

George Gordon Byron (1788-1824)

1 *“Beware! Beware! of the Black Friar”*

1.

Beware! beware! of the Black Friar,  
Who sitteth by Norman stone,  
For he mutters his prayer in the midnight air,  
And his mass of the days that are gone.  
When the Lord of the Hill, Amundeville, 5  
Made Norman Church his prey,  
And expell'd the friars, one friar still  
Would not be driven away.

2.

Though he came in his might, with King Henry's right,  
To turn church lands to lay, 10  
With sword in hand, and torch to light  
Their walls, if they said nay;  
A monk remain'd, unchased, unchain'd,  
And he did not seem form'd of clay,  
For he 's seen in the porch, and he 's seen in the church, 15  
Though he is not seen by day.

3.

And whether for good, or whether for ill,  
It is not mine to say;  
But still with the house of Amundeville  
He abideth night and day. 20  
By the marriage-bed of their lords, 't is said,  
He flits on the bridal eve;  
And 't is held as faith, to their bed of death  
He comes — but not to grieve.

4.

When an heir is born, he 's heard to mourn, 25  
And when aught is to befall  
That ancient line, in the pale moonshine  
He walks from hall to hall.

His form you may trace, but not his face,  
    'T is shadow'd by his cowl: 30  
But his eyes may be seen from the folds between,  
    And they seem of a parted soul.

5.

But beware! beware! of the Black Friar,  
    He still retains his sway,  
For he is yet the church's heir 35  
    Whoever may be the lay.  
Amundeville is lord by day,  
    But the monk is lord by night;  
Nor wine nor wassail could raise a vassal  
    To question that friar's right. 40

6.

Say nought to him as he walks the hall,  
    And he 'll say nought to you;  
He sweeps along in his dusky pall,  
    As o'er the grass the dew.  
Then grammercy! for the Black Friar; 45  
    Heaven sain him! fair or foul,  
And whatsoe'er may be his prayer,  
    Let ours be for his soul.

*1823*

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