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The Battle of Prestonpans

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The Chevalier, being void of fear,
Did march up Birsle brae, man,
And through Tranent ere he did stent,
As fast as he could gae, man;
While General Cope did taunt and mock,
Wi' mony a loud huzza, man,
But ere next morn proclaim'd the cock,
We heard anither craw, man.

The brave Lochiel, as I heard tell,
Led Camerons on in clouds, man;
The morning fair, and clear the air,
They loos'd with devilish thuds, man.
Down guns they threw, and swords they drew,
And soon did chase them aff, man:
On Seaton crafts they buft their chafts,
And gart them rin like daft, man.

The bluff dragoons swore, blood and oons!
They'd make the rebels run, man:
And yet they flee when them they see,
And winna fire a gun, man.
They turn'd their back, the foot they break,
Such terror seiz'd them a', man.
Some wet their cheeks, some fyl'd their breeks,
And some for fear did fa', man.

The volunteers prick'd up their ears,
And vow gin they were crouse, man!
But when the bairns saw't turn to earn'st,
There werena worth a louse, man.
Maist feck gade hame, O fie for shame!
They'd better staid awa, man,
Than wi' cockade to make parade,
And do nae gude at a', man.

Menteith the great, when hersel s***,
Un'wares did ding him owre, man,
Yet wadna stand to bear a hand,
But aff fu fast did scour, man,
O'er Sourtra Hill, ere he stood still,
Before he tasted meat, man.

Troth, he may brag of his swift nag,
That bore him aff sae fleet, man.

And Simpson, keen to clear the een
Of rebels far in wrang, man.
Did never strive wi' pistols five,
But gallop'd wi' the thrang, man.
He turn'd his back, and in a crack
Was cleanly out o' sight, man,
And thought it best: it was nae jest,
Wi' Highlanders to fight, man.

'Mangst a' the gang, nane bade the bang
But twa, and ane was ta'en, man;
For Campbell rade, but Myrie staid,
And sair he paid the kane, man.
Four skelpe he got, was waur than shot,
Frae the sharp-edg'd claymore, man;
Frae mony a spout came running out
His recking het red gore, man.

But Gard'ner brave did still behave
Like to a hero bright, man;
His courage true, like him were few
That still despised flight, man.
For king, and laws, and country's cause,
In honour's bed he lay, man.
His life, but not his courage fled,
While he had breath to draw, man.

And Major Bowle, that worthy soul,
Was brought down to the ground, man;
His horse being shot, it was his lot
For to get mony a wound, man.
Lieutenant Smith of Irish birth,
Frae whom he call'd for aid, man,
But full of dread, lap o'er his head,
And wadna be gainsaid, man.

He made sic haste, sae spurr'd his beast,
'Twas little there he saw, man;
To Berwick rade, and falsely said
The Scots were rebels a', man.
But let that end, for weel 'tis kend
His use and wonts to lie, man.
The Teague is naught, he never fought
When he had room to flee, man.

And Cadell, drest, amang the rest,
With gun and gude claymore, man,
On gelding gray he rode that day,
With pistols set before, man.
The cause was good, he'd spend his blood
Before that he would yield, man;
But the night before he left the core,
And never fac'd the field, man.

But gallant Roger, like a soger,
Stood and bravely fought, man;
I'm wae to tell, at last he fell,
And mae down wi' him brought, man.
At point of death, wi' his last breath,
Some standing round in ring, man,
On's back lying flat, he wav'd his hat,
And cried, 'God save the king!' man.

Some Highland rogues, like hungry dogs,
Neglecting to pursue, man.
About they fac'd, and, in great haste,
Upon the booty flew, man.
And they, as gain for all their pain,
Are deck's wi' spoils of war, man;
Fu' bauld can tell how her nain sel
Was ne're sae praw before, man.

At the thorn tree, which you may see,
Bewest the meadow mill, man,
There mony slain lay on the plain,
The clans pursuing still, man.
Sic unco hacks, and deadly whacks,
I never saw the like, man;
Lost hands and heads cost them their deads,
That fell near Preston dyke, man.

That afternoon, what a' was done,
I gade to see the fray, man;
But I had wist what after past,
I'd better staid away, man:
On Seaton sands, wi' nimble hands,
They pick'd my pockets bare, man;
But I wish ne'er to dree sic fear,
For a' the sum and mair, man.

SOURCE: Michael Brander. Scottish
and Border Battles and Ballads. (New
York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1993), 273-276.

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APR99