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The Earl of Totnes

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The feast was over at Haccombe Hall
And the wassail bowl had been served to all,
When the Earl of Totnes rose from his place
And the chanters came in to say the grace.

But scarce was ended the holy rite
When there stepped from the crowd a valiant knight;
His armour bright and his visage brown,
His name was Sir Arthur Champernowne.

"Good Earl of Totness I've brought with me
My fleetest courser of Barbary;
And whether good or ill betide,
A wager with thee I mean for to ride."

"No Barbary courser do I own,
But I have," quoth the Earl, "a Devonshire roan;
And I'll ride for a wager by land or by sea,
The roan 'gainst the courser of Barbary."

"'Tis done," said Sir Arthur, "already I've won;
And I'll stake my manor of Dartington
'Gainst Haccombe Hall and its rich domain."
So the Earl of Totnes the wager has ta'en.

"To horse! To horse!" resounds through the hall,
Each warrior's horse is led from its stall;
And with gallant train over Milburn Down
Ride the bold Carew and the Champernowne.

And when they come to the Abbey of Tor,
The abbot came forth from the western door,
And much he prayed them to stay and dine;
But the earl took nought but a goblet of wine.

Sir Arthur he raised the bowl on high
And prayed to the Giver of Victory;
Then drank success to himself in the course,
And the sops of the wine he gave to his horse.

Away they rode from the Abbey of Tor
Till they reached the inlet's curving shore;

The earl plunged first in the foaming wave,
And was followed straight by Sir Arthur the brave.

The wind blew hard and the waves beat high,
And the horses strove for the mastery;
Till Sir Arthur cried, "Help, thou bold Carew!
Help, if thou art a Christian true!

"O save for the sake of that lady of mine
Good Earl of Totnes, the manor is thine!
The Barbary courser must yield to the roan,
And thou art the Lord of Dartington."

The Earl his steed began to restrain,
And he seized Sir Arthur's horse by the rein;
He cheered him by words and gave him his hand,
And brought Sir Arthur safe to land.

Then Sir Arthur, with sickness and grief opprest,
Lay down in the abbey chambers to rest;
But the earl he rode from the Abbey of Tor
Straight forward to Haccombe chapel door.

And there he fell on his knees and prayed
And many an "Ave Maria" said;
Bread and money he gave to the poor,
And he nailed the roan's shoes to the chapel door.

George Carew Totnes, earl of; born 5/29/1555 (d3/27/1629), English soldier, administrator and antiquary noted for his service in Ireland during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

"The Earl of Totnes", a Devonshire ballad. In V. Day Sharman, *Folk Tales of Devon*. Recorded by R & B Dransfield, *The Rout of the Blues*

AJS
apr97