

Janet Little, â??From Snipe, a favourite Dog, to his Masterâ?•

Description

JANET LITTLE

â??From Snipe, a favourite Dog, to his Masterâ?•

O best of good masters, your mild disposition
Perhaps may induce you to read my petition:
Believe me in earnest, though acting the poet,
My breast feels the smart, and mine actions do shew it.
At morn when I rise, I go down to the kitchen, 5
Where oft Iâ??ve been treated with kicking and switching.
Thereâ??s nothing but quiet, no toil nor vexation,
The cookmaid herself seems possessâ??d of discretion.
The scene gave surprise, and I could not but love it,
Then found â??twas because she had nothing to covet. 10
From thence to the dining-room I took a range sir,
My heart swells with grief when I think of the change there;
No dishes well dressâ??d, with their flavour to charm me,
Nor even so much as a fire to warm me.
For bread I ransack evâ??ry corner with caution, 15
Then trip down the stair in a terrible passion.
I go with old James, when the soss is a dealing,
But brutes are voracious and void of all feeling;
They quickly devourâ??t: not a morsel they leave me,
And then by their growling ill nature they grieve me. 20
My friend Jenny Little pretends to respect me,
And yet sir at meal-time she often neglects me:
Of late she her breakfast with me would have parted,
But now eats it all, so Iâ??m quite broken hearted.
O haste back to Loudoun, my gentle good master, 25
Relieve your poor Snipy from evâ??ry disaster.
A sight of yourself would afford me much pleasure,
A share of your dinner an excellent treasure,
Present my best wishes unto the good lady,
Whose plate and potatoes to me are ay ready: 30
When puss and I feasted so kindly together;
But now quite forlorn we condole with each other.
No more Iâ??ll insist, lest your patience be ended;
I beg by my scrawl, sir, youâ??ll not be offended;
But mind, when you see me ascending Parnassus, 35

The need thatâ??s of dogs there to drive down the Asses.

NOTES:

17 *soos* A sloppy mess or mixture; a dish of food having this character (*OED*).

25 *Loudoun* A castle where Little was employed by Frances Dunlop and took charge of dairy, a position that offered financial stability and the means to publish her volume of poems, with the help of her patron.

31 *puss* A conventional proper or pet name for a cat, freq. (sometimes reduplicated) used as a call to attract its attention (*OED*).

35 *Parnassus* A mountain in Greece that, according to Greek mythology, was sacred to the several gods and serves as a metaphor for the the home of poetry, literature, and by extension, learning.

36 *The need thatâ??s of dogs there to drive down the Asses* Allusion to Robert Burnsâ??s â??Epistle to J. L*****k, An Old Scotch Bardâ?• (ll. 67-72).

Source: Janet Little, *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, the Scotch Milkmaid* (Air, 1792). [Hathi Trust]

Edited by Kent Congdon