

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Lochmaben Harper

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There was a jolly harper-man,
That harped aye frae toun to toun;
A wager he made, with two knights he laid
To steal King Henry's Wanton Brown.

Sir Roger he wagered five ploughs o land,
Sir Charles wagered five thousand pound,
And John he's taen the deed in hand,
To steal King Henry's Wanton Brown.

He's taen his harp into his hand,
And he gaed harping thro the toun,
And as the king in his palace sat,
His ear was touched wi the soun.

Come in, come in, ye harper-man,
Some o your harping let me hear;
Indeed, my liege, and by your grace,
I'd rather hae stabling to my mare.'

Ye'll gang to yon outer court,
That stands a little below the toun;
Ye'll find a stable snug and neat,
Where stands my stately Wanton Brown.'

He's down him to the outer court,
That stood a little below the toun;
There found a stable snug and neat,
For stately stood the Wanton Brown.

Then he has fixd a good strong cord
Unto his grey mare's bridle-rein,
And tied it unto that steed's tail,
Syne shut the stable-door behin.

Then he harped on, an he carped on,
Till all were fast asleep;
Then down thro bower and ha he's gone,
Even on his hands and feet.

He's to yon stable snug and neat,
That lay a little below the toun;

For there he placed his ain grey mare,
Alang wi Henry's Wanton Brown.

'Ye'll do you down thro mire an moss,
Thro mony bog an lairy hole;
But never miss your Wanton slack;
Ye'll gang to Mayblane, to your foal.'

As soon's the door he had unshut,
The mare gaed prancing frae the town,
An at her bridle-rein was tied
Henry's stately Wanton Brown.

Then she did rin thro mire an moss,
'Thro mony bog an miery hole;
But never missed her Wanton slack
Till she reachd Mayblane, to her foal.

When the king awaked from sleep
He to the harper-man did say,
O waken ye, waken ye, jolly John,
We've fairly slept till it is day.

Win up, win up, ye harper-man,
Some mair o harping ye'll gie me:
He said, My liege, wi a'my heart,
But first my gude grey mare maun see.

Then forth he ran, and in he came,
Dropping mony a feigned tear:
'Some rogue[s] hae broke the outer court,
An stown awa my gude grey mare.'

'Then by my sooth,' the king replied,
'If there'a been rogues into the toun,
I fear, as well as gour grey mare,
Awa is my stately Wanton Brown.'

'My loss is great,' the harper said,
My loss is twice as great, I fear;
In Scotland I lost a gude grey steed,
An here I've lost a gude grey mare.'

'Come on, come on, ye harper-man,
Some o your music lat me hear;
Well paid ye'se be, John, for the same,
An likewise for gour gude grey mare.'

When that John his monie received,

Then he went harping frae the toun,
But little did King Henry ken
He'd stown awa his Wanton Brown.

The knights then lay ower castle-wa,
An they beheld baith dale an down,
An saw the jolly harper-man
Come harping on to Striveling toun.

Then, 'By my sooth,' Sir Roger said,
Are ye returned back to toun?
I doubt my lad ye hae ill sped
Of stealing o the Wanton Brown.'

I hae been into fair England,
An even into Lunan toun,
An in King Henry's outer court,
An stown awa the Wanton Brown.'

'Ye lie, ye lie,' Sir Charles he said,
An aye sae loud's I hear ye lie;
Twall armed men, in armour bright,
They guard the stable night and day.'

But I did harp them all asleep,
An managed my business cunnilie
If ye make light o what I say
Come to my stable an ye'll see

'My music pleasd the king sae well
More o my harping he wished to hear;
An for the same he paid me well,
And also for my gude grey mare'

Then he drew out a gude lang purse
Well stored wi gowd and white monie,
An in a short time after this
The Wanton Brown he lat them see.

Sir Roger produced his ploughs o land,
Sir Charles produced his thousand pounds,
Then back to Henry, the English king,
Restored the stately Wanton Brown.

Child #192

Buchan's MSS, 1, 35 ; Dixon, Scottish Traditional Versions of
Ancient Ballads, p. 37, Percy Society, Vol. xvii.

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