

John Frizzle, “An Irish Miller, to Mr. Stephen Duck”

Description

JOHN FRIZZLE

“An Irish Miller, to Mr. Stephen Duck”

O *Stephen, Stephen*, if thy gentler Ear
Can yet a rustick Verse unruffled hear,
Receive these Lines, but look not for much Skill
Nor yet for Smoothness, from a Water-mill.
I near the Hopper stand with dusty Coat, 5
And, if my Mouth be open, dusty Throat.
The Stones, the Wheels, the Water make a Din;
Hogs grunt without, or squeeks a Rat within.
To meditate sweet Verse is this a Place?
Or will the Muses such a Mansion grace? 10
Think when thy Flail rebounded from the Floor
Was't then you made the *Shunamite*?—no sure.
And can I write? ah! make my Case your own,
A Miller Poet let a Thrasher own.
Smooth gliding *Thames* now bids thy Notes refine, 15
And Royal *Richmond's* Shades and *Caroline*.
The wond'rous Grotto may thy Song inspire,
And Foundress influence like Celestial Fire.
Where I awhile from Noise and Dust releas'd,
And Sacks, and Horses, and the mooter Chest; 20
And I could see the Hermitage, even I,
As well as you, my little Skill might try,
The splendid Scene attempting to recite,
Princes can build—and shall not Poets write?
But the good Queen, as Fame acquaints us here, 25
Does ev'ry way so excellent appear,
Around her such Diffusive Bounty sheds,
So constant in the path of Glory treads,
That they who know her Nobleness of Mind,
Not much t'admire in works of Art can find. 30
Should she build Palaces that charm the sight,
Her Godlike virtues would give more delight.
Should she command high Pyramids to frame,
Her fair Perfections would more wonder claim.
The Grotto, *Stephen*, no hard Task has been, 35
But where's an equal Pen to such a Queen?

NOTES:

11 Flail A Flail was a tool used to thresh grain. This line alludes to lines 36-37 of “The Thresher’s Labour,” Duck’s most well known and breakthrough work: “From the strong Planks our Crab-Tree Staves rebound,/ And Echoing Barns return the rattling Sound.”

12 Shunamite Another allusion to one of Duck’s poems, “The Shunammite,” a poem of some few hundred lines and recounting a biblical tale about the prophet Elisha.

12 no sure Most likely, the phrase is an archaic variant of the modern, “surely not,” but with the order reversed in order to complete the couplet with “Floor” from line eleven.

15-17 Duck published a panegyric to Queen Caroline, his patron, titled, “On the Queen’s Grotto, in Richmond Gardens.” Line fifteen of Frizzle’s work parallels line seven of the Duck poem: “Flow swiftly, THAMES; and flowing, still proclaim” (Duck, *Poems on Several Occasions, 1736* [ECCO]).

18 Foundress “Female founder” (*OED*). Another allusion to Duck’s “On the Queen’s Grotto, in Richmond Gardens”, wherein he refers to the Queen in line 29: “And You, Imperial Foundress! deign to smile” (Duck, *Poems on Several Occasions, 1736* [ECCO]).

20 mooter Chest A variant of “Multure-chest,” the receptacle where a miller collects his portion of what a mill produces (*EDD*).

21 Hermitage An allusion to the Duck poem “Verses on the Hermitage,” which was an earlier version of “On the Queen’s Grotto, in Richmond Gardens” ostensibly published without Duck’s consent (See Jennifer Batt, “From the Field to the Coffeehouse: Changing Representations of Stephen Duck,” *Criticism* 47:4 [Fall, 2005]: pp. 460.)

33 Frame “To give structure to, shape, or construct” (*OED*).

Source: *The Gentleman’s Magazine, Vol. 3 (February 1733), p. 95*

Edited by Joseph Watkins