John Gay, â??The Shepherdâ??s Week IV. Thursday; or, the Spellâ?•

Description

JOHN GAY

â??The Shepherdâ??s Week IV. Thursday; or, the Spellâ?•

Hobnelia, seated in a dreary vale,
In pensive mood rehearsâ??d her piteous tale,
Her piteous tale the winds in sighs bemoan,
And pining echo answers groan for groan.
I rue the day, a rueful day I trow,
The woful day, a day indeed of woe!
When *Lubberkin* to town his cattle drove,
A maiden fine bedight he hapt to love;
The maiden fine bedight his love retains,
And for the village he forsakes the plains.
Return, my *Lubberkin,* these ditties hear;
Spells will I try, and spells shall ease my care.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
When first the year, I heard the cuckow sing,
And call with welcome note the budding spring,
I straitway set a running with such haste,
Debâ??rah that won the smock scarce ran so fast.
â??Till spent for lack of breath, quite weary grown,
Upon a rising bank I sat adown,
Then doffâ??d my shoe, and by my troth, I swear,
There I spyâ??d this yellow frizled hair,
As like to *Lubberkinâ??s* in curl and hue,
As if upon his comely pate it grew.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
At eve last *Midsummer* no sleep I sought,
But to the field a bag of hemp-seed brought,
I scatterâ??d round the seed on evâ??ry side,
And three times in a trembling accent cryâ??d,
This hemp-seed with my virgin hand I sow,
Who shall my true-love be, the crop shall mow.
I strait lookâ??d back, and if my eyes speak truth,
With his keen scythe behind me came the youth.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,

And turn me thrice around, around, around.
Last *Valentine,* the day when birds of kind.
Their paramours with mutual chirpings find;
I rearly rose, just at the break of the day,
Before the sun had chasâ??d the stars away;
A-field I went, amid the morning dew
To milk my kine (for so should huswives do)
Thee first I spyâ??d, and the first swain we see,
In spite of fortune shall our true-love be;
See, *Lubberkin,* each bird his partner take,
And canst thou then thy sweetheart dear forsake?
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
Last May-day fair I searchâ??d to find a snail
That might my secret loverâ??s name reveal;
Upon a gooseberry-bush a snail I found,
For always snails near sweetest fruit abound.
I seizâ??d the vermine, home I quickly sped,
And on the hearth the milk-white embers spread.
Slow crawlâ??d the snail, and if I right can spell,
In the soft ashes markâ??d a curious *L*:
Oh, may this wondrous omen lucky prove!
For *L* is found in *Lubberkin* and *Love.*
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
Two hazel-nuts I threw into the flame,
And to each nut I gave a sweet-heartâ??s name.
This with the loudest bounce me sore amazâ??d,
That in a flame of brightest colour blazâ??d.
As blazâ??d the nut so may thy passion grow,
For â??twas thy nut that did so brightly glow.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
As peascods once I pluckâ??d, I chancâ??d to see
One that was closely fillâ??d with three times three,
Which when I cropâ??d I safely home conveyâ??d,
And oâ??er the door the spell in secret laid,
My wheel I turnâ??d, and sung a ballad new,
While from the spindle I the fleeces drew;
The latch movâ??d up, when who shouâ??d first come in,
But in his proper person,--*Lubberkin.*
I broke my yarn surprizâ??d the sight to see,
Sure sign that he would break his word with me.
Eftsoons I joinâ??d it with my wonted slight,
So may again his love with mine unite!
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
This *Lady-fly* I take from off the grass,

