SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT
1606–1668

The chief literary importance of Sir William Davenant is that he kept alive the theatrical traditions of the pre-Commonwealth era, to be revived after the Restoration. In the process, he became the author of the first English opera, The Siege of Rhodes (1656). His Song is a parody of the traditional aubade, or song of the lover to his mistress at dawn.

A Song

O thou that sleep'st like pig in straw,
   Thou lady dear, arise;
Open (to keep the sun in awe)
   Thy pretty pinking1 eyes:
5   And, having stretched each leg and arm,
   Put on your clean white smock,
And then I pray, to keep you warm,
   A petticoat or dock.2
Arise, arise! Why should you sleep
10   When you have slept enough?
Long since, French boys cried Chimney-sweep,
   And damsels Kitchen-stuff.
The shops were opened long before,
   And youngest prentice goes
15   To lay at’s master’s chamber-door
   His master’s shining shoes.
Arise, arise! your breakfast stays,
   Good water-gruel warm,
Or sugar-sops, which Galen3 says
20   With mace, will do no harm.
Arise, arise! when you are up
   You’ll find more to your cost,
For morning’s draught in caudle-cup,4
   Good nutbrown ale, and toast.5

3. Galen is the ancient Greek physician; sugar-sops are slices of bread with sugar and spice.
4. Gruel, served to invalids and for breakfast.
5. As a breakfast drink, the young person will find more to her cost (perhaps “taste”) a cup of ale and a crust of bread.