

[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
An horse to the parson to ride; 10
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* Slandorous 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