Whose spotted back might scarlet red surpass.
Fly, Lady-Bird, *North, South, or East or West,*
Fly where the Man is found that I love best.
He leaves my hand, see to the West heâ??s flown,
To call my true-love from the faithless town.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
This mellow pippin, which I pare around,
My shepherdâ??s name shall flourish on the ground.
I fling thâ??unbroken paring oâ??er my head,
Upon the grass a perfect L is read;
Yet on my heart a fairer L is seen
Than what the paring marks upon the green.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
This pippin shall another tryal make,
See from the core two kernels brown I take;
This on my check for *Lubberkin* is worn,
And *Boobyclod* on tâ??other side is born.
But *Boobyclod* soon drops upon the ground,
A certain token that his loveâ??s unsound,
While *Lubberkin* sticks firmly to the last
Oh were his Lips to mine but joinâ??d so fast!
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
As *Lubberkin* once slept beneath a Tree
I twitchâ??d his dangling garter from his knee;
He wist not when the hempen string I drew,
Now mine I quickly doff of inkle blue;
Together fast I tye the garters twain,
And while I knit the knot repeat his strain.
Three times a true-loveâ??s knot I tye secure,
Firm be the knot, firm may his love endure.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
As I was wont, I trudgâ??d last market-day
To town, with new-laid eggs preservâ??d in hay.
I made my market long before â??twas night,
My purse grew heavy and my basket light.
Strait to the â??pothecaryâ??s shop I went,
And in love-powder all my mony spent;
Behap what will, next *Sunday* after prayers,
When to the ale-house *Lubberkin* repairs,
These *golden flies* into his mug Iâ??ll throw,
And soon the swain with fervent love shall glow.
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.
But holdâ??our *Light-foot* barks, and cocks his ears,

Oâ??er yonder stile see *Lubberkin* appears.
He comes, he comes, *Hobneliaâ??s* not bewrayâ??d,
Nor shall she crownâ??d with willow die a maid.
He vows, he swears, heâ??ll give me a green gown, 135
Oh dear! I fall adown, adown, adown!

NOTES:

4 *pining* â??The infliction or undergoing of physical or emotional painâ?• (*OED*).

5 *trow* â??Belief; faith, trustâ?• (*OED*).

8 *bedight* â??To equipâ?• (*OED*).

18 *won the smock* â??Based on a superstition in eighteenth-century England that states if a young woman were to head into the fields early in the morning, she might hear the notes of a cuckoo. If a young woman were to succeed in hearing the notes of a cuckoo, sheâ??s to take off her boot and look inside and find a hair the colour of the man they were to marryâ?• (Charles Dickens, *All The Year Round*, 88).

21 *doffâ??d* â??To put off or take off from the bodyâ?• (*OED*).

24 *comely pate* Beautiful head.

27 *Midsummer* â??The day of the summer solstice (21 or 22 June), or the period around thisâ?• (*OED*).

28 *hemp-seed* â??The seed of an annual herbaceous plantâ?• (*OED*).

43 *swain* â??A country or farm labourer, frequently a shepherdâ?• (*OED*).

49 *May-day fair* â??May Day ushers in the fifth month of the modern calendar year, the month of May. May Day celebrations and festivities were once the highlight of the year in every town and village through Britainâ?• (*The Learn English Network*).

69 *peascods* **â??**The pod or legume of the pea plantâ?• (*OED*).

79 *Eftsoons* **â??**A second time, againâ?• (*OED*).

91 *pippin* â??A seed or pip of any of various fleshy fruitsâ?• (*OED*).

111 wist Knew (*OED*).

123 â??*pothecaryâ??s shop* A contraction of â??apothecaryâ?• meaning â??a store or shop of non-perishable commodities, spices, drugs, comfits, preservesâ?• (*OED*).

134 *crownâ??d with willow* â??Taken as a symbol of grief for unrequited love or the loss of a mateâ?• (*OED*). The use of willow as a symbol of grief appears in Psalm 137 and influenced the custom of wearing a cap or crown made of willow twigs to communicate the grief suffered by forsaken lovers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (Paul Kendall, *Trees for Life,* 1).

135 *green gown* The Bride in Jan Van Eyckâ??s fifteenth-century painting, â??Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride,â?• wears green as a symbol of her fertility while slouching in imitation of pregnancy, indicating her

willingness to bear children. A green gown was the best choice for a brideâ??s gown because of its early symbolism (John Gage, *Color and Culture*, 1993).

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1720), pp. 101-108.

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