

William Motherwell (1797-1835)

13 *The Slayne Menstrel*

Ane harper there was — ane harper gude —
Cam' harpin' at te gloamin fa' —
And he has won to the bonnie bield
Quhilk callit is te Newtoun Ha'.

“Brume, brume on hil” — the harper sang — 5
“And rose on brier are blithe to see —
I would I saw the brume sae lang,
Quhilk cleidis te braes o' my ain countree!”

“Out on ye, out, ye prydefu' loun,
Wi' me ye winna lig the nicht — 10
Hie to some bordel in borrowe toun:
Of harpand craft I haud but licht!

“Out on ye, out, ye prydefu' loun,
Wi' me ye winna lig the nicht —
Hie to some bordel in borrowe toun: 15
Of harpand craft I haud but licht!

“Out on ye, out, ye minstrel lewde” —
Sayd the crewel Laird o' the Newtoun Ha' —
“Ye'll nae bide here, by blessit Rude,
Gif harpe or lyf yye reck ava'!” 20

“I care na for mie lyf ane plack” —
Quoth that auld harper sturdily —
“But this gude harpe upon mie back
Sal ne'er be fylit by ane lyk thee!”

“Thou liest therem, thou minstrel wicht!” 25
Outspak the Laird o' the Newtoun Ha' —
“For ye to death bedene art dicht,
Haif at thee here and mend thy saw!”

Alace, Alace, the harper gude
Was borne back aganis the wa', 30
And wi' the best o' his auld hertis blude,
They weetit hae the Newtoun Ha'!

Yet did he die wi' harpe in han',
Maist lyk ane minstrel o' degree —
There was na ane in a' the land 35
Might matche wi' him o' the North countree!

Erle Douglas chauncit to ryde therebye —
Ane gallant gentlemand was he —
Wi' four score o' weel harnessit men,
To harrie in the South countree. 40

He haltit at the Newtoun Ha' —
“Quhat novelles now, bauld Laird, hae ye?”
“It's I haid slayne a worthlesse wicht,
Ane minstrel lewdw, as you may see!”

“Now schwa to me the harper's heid, 45
And schaw to me the harper's hand,
For sair I fear you've causeless spilt
As geentil blude as in a' Scotland!”

“Kep then his heid, thou black Douglas” —
Sayd boastfullie fase Newtoun Ha' — 50
“And kep his hand, thou black Douglas,
His fingers slim his craft may schaw!”

The stout Erle visit first the heid,
Then neist he lukit on the hand —
“It's foul befa' ye, Newtoun Ha', 55
Ye've slayne the pryde o' gude Scotland.

“Now stir ye, stir, my merrie men,
The faggot licht, and bete the flame,
A fire sal rise o'er this buirdly bield,
And its saulless Laird in the lowe we'll tame!” 60

The bleeze blew up, the bleeze clipt roun'

The bonnie towers o' te Newtoun Ha',
And evir as armit men ran out,
Black Douglas slewe them ane and a'.

The bleeze it roarit and wantonit roun' 65
The weel-pilet wawis o' the Newtoun Ha',
And ruif and rafter, bauk and beam,
Aneath the bauld fyris doun did fa'!

Now waly for the crewel Laird — 70
As he cam loupin' through the lowe,
Erle Douglas swappit aff his heid
And swung it at his saddil bowe!

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