

Charles Stuart Calverley (1831-84)

1 *Ballad*

The auld wife sat at her ivied door,  
    (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)  
A thing she had frequently done before;  
    And her spectacles lay on her apron'd knees.

The piper he piped on the hill-top high, 5  
    (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)  
Till the cow said "I die," and the goose ask'd "Why?"  
    And the dog said nothing, but search'd for fleas.

The farmer he strode through the square farmyard;  
    (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*) 10  
His last brew of ale was a trifle hard —  
    The connexion of which with the plot one sees.

The farmer's daughter hath frank blue eyes;  
    (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)  
She hears the rooks caw in the windy skies, 15  
    As she sits at her lattice and shells her peas.

The farmer's daughter hath ripe red lips;  
    (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)  
If you try to approach her, away she skips  
    Over tables and chairs with apparent ease. 20

The farmer's daughter hath soft brown hair;  
    (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)  
And I met with a ballad, I can't say where,  
    Which wholly consisted of lines like these.

PART II.

She sat with her hands 'neath her dimpled cheeks, 25  
    (*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)  
And spake not a word. While a lady speaks  
    There is hope, but she didn't even sneeze.

She sat, with her hands 'neath her crimson cheeks;  
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*) 30

She gave up mending her father's breeks,  
And let the cat roll in her new chemise.

She sat, with her hands 'neath her burning cheeks,  
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)  
And gazed at the piper for thirteen weeks; 35  
Then she follow'd him out o'er the misty leas.

Her sheep follow'd her, as their tails did them.  
(*Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese*)  
And this song is consider'd a perfect gem,  
And as to the meaning, it's what you please. 40

1872

(From *Fly Leaves*. Cambridge, 1881)