

Winthrop Mackworth Praed (1802-39)

3 *Sir Nicholas at Marston Moor*

To horse, to horse, Sir Nicholas! the clarion's note is high;
To horse, to horse, Sir Nicholas! the huge drum makes reply:
Ere this hath Lucas marched with his gallant cavaliers,
And the bray of Rupert's trumpets grows fainter on our ears.
To horse, to horse, Sir Nicholas! White Guy is at the door, 5
And the vulture whets his beak o'er the field of Marston Moor.

Up rose the Lady Alice from her brief and broken prayer,
And she brought a silken standard down the narrow turret stair.
Oh, many were the tears that those radiant eyes had shed,
As she worked the bright word "Glory" in the gay and glancing thread; 10
And mournful was the smile that o'er those beauteous features ran,
As she said, "It is your lady's gift, unfurl it in the van."

"It shall flutter, noble wench, where the best and boldest ride,
Though the steel-clad files of Skippon the black dragoons of Pride;
The recreant soul of Fairfax will feel a sicklier qualm, 15
And the rebel lips of Oliver give out a louder psalm,
When they see my lady's gewgaw flaunt bravely on their wing,
And hear her loyal soldiers' shout, for God and for the King!" —

'Tis noon; the ranks are broken along the royal line;
They fly, the braggarts of the Court, the bullies of the Rhine: 20
Stout Langley's cheer is heard no more, and Astley's helm is down,
And Rupert sheathes his rapier with a curse and with a frown;
And cold Newcastle mutters, as he follows in their flight,
"The German boar had better far have supped in York to-night."

The Knight is all alone, his steel cap cleft in twain, 25
His good buff jerkin crimsoned o'er with many a gory stain;
But still he waves the standard, and cries, amid the rout —
"For Church and King, fair gentlemen, spur on and fight it out!"
And now he wards a Roundhead's pike, and now he hums a stave,
And here he quotes a stage-play, and there he fells a knave. 30

Good speed to thee, Sir Nicholas! thou hast no thought of fear;
Good speed to thee, Sir Nicholas! but fearful odds are here.
The traitors ring thee round, and with every blow and thrust,
“Down, down,” they cry, “with Belial, down with him to the dust!”
“I would,” quoth grim old Oliver, “that Belial’s trusty sword
This day were doing battle for the Saints and for the Lord!” 35

The Lady Alice sits with her maidens in her bower;
The gray-haired warden watches on the castle’s highest tower. —
“What news, what news, old Anthony?” — “The field is lost and won;
The ranks of war are melting as the mists beneath the sun; 40
And a wounded man speeds hither, — I am old and cannot see,
Or sure I am that sturdy step my master’s step should be.” —

“I bring thee back the standard, from as rude and rough a fray
As e’er was proof of soldier’s thews, or theme for minstrel’s lay.
Bid Hubert fetch the silver bowl, and liquor *quantum suff.*; 45
I’ll make a shift to drain it, ere I part with boot and buff;
Though Guy through many a gaping wound is breathing out his life,
And I come to thee a landless man, my fond and faithful wife!

“Sweet! we will fill our money-bags, and freight a ship for France,
And mourn in merry Paris for this poor realm’s mischance: 50
Or, if the worst betide me, why, better axe and rope,
Than life with Lenthal for a king, and Peters for a pope!
Alas, alas, my gallant Guy! — out on the crop-eared boor,
That sent me with my standard on foot from Marston Moor!”

1830

(From *The Poems of Winthrop Mackworth Praed*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. With a Memoir by the Rev. Derwent Coleridge. Vol. 1. New York, 1865)