[Catherine Jemmat], â??The Rural Lassâ?•

Description

[CATHERINE JEMMAT]

â??*The Rural Lass*â?•

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,
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;
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;
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.

Yet I will be marryâ??d to-morrow,
And charming young *Harryâ??s* the man;
My brotherâ??s blind nag we can borrow,
And he may prevent us that can.

Not waiting for parentsâ?? consenting,
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 *Nellâ??s*?
There wives by their husbands are undone,

As *Saturdayâ??s* news-paper tells.

Poll Barnley said, over and over,
I soon shouâ??d be left in the lurch;
For *Harry*, she knew, was a rover,
And never wouâ??d 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 likâ??d best.

But all that are like her, or *wouâ??d* be,
May learn from my *Harry* and me,
If maids wouâ??d be maids while they *shouâ??d* be,
How faithful their sweet-hearts wouâ??d be.

My mother says, clothing and feeding
Will soon make me sick of a brat:
But, thoâ?? 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;
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,*
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.*

I envy not wealth to the miser,
Nor wouâ??d I be plaguâ??d with his store:
To eat all and wear all is wiser;
Enough must be better than *more.*

So nothing shall tempt me from *Harry*,
His heart is as true as the sun:
Eve with *Adam* was orderâ??d to marry;
This world it should *end* as *begun.*

NOTES:

12 *John* A literary name for a common or working-class man (*OED*).

17 *nettlâ??d* â??Teased, provoked, out of temperâ?• (Grose).

20 *backbitings â??*Slanderous or malicious talk about someone not presentâ?• (Grose).

22 *Harry* May refer to a country man, a common name for â??a waggonerâ?• (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* â??A flirtatious, promiscuous, or unfaithful man; an inconstant loverâ?• (*OED*).

48 *farthing* â??A former monetary unit and coin of the UK, withdrawn in 1961, equal to a quarter of an old pennyâ?• (*OED*).

53 *dainties* â??Something good to eat, a delicacyâ?• (*OED*); *button* â??used in reference to something of little worthâ?• (*OED*).

56 *chine â??*The backbone of an animal as it appears in a joint of meatâ?• (*OED*).

58 *lindsey* Alternate spelling of linsey, â??a strong, coarse fabric made with cotton or linen, probably originally made in Lindsey, a town in Suffolkâ?• (*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 Gentlemanâ??s Magazine* (November 1750), p. 517.

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