

George Walter Thornbury (1828-76)

4 *The Three Troopers*

During the Protectorate.

Into the Devil tavern  
Three booted troopers strode,  
From spur to feather spotted and splashed  
With the mud of a winter road.  
In each of their cups they drop[p]led a crust, 5  
And stared at the guests with a frown;  
Then drew their swords, and roared for a toast.  
“God send this Crum-well-down!”

A blue smoke rose from their pistol locks,  
Their sword blades were still wet; 10  
There were long red smears on their jerkins of buff,  
As the table they overset.  
Then into their cups they stirred the crusts,  
And cursed old London town;  
Then waved their swords, and drank with a stamp, 15  
“God send this Crum-well-down!”

The ’prentice dropped his can of beer,  
The host turned pale as a clout;  
The ruby nose of the topping squires  
Grew white at the wild men’s shout. 20  
Then into their cups they flung the crusts,  
And showed their teeth with a frown;  
They flashed their swords as they gave the toast,  
“God send this Crum-well-down!”

The gambler dropped his dog’s-ear’d cards, 25  
The waiting-women screamed,  
As the light of the fire, like stains of blood,  
On the wild men’s sabres gleamed.  
Then into their cups they splashed the crusts,  
And cursed the fool of a town, 30  
And leapt on the table, and roared a toast,

“God send this Crum-well-down!”

Till on a sudden fire-bells rang,  
And the troopers sprang to horse;  
The eldest muttered between his teeth, 35  
Hot curses — deep and coarse.  
In their stirrup cups they flung the crusts,  
And cried as they spurred through town,  
With their keen swords drawn and their pistols cocked,  
“God send this Crum-well-down!” 40

Away they dashed through Temple Bar,  
Their red cloaks flowing free,  
Their scabbards clashed, each back-piece shone —  
None liked to touch the three.  
The silver cups that held the crusts 45  
They flung to the startled town,  
Shouting again, with a blaze of swords,  
“God send this Crum-well-down!”

1857

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