

“L.R.,” “Ode to Venus”

Description

“L.R.”

“Ode to Venus”

On seeing the Estate of Gretna-Green advertised for Sale in the News-papers of the Day.

When Horace pray’d thee, Queen of Love,
To quit in haste thy Cyprian grove,
And seek his Fair-one’s roof,
The paltry smoke her incense threw,
And message trite to all thy crew, Â 5
Had kept thee well aloof.

A juster plea, a menac’d wrong,
Unvarnish’d by the Poet’s song,
Demands thy instant aid;
Quick let the doves their wings prepare, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 10
Cupid alone attend thy car,
And speed to Gretna’s shade.

To Gretna speed; your strongest hold
Plutus attacks with arms of gold,
And thinks the fortress won; Â 15
But Hymen your approach will meet,
For only there he’s wont to meet
The Mother and her Son.

Fear not yon dotard’s sooty face,
His blacken’d hands, his hobbling pace, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 20
‘Tis not thy spouse, sweet dame!
From nets of steel our smith abstains;
Fetters of silk, and rosy chains,
His gentler labours frame.

But Christie lifts his *hammer* high; Â 25
Oh! Â swiftly, swiftly, Goddess, fly,
And vindicate your claim!
So Gretna’s priest shall chaunt your praise,
And frequent pairs enraptur’d raise
A column to your fame. Â

NOTES:

Title *Venus* Roman goddess of beauty and love (*OED*).

Subtitle *Gretna Green* A Scottish village that became a popular destination for English couples looking to elope after Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act (1753) was brought into force in England. *The Newcastle Courant*, for example, carried an advertisement for the "Sale of Gretna" by auction (No. 6354, 21 July 1798).

1 *Horace* Roman lyric poet (65-8 BCE), whose ode addressed to Venus (*Odes*, IV.1) is being paraphrased in this stanza.

2 *Cyprian* Of Cyprus, an island in the eastern Mediterranean, famous in ancient times for the worship of Aphrodite or Venus (*OED*).

4 *paltry* Very small or meagre (*OED*).

5 *trite* Worn out by constant use or repetition (*OED*).

7 *juster* Well-founded; justifiable (*OED*); *menaced* Threatened (*OED*).

8 *Unvarnish'd* Not covered (*OED*).

11 *Cupid* Roman god of love, son of Mercury and Venus (*OED*).

14 *Plutus* Greek God of abundance or wealth (*Britannica*).

16 *Hymen* God of marriage in Greek and Roman mythology (*OED*).

19 *dotard* An old person (*OED*); *sooty face* "At Gretna Green the marriage ceremony was usually performed by the blacksmith" (*Britannica*).

23 *Fetters* Figuratively, a restraint (*OED*).

25 *Christie* James Christie (1730-1803), a Scottish auctioneer who founded the auction house Christie's in London, England.

28 *chaunt* A repeated rhythmic phrase (*OED*).

SOURCE: *The Gentleman's Magazine* (August 1798), p. 707. [J. Paul Leonard Library]

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