Christopher Smart, â??A Morning Piece, or, An Hymn for the Hay-Makersâ?•

Description

CHRISTOPHER SMART

â??A Morning Piece, or, An Hymn for the Hay-Makersâ?•

ODE I.

Quinetiam Gallum noctem explaudentibus alis
Auroram clara consuetum voce vocare. LUCRET[IUS].

Brisk chaunticleer his mattins had begun,
And broke the silence of the night,
And thrice he callâ??d aloud the tardy sun,
And thrice he hailâ??d the dawnâ??s ambiguous light;
Back to their graves the fear-begotten phantoms run.

Strong Labour got up with his pipe in his mouth,
And stoutly strode over the dale,
He lent new perfumes to breath of the south,
On his back hung his wallet and flail.
Behind him came Health from her cottage of thatch,
Where never physician had lifted the latch.

First of the village Colin was awake,
And thus he sung, reclining on his rake.
Now the rural graces three
Dance beneath yon maple tree;
First the vestal Virtue, known
By her adamantine zone;
Next to her in rosy pride,
Sweet Society, the bride;
Last Honesty, full seemly drest
In her cleanly home-spun vest.
The abby bells in wakâ??ning rounds
The warning peal have givâ??n;
And pious Gratitude resounds
Her morning hymn to heavâ??n.

All nature wakesâ??the birds unlock their throats,
And mock the shepherdâ??s rustic notes.
All alive oâ??er the lawn,
Full glad of the dawn,
The little lambkins play,

Sylvia and Sol arise,â??and all is dayâ??

Come, my mates, let us work,
And all hands to the fork,
While the Sun shines, our Hay-cocks to make,
So fine is the Day,
And so fragrant the Hay,
That the Meadowâ??s as blithe as the Wake.

Our voices letâ??s raise
In Phoebusâ??s praise,
Inspirâ??d by so glorious a theme,
Our musical words
Shall be joinâ??d by the birds,
And weâ??ll dance to the tune of the stream.

NOTES:

Epigraph *Quinetiam Gallum noctem explaudentibus alis/Auroram clara consuetum voce vocare* From Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book IV, ll. 714-715. â??For the Cock, that claps his Wings and drives away the Darkness, and by his clear Notes calls forth the Morning Lightâ?• (Guernier, and others, *T. Lucretius Carus Of the Nature of Things, in Six Books* [London, 1743], vol. 2, p. 63).

1 *chaunticleer* Proverbial name for a rooster; *mattins* â??The service of morning prayer, especially in the Anglican Church compare evensong, vespersâ?• (*OED*).

9 *flail* â??A tool that has a long handle with a stick swinging from it, used especially in the past to separate grains of wheat from their dry outer covering, by beating the wheatâ?• (*OED*).

17 *adamantine* â??Rigidly firm: unyielding adamantine disciplineâ?• (*OED*).

23 *peal* â??A loud ringing of a bell or bellsâ?• (*OED*).

30 *lambkins* â??Young lambsâ?• (*OED*).

33 *fork* Pitchfork.

37 *blithe* â??Cheerfulâ?• (*OED*); W*ake â??*Rows of green damp grassâ?• (James Orchard Halliwell, *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*, vol. 2 [London, 1872], p. 913)

39 *Phoebus* â??God identified with the sunâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1752), pp. 7-9. [Google Books]

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