Anonymous, â??To the Cottagersâ?•

Description

ANONYMOUS

â??To the Cottagersâ?•

Will you, ladies, think us rude,
If ourselves we thus intrude?
Will you pardon what is sent
With a friendly good intent?
Thoâ?? we own the mode is new,
Nor deny a selfish view.
Mopâ??d and starvâ??d with wintry weather,
Round the fire we crowd together;
To the window then we run,
Hoping still to see the Sun;
But yonâ?? towâ??ring mast and fane
Tell us still â??twill blow and rain.
This the plea for pen that labours
For a peep at cottage neighbours.
Tell us, ladies, have you seen
Two fair nymphs, of gentle mien,
Tripping lightly oâ??er the green?
They frequent your usual way:
Did you see â??em bathe to-day,
And emerge from *Ribbleâ??*s arms,
Dripping, like the Grecian charms?
For they brought the Graces with â??em,
Lately come to stay at Lytham!
If you know â??em, tell us true,
Own it, ladies,â??are they you?
On one sad day, in luckless hour,
Of stormy wind, and pelting showâ??r,
We saw *two* scudding oâ??er the heath,
With fluttâ??ring lawn and panting breath;
We saw and grievâ??d, no cloak was there,
Nor broad umbrella had we near;
But, whilst we wailâ??d this sad disaster,
Wind, hail, and rain, descending faster,
We saw the *witches* take to flight,
And vanish sudden from our sight!
Had one *sage* author seen the deed,
How gladly heâ??d have changâ??d his creed!

If you know â??em, tell us true,
Own it, ladies,â??were they you?
Lastly, ladies, should intrusion
Not throw all parties in confusion,
â??Twould make us proud to cross the gap,
And give your door a friendly rap;
Thrice happy should we deem our lot
To greet you in our humble cot;
We then might saunter miles by dozens,
Or sit and chat of Yorkshire cousins.
And should you, kindly, so befriend us
As pardon, freely, soon to send us,
â??Twould make the grateful hearts right glad
Of Frances, Charles, and Hugo Chad.

NOTES:

11 *fane â??*A templeâ?• (*OED*).

16 *mien â??*The look, bearing, or conduct of a person, as showing character, moodâ?• (*OED*).

20 *Ribble â??*River rising in Yorkshire. It flows through Settle, Clitheroe Ribchester and Preston, before emptying into the Irish Sea between Lytham St. Annes and Southport, a length of 75 milesâ?• (*Settle Hydro*).

21 *Grecian charms* In the sense of â??persons or lives: fortified, protected, rendered invulnerable, etc., by a spell or charmâ?• (*OED*).

22 *Graces* The â??number of Graces varied in different myths, but usually there were three: Aglaia (Brightness), Euphrosyne (Joyfulness), and Thalia (Bloom). Frequently, the Graces were taken as goddesses of charm or beauty in general and hence were associated with Aphrodite, the goddess of loveâ?• (*Britannica*).

23 *Lytham* Seaside town in the Borough of Fylde in Lancashire, England.

34 *witches â??*The trials of the Pendle Hill witches in Lancashire in 1612 are among the most famous witch trials in English history. The twelve accused lived in the area surrounding Pendle Hill in Lancashire and were charged with the murders of ten people using witchcraftâ?• (J. T. Swain, *The Lancashire Witch Trials of 1612 and 1634 and the Economics of Witchcraft*).

36 â??Description of Blackpool, p. 40; where the *Lancashire witches* are spoken of a â??*leetle*â?• irreverentlyâ?• [Authorâ??s Note]. The reference is to a book by William Hutton titled *A Description of Blackpool in Lancashire* (1789). The cited passage reads: â??He may safely carry his heart *in* and *through* the country, and find the witches perfectly harmless. He will be in no more danger than *Don Quixote* with the lovely *Altisidora*. Perhaps he would find a more hazardous passage through the little town of Ashbourn in the Peak, than the whole county of Lancaster. Though beauties, at a cursory view, may seem to abound, as in other places, yet the careful observer, upon a fair examination, will think with me, they are a â??*leetle*â?• below mediocrityâ?• (40).

51 *Frances, Charles, and Hugo Chad* Unable to trace.

SOURCE: *The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine*, vol. 68, part II (October 1798), p. 884. [J. Paul Leonard Library]

Edited by Gabriela Pires