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)