The Leather Bottel

The Leather Bottel

'Twas God above that made all things
The heav'ns, the earth, and all therein *
The ships that on the sea do swim
To guard from foes that none come in.
And let them all do what they can
'Twas for one end - the use of Man
So I wish in heaven his soul may dwell
That first found out the leather bottel.

Now, what do you say to these cans of wood?
Oh no, in faith, they cannot be good
For if the bearer fall by the way
Why, on the ground your liquor doth lay;
But had it been in a leather bottel
Although he had fallen, all would be well
So I wish etc.

Then what do you say to these glasses fine?
Oh, they shall have no praise of mine
For if you chance to touch the brim
Down dalls the liquor and all therein;
But had it been in a leather bottel
And the stopple in, all would be well,
So I wish etc.

Then what do you say to these black pots three?
If a man and his wife should disagree
Why they'll tug and they'll pull till their liquor doth spill
In a leather bottel they may tug their fill.
And pull away till their hearts do ache
And yet the liquor no harm can take
So I wish etc.

Then what do you say to these flagons fine?
Oh, they shall have no praise of mine
For when a Lord is about to dine
He sends them to be filled with wine,
The man with the flagons doth run away
Because they are silver most gallant and gay
So I wish etc.

A leather bottel we know is good
Far better than glasses or cans of wood
For when a man's at work in the field
You glasses and pots no comfort will yield;
But a good leather bottel standingh by
Will raise his spirits, whenever he's dry
So I wish etc.

At noon, the haymakers sit them down
To drink from their bottles of ale, nut-brown;
In summer, too, when the weather is warm
A good bottle full will do them no harm.
Then the lads and the lasses begin to tattle
But what would they do without this bottle?
So I wish etc.

There's never a Lord, an Earl, or Knight,
But in this bottle doth take delight
For when he's hunting of the deer
He oft doth wish for a bottle of beer;
Likewise the man that works in the wood
A bottle beer will oft do him good
So I wish etc.

And when the leather bottel grows old
And will good liquor no longer hold,
Out of its side you may make a clout
To mend your shoes when they're worn out;
Or take it and hang it up on a pin
'Twill do to put hinges and odd things in
So I wish etc.

From Popular Music of the Olden Time, Chappell.
Note: According to Chappell, earliest printed sources date this at least as far back as reign of Charles II, though Chapelle feels that it's probably contemporary with Chaucer.
* For better or for worse, I first heard the two opening lines as:
"When I survey the world around,
The wondrous things that do abound" --RG

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