Edward Cobden, â??A Letter to a Friend, on the Death of his Cowâ?•

Description

EDWARD COBDEN

â??A Letter to a Friend, on the Death of his Cowâ?•

Tu semper urges flebilibus modis
Raptam Juvencam, nec tibi vespere
Surgente decedunt amores,
Nec rapidum fugiente solem. Hor[ace].

â??You, with incessant Wails, deplore,
That gentle *Mully* is no more:
Evâ??ning and Morn bring no Relief,
No Milking to assuage your Grief.â?•

This Moment, Brother, I receivâ??d
The News, at which Iâ??m much aggrievâ??d,
That she, your Favourite of late,
Dear *Mully*, has resignâ??d to Fate:
Mully, from whose indulgent Side
You were so lavishly supplyâ??d
With what might decently afford
A Dish successive on the Board.

When Pudding enters, all are pleasâ??d,
Their Bowels seem already easâ??d;
And if the Butter richly flow,
Glibly the luscious Morsels go.

Happyâ??s the Table then partakes
Of tender Custards, frail Cheese-cakes,
Or Syllabub, by Artists beat
To an obliging, empty Cheat.
Too like the Kisses of the Fair,
So light, you almost nothing share;
So tempting, that you canâ??t forebear.

The Dinner with perfuming Cheese
Is nobly crownâ??d. Now each of these,
All understanding Housewives know,
Their Essence to a Dairy owe.

A thousand Pleasures, *inter* Meals,
The Monarch of a Dairy feels:
With purest Cream now softens Tea,
Now calls for Posset-Drink, and Whey:
Commands Variety of Good,
Either for Physic, or for Food.
With friendly Visits always pleasâ??d,
He unprovided canâ??t be seizâ??d:
A hearty Welcome neâ??er refuses,
Nor gives, instead of that, Excuses.

If, when the Day declines, by Hap
Some unexpected Guests should rap,
And tarry, till the Heifer roars
For *Susan*, to unload her Stores;
His open Soul, disposâ??d to treat
With Dainties exquisitely sweet
A Portion small of genâ??rous Wines
With grated Spice and Sugar joins,
Then summons *Sue* to stream uponâ??t
Milk smoking from the native Font:
Forwith ambrosial Curds arise,
Beneath while flowing Nectar lies.
They lade or suck (thereâ??s little Odds)
Immortal Medley, fit for Gods!

I might, in counting Blessings, tire;
All which in *Mully* now expire.

But here imprudently I dwell
On what you recollect too well,
Not sufferâ??d by your grateful Mind
To lye in this Account behind.
Severeâ??s your Fate, must be allowâ??d!
Stupid the Mortal is, that wouâ??d
Be unconcernâ??d in such a Case:
Yet that you gently screw your Face,
Nor take this over-much to Heart,
Resistless Reasons Iâ??ll impart.

Consider, willingly, or no,
You must endure thâ?? uneasy Blow.
Then why disconsolately grieve
At what no Conduct can retrieve?
Then lodge this Truth within your Breast,
All Things are orderâ??d for the best.
Misfortunes from the Stars are sent
In Kindness, more than Punishment.

You say, You had not valuâ??d half
So much the Loss, but from a Calf
Up the fond Simpleton you brought,
And sucking with your Finger taught:
That long Acquaintance with each Feature
Had much endearâ??d you to the Creature.

This makes the Affirmation plain,
Which I endeavourâ??d to maintain,
That you too warmly lovâ??d the Brute,
And often stole a sly Salute:
Pretending, with a cunning Fetch,
The Flavour of her Breath to catch.
If so, the Fates have this designâ??d
To raise and elevate your Mind
This Worldâ??s Uncertainty to show,
And wean you from Concerns below.

This, or whatever be the Reason,
Assure yourself, she dyâ??d in Season.
Beside, had I this Loss sustainâ??d,
I had with Justice more complainâ??d,
Who have, except my *Mully*, little
For Conversation, or for Vittle.
But, though you are of her bereft,
Unnumberâ??d Blessings still are left.
The Charms of an engaging Spouse,
And Plenty smiling round your House.
Your Tulips in the Spring appear,
And Children blooming all the Year.
Then comfort up a fleeting Life;
Since *Mullyâ??s* gone, eâ??en kiss your Wife.
This, your Affliction to relieve,
Is what Advice a Friend can give.

