â??L.R.,â?• â??Ode to Venusâ?•

Description

â??L.R.â?•

â??Ode to Venusâ?•

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

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

A juster plea, a menacâ??d wrong,
Unvarnishâ??d by the Poetâ??s song,
Demands thy instant aid;
Quick let the doves their wings prepare,
Cupid alone attend thy car,
And speed to Gretnaâ??s shade.

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

Fear not yon dotardâ??s sooty face,
His blackenâ??d hands, his hobbling pace,
â??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;
Oh! swiftly, swiftly, Goddess, fly,
And vindicate your claim!
So Gretnaâ??s priest shall chaunt your praise,
And frequent pairs enrapturâ??d raise
A column to your fame.

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 Hardwickeâ??s Marriage Act (1753) was brought into force in England. *The Newcastle Courant*, for example, carried an advertisement for the â??Sale of Gretnaâ?• 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, â??an island in the eastern Mediterranean, famous in ancient times for the worship of Aphrodite or Venusâ?• (*OED*).

4 *paltry* â??Very small or meagreâ?• (*OED*).

5 *trite* â??Worn out by constant use or repetitionâ?• (*OED*).

7 *juster* â??Well-founded; justifiableâ?• (*OED*); *menacâ??d* â??Threatenedâ?• (*OED*).

8 *Unvarnishâ??d* â??Not coveredâ?• (*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* â??An old personâ?• (*OED*); *sooty face* â??At Gretna Green the marriage ceremony was usually performed by the blacksmithâ?• (*Britannica*).

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

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

28 *chaunt â??*A repeated rhythmic phraseâ?• (*OED*).

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

Edited by Jhadeeja Shahida Vaz