

Epistles on Women

Lucy Aikin

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Lucy Aikin

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**EPISTLES ON WOMEN