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Anonymous
Snaith Marsh

[135]

SNAITH MARSH A Yorkshire Pastoral

"Young *Robin* of the plain, 'erst• blithest blade
That e'er with sickle keen the fields disray'd,
Who whistling drove the smoking team along,
Or trimm'd the thorny fence, with rustic song,
Thro' every season busy, still, and gay,
He plough'd, he sow'd; he made, and stack'd the hay,
Not dreary winter reach'd to *Robin's* breast,
He thrash'd, he winnow'd, and he crack'd his jest.
But now, not spring's return with joy he sees,
Nor flow'ry plain he heeds, nor budding trees,

The Salamanca Corpus: *Snaith Marsh* (1754)

Nor linnet warbling from the dewy brakes,
Nor early lark who tow'ring circles takes,
Nor tuneful thrushes from the hedge that sing,
Nor the shrill blackbird's welcome to the spring.
Against a gate he leans in rueful plight,
And eyes the plain that late was *Snaith Marsh* hight.

Ah! wae (1) is me, thos doleful 'gan he mourn:

Ah! wae the time, when ever I was born!

But far more waefol still that luckless day,

Which with the commons gave *Snaith Marsh* away;

Snaith Marsh, our whole town's pride, the poor man's bread,

Where, tho' no rent he paid, his cattle fed,

Fed on the sweetest grass which here rife (2) grew,

Common to all, nor fence, nor landmark knew,

Whose flow'ry turf no crooked share had raz'd,

Nor wide destroying scythe its green effac'd.

But now, ah! now, it stoops, sad saet (3) I ween, (4)

In mooy a row, with rails suspended 'tween.

Wae warth (5) the day, when tic'd sure by old *Nick*,

All to grow rich at once, like neighbour *Dick*,

Ta town I high'd, and on a luckless fair,

For cattle here to graze, war'd (6) all my gear, (7)

And boldly ventur'd at one cast to buy,

A deft (8) fine breeding mear (9) and newted whye, (10)

Ten ewes, a tup, (11) and more, a flock of geese,

All which I thought woold here so fast increase,

That tho' they'd cost me all my worldly store,

I rekenn'd soon to gain as mickle more,

But now *Snaith Marsh's* taid (12) and all my gain blown o'er.

My goodly stock e'er yet they tasted food,

By cross grain'd hinds were driv'n from their abode,

The Salamanca Corpus: *Snaith Marsh* (1754)

Tho' lest bad neighbours might have ow'd me spight,
I fore-hand taid a house to give me right,
With bonny *Susan* where I hop'd to dwell,
But now I prove that proverb on mysell (13),
Which says, that one grief brings another on,
Too sure, alas, and mine will ne'er have done,
For *Susan*, whom I thought my sweetheart true,
When as my crosses came 'gan look askue;
And what than all beside my heart most pains,
For landed *Roger*, now my love disdains,
Roger, not to be nam'd with me, I trow,
More than muckmidden (14) vile, with barley mow;
But *Roger* has a house in yonder lane,
And my sad loss proves ev'ry way his gain;
Yet wilt thou, *Susan*? will thou, selfish lass?
For sake of sordid wealth, thy love debase,
No, do not think content is in mich store,
But be to *Robin* kind, as heretofore,
And we'll in love be bless'd, tho' *Snaith Marsh* be no more.
 Alas! will *Roger* e'er his sleep forgo?
Afore larks sing, or early cock 'gin crow,
As I've for thee, ungrateful maiden, done,
To help thee milking, e'er day wark begun
And when thy well stript kye (15) would yield no more,
Still on my head the reeking kit (16) I bore.
And, oh! bethink thee, then, what lovesome talk,
We've held together ganging down the balk, (17)
Maund'ring (18) at time which wou'd na (19) for us stay,
But now, I ween, mais (20) no such hast away.
Yet, O! return eftsoon (21) and ease my woe,
And to some distant parish let us go,

The Salamanca Corpus: *Snaith Marsh* (1754)

And there again them leetsome (22) days restore,
Where unassail'd by meety (23) folk in pow'r,
Our cattle yet may feed, tho' *Snaith Marsh* be no more.

But wae is me, I wot, I fand (24) am grown,
Forgetting *Susan* is already gone,
And *Roger* aims (25) e'er *Lady Day* to wed;
The banns last *Sunday* in the church were bid.
But let me, let me first i' th' churchyard lig, (26)
For soon I there must gang, my grief's so big.
All others in their loss some comfort find;
Tho' *Ned's* like me reduc'd, yet *Jenny's* kind,
And tho' his fleece no more our parson takes,
And roast goose, dainty food, his table lacks,
Yet he for tithes ill paid, gets better land,
While I am ev'ry way o' th' losing hand.
My adlings (27) ware'd, and yet my rent to pay,
My geese, like *Susan's* faith, flown far away;
My cattle like their master lank and poor,
My heart with hopeless love to pieces tore,
And all these sorrows came syne *Snaith Marsh* was no more."

• *An old word signifying in time past.*

- (1) *woe.*
- (2) *plentiful.*
- (3) *sight.*
- (4) *think or conceive.*
- (5) *a phrase.*
- (6) *laid.*
- (7) *riches.*
- (8) *lively or nimble.*
- (9) *mare.*
- (10) *new calv'd young cow.*
- (11) *a ram.*
- (12) *took.*

The Salamanca Corpus: *Snaith Marsh* (1754)

- (13) *self.*
- (14) *dunghill*
- (15) *cow*
- (16) *pail.*
- (17) *A land in the field for foot paths and carriages*
- (18) *finding fau't.*
- (19) *not.*
- (20) *makes.*
- (21) *an old word for very soon.*
- (22) *lightsome or very chearful.*
- (23) *mighty men.*
- (24) *foolish or stupid.*
- (25) *intends.*
- (26) *be laid*
- (27) *earnings.*

