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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Friday; or, the Dirge

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FRIDAY;

OR, THE

DIRGE*.

BUMKINET, GRUBBINOL.

BUMKINET.

WHY, Grubbinol, doſt thou ſo wiſtful ſeem?
There's ſorrow in thy look, if right I deem.
'Tis true, yon oaks with yellow tops appear,
And chilly blaſts begin to nip the year;
From the tall elm a ſhower of leaves is borne,
And their loſt beauty riven beeches mourn.
Yet even this ſeaſon pleaſance blithe affords,
Now the ſqueez'd preſs foams with our apple hoards.
Come, let us hye, and quaff a cheary bowl,
Let cyder now *waſh ſorrow from thy ſoul.*

* Dirge or Dyrge, a mournful ditty or ſong of lamentation over the dead; not a contraction of the Latin Dirige in the Popiſh hymn *Dirige greſſus meos*, as ſome pretend. But from the Teutonic Dyrke, *Laudare*, to praiſe and extol. Whence it is poſſible their dyrke and our dirge was a laudatory ſong to commemorate and applaud the dead. *Cowell's Interpreter.*

GRUBBINOL.

Ah Bumkinet! ſince thou from hence wert gone,
From theſe ſad plains all merriment is flown;
Should I reveal my grief 'twould ſpoil thy chear,
And make thine eye o'erflow with many a tear.

BUMKINET.

Hang ſorrow! Let's to yonder hut repair,
And with trim ſonnets *caſt away our care*,
Gillian of Croydon well thy pipe can play,
Thou ſing'ſt moſt ſweet, *O'er hills and far away*,
Of patient Griſſel I deviſe to ſing,
And catches quaint ſhall make the vaillies ring.
Come, Grubbinol, beneath this ſhelter, come,
From hence we view our flocks ſecurely roam.

GRUBBINOL.

Yes, blitheſome lad, a tale I mean to ſing,
But with my wo ſhall diſtant vallies ring;
The tale ſhall make our kidlings droop their head,
For wo is me!——our Blouzelind is dead.

BUMKINET.

Is Blouzelinda dead? farewel my glee! †
No happineſs is now reſerv'd for me.
As the wood pigeon cooes without his mate,
So ſhall my doleful dirge bewail her fate.
Of Blouzelinda fair I mean to tell,
The peerleſs maid that did all maids excel.

† Glee, joy; from the Dutch glooren, to recreate.

Henceforth the morn ſhall dewy ſorrow ſhed,
And ev'ning tears upon the graſs be ſpread;
The rolling ſtreams with wat'ry grief ſhall flow,
And winds ſhall moan aloud—when loud they blow.
Henceforth, as oft as autumn ſhall return,
The dropping trees, whene'er it rains, ſhall mourn:
This ſeaſon quite ſhall ſtrip the country's pride,
For 'twas in autumn Blouzelinda dy'd.

Where'er I gad, I Blouzelind ſhall view,
Woods, dairy, barn, and mows our paſſion knew.
When I direct my eyes to yonder wood,
Freſh riſing ſorrow curdles in my blood.
Thither I've often been the damſel's guide,
When rotten ſticks our fuel have ſupply'd;
There I remember how her faggots large,
Were frequently theſe happy ſhoulders charge.
Sometimes this crook drew hazel boughs adown,
And ſtuff'd her apron wide with nuts ſo brown;
Or when her feeding hogs had miſs'd their way,
Or wallowing 'mid a feaſt of acorns lay,
Th' untoward creatures to the ſtye I drove,
And whiſtled all the way—or told my love.

If by the dairy's hatch I chance to hie,
I ſhall her goodly countenance eſpy;
For there her goodly countenance I've ſeen,
Set off with kerchief ſtarch'd and pinners clean.
Sometimes, like wax, ſhe rolls the butter round,
Or with the wooden lilly prints the pound.
Whilom I've ſeen her ſkim the clouted cream,
And preſs from ſpongy curds the milky ſtream.
But now, alas! theſe ears ſhall hear no more
The whining ſwine ſurround the dairy door,