If, deaf to Admonition, still
Your Thoughts lye brooding oâ??er the Ill;
Rather than endless you repine
Your Favâ??rite lost, Iâ??ll lend you mine;
Who, thoâ?? her usual Bounty, now
Sheâ??s near her Time, refuse to flow,
(She keeping in a leathern Bottle
Her Liquor for the groaning Twattle)
And will your Expectations bilk,
If much they hanker after Milk,
Yet is her Company as good
As when a Virgin she was wooâ??d:
And with her Sister, in my Eye,

She might for Wit and Beauty vie:
Youâ??ll hardly one in Thousands find
More suited to relieve your Mind.
â??Twill probably assist your Case,
Oft to survey her comely Face.
And when her rival Lowings ring,
It may some Consolation bring.

Such kindly Visit she shall pay,
While this Vexation wears away.
But if her young oneâ??s troublesome,
When sheâ??s deliverâ??d, send them home.
And should you, when (or quickly after)
I lend my Jewel, spare your Daughter,
In harmless Waggery and Play
Engagâ??d, weâ??d cheat the sultry Day,
And banish Sorrow far away.
And in this sweet Exchange, thoâ?? short,
Iâ??ll pawn my Gown and Cassock forâ??t,
The lovely *Patty* shanâ??t be hurt.
The smiling Charge Iâ??ll safe resign
Again, when *Mully* shall be mine.

Should *Mullyâ??s* Issue prove a *Nancy,*
And, with her Looks, attract your Fancy,
Return the Mother home for Food,
Keep *Nan*, in *Pattyâ??s* place, for good.
Thrice happy both! when thus supplyâ??d,
You with a Heifer, I, a Bride.

If, Neighbour, you shall be requirâ??d
To dignify the Brute expirâ??d,
And rear some monumental Stones,
Where dying she bequeathâ??d her Bones;
Which near the Crib we may suppose,
The Work let this Inscription close.

The Epitaph.

Here, where she oft was stroakâ??d and fed,
All that remains of *Mullyâ??s* laid;
Enclosâ??d within this narrow Bound,
That rangâ??d the whole Enclosure round.
Her Fate, with Sorrow, is deplorâ??d,
Who gave us Pleasure when she roarâ??d.
Her welcome Plaints kept me alive;
O could she now by mine survive!

NOTES:

Epigraph The source is Horaceâ??s *Odes*, Book 2.9, lines 9-12. However, Cobden has replaced the phrase â??Mysten Ademptumâ?• at line 10, with â??Raptam Juvencamâ?• (â??raped heiferâ?•). Cobdenâ??s rather loose translation follows.

15 *Syllabub* â??A drink or dish made of milk (frequently as drawn from the cow) or cream, curdled by the admixture of wine, cider, or other acid, and often sweetened and flavouredâ?• (*OED*).

27 *Posset-Drink* â??A drink made from hot milk curdled with ale, wine, or other liquor, flavoured with sugar, herbs, spices, etc.â?• (*OED*).

78 *Fetch* â??A contrivance, stratagemâ?• (*OED*).

89 *Vittle* â??Food or provisions of any kindâ?• (*OED*).

94 *Your Tulips* â??The Clergyman was a Floristâ?• [Authorâ??s note].

107 *Twattle* â??Idle talk, chatter, babbleâ?• (*OED*).

118 *Lowings* â??The deep resonant vocal sound characteristically made by a cowâ?• (*OED*).

126 *Waggery* â??The action or disposition of a wag; drollery, jocularity; in early use chiefly, mischievous drollery, practical jokingâ?• (*OED*).

130 *Cassock* â??A long close-fitting frock or tunic worn by Anglican clergymen, originally along with and under the gownâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1748), pp. 87-95. [Google Books]

Edited by Josiah Taylor