shortlye and anon;
They shott ouer the Scottish oast
And scantlye toucht a man.

`Hold downe your hands,' sayd the Bishopp of Durham,
`My archers good and true:'
The second shoote that the shott,
Full sore the Scottes itt rue.

The Bishopp of Durham spoke on hye,
That both partyes might heare:
`Be of good cheere, my merrymen all,

The Scotts flyen, and changen there cheere.'

But as the saidden, soe the didden,
They fell on heapes hye;
Our Englishmen laid on with their bowes,
As fast as they might dree.

The king of Scotts in a studye stood
Amongst his companye;
An arrow stoke him thorow the nose,
And thorow his armorye.

The King went to a marsh-side
And light beside his steede;
He leaned him downe on his sword-hilts,
To let his nose bleede.

There followed him a yeaman of merry England,
His name was Iohn of Coplande:
'Yeeld thee, traytor!' saies Coplande then,
'Thy liffe lyes in my hand.'

'How shold I yeeld me,' sayes the King,
'And thou art noe gentleman?'
'Noe, by my troth,' sayes Copland there,
'I am but a poore yeaman.

'What art thou better then I, Sir King?
Tell me if that thou can!
What art thou better then I, Sir King,
Now we be but man to man?'

The King smote angerly at Copland then,
Angerly in that stonde;
And then Copland was a bold yeaman,
And bore the King to the ground.

He sett the King upon a palfrey,
Himselfe upon a steede;
He tooke him by the bridle-rayne,
Towards London he can him lead.

And when to London that he came,
The King from france was new come home,
And there unto the king of Scottes
He sayd these words anon.

'How like you my shepards and my millers?
My priests with shaven crownes?'

`By my fayth, they are the sorest fighting men
that ever I mett on the ground.

`There was never a yeaman in merry England
But he was worth a Scottish knight:'

`I, by my troth,' said King Edward, and laughe,
`For you fought all against the right.'

But now the prince of merry England,
Worthilye under his sheelde,
Hath taken the king of france,
At Poytiers in the feelde.

The prince did present his father with that food,
The louely king off france,
And forward of his iourney he is gone:
God send us all good chance!

`You are welcome, brother!' sayd the king of Scotts, to the king of france,
`For I am come hither to soone;
Christ leeve that I had taken my way
Unto the court of Roome!"

`And soe wold I,' said the king of france,
`When I came over the streame,
that I had taken my iourney
Unto Ierusalem!"

Thus ends the battell of faire Durham,
In one morning of May,
The battell of Cressey, and the battle of Potyers,
All within one monthes day.

Then was welthe and welfare in mery England,
Solaces, game, and glee,
And every man loved other well,
And the King loved good yeomanrye.

But God that made the grasse to growe,
And leaves on greenwoode tree,
Now save and keepe our noble king,
And maintaine good yeomanry!

Child #159

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