

JOHNIE ARMSTRANG

1. Sum speikis of Lords, sum speikis of Lairds,
And sick lyke men of hie degrie;
Of a gentleman I sing a sang,
Sum time called Laird of Gilnockie.
2. The King he wrytes a luvng letter,
With his ain hand sae tenderly,
And he hath sent it to Johnie Armstrang,
To cum and speik with him speidily.
3. The Eliots and Armstrangs did convene,
They were a gallant cumpanie—
“We’ll ride and meit our lawful King,
And bring him safe to Gilnockie.”
4. “Make kinnen and capon ready then,
And venison in great plentie,
We’ll wellcome here our Royal King,
I hope he’ll dine at Gilnockie!”
5. They ran their horse on the Langhome howm,
And brak their speirs wi’ mickle main;
The Ladies lukit frae their loft windows—
“God bring our men weel back agen!”
6. When Johnie came before the King,
Wi’ a’ his men sae brave to see,
The King he movit his bonnet to him,
He ween’d he was a King as well as he.
7. “May I find grace, my Sovereign Leige,
Grace for my loyal men and me?
For my name it is Johnie Armstrang,
And subject of your’s, my Liege,” said he.
8. “Away, away, thou traitor strang!
Out of my sight soon may’st thou be!
I grantit never a traitor’s life,
And now I’ll not begin wi’ thee.”—
9. “Grant me my life, my Liege, my King!
And a bonny gift I’ll gie to thee—
Full four and twenty milk-white steids,
Were a’ foaled in a year to me.

10. "I'll gie thee a' these milk-white steids,
That prance and nicker at a speir;
And as mickle gude English gilt,
As four of their braid backs dow bear."—
11. "Away, away, thou traitor strang!
Out of my sight soon may'st thou be!
I grantit nevir a traitor's life,
And now I'll not begin wi' thee!"—
12. "Grant me my life, my Liege, my King!
And a bonny gift I'll gie to thee—
Gude four and twenty ganging mills,
That gang thro' a' the year to me.
13. "These four and twenty mills complete,
Shall gang for thee thro' a' the yeir;
And as meikle of gude reid wheat,
As a' thair happens dow to bear."—
14. "Away, away, thou traitor strang!
Out of my sight sune may'st thou be!
I grantit nevir a traitor's life,
And now I'll not begin wi' thee."—
15. "Grant me my life, my Liege, my King!
And a great gift I'll gie to thee—
Bauld four and twenty sister's sons,
Shall for thee ficht, tho' all should flee!"
16. "Away, away, thou traitor strang!
Out of my sight sune may'st thou be!
I grantit nevir a traitor's life,
And now I'll not begin wi' thee."—
17. "Grant me my life, my Liege, my King!
And a brave gift I'll gie to thee—
All between heir and Newcastle town,
Shall pay their yeirly rent to thee."—
18. "Away, away, thou traitor strang!
Out of my sight sune may'st thou be!
I grantit nevir a traitor's life,
And now I'll not begin wi' thee."—

19. “Ye leid, ye leid, now King,” he says,
Altho’ a King and Prince ye be!
For I’ve luved naething in my life,
I weel dare say it, but honesty—
20. “Save a fat horse, and a fair woman,
Twa bonny dogs to kill a deir;
But England suld have found me meal and mault,
Gif I had lived this hundred yeir!
21. “Sche suld have found me meil and mault,
And beif and mutton in all plentie;
But never a Scots wyfe could have said,
That e’er I skaithed her a pure flee.
22. “To seik het water beneith cauld ice,
Surely it is a greit folie—
I have asked grace at a graceless face,
But there is nane for my men and me!
23. “But, had I kenn’d ere I cam frae hame,
How thou unkind wadst been to me!
I wad have keepit the Border side,
In spite of all thy force and thee.
24. “Wist England’s King that I was ta’en,
O gin a blythe man he wad be!
For anes I slew his sister’s son,
And on his breist bane brake a trie.”—
25. John wore a girdle about his middle,
Imbroidered ower wi’ burning gold;
Bespangled wi’ the same metal,
Maist beautiful was to behold.
26. There hang nine targats at Johnie’s hat,
And ilk ane worth three hundred pound—
“What wants that knave that a King suld have,
But the sword of honour, and the crown?
27. “O whair gat thou these targats, Johnie,
That blink¹ sae brawly abune thy brie?”
“I gat them in the field fechtin,
Where, cruel King, thou durst not be.
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28. “Had I my horse, and harness gude,
And riding as I wont to be,
It suld have been tald this hundred yeir,
The meeting of my King and me!
29. “God be with thee, Kirsty², my brother,
Lang live thou Laird of Mangertoun;
Lang mayst thou live on the Border syde,
Ere thou see thy brother ride up and down!
30. “And God be with thee, Kirsty, my son!
Where thou sits on thy nurse’s knee;
But and thou live this hundred yeir,
Thy father’s better thoul’t never be.
31. “Farewell! my bonny Gilnock-hall,
Where on Eske side thou standest stout!
Gif I had lived but seven years mair,
I wad hae gilt thee round about.”
32. John murdered was at Carlinrigg,
And all his gallant cumpanie;
But Scotland’s heart was near sae wae,
To see sae mony brave men die—
33. Because they saved their country deir,
Frae Englishmen! Nane were sae bauld,
Whyle Johnie lived on the Border syde,
Nane of them durst cum near his hauld.
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