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Anonymous

A Pleasant New Ballad, On Sir John Barley-Corn
(1660)

The Tune is: *Shall I ly beyond thee.*

As I went through the North Countrie,
I heard a merry meeting,
A pleasant Toy and full of joy,
two noblemen were greeting;
And as they walked forth to sport,
upon a Summers Day,
They met another Noble-man,
with whom they had a fray.

His name was Sir John Barley-Corn,
he dwelt down in a Vale,
And had a Kinsman dwelt with him,
they call'd him Tom Good Ale,
Another named Sir Richard Beer,
was ready at that time:

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And likewise came a busie Peer,
called Sir William White-Wine.

Some of them fought in a black jack,
some of them in a Can,
But yet the chiefest in a black Pot,
fought like a Nobleman.
Sir Barley-Corn fought in a bowl,
who wan the Victory,
Which made them all to curse and swear,
that Barley-Corn must die.

Some said kill him, some said him drown
some wisht to hang him high.
For those that followed Barley-Corn,
they said would Beggars die.
Then with a Plow they Plow'd him up,
and thus they did deuise
To bury him within the Earth,
and swore he should not rise.

With Harrows strong they came to him
and burst Clods on his head,
A joyful Banquet then was made,
when Barley-Corn was dead.
He rested still upon the Earth,
till rain from Sky did fall.
Then he grew up in branches green,
which sore amazed them all.

Increasing then till midsummer,
he made them all afraid:
For then he did spring up on high,
and had a goodly beard.
When riping at St. James's time,
his 'countenance wax'd wan:
Yet now full grown in part of strength,
and thus became a man.

Wherefore with books and sickles keen,
unto the fields they [?]y'd,
Thy cut off his Legs off by the knees,
and Limb from Limb divide,
Then bloodily they cut him down,

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from place where he did stand.
And like a Thief for treacherie,
they bound him in a band.

So then they took him up again,
according to his kind,
And plac'd him up in several stacks,
to wither with the wind.
Then with a Pitchfork sharp and lang,
they rent him to the heart,
And Traitor like for Treason vile,
they bound him in a Cart.

And tending him with weapons strong,
unto the town they hie,
Whereas they mov'd him a mow,
and so they let him ly.
They left him groaning by the walls,
till all his bones were sore,
And having took him up again,
they cast him on the floor.

And hired two with hollin Clubs,
and beat at him at once
Who thwackt so hard on Barley-Corn,
the flesh fell from his bones.
Then after took him up again,
to please some womens minds,
Yea, dusted, faud'd, and sifted him,
till he was almost blind.

Full fast they knit him in a Sack,
which griev'd him very sore,
And soundly steept him in a Fat,
for three days space and more.
From whence again they took him out,
and laid him forth to dry,
Then cast him on the Chamber floor,
and swore that he should dy.

They rub'd and stir'd him up and down
and oft did toil and [?]re
The Mault-Man likewise woo's his death
his body should be sure.

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They pul'd and h[?]ld him up in spight,
and threw him on a Rill,
Yea, dry'd him o're a fire bote,
the more to work their will.

Then to Mill they forc'd him straight,
whereas they bruise'd his bones,
The Miller swore to murder him,
betwixt a pair of stones.
The last time that they took him up,
they serv'd him worse than that,
For with hot scalding liquor store,
they washt him in a Fat.

But not content with this well wot,
they wrought him so much harm,
With cruel threats they promise next
to beat him into barm,
And lying thus in danger deep,
for fear that he should quarrel,
They heav'd him straight out of the Fat,
and turn'd into the barrel.

They goar'd and broach'd it with a Tay,
so this his death began
And drew out every drop of blood,
while any drop would run.
Some brought in jacke upon their backs,
some brought in bowls and pail,
Yea, every man some weapon had,
poor Barley-Corn to kill.

When Sir John Good-Ale heard of this,
he came with meikle might,
And took by strength their tongues away
their Legs and eke their Sight.
Sir John at last in this respect,
so paid them all their hyre,
That some lay bleeding by the walls,
some tumbling in the Myre

Some lay groaning by the walls,
some fell i'th street down right,
The wisest of them scarcely knew,

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what he had done o're night,
All you good wives that brews good Ale,
God keep you from all teen.
But if you put too much water in,
the Crows pick out your Eyne.