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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Wednesday; or, the dumps

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WEDNESDAY;

OR, THE

DUMPS*.

SPARABELLA.

THE wailings of a maiden I recite,
A maiden fair that Sparabella hight.
Such ſtrains ne'er warble in the linnet's throat,
Nor the gay goldfinch chaunts ſo ſweet a note.
No magpye chatter'd, nor the painted jay,
Nor ox was heard to low, nor aſs to bray;
No ruſtling breezes play'd the leaves among,
While thus her madrigal the damſel ſung.

* Dumps, or Dumbs, made uſe of to expreſs a fit of the ſullens. Some have pretended that it is derived from Dumops, a king of Egypt, that built a pyramid, and died of melancholy. So Mopes, after the ſame manner, is thought to have come from Merops, another Egyptian king that died of the ſame diſtemper; but our Engliſh antiquaries have conjectured that Dumps, which is a grievous heavineſs of ſpirits, comes from the word Dumplin, the heavieſt kind of pudding that is eaten in this country, much uſed in Norfolk, and other counties of England.

A while, O D'Urfey, lend an ear or twain,
Nor, though in homely guiſe, my verſe diſdain;
Whether thou ſeek'ſt new kingdoms in the ſun *,
Whether thy muſe does at Newmarket run,
Or does with goſſips at a feaſt regale,
And heighten her conceits with ſack and ale;
Or elſe at wakes with Joan and Hodge rejoice,
Where D'Urfey's lyrics ſwell in ev'ry voice;
Yet ſuffer me, thou bard of wond'rous meed †,
Amid thy bays to weave this rural weed.

Now the ſun drove adown the weſtern road,
And oxen laid at reſt forget the goad;
The clown, fatigu'd, trudg'd homeward with his ſpade,
Acroſs the meadow ſtretch'd the lengthen'd ſhade:
When Sparabella, penſive and forlorn,
Alike with yearning love and labour worn,
Lean'd on her rake, and ſtrait with doleful guiſe,
Did this ſad plaint in moanful notes deviſe.

Come night as dark as pitch, ſurround my head,
From Sparabella Bumkinet is fled;
The ribbon that his val'rous cudgel won,
Laſt Sunday happier Clumſilis put on.
Sure if he'd eyes, (*but Love*, they ſay, *has none*),
I whilhom by that ribbon had been known.

* An opera written by this author, called the World in the Sun, or the Kingdom of Birds; he is alſo famous for his ſong on the Newmarket horſe-race, and ſeveral others that are ſung by the Britiſh ſwains.

† Meed, an old word for fame or renown.

Ah, well-a-day! I'm ſhent with baneful ſmart,*
For with that ribbon he beſtow'd his heart.
My plaint, ye laſſes, with this burden aid,
'Tis hard ſo true a damſel dies a maid.

Shall heavy Clumſilis with me compare?
View this, ye lovers, and like me deſpair.
Her blubber'd lip by ſmutty pipes is worn,
And in her breath tobacco whiffs are borne;
The cleanly cheeſe-preſs ſhe could never turn,
Her aukward fiſt did ne'er employ the churn;
If e'er ſhe brew'd, the drink would ſtrait go ſour,
Before it ever felt the thunder's pow'r;
No huſwifery the dowdy creature knew;
To ſum up all, her tongue confeſs'd the ſhrew.
My plaint, ye laſſes, with this burden aid,
'Tis hard ſo true a damſel dies a maid.

I've often ſeen my viſage in yon lake,
Nor are my features of the homelieſt make.
Though Clumſilis may boaſt a whiter dye,
Yet the black ſloe turns in my rolling eye;
And faireſt bloſſoms drop with ev'ry blaſt,
But the brown beauty will like hollies laſt.
Her wan complexion's like the wither'd leek,
While Katherine pears adorn my ruddy cheek.
Yet ſhe, alas! the witleſs lout hath won,
And by her gain, poor Sparabell's undone!
Let hares and hounds in coupling ſtraps unite,
The clucking hen make friendſhip with the kite,
Let the fox ſimply wear the nuptial nooſe,
And join in wedlock with the wadling gooſe;

* Shent, an old word ſignifying hurt or harmed.

For love hath brought a ſtranger thing to paſs,
The faireſt ſhepherd weds the fouleſt laſs.
My plaint, ye laſſes, with this burden aid,
'Tis hard ſo true a damſel dies a maid.

Sooner ſhall cats diſport in waters clear,
And ſpeckled mackrels graze the meadows fair,
Sooner ſhall ſcreech-owls baſk in ſunny day,
And the ſlow aſs on trees, like ſquirrels, play,
Sooner ſhall ſnails on inſect pinions rove,
Than I forget my ſhepherd's wonted love.
My plaint, ye laſſes, with this burden aid,
'Tis hard ſo true a damſel dies a maid.

Ah! didſt thou know what proffers I withſtood,
When late I met the Squire in yonder wood!
To me he ſped, regardleſs of his game,
While all my cheek was glowing red with ſhame;
My lip he kiſs'd, and prais'd my healthful look,
Then from his purſe of ſilk a guinea took,
Into my hand he forc'd the tempting gold,
While I with modeſt ſtruggling broke his hold.
He ſwore that Dick in liv'ry ſtripp'd with lace,
Should wed me ſoon, to keep me from diſgrace;
But I nor footman priz'd nor golden fee,
For what is lace or gold compar'd to thee?
My plaint, ye laſſes, with this burden aid,
'Tis hard ſo true a damſel dies a maid.

Now plain I ken † whence Love his riſe begun;
Sure he was born ſome bloody butcher's ſon,

† To ken. Scire, Chaucero, to kên, and kende notus A. S. cunnan Goth. Kunnan. Germanis ken-

Bred up in ſhambles, where our younglings ſlain,
Erſt taught him miſchief and to ſport with pain.
The father only ſilly ſheep annoys,
The ſon the ſillier ſhepherdeſs deſtroys.
Does ſon or father greater miſchief do?
The ſire is cruel, ſo the ſon is too.
My plaint, ye laſſes, with this burden aid,
'Tis hard ſo true a damſel dies a maid.

Farewel, ye woods, ye meads, ye ſtreams that flow;
A ſudden death ſhall rid me of my wo.
This penknife keen my windwipe ſhall divide.
What, ſhall I fall as ſqueaking pigs have dy'd!
No—To ſome tree this carcaſe I'll ſuſpend;
But worrying curs find ſuch untimely end!
I'll ſpeed me to the pond, where the high ſtool
On the long plank hangs o'er the muddy pool,
That ſtool, the dread of ev'ry ſcolding quean;
Yet, ſure a lover ſhould not die ſo mean!
There plac'd aloft, I'll rave and rail by fits,
Though all the pariſh ſay I've loſt my wits;
And thence, if courage holds, myſelf I'll throw,
And quench my paſſion in the lake below.
Ye laſſes, eaſe your burden, ceaſe to moan,
And, by my caſe forewarn'd, go mind your own.

nen. Danis kiende. Iſlandis kunna. Belgis kennen. This word is of general uſe, but not very common, though not unknown to the vulgar. Ken, for proſpicere, is well known, and uſed to diſcover by the eye. Ray, F. R. S.

The ſun was ſet; the night came on a-pace,
And falling dews bewet around the place;
The bat takes airy rounds on leathern wings,
And the hoarſe owl his woful dirges ſings;
The prudent maiden deems it now too late,
And, till to-morrow comes, defers her fate.