

## HUMOR



Joel Barlow

(1754-1812)

## INTRODUCTION

Joel Barlow was educated at Yale, served in the American Revolution and became a teacher, lawyer, diplomat, humorist and poet. He is the most prominent of the “Hartford wits.” His ambitious life’s work, *The Columbiad* (1807), is a patriotic Neoclassical epic that has been described as a long dull imitation of Alexander Pope. His mock pastoral “The Hasty Pudding” (1796) is more appealing, written in praise of his native corn-meal while he was a diplomat missing it abroad.

from “The Hasty Pudding” (1796)

...I sing the sweets I know, the charms I feel,  
My morning incense, and my evening meal,  
The sweets of Hasty-Pudding. Come, dear bowl,  
Glide o’er my palate, and inspire my soul.  
The milk beside thee, smoking from the kine,  
Its substance mingled, married in with thine,  
Shall cool and temper thy superior heat,  
And save the pains of blowing while I eat....

Thy name is *Hasty-Pudding!* thus our sires  
Were wont to greet thee fuming from their fires,  
And while they argu’d in thy just defense  
With logic clear, they thus explain’d the sense:--  
In haste the boiling cauldron, o’er the blaze,  
Receives and cooks the ready-powder’d maize;  
In haste ‘tis served, and then in equal haste,  
With cooling milk, we make the sweet repast....

There are those who strive to stamp with disrepute  
The luscious food, because it feeds the brute;  
In tropes of high-strain'd wit, while gaudy prigs  
Compare thy nursling man to pamper'd pigs;  
With sovereign scorn I treat the vulgar jest,  
Nor fear to share thy bounties with the beast.  
What though the generous cow gives me to quaff  
The milk nutritious; am I then a calf?  
Or can the genius of the noisy swine,  
Though nurs'd on pudding, thence lay claim to mine?  
Sure the sweet song, I fashion to thy praise,  
Runs more melodious than the notes they raise.

Delicious grain! whatever form it take,  
To roast or boil, to smother or to bake,  
In every dish 'tis welcome still to me,  
But most, my *Hasty-pudding*, most in thee.

Like the free Frenchman, from your joyous chin  
Suspend the ready napkin; or, like me,  
Poise with one hand your bowl upon your knee;  
Just in the zenith your wise head project,  
Your full spoon, rising in a line direct,  
Bold as a bucket, heeds no drops that fall,  
The wide-mouthed bowl will surely catch them all!