

John Marriott (1780-1825)

2 *The Feast of Spurs*

In the account of Walter Scott of Harden's way of living, it is mentioned that "when the last bullock was killed and devoured, it was the lady's custom to place on the table a dish, which, on being uncovered, was found to contain a pair of clean spurs; a hint to the Riders, that they must shift for their next meal." See Introduction.

The speakers in the following stanzas are Walter Scott of Harden and his wife, Mary Scott, the flower of Yarrow.

"Haste, ho! my dame, what cheer the night?
I look to see your table dight,
For I ha'e been up since peep o' light,
Driving the dun deer merrilie.

"Wow! but the bonnie harts and raes 5
Are fleet o' foot on Ettricke braes;
My gude dogs ne'er, in a' their days,
Forfoughten were sae wearilie.

"Frae Shaws to Rankelburn we ran 10
A score, that neither stint nor blan;
And now ahint the breckans stan',
And laugh at a' our company.

"We've passed through monie a tangled cleugh,
We've rade fu' fast o'er haugh and heugh;
I trust ye've got gude cheer eneugh 15
To feast us a' right lustilie." —

"Are ye sae keen-set, Wat? 'tis weel;
Ye winna find a dainty meal;
It's a' o' the gude Rippon steel,
Ye maun digest it manfullie. 20

“Nae ky are left in Harden Glen;
Ye maun be stirring wi’ your men;
Gin ye soud bring me less than ten,
I winna roose your braverie.” —

“Are ye sae modest ten to name? 25
Syne, an’ I bring na twenty hame,
I’ll freely gi’e ye leave to blame
Baith me, and a’ my chyvalrie.

“I could ha’e relished better cheer,
After the chase o’ sick-like deer; 30
But, trust me, rowth o’ Southern gear
Shall deck your lard’ner speedilie.

“When Stanegirthside I last came by,
A bassen’d bull allured mine eye,
Feeding amang a herd o’ kye; 35
O gin I look’d na wistfullie!

“To horse! young Jock shall lead the way;
And soud the Warden tak the fray
To mar our riding, I winna say,
But he mote be in jeopardie. 40

“The siller moon now glimmers pale;
But ere we’ve cross’d fair Liddesdale,
She’ll shine as brightlie as the bale
That warns the water hastilie.

“O leeze me on her bonnie light! 45
There’s nought sae dear to Harden’s sight;
Troth, gin she shone but ilka night,
Our clan might live right royallie.

“Haste, bring your nagies frae the sta’,
And lightlie louping, ane and a’, 50

Intull your saddles, scour awa',
And ranshake the Southronie.

“Let ilka ane his knapsap lace;
Let ilka ane his steil-jack brace;
And deil bless him that sall disgrace
Walter o' Harden's liverie!”

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1802-03

(From Sir Walter Scott, ed. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish
Border*. Ed. Thomas Henderson. London, 1931)