

[Catherine Jemmat], *â??The Rural Lassâ??*•

Description

[CATHERINE JEMMAT]

â??The Rural Lassâ??•

My father and mother, (what ails â??em?)
Pretend Iâ??m too young to be wed;
They expect, but in troth I shall fail â??em,
That I finish my *chairs* and my *bed*.

Provided our minds are but cheery, 5
Wooden chairs wonnot argue a glove,
Any bed will hold me and my deary,
The main chance in wedlock is love.

My father, when askâ??d if heâ??d lend us 10
An horse to the parson to ride;
In a *wheel-barrow* offerâ??d to send us,
And *John* for the *footman* beside.

Wouâ??d we never had askâ??d him; for, whip it!
To the church thoâ?? two miles and a half,
Twice as far â??twere a pleasure to trip it; 15
But then how the people would laugh!

The neighbours are nettlâ??d most sadly,
â??Was eâ??er such a forward bold thing?
â??Sure girl never acted so madly!â??
Throâ?? the parish these backbitings ring. 20

Yet I will be marryâ??d to-morrow,
And charming young *Harry*â??s the man;
My brotherâ??s blind nag we can borrow,
And he may prevent us that can.

Not waiting for parentsâ?? consenting, 25
My brother took *Nell* of the *green*;
Yet both far enough from repenting,
Now live like a *king* and a *queen*.

Pray when will your gay things of *London*
Produce such a strapper as *Nell*â??s? 30
There wives by their husbands are undone,

As *Saturday*'s news-paper tells.

Poll Barnley said, over and over,
 I soon shou^{ld} be left in the lurch;
 For *Harry*, she knew, was a rover, 35
 And never wou^{ld} venture to church.

And I know the sorrows that wound her,
 He courted her once, he confest;
 With another too great, when he found her,
 He bid her take him she lik^{ed} best. 40

But all that are like her, or wou^{ld} be,
 May learn from my *Harry* and me,
 If maids wou^{ld} be maids while they shou^{ld} be,
 How faithful their sweet-hearts wou^{ld} be.

My mother says, clothing and feeding 45
 Will soon make me sick of a brat:
 But, tho^{ugh} I prove sick in my breeding,
 I care not a farthing for that.

For if Iâ^m not hugely mistaken,
 We can live by the sweat of our brow; 50
 Stick a *hog* once a year, for fat *bacon*,
 And all the year round keep a *cow*.

I value no *dainties* a button,
 Course food with our stomachs allay;
 If we cannot get *veal*, *beef*, and *mutton*, 55
 A *chine* and a pudding we may.

A fig for your richest *brocading*;
 In *lindsey* thereâ^s nothing thatâ^s base;
 Your *finery* soon sets a fading,
 My *dowlass* will last beyond *lace*. 60

I envy not wealth to the miser,
 Nor wou^{ld} I be plagu^{ed} with his store:
 To eat all and wear all is wiser;
Enough must be better than *more*.

So nothing shall tempt me from *Harry*, 65
 His heart is as true as the sun:
Eve with *Adam* was order^{ed} to marry;
 This world it should *end* as *begun*.

NOTES:

12 *John* A literary name for a common or working-class man (*OED*).

17 *nettle* Teased, provoked, out of temper (Grose).

20 *backbitings* Slanderous or malicious talk about someone not present (Grose).

22 *Harry* May refer to a country man, a common name for a waggoner (Grose).

23 *nag* A horse, usually one that is old or sickly (Grose).

26 *Nell* Usually a name for a prostitute (*OED*); *of the green* A euphemism for sex before marriage (Grose).

35 *rover* A flirtatious, promiscuous, or unfaithful man; an inconstant lover (*OED*).

48 *farthing* A former monetary unit and coin of the UK, withdrawn in 1961, equal to a quarter of an old penny (*OED*).

53 *dainties* Something good to eat, a delicacy (*OED*); *button* used in reference to something of little worth (*OED*).

56 *chine* The backbone of an animal as it appears in a joint of meat (*OED*).

58 *lindsey* Alternate spelling of linsey, a strong, coarse fabric made with cotton or linen, probably originally made in Lindsey, a town in Suffolk (*OED*).

60 *dowlass* A type of coarse linen (*OED*).

67 *Eve with Adam* Refers to the biblical creation story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Source: *The Gentleman's Magazine* (November 1750), p. 517.

Edited by Nicole Walker