No more her care ſhall fill the hollow tray,
To fat the guzzling hogs with floods of whey.
Lament, ye ſwine, in grunting ſpend your grief,
For you, like me, have loſt your ſole relief.
When in the barn the ſounding flail I ply,
Where from her ſieve the chaff was wont to fly,
The poultry there will ſeem around to ſtand,
Waiting upon her charitable hand;
No ſuccour meet the poultry now can find,
For they, like me, have loſt their Blouzelind.
Whenever by yon barley mow I paſs,
Before my eyes will trip the tidy laſs.
I pitch'd the ſheaves, (oh could I do ſo now),
Which ſhe in rows pil'd on the growing mow.
There ev'ry deale my heart by love was gain'd,
There the ſweet kiſs my courtſhip has explain'd.
Ah Blouzelind! that mow I ne'er ſhall ſee,
But thy memorial will revive in me.
Lament, ye fields, and rueful ſymptoms ſhow,
Henceforth let not the ſmelling primroſe grow;
Let weeds inſtead of butter-flowers appear,
And meads, inſtead of daiſies, hemlock bear;
For couſlips ſweet let dandelions ſpread,
For Blouzelinda, blitheſome maid, is dead!
Lament, ye ſwains, and o'er her grave bemoan,
And ſpell ye right, this verſe upon her ſtone:
Here Blouzelinda lies——Alas, alas!
Weep, ſhepherds——and remember fleſh is graſs.

GRUBBINOL.

Albeit thy ſongs are ſweeter to mine ear,
Than to the thirſty cattle rivers clear;

Or winter porridge to the lab'ring youth,
Or buns and ſugar to the damſel's tooth;
Yet Blouzelinda's name ſhall tune my lay;
Of her I'll ſing for ever and for aye.
When Blouzelind expir'd, the weather's bell
Before the drooping flock toll'd forth her knell;
The ſolemn death-watch click'd the hour ſhe dy'd,
And ſhrilling crickets in the chimney cry'd;
The bodding raven on her cottage ſat,
And with hoarſe croaking warn'd us of her fate;
The lambkin, which her wonted tendance bred,
Dropp'd on the plains that fatal inſtant dead;
Swarm'd on a rotten ſtick the bees I ſpy'd,
Which erſt I ſaw when Goody Dobſon dy'd.
How ſhall I, void of tears, her death relate,
While on her darling's bed her mother ſat!
Theſe words the dying Blouzelinda ſpoke,
And *of the dead let none the will revoke.*
Mother, quoth ſhe, let not the poultry need,
And give the gooſe wherewith to raiſe her breed;
Be theſe my ſiſter's care—and ev'ry morn
Amid the ducklings let her ſcatter corn;
The ſickly calf that's hous'd, be ſure to tend,
Feed him with milk, and from bleak colds defend.
Yet, ere I die—ſee, mother, yonder ſhelf,
There ſecretly I've hid my worldly pelf,
Twenty good ſhillings in a rag I laid,
Be ten the parſon's, for my ſermon paid.
The reſt is your's—my ſpinning-wheel and rake,
Let Suſan keep for her dear ſiſter's ſake;
My new ſtraw-hat, that's trimly lin'd with green,
Let Peggy wear, for ſhe's a damſel clean.

My leathern bottle, long in harvests try'd,
Be Grubbinol's—this silver ring beside:
Three silver pennies, and a nine-pence bent,
A token kind, to Bumkinet is sent.
Thus spoke the maiden, while her mother cry'd,
And peaceful, like the harmless lamb, she dy'd.

To show their love, the neighbours far and near,
Follow'd with wistful look the damsel's bier.
Sprigg'd rosemary the lads and lasses bore,
While dismally the parson walk'd before.
Upon her grave the rosemary they threw,
The daisie, butter-flow'r, and endive blue.

After the good man warn'd us from his text,
That none could tell whose turn would be the next;
He said, that Heav'n would take her soul, no doubt,
And spoke the hour-glass in her praise—quite out.

To her sweet mem'ry flow'ry garlands strung,
O'er her now empty seat aloft were hung.
With wicker rods we fenc'd her tomb around,
To ward from man and beast the hallow'd ground,
Lest her new grave the parson's cattle raze;
For both his horse and cow the church-yard graze.

Now we trudg'd homeward to her mother's farm,
To drink new cyder mull'd, with ginger warm.
For gaffer Tread-well told us by the bye,
Excessive sorrow is exceeding dry.

While bulls bear horns upon their curled brow,
Or lasses with soft stroakings milk the cow;
While padling ducks the standing lake desire,
Or batt'ning hogs roll in the sinking mire;
While moles the crumbled earth in hillocks raise,
So long shall swains tell Blouzelinda's praise.

Thus wail'd the louts in melancholy ſtrain,
Till bonny Suſan ſped a-croſs the plain;
They ſeiz'd the laſs in apron clean array'd,
And to the ale-houſe forc'd the willing maid:
In ale and kiſſes they forgot their cares,
And Suſan Blouzelinda's loſs repairs.