

Johnie Armstrong (Child 169C)

- 1 SUM speiks of lords, sum speiks of lairds,
And siclyke men of hie degrie;
Of a gentleman I sing a sang,
Sumtyme calld Laird of Gilnockie.
- 2 The king he wrytes a luving letter, 5
With his ain hand sae tenderly:
And he hath sent it to Johny Armstrang,
To cum and speik with him speidily.
- 3 The Eliots and Armstrangs did convene,
They were a gallant company: 10
'We 'ill ryde and meit our lawful king,
And bring him safe to Gilnockie.
- 4 'Make kinnen and capon ready, then,
And venison in great plenty;
We 'ill welcome hame our royal king; 15
I hope he 'ill dyne at Gilnockie!'
- 5 They ran their horse on the Langum howm,
And brake their speirs with mekle main;
The ladys lukit frae their loft-windows,
'God bring our men weil back again!' 20
- 6 When Johny came before the king,
With all his men sae brave to see,
The king he movit his bonnet to him;
He weind he was a king as well as he.
- 7 'May I find grace, my sovereign liege, 25
Grace for my loyal men and me?
For my name it is Johny Armstrang,
And subject of yours, my liege,' said he.
- 8 'Away, away, thou traytor, strang!
Out of my sicht thou mayst sune be! 30
I grantit nevir a traytors lyfe,

And now I 'll not begin with thee.'

- 9 'Grant me my lyfe, my liege, my king,
And a bony gift I will give to thee;
Full four-and-twenty milk-whyte steids, 35
Were a' foald in a yeir to me.
- 10 'I 'll gie thee all these milk-whyte steids,
That prance and nicher at a speir,
With as mekle gude Inglis gilt
As four of their braid backs dow beir.' 40
- 11 'Away, away, thou traytor strang!
Out o' my sicht thou mayst sune be!
I grantit nevir a traytors lyfe,
And now I 'll not begin with thee.'
- 12 'Grant me my lyfe, my liege, my king, 45
And a bony gift I 'll gie to thee;
Gude four-and-twenty ganging mills,
That gang throw a' the yeir to me.
- 13 'These four-and-twenty mills complete
Sall gang for thee throw all the yeir, 50
And as mekle of gude reid wheit
As all their happers dow to bear.'
- 14 'Away, away, thou traytor, strang!
Out of my sicht thou mayst sune be!
I grantit nevir a traytors lyfe, 55
And now I 'll not begin with thee.'
- 15 'Grant me my lyfe, my liege, my king,
And a great gift I 'll gie to thee;
Bauld four-and-twenty sisters sons,
Sall for the fecht, tho all sould flee.' 60
- 16 'Away, away, thou traytor, strang!
Out of my sicht thou mayst sune be!
I grantit nevir a traytors lyfe,
And now I 'll not begin with thee.'

- 17 'Grant me my lyfe, my liege, my king, 65
And a brave gift I 'll gie to thee;
All betwene heir and Newcastle town
Sall pay thair yeirly rent to thee.'
- 18 'Away, away, thou traytor, strang!
Out of my sicht thou mayst sune be! 70
I grantit nevir a traytors lyfe,
And now I 'll not begin with thee.'
- 19 'Ye lied, ye lied, now, king,' he says,
'Althocht a king and prince ye be,
For I luid naithing in all my lyfe, 75
I dare well say it, but honesty;
- 20 'But a fat horse, and a fair woman,
Twa bony dogs to kill a deir:
But Ingland suld haif found me meil and malt,
Gif I had livd this hundred yeir! 80
- 21 'Scho suld haif found me meil and malt,
And beif and mutton in all plentie;
But neir a Scots wyfe could haif said
That eir I skaithd her a pure flie.
- 22 'To seik het water beneth cauld yce, 85
Surely it is a great folie;
I haif asked grace at a graceless face,
But there is nane for my men and me.
- 23 'But had I kend, or I came frae hame,
How thou unkynd wadst bene to me, 90
I wad haif kept the border-syde,
In spyte of all thy force and thee.
- 24 'Wist Englands king that I was tane,
O gin a blyth man wald he be!
For anes I slew his sisters son, 95
And on his breist-bane brak a tree.'
- 25 John wore a girdle about his midle,
Imbroiderd owre with burning gold,

- Bespangled with the same mettle,
Maist beautifull was to behold. 100
- 26 Ther hang nine targats at Johnys hat,
And ilk an worth three hundred pound:
'What wants that knave that a king suld haif,
But the sword of honour and the crown!
- 27 'O whair gat thou these targats, Johnie, 105
That blink sae brawly abune thy brie?'
'I gat them in the field fechtin,
Wher, cruel king, thou durst not be.
- 28 'Had I my horse, and my harness gude,
And ryding as I wont to be, 110
It sould haif bene tald this hundred yeir
The meiting of my king and me.
- 29 'God be withee, Kirsty, my brither,
Lang live thou Laird of Mangertoun!
Lang mayst thou live on the border-syde 115
Or thou se thy brither ryde up and doun.
- 30 'And God be withee, Kirsty, my son,
Whair thou sits on thy nurses knee!
But and thou live this hundred yeir,
Thy fathers better thoul't never be. 120
- 31 'Farweil, my bonny Gilnock-Hall,
Whair on Esk-syde thou standest stout!
Gif I had lived but seven yeirs mair,
I wald haif gilt thee round about.'
- 32 John murdred was at Carlinrigg, 125
And all his galant companie;
But Scotlands heart was never sae wae,
To see sae mony brave men die.
- 33 Because they savd their country deir
Frae Englishmen; nane were sae bauld, 130
Whyle Johnie livd on the border-syde,
Nane of them durst cum neir his hald.