

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Dick o' the Cow

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NOW Liddisdale has lain long in,

[Fa la]

There is no rideing there a ta;

[Fa la]

Their horse is growing so lidder and fatt

That are lazie in the sta.

[Fa la la didle]

Then Johne Armstrong to Willie can say,

Billie, a rideing then will we;

England and us has been long at a feed;

Perhaps we may hitt of some bootie.

Then they're comd on to Hutton Hall,

They rade that proper place about;

But the laird he was the wiser man,

For he had left nae gear without.

Then he had left nae gear to steal,

Except six sheep upon a lee;

Says Johnie, I'de rather in England die

Before their six sheep good to Liddesdale with me.

`But how cald they the man we last with mett,

Billie, as we came over the know?'

`That same he is an innocent fool,

And some men calls him Dick o the Cow.'

`That fool has three as good kyne of his own

As in a' Cumberland, billie,' quoth he:

`Betide my life, betide my death,

These three kyne shal go to Liddisdaile with me.'

Then they're comd on to the poor fool's house,

And they have broken his wals so wide;

They have loosd out Dick o the Cow's kyne three,

And tane three coerlets off his wife's bed.

Then on the morn, when the day grew light,

The shouts and crys rose loud and high:

`Hold thy tongue, my wife,' he says,

`And of thy crying let me bee.

'Hald thy tongue, my wife,' he says,
'And of thy crying let me bee,
And ay that where thou wants a kow,
Good sooth that I shal bring the three.'

Then Dick's comd on to lord and master,
And I wate a drerie fool was he:
'Hald thy tongue, my fool,' he says,
'For I may not stand to jest with thee.'

'Shame speed a your jesting, my lord,' quo Dickie,
'For nae such jesting grees with me;
Liddesdaile has been in my house this last night,
And they have tane my three kyne from me.

'But I may nae langer in Cumberland dwel,
To be your poor fool and your leel,
Unless ye give me leave, my lord,
To go to Liddisdale and steal.'

'To give thee leave, my fool,' he says,
'Thou speaks against mine honour and me;
Unless thou give me thy trouth and thy right hand
Thou'l steal frae nane but them that sta from thee.'

'There is my trouth and my right hand;
My head shal hing on Hairibie,
I'le never crose Carlele sands again,
If I steal frae a man but them that sta frae me.'

Dickie has tane leave at lord and master,
And I wate a merrie fool was he;
He has bought a bridle and a pair of new spurs,
And has packed them up in his breek-thigh.

Then Dickie's come on for Puddinburn,
Even as fast as he may drie;
Dickie's come on for Puddinburn,
Where there was thirty Armstrongs and three.

'What's this comd on me!' quo Dicke:,
'What meakle wae's this happend on me,' quo he,
'Where here is but ae innocent fool,
And there is thirty Armstrongs and three!'

Yet he's comd up to the hall among them all;
So wel he became his courtisie:
'Well may ye be, my good Laird's Jock!

But the deil bless all your companie.

'I'm come to plain of your man Fair Johnie Armstrong,
And syne his billie Willie,' quou he;
'How they have been in my house this last night,
And they have tane my three ky frae me.'

Quo Johnie Armstrong, We'll him hang;
'Nay,' thain quo Willie, 'we'll him slae;'
But up bespake another young man, We'le nit him in a four-nooked sheet,
Give him his burden of batts, and lett him gae.

Then up bespake the good Laird's Jock,
The best falla in the companie:
Fitt thy way down a little while, Dicke:,
And a peice of thine own cow's hough I'l give to thee.

But Dicki's heart it grew so great
That never a bitt of it he dought to eat;
But Dickie was warr of ane auld peat-house,
Where there al the night he thought for to sleep.

Then Dickie was warr of that auld peat-house,
Where there al the night he thought for to ly;
And a' the prayers the poor fool prayd was,
'I wish I had a mense for my own three kye!'

Then it was the use of Puddinburn,
And the house of Mangertoun, all haile!
These that came not at the first call
They gott no more meat till the next meall.

The lads, that hungry and aevery was,
Above the door-head they flang the key;
Dickie took good notice to that;
Says, There's a bootie younder for me.

Then Dickie's gane into the stable,
Where there stood thirty horse and three;
He has ty'd them a' with St Mary knot,
All these horse but barely three.

He has ty'd them a' with St Mary knott,
All these horse but barely three;
He has loupen on one, taken another in his hand,
And out at the door and gane is Dickie.

Then on the morn, when the day grew light,
The shouts and cryes rose loud and high;

‘What’s that theife?’ quo the good Laird’s Jock;

‘Tel me the truth and the verity.

‘What’s that theife?’ quo the good Laird’s Jock;

‘See unto me ye do not lie:’

‘Dick o the Cow has been in the stable this last night,

And has my brother’s horse and mine frae me.’

‘Ye wad never be told it,’ quo the Laird’s Jock;

‘Have ye not found my tales fu leel?

Ye wade never out of England bide,

Till crooked and blind and a’ wad steal.’

‘But will thou lend me thy bay?’ Fair Johne: Armstrong can say,

‘There’s nae mae horse loose in the stable but he;

And I’le either bring ye Dick o the Kow again,

Or the day is come that he must die.’

‘To lend thee my bay,’ the Laird’s Jock can say,

‘He’s both worth gold and good monie;

Dick o the Kow has away twa horse,

I wish no thou should no make him three.’

