

THE LOCHMABEN HARPER

1. O heard ye na o' the silly blind harper,
How lang he lived in Lochmaben town?
And how he wad gang to fair England,
To steal the Lord Warden's Wanton Brown?
2. But first he gaed to his gude wyfe,
Wi a' the haste that he could thole—
“This wark,” quo' he, “will ne'er gae weel,
Without a mare that has a foal.”—
3. Quo' she—“Thou hast a gude gray mare,
That can baith lance o'er laigh and hie;
Sae set thee on the gray mare's back,
And leave the foal at hame wi' me.”
4. So he is up to England gane,
And even as fast as he may drie,
And when he cam to Carlisle gate,
O whae was there but the Warden, he?
5. “Come into my hall, thou silly blind harper,
And of thy harping let me hear”—
“O by my sooth,” quo' the silly blind harper,
I wad rather hae stabling for my mare!”
6. The Warden look'd ower his left shoulder,
And said unto his stable groom—
“Gae take the silly blind harper's mare,
And tie her beside my Wanton Brown.”
7. Then aye he harped, and aye he carped,
Till a' the Lordlings footed the floor;
But an' the music was sae sweet,
The groom had nae mind o' the stable door.
8. And aye he harped, and aye he carped,
Till a' the Nobles were fast asleep;
Then quietly he took aff his shoon,
And saftly down the stair did creep.
9. Syne to the stable door he hied,
Wi' tread as light as light could be,
And when he opened and gaed in,
There he fand thirty steeds and three.

10. He took a cowt halter frae his hose,
And o' his purpose he did na fail,
He slipt it ower the Wanton's nose,
And tied it to his gray mare's tail.
11. He turned them loose at the castle gate,
Ower muir and moss and ilka dale,
And she ne'er let the Wanton bait,
But kept him a-galloping hame to her foal.
12. The mare she was right swift o' foot,
She didna fail to find the way;
For she was at Lochmaben gate,
A lang three hours before the day.
13. When she cam to the harper's door,
There she gave mony a nicker and sneer—
“Rise up,” quo' the wife, “thou lazy lass,
Let in thy master and his mare.”
14. Then up she rose, put on her cloathes,
And keekit through at the lock-hole—
“O! by my sooth,” then cried the lass,
“Our mare has gotten a braw brown foal!”
15. “Come, haud thy tongue, thou silly wench!
The morn's but glancing in your ee”—
—“I'll wad my hail fee against a groat,
He's bigger than e'er our foal will be.”
16. Now all this while, in merry Carlisle,
The harper harped to hie and law;
And the fiend thing dought they do but listen him to,
Untill that the day began to daw.
17. But on the morn, at fair day light,
When they had ended a' their cheer,
Behold the Wanton Brown was gane,
And eke the poor blind harper's mare!
18. “Allace! allace!” quo' the cunning auld harper,
“And ever allace that I cam here!
In Scotland I lost a braw cowt foal,
In England they've stown my gude gray mare!”

19. “Come! cease thy allacing, thou silly blind harper,
And again of thy harping let us hear,
And weel payd sall thy cowt foal be,
And thou sall have a far better mare.”
20. Then aye he harped, and aye he carped,
Sae sweet were the harpings he let them hear!
He was paid for the foal he had never lost,
And three times ower for the gude GRAY MARE.