

John Marriott (1780-1825)

1 *Archie Armstrong's Aith*

As Archie passed the Brockwood-leys,
He cursed the blinkan moon,
For shouts were borne upo' the breeze
Frae a' the hills aboon.

A herd had marked his lingering pace, 5
That e'enin near the fauld,
And warned his fellows to the chase,
For he kenn'd him stout and bauld.

A light shone frae Gilnockie tower;
He thought, as he ran past, — 10
“O Johnnie ance was stiff in stour,
But hangit at the last!” —

His load was heavy, and the way
Was rough, and ill to find;
But ere he reached the Stubholm brae, 15
His faes were far behind.

He clamb the brae, and frae his brow
The draps fell fast and free;
And when he heard a loud halloo,
A waefu' man was he. 20

O'er his left shouther, towards the muir,
An anxious e'e he cast;
And oh! when he stepped o'er the door,
His wife she looked aghast.

“Ah wherefore, Archie, wad ye slight 25
Ilk word o' timely warning

I trow ye will be ta'en the night,
And hangit i' the morning." —

"Now haud your tongue, ye prating wife,
And help me as ye dow; 30
I wad be laith to lose my life
For ae poor silly yowe."

They stript awa' the skin aff-hand,
Wi' a' the woo' aboon;
There's ne'er a flesher i' the land 35
Had done it half sae soon.

They took the *haggis-bag* and heart,
The heart but and the liver;
Alake, that siccan a noble part
Should win intull the river! 40

But Archie he has ta'en them a',
And wrapt them i' the skin;
And he has thrown them o'er the wa',
And sicht whan they fell in.

The cradle stans by the ingle toom, 45
The bairn wi' auntie stays;
They clapt the carcass in its room,
And smoor'd it wi' the claes.

And down sate Archie daintilie,
And rock'd it wi' his hand; 50
Siccan a rough nourice as he
Was not in a' the land.

And saftlie he began to croon,
"Hush, hushabye, my dear." —
He had na sang to sic a tune, 55
I trow, for monie a year.

Now frae the hills they cam in haste,
A' rinnin' out o' breath; —
“Ah, Archie, we ha' got ye fast,
And ye maun die the death! 60

“Aft ha' ye thinned our master's herds,
And elsewhere cast the blame;
Now ye may spare your wilie words,
For we have traced ye hame.” —

“Your sheep for warlds I wad na take; 65
Deil ha' me if I'm leein'!
But haud your tongues for mercy's sake,
The bairn's just at the deein'.

“If e'er I did sae fause a feat,
As thin my neebor's faulds, 70
May I be doomed the flesh to eat
This vera cradle halds!

“But gin ye reck na what I swear,
Go search the biggin thorow,
And if ye find ae trotter there, 75
Then hang me up the morrow.”

They thought to find the stolen gear,
They search'd baith but and ben;
But a' was clean, and a' was clear,
And naething could they ken. 80

And what to think they couldna tell,
They glowr'd at ane anither; —
“Sure, Patie, 'twas the deil himsel
That ye saw rinnin' hither.

“Or aiblins Maggie's ta'en the yowe, 85

And thus beguiled your e'e." —
"Hey, Robbie, man, and like enowe,
For I ha'e nae rowan tree."

Awa' they went wi' muckle haste,
Convinced 'twas Maggie Brown; 90
And Maggie, ere eight days were past,
Got mair nor ae new gown.

Then Archie turned him on his heel,
And gamesomelie did say, —
"I didna think that half sae weel 95
The nourice I could play."

And Archie didna break his aith,
He ate the cradled sheep;
I trow he was na very laith
Siccan a vow to keep. 100

And aft sinsyne to England's king
The story he has told;
And aye when he gan rock and sing,
Charlie his sides wad hold.

1802-03

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