

James Hogg (1770-1835)

6 *Jock Johnstone the Tinkler*

“Oh, came ye ower by the Yoke-burn Ford,
Or down the King’s Road of the cleuch?
Or saw ye a Knight and a lady bright,
Wha hae gane the gate they baith shall rue?”

“I saw a knight and a lady bright, 5
Ride up the cleuch at the break of day;
The knight upon a coal-black steed,
And the dame on one of the silver gray.

“And the lady’s palfrey flew the first, 10
With many a clang of silver bell:
Swift as the raven’s morning flight,
The two went scouring ower the fell.

“By this time they are man and wife, 15
And standing in St. Mary’s fane;
And the lady in the grass-green silk
A maid you will never see again.”

“But I can tell thee, saucy wight — 20
And that the runaways shall prove —
Revenge to a Douglas is as sweet
As maiden charms or maiden’s love.”

“Since thou say’st that, my Lord Douglas,
Good faith some clinking there will be;
Beshrew my heart, but and my sword,
If I winna turn and ride with thee!”

They whipp’d out ower the shepherd cleuch, 25
And down the links o’ the Corsecleuch burn;
And aye the Douglas swore by his sword
To win his love or ne’er return.

“First fight your rival, Lord Douglas,
And then brag after, if you may; 30
For the Earl of Ross is as brave a lord
As ever gave good weapon sway.

“But I for ae poor siller merk,
Or thirteen pennies an’ a bawbee,
Will tak in hand to fight you baith, 35
Or beat the winner, whiche’er it be.”

The Douglas turn’d him on his steed,
And I wat a loud laughter leuch he: —
“Of all the fools I have ever met,
Man, I hae never met ane like thee. 40

“Art thou akin to lord or knight,
Or courtly squire or warrior leal?”
“I am a tinkler,” quo the wight,
“But I like crown-cracking unco weel.”

When they came to St. Mary’s kirk, 45
The chaplain shook for very fear;
And aye he kiss’d the cross, and said,
“What deevil has sent that Douglas here!

“He neither values book nor ban,
But curses all without demur; 50
And cares nae mair for a holy man,
Than I do for a worthless cur.”

“Come here, thou bland and brittle priest,
And tell to me without delay,
Where you have hid the Lord of Ross, 55
And the lady that came at the break of day?”

“No knight or lady, good Lord Douglas,
Have I beheld since break of morn;
And I never saw the Lord of Ross,
Since the woeful day that I was born.” 60

Lord Douglas turn’d him round about,

And look'd the tinkler in the face;
Where he beheld a lurking smile,
And a deevil of a dour grimace.

"How's this, how's this, thou tinkler loun? 65
Hast thou presumed to lie to me?"
"Faith that I have!" the tinkler said,
"And a right good turn I have done to thee;

"For the Lord of Ross, and thy own true love, 70
The beauteous Harriet of Thirlestane,
Rade west away, ere the break of day;
And you'll never see that dear maid again:

"So I thought it best to bring you here,
On a wrang scent, of my own accord;
For had you met the Johnstone clan, 75
They wad hae made mince-meat of a lord."

At this the Douglas was so wroth,
He wist not what to say or do;
But he strak the tinkler o'er the croun,
Till the blood came dreeping ower his brow. 80

"Beshrew thy heart," quo the tinkler lad,
"Thou bear'st thee most ungallantlye!
If these are the manners of a lord,
They are manners that winna gang down wi' me."

"Hold up thy hand," the Douglas cried, 85
"And keep thy distance, tinkler loun!"
"That will I not," the tinkler said,
"Though I and my mare should both go down!"

"I have armour on," cried the Lord Douglas,
"Cuirass and helm, as you may see." 90
"The deil may care!" quo the tinkler lad;
"I shall have a skelp at them and thee."

"You are not horsed," quo the Lord Douglas,
"And no remorse this weapon brooks."

“Mine’s a right good yaud,” quo the tinkler lad, 95
“And a great deal better nor she looks.

