

THE YEARLY DISTRESS,
OR TITHING TIME. AT STOCK, IN ESSEX

Verses addressed to a Country Clergyman, complaining of the diasgreeableness of the Day annually appointed for receiving the Dues at the Parsonage.

Come, ponder well—for 'tis no jest
To laugh it would be wrong—
The troubles of a worthy priest,
The burden of my song.

This priest he merry is and blithe
Three quarters of a year,
But oh ! it cuts him like a scythe
When tithing time draws near.

He then is full of frights and fears,
As one at point to die,
And long before the day appears
He heaves up many a sigh.

For then the farmers come jog-jog,
Along the miry road,
Each heart as heavy as a log,
To make their payments good.

In sooth the sorrow of such days
Is not to be express'd,
When he that takes, and he that pays
Are both alike distressed.

Now all unwelcome at his gates
The clumsy swains alight,
With rueful faces and bald pates—
He trembles at the sight.

And well he may, for well he knows
Each bumpkin of the clan,
Instead of paying what he owes,
Will cheat him if he can.

So in they come, each makes his leg,
And flings his head before,
And looks as if he came to beg,
And not to quit a score.

“ And how does Miss and Madam do,
The little boy and all ? ”
“ All tight and well And. how do
you,
Good Mr. What-d'ye-call ? ”

The dinner comes, and down they sit :
Were e'er such hungry folk ?
There's little talking, and no wit ;
It is no time to joke.

One wipes his nose upon his sleeve,
One spits upon the floor,
Yet, not to give offence or grieve,
Holds up the cloth before.

The punch goes round, and they are
dull
And limpish still as ever ;
Like barrels with their bellies full,
They only weigh the heavier.

At length the busy time begins :
“ Come, neighbours, we must wag ”
The money chinks, down drop their
chins,
Each lugging out his bag.

One talks of mildew and of frost,
And one of storms of hail,
And one of pigs that he has lost
By maggots at the tail.

Quoth one, “ a rarer man than you
“ In pulpit none shall hear :
“ But yet, me thinks, to tell you true,
“ You sell it plaguy dear.”

O why are farmers made so coarse,
Or clergy made so fine ?
A kick, that scarce would move a
horse,
May kill a sound divine.

Then let the boobies stay at home ;
'Twould cost him, I dare say,
Less trouble taking twice the sum,
Without the clowns that pay.