

THE COTTAGER'S REPLY

by Frank Mansell

You say you'll pay ten thousand pound
For this old house and a bit of ground,
You like these hills and have it planned
To settle here, on Cotswold land.

Well, come you in and sit you down,
You would-be buyer from the town,
And listen to me while I tell
The reasons why I will not sell.

This stone-tiled cottage you call 'nice'
Was gained at far too high a price,
That I should lightly sign away
What others toiled for, night and day,

Who hammered blue-stone by the yard
To pay the rent when times were hard,
Who spent themselves beneath the sun,
Tending the fields you gaze upon.

Their time is over, but for me
Remains the wild hare running free,
And snuffling brock who travels still
Ancestral highways on the hill.

And I, as Cotswold bred as these,
Have likewise need of fields and trees,
To feel the soil that nursed my race,
Beneath me in my native place.

Nor would I tread the barren street
With strangers round me, none to greet,
Expectant at each opening door
To find some face I see no more.

Enough for me this cot of stone,
A mite of land to call my own,
A friend to drink with, wench to smile,
And Cotswold country by the mile.

So take your glass and drain it down,
You would-be peasant from the town,
Go on your journey, let me bide,
Content in my own countryside.