

John Stuart Blackie (1809-95)

2 *John Frazer*

John Frazer was a pious man,
Who dwelt in lone Dalquhairn,
Where huge hills feed the founts of Ken,
'Twixt Sanquhar and Carsphairn.

King Charles, he was a despot fell; 5
With harlots and buffoons
He filled his court, and scoured the hills
With troopers and dragoons.

For he hated all the godly men,
When, free on heather braes, 10
Their hearts would brim with an holy hymn
To their great Maker's praise.

And he hated good John Frazer,
And he bade his troopers ride
Up dale and dell, by crag and fell, 15
And snow-wreathed mountain side.

One night in bleak December,
When the snow was drifting down,
John Frazer sate by his ingle-side
With his good wife Marion. 20

And they spake, as godly folk will speak,
O' the kirk, and the kirk's concerns,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes in thousand shapes,
And they spake o' their bonnie bairns.

Tramp, tramp! — Who's there? — 'Tis they, O Heaven! 25
The Devil's own errand loons!
They've lifted the latch, and there they stand,
Six striding stark dragoons!

Too late, too late, thou crop-eared Whig!
Too late to turn and flee! 30
To-morrow thou'lt dance thy latest jig,
High on a gallows-tree!

They bound his arms and legs with thongs,
As hard as they were able:
Then took him where their horses stood, 35
And locked him in the stable.

Then back to the house they came, and bade
The sorrowful gudewife pour
The stout brown ale — for well they knew
She kept a goodly store. 40

The gudewife was a prudent dame:
The stout brown ale brought she;
They filled and quaffed, and quaffed and filled,
And talked with boisterous glee.

And many a ribald song they sang, 45
And told in jeering strain
How God's dear saints were seized and bound,
And hounded o'er the main.

And many an ugly oath they swore,
That made the gudewife turn pale; 50
But she smoothed her face with a decent grace,
And still she poured the ale.

And still they drank, and still they sang,
And still they cursed and swore:
The clock struck twelve! the clock struck one! 55
And still they cried for more.

The gudewife was a prudent dame,
She broached her ripest store:
The clock struck two! the clock struck three!
And still the gudewife did pour. 60

Then up and spake the first dragoon;

Now mount and grip the reins, boys!
It suits not well that a bold dragoon
Should drink away his brains, boys!

Then up they rose, and, with an oath, 65
Went reeling to the stable;
Their steeds bestrode, and off they rode
As fast as they were able.

With lamp in hand the gudewife rose
And to the stable ran, 70
And looked, and looked, till in a nook
She found her own gudeman!

“Now God be praised! — he’s fresh and hale!
A mighty work this day
The Lord hath done! — the stout brown ale 75
Hath stol’n their wits away.”

Eftsoons she brought a huge sharp knife,
And cut the thongs in tway;
“Now run, gudeman, and save thy life!
They’ll be back by break o’ day!” 80

And off he ran, like a practised man —
For oft for his life ran he —
And lurked in the hills, till God cast down
King Charles and his company.

And lived to tell, when over the wave 85
Went James with his Popish loons,
How God by stout brown ale did save
His life from the drunk dragoons.

1860

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