He has tane the Laird’s jack on his back,

The twa-handed sword that hang lieugh by his thigh;

He has tane the steel cap on his head,

And on is he to follow Dickie.

Then Dickie was not a mile off the town,

I wate a mile but barely three,

Till John Armstrong has oertane Dick o the Kow,

Hand for hand on Cannobei lee.

‘Abide the, bide now, Dickie than,

The day is come that thou must die;’

Dickie looked oer his left shoulder;

‘Johnie, has thou any mo in thy company?

‘There is a preacher in owr chapell,

And a’ the lee-lang day teaches he;

When day is gane, and night is come,

There’s never a word I mark but three.

‘The first and second’s Faith and Conscience;

The third is, Johnie, Take head of thee;

But what faith and conscience had thou, traitor,

When thou took my three kye frae me?

‘And when thou had tane my three kye,

Thou thought in thy heart thou was no wel sped;
But thou sent thi billie Willie oer the know,
And he took three coerlets of my wife's bed.'

Then Johne lett a spear fa leaugh by his thigh,
Thought well to run the innocent through;
But the powers above was more than his,
He ran but the poor fool's jerkin through.

Together they ran or ever they blan----
This was Dickie, the fool, and hee----
Dickie could not win to him with the blade of the sword,
But he feld him with the plummet under the eye.

Now Dickie has feld Fair John: Armstrong,
The prettiest man in the south countrey;
'Gramercie,' then can Dickie say,
'I had twa horse, thou has made me three.'

He has tane the laird's jack off his back,
The twa-handed sword that hang leiugh by his thigh;
He has tane the steel cape off his head:
'Johnie, I'le tel my master I met with thee.'

When Johne: wakend out of his dream,
I wate a dreiry man was he:
'Is thou gane now, Dickie, than?
The shame gae in thy company!

'Is thou gane now, Dickie, than?
The shame go in thy companie!
For if I should live this hundred year,
I shal never fight with a fool after thee.'

Then Dickie comed home to lord and master,
Even as fast as he may driee:
'Now Dickie, I shal neither eat meat nor drink
Till high hanged that thou shall be!'

'The shame speed the liars, my lord!' quo Dickie,
'That was no the promise ye made to me;
For I'd never gane to Liddesdale to steal
Till that I sought my leave at thee.'

'But what gart thou steal the Laird's-Jock's horse?
And, limmer, what gart thou steal him?' quo he;
'For lang might thou in Cumberland dwelt
Or the Laird's Jock had stoln ought frae thee.'

`Indeed I wate ye leed, my lord,
And even so loud as I hear ye lie;
I wan him frae his man, Fair Johne: Armstrong,
Hand for hand on Cannobie lee.

`There's the jack was on his back,
The twa-handed sword that hung lewgh by his thigh;
There's the steel cap was on his head;
I have a' these takens to lett you see.'

`If that be true thou to me tels----
I trow thou dare not tel a lie----
I'le give thee twenty pound for the good horse,
Wel told in thy cloke-lap shall be.

`And I'le give thee one of my best milk-kye,
To maintain thy wife and children three;
And that may be as good, I think,
As ony twa o thine might be.'

`The shame speed the liars, my lord!' quo Dicke,
`Trow ye ay to make a fool of me?
I'le either have thirty pound for the good horse,
Or els he's gae to Mattan fair wi me:'

Then he has given him thirty pound for the good horse,
All in gold and good monie;
He has given him one of his best milk-kye,
To maintain his wife and children three.

Then Dickie's come down through Carlile town,
Even as fast as he may drie:
The first of men that he with mett
Was my lord's brother, Bailife Glazemberrie.

`Well may ye be, my good Ralph Scrupe!'
`Welcome, my brother's fool!' quo he;
`Where did thou gett Fair Johnie Armstrong's horse?'
`Where did I get him but steall him,' quo he.

`But will thou sell me Fair Johnie Armstrong's horse?
And, billie, will thou sel him to me?' quo he:
`Ay, and tel me the monie on my cloke-lap,
For there's not one fathing I'le trust thee.'

`I'le give thee fifteen pound for the good horse,
Wel told on thy cloke-lap shal be;
And I'le give thee one of my best milk-kye,
To maintain thy wife and children three.'

'The shame speed the liars, my lord!' quo Dicke:,
'Trow ye ay to make a fool of me?' quo he:
'I'le either have thirty pound for the good horse,
Or else he's to Mattan Fair with me.'

He has given him thirty pound for the good horse,
All in gold and good monie;
He has given him one of his best milk-kye,
To maintain his wife and children three.

Then Dickie lap a loup on high,
And I wate a loud laughter leugh he:
'I wish the neck of the third horse were browken,
For I have a better of my own, and onie better can be.'

Then Dickie comd hame to his wife again;
Judge ye how the poor fool he sped;
He has given her three score of English pounds
For the three auld coerlets was tane of her bed.

'Hae, take thee there twa as good kye,
I trow, as al thy three might be;
And yet here is a white-footed naigg;
I think he'le carry booth thee and me.

'But I may no longer in Cumberland dwell;
The Armstrongs the'le hang me high:'
But Dickie has tane leave at lord and master,
And Burgh under Stanemuir there dwels Dickie.

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Version in Child
LMP