“So stand to thy weapons, thou haughty lord;
What I have taken I needs must give;
Thou shalt never strike a tinkler again,
For the langest day thou hast to live.” 100

Then to it they fell, both sharp and snell,
Till the fire from both their weapons flew;
But the very first shock that they met with,
The Douglas his rashness ’gan to rue.

For though he had on a sark of mail, 105
And a cuirass on his breast wore he,
With a good steel bonnet on his head,
Yet the blood ran trinkling to his knee.

The Douglas sat upright and firm,
Aye as together their horses ran; 110
But the tinkler laid on like a very deil —
Siccan strokes were never laid on by man.

“Hold up thy hand, thou tinkler loun,”
Cried the poor priest, with whining din;
“If thou hurt the brave Lord James Douglas, 115
A curse be on thee and all thy kin!”

“I care no more for Lord James Douglas,
Than Lord James Douglas cares for me;
But I want to let his proud heart know,
That a tinkler’s a man as well as he.” 120

So they fought on, and they fought on,
Till good Lord Douglas’ breath was gone;
And the tinkler bore him to the ground,
With rush, with rattle, and with groan.

“O hon! O hon!” cried the proud Douglas, 125
“That I this day should have lived to see!
For sure my honour I have lost,

And a leader again I can never be!

“But tell me of thy kith and kin,
And where was bred thy weapon hand? 130
For thou art the wale of tinkler louns
That ever was born in fair Scotland.”

“My name’s Jock Johnstone,” quo the wight —
“I winna keep in my name frae thee;
And here, take thou thy sword again, 135
And better friends we two shall be.”

But the Douglas swore a solemn oath,
That was a debt he could never owe;
He would rather die at the back of the dike,
Than owe his sword to a man so low. 140

“But if thou wilt ride under my banner,
And bear my livery and my name,
My right-hand warrior thou shalt be,
And I’ll knight thee on the field of fame.”

“Woe worth thy wit, good Lord Douglas, 145
To think I’d change my trade for thine;
Far better and wiser would you be,
To live as journeyman of mine,

“To mend a kettle or a casque,
Or clout a goodwife’s yettlin pan — 150
Upon my life, good Lord Douglas,
You’d make a noble tinkler man!

“I would give you drammock twice a-day,
And sunkets on a Sunday morn;
And you should be a rare adept 155
In steel and copper, brass and horn.

“I’ll fight you every day you rise,
Till you can act the hero’s part;
Therefore, I pray you, think of this,
And lay it seriously to heart.” 160

Then he is to Lord Douglas gone,
And he raised him kindly by the hand,
And he set him on his gallant steed, 195
And bore him away to Henderland:

“Be not cast down, my Lord Douglas,
Nor writhe beneath a broken bane,
For the leach’s art will mend the part,
And your honour lost will spring again. 200

“Tis true, Jock Johnstone is my name,
I’m a right good tinkler as you see;
For I can crack a casque betimes,
Or clout one, as my need may be.

“Jock Johnstone is my name, ’tis true — 205
But noble hearts are allied to me,
For I am the Lord of Annandale,
And a knight and earl as well as thee.”

Then Douglas strain’d the hero’s hand,
And took from it his sword again; 210
Since thou art the Lord of Annandale,
Thou hast eased my heart of meikle pain.

“I might have known thy noble form,
In that disguise thou’rt pleased to wear;
All Scotland knows thy matchless arm, 215
And England by experience dear.

“We have been foes as well as friends,
And jealous of each other’s sway;
But little can I comprehend
Thy motive for these pranks to-day?” 220

“Sooth, my good lord, the truth to tell,
’Twas I that stole your love away,
And gave her to the Lord of Ross
An hour before the break of day:

“For the Lord of Ross is my brother, 225

By all the laws of chivalrye;
And I brought with me a thousand men
To guard him to my own countrye.

“But I thought meet to stay behind,
And try your lordship to waylay; 230
Resolved to breed some noble sport,
By leading you so far astray;

“Judging it better some lives to spare —
Which fancy takes me now and then —
And settle our quarrel hand to hand, 235
Than each with our ten thousand men.

“God send you soon, my Lord Douglas,
To Border foray sound and hail!
But never strike a tinkler again,
If he be a Johnstone of Annandale.” 240

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