

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Bothwell Bridge

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1. "O Billie, billie, bonny billie,
Will ye go to the wood wi me?
We'll ca our horse hame masterless,
An gar them trow slain men are we."

2. "O no, O no," says Earlstoun,
"For that's the thing that mauna be;
For I am sworn to Bothwell Hill,
Where I maun either gae or die."

3. So Earlstoun rose in the morning,
An mounted by the break o day,
An he has joind our Scottish lads,
As they were marching out the way,

4. "Now, farewell, father, and farewell, mother,
An fare ye weel, My sisters three
An fare ye well, My Earlstoun,
For thee again I'll never see."

5 So they're awa to Bothwell Hill,
An waly, they rode bonnily!
When the Duke o Monmouth saw them comin,
He went to view their company.

6. "Ye're welcome, lads," then, Monmouth said,
"Ye're welcome, brave Scots lads, to me,
And sae are you, brave Earlstoun,
The foremost o your company.

7 "But yield your weapons ane an a'
O yield your weapons, lads, to me
For, gin ye'll yield my weapons up,
Ye'se a' gae hame to your country."

8. Out then spak a Lennox lad,
And wary, but he spoke bonnily,
"I winna yield my weapons up,
To you nor nae man that I see."

9 Then he set up the flag o red,

A' set about wi bonny blue.

"Since ye'll no cease, and be at peace,
See that ye stand by ither true."

10. They stelled their cannons on the height,
And showrd their shot down in the how,
An beat our Scots lads even down;
Thick they lay slain on every know.

11. As e'er you saw the rain down fa,
Or yet the arrow frae the bow,
Sae our Scottish lads fell even down
As they lay slain on every know.

12. "O hold your hand," then Monmouth cry'd,
"Gie quarters to your men for me;"
But wicked Claverhouse swore an oath
His cornet's death revengd sud be.

13. "O hold your hand," then Monmouth cry'd.
"If ony thing you'll do for me;
Hold up your hand, you cursed Graeme,
Else a rebel to our king ye'll be."

14 Then wicked Claverhouse turnd about
I wot an angry man was he
And he has lifted up his hat,
And cry'd, God bless his Majesty!

15 Than he's awa to Londontown,
Ay een as fast as he can dree;
Fause witnesses he has wi him taen,
An taen Monmouth's head frae his body.

16. Alang the brae beyond the brig,
Mony brave man lies cauld and still;
But lang we'll mind, and sair we'll rue,
The bloody battle of Bothwell Hill.

On June 22, 1679, the royal army under the command of the Duke of Monmouth moved against the Covenanters at Bothwell Bridge on the Clyde. The Covenanters after a stubborn fight on the bridge were routed by cannon fire, whereupon the King's forces crossed and soon dispersed the main body.
From MacEdward Leach, *The Ballad Book*. Text, Scott, iii, 209.

Notes

Earlston: William Gordon of Earlston, a staunch Covenanter.

Claverhouse: John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee.
He was a staunch foe of the Covenanters.
His cornet, his nephew, had been killed in the fight at Drumclog.

Child #206

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