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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Thursday; or, the spell

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THURSDAY;

OR, THE

SPELL.

HOBNELIA.

HOBNELIA, ſeated in a dreary vale,
In penſive mood rehears'd her piteous tale;
Her piteous tale the winds in ſighs bemoan,
And pining Eccho anſwers groan for groan.
I rue the day, a rueful day I trow,
The woful day, a day indeed of woe!
When Lubberkin to town his cattle drove,
A maiden fine bedight * he hapt to love;
The maiden fine bedight his love retains,
And for the village he forſakes the plains.
Return, my Lubberkin, theſe ditties hear;
Spells will I try, and ſpells ſhall eaſe my care.
With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

When firſt the year, I heard the cuckow ſing,
And call with welcome note the budding ſpring,

* Dight or bedight, from the Saxon word dightan, which ſignifies to ſet in order.

I ſtraightway ſet a-running with ſuch haſte,
Deb'rah that won the ſmock ſcarce ran ſo faſt;
'Till ſpent for lack of breath quite weary grown,
Upon a riſing bank I ſat adown,
Then doff'd † my ſhoe, and by my troth, I ſwear,
Therein I ſpy'd this yellow frizzled hair,
As like to Lubberkin's in curl and hue,
As if upon his comely pate it grew.

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

At eve laſt Midſummer no ſleep I ſought,
But to the field a bag of hempſeed brought,
I ſcatter'd round the ſeed on every ſide,
And three times in a trembling accent cry'd,
This hempſeed with my virgin hand I ſow,
Who ſhall my true-love be, the crop ſhall mow.
I ſtraight look'd back, and if my eyes ſpeak truth,
With his keen ſcythe behind me came the youth.

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

Laſt Valentine, the day when birds of kind
Their paramours with mutual chirpings find,
I early roſe, juſt at the break of day,
Before the ſun had chas'd the ſtars away;
A field I went, amid the morning dew
To milk my kine (for ſo ſhould huſwives do)
Thee firſt I ſpy'd, and the firſt ſwain we ſee,
In ſpite of fortune ſhall our true love be;
See, Lubberkin, each bird his partner take,
And canſt thou then thy ſweetheart dear forſake?

† Doff, and Don, contracted from the words do off, and do on.

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

Laſt May-day fair I ſearched to find a ſnail
That might my ſecret lover's name reveal;
Upon a gooſeberry-buſh a ſnail I found,
For always ſnails near ſweeteſt fruit abound.
I ſciz'd the vermine, home I quickly ſped,
And on the hearth the milk-white embers ſpread.
Slow crawl'd the ſnail, and if I right can ſpell,
In the ſoft aſhes mark'd a curious L:
Oh, may this wondrous omen lucky prove!
For L is found in Lubberkin and love.

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

Two hazel-nuts I threw into the flame,
And to each nut I gave a ſweetheart's name.
This with the loudeſt bounce me ſore amaz'd,
That in a flame of brighteſt colour blaz'd.
As blaz'd the nut ſo may thy paſſion grow,
For 'twas thy nut that did ſo brightly glow.

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

As peaſcods once I pluck'd, I chanc'd to ſee
One that was cloſely fill'd with three times three,
Which when I crop'd I ſafely home convey'd,
And o'er the door the ſpell in ſecret laid,
My wheel I turn'd, and ſung a ballad new,
While from the ſpindle I the fleeces drew;
The latch mov'd up, when who ſhould firſt come in,
[But in his proper perſon,—Lubberkin.

I broke my yarn, ſurpris'd the ſight to ſee,
Sure ſign that he would break his word with me.
Eftſoons I join'd it with my wonted ſlight,
So may again his love with mine unite!

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

This Lady-fly I take from off the graſs,
Whoſe ſpotted back might ſcarlet red ſurpaſs.
Fly, Lady-bird, North, South, or Eaſt, or Weſt,
Fly where the man is found that I love beſt.
He leaves my hand, ſee to the Weſt he's flown,
To call my true-love from the faithleſs town.

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

I pare this pippin round and round again,
My ſhepherd's name to flouriſh on the plain.
I fling th' unbroken paring o'er my head,
Upon the graſs a perfect L is read;
Yet on my heart a fairer L is ſeen
Than what the paring marks upon the green.

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

This pippin ſhall another trial make,
See from the core two kernels brown I take;
This on my cheek for Lubberkin is worn,
And Boobyclod on t'other ſide is borne.
But Boobyclod ſoon drops upon the ground,
A certain token that his love's unſound,
While Lubberkin ſticks firmly to the laſt;
Oh were his lips to mine but join'd ſo faſt!

With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

As Lubberkin once ſlept beneath a tree,
I twitch'd his dangling garter from his knee;
He wiſt not when the hempen ſtring I drew.
Now mine I quickly doff of inkle blue;
Together faſt I tye the garters twain,
And while I knit the knot repeat this ſtrain:
Three times a true-love's knot I tye ſecure,
Firm be the knot, firm may his love endure.
With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

As I was wont, I trudg'd laſt market-day
To town, with new laid eggs preſerv'd in hay.
I made my market long before 'twas night,
My purſe grew heavy, and my baſket light.
Strait to the 'pothecary's ſhop I went,
And in love-powder all my money ſpent;
Behap what will, next Sunday, after prayers,
When to the ale-houſe Lubberkin repairs,
Theſe golden flies into his mug I'll throw,
And ſoon the ſwain with fervent love ſhall glow.
With my ſharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

But hold—our Lightfoot barks, and cocks his ears,
O'er yonder ſtile ſee Lubberkin appears.
He comes, he comes, Hobnelia's not bewray'd,
Nor ſhall ſhe, crown'd with willow, die a maid.
He vows, he ſwears he'll give me a green gown;
Oh dear! I fall adown, adown, adown!