

Edward Cobden, "A Letter to a Friend, on the Death of his Cow"

by admin - Sunday, May 08, 2022

<http://poeticalscavenger.sfsuenglishdh.net/poems/edward-cobden-a-letter-to-a-friend-on-the-death-of-his-cow/>

EDWARD COBDEN

"A Letter to a Friend, on the Death of his Cow"

*Tu semper urges flebilibus modis
Raptam Juvencam, nec tibi vespere
Surgente decedunt amores,
Nec rapidum fugiente solem.* Hor[ace].

"You, with incessant Wails, deplore,
That gentle *Mully* is no more:
Ev'ning and Morn bring no Relief,
No Milking to assuage your Grief."

This Moment, Brother, I receiv'd
The News, at which I'm much aggriev'd,
That she, your Favourite of late,
Dear *Mully*, has resign'd to Fate:
Mully, from whose indulgent Side
You were so lavishly supply'd
With what might decently afford
A Dish successive on the Board.

When Pudding enters, all are pleas'd,
Their Bowels seem already eas'd;
And if the Butter richly flow,
Glibly the luscious Morsels go.

Happy's the Table then partakes
Of tender Custards, frail Cheese-cakes,
Or Syllabub, by Artists beat
To an obliging, empty Cheat.
Too like the Kisses of the Fair,
So light, you almost nothing share;
So tempting, that you can't forbear.

The Dinner with perfuming Cheese 20
Is nobly crown'd. Now each of these,
All understanding Housewives know,
Their Essence to a Dairy owe.

A thousand Pleasures, *inter* Meals,
The Monarch of a Dairy feels: 25
With purest Cream now softens Tea,
Now calls for Posset-Drink, and Whey:
Commands Variety of Good,
Either for Physic, or for Food.
With friendly Visits always pleas'd, 30
He unprovided can't be seiz'd:
A hearty Welcome ne'er refuses,
Nor gives, instead of that, Excuses.

If, when the Day declines, by Hap
Some unexpected Guests should rap, 35
And tarry, till the Heifer roars
For *Susan*, to unload her Stores;
His open Soul, dispos'd to treat
With Dainties exquisitely sweet
A Portion small of gen'rous Wines 40
With grated Spice and Sugar joins,
Then summons *Sue* to stream upon't
Milk smoking from the native Font:
Forwith ambrosial Curds arise,
Beneath while flowing Nectar lies. 45
They lade or suck (there's little Odds)
Immortal Medley, fit for Gods!

I might, in counting Blessings, tire;
All which in *Mully* now expire.

But here imprudently I dwell 50
On what you recollect too well,
Not suffer'd by your grateful Mind
To lye in this Account behind.
Severe's your Fate, must be allow'd!
Stupid the Mortal is, that wou'd 55
Be unconcern'd in such a Case:
Yet that you gently screw your Face,
Nor take this over-much to Heart,
Resistless Reasons I'll impart.

Consider, willingly, or no, 60

You must endure th' uneasy Blow.
Then why disconsolately grieve
At what no Conduct can retrieve?
Then lodge this Truth within your Breast,
All Things are order'd for the best. 65
Misfortunes from the Stars are sent
In Kindness, more than Punishment.

You say, You had not valu'd half
So much the Loss, but from a Calf
Up the fond Simpleton you brought, 70
And sucking with your Finger taught:
That long Acquaintance with each Feature
Had much endear'd you to the Creature.

This makes the Affirmation plain,
Which I endeavour'd to maintain, 75
That you too warmly lov'd the Brute,
And often stole a sly Salute:
Pretending, with a cunning Fetch,
The Flavour of her Breath to catch.
If so, the Fates have this design'd 80
To raise and elevate your Mind
This World's Uncertainty to show,
And wean you from Concerns below.

This, or whatever be the Reason,
Assure yourself, she dy'd in Season. 85
Beside, had I this Loss sustain'd,
I had with Justice more complain'd,
Who have, except my *Mully*, little
For Conversation, or for Vittle.
But, though you are of her bereft, 90
Unnumber'd Blessings still are left.
The Charms of an engaging Spouse,
And Plenty smiling round your House.
Your Tulips in the Spring appear,
And Children blooming all the Year. 95
Then comfort up a fleeting Life;
Since *Mully's* gone, e'en kiss your Wife.
This, your Affliction to relieve,
Is what Advice a Friend can give.

If, deaf to Admonition, still 100
Your Thoughts lye brooding o'er the Ill;
Rather than endless you repine

Your Fav'rite lost, I'll lend you mine;
Who, tho' her usual Bounty, now
She's near her Time, refuse to flow, 105
(She keeping in a leathern Bottle
Her Liquor for the groaning Twattle)
And will your Expectations bilk,
If much they hanker after Milk,
Yet is her Company as good 110
As when a Virgin she was woo'd:
And with her Sister, in my Eye,
She might for Wit and Beauty vie:
You'll hardly one in Thousands find
More suited to relieve your Mind. 115
'Twill probably assist your Case,
Oft to survey her comely Face.
And when her rival Lowings ring,
It may some Consolation bring.

Such kindly Visit she shall pay, 120
While this Vexation wears away.
But if her young one's troublesome,
When she's deliver'd, send them home.
And should you, when (or quickly after)
I lend my Jewel, spare your Daughter, 125
In harmless Wagery and Play
Engag'd, we'd cheat the sultry Day,
And banish Sorrow far away.
And in this sweet Exchange, tho' short,
I'll pawn my Gown and Cassock for't, 130
The lovely *Patty* shan't be hurt.
The smiling Charge I'll safe resign
Again, when *Mully* shall be mine.

Should *Mully's* Issue prove a *Nancy*,
And, with her Looks, attract your Fancy, 135
Return the Mother home for Food,
Keep *Nan*, in *Patty's* place, for good.
Thrice happy both! when thus supply'd,
You with a Heifer, I, a Bride.

If, Neighbour, you shall be requir'd 140
To dignify the Brute expir'd,
And rear some monumental Stones,
Where dying she bequeath'd her Bones;
Which near the Crib we may suppose,
The Work let this Inscription close. 145

The Epitaph.

Here, where she oft was stroak'd and fed,
All that remains of *Mully's* laid;
Enclos'd within this narrow Bound,
That rang'd the whole Enclosure round.
Her Fate, with Sorrow, is deplor'd, 150
Who gave us Pleasure when she roar'd.
Her welcome Complaints kept me alive;
O could she now by mine survive!

NOTES:

Epigraph The source is Horace's *Odes*, Book 2.9, lines 9-12. However, Cobden has replaced the phrase "Mysten Ademptum" at line 10, with "Raptam Juvencam" ("raped heifer"). Cobden's rather loose translation follows.

15 *Syllabub* "A drink or dish made of milk (frequently as drawn from the cow) or cream, curdled by the admixture of wine, cider, or other acid, and often sweetened and flavoured" (*OED*).

27 *Posset-Drink* "A drink made from hot milk curdled with ale, wine, or other liquor, flavoured with sugar, herbs, spices, etc." (*OED*).

78 *Fetch* "A contrivance, stratagem" (*OED*).

89 *Vittle* "Food or provisions of any kind" (*OED*).

94 *Your Tulips* "The Clergyman was a Florist" [Author's note].

107 *Twattle* "Idle talk, chatter, babble" (*OED*).

118 *Lowings* "The deep resonant vocal sound characteristically made by a cow" (*OED*).

126 *Waggery* "The action or disposition of a wag; drollery, jocularly; in early use chiefly, mischievous drollery, practical joking" (*OED*).

130 *Cassock* "A long close-fitting frock or tunic worn by Anglican clergymen, originally along with and under the gown" (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1748), pp. 87-95. [[Google Books](#)]

Edited by Josiah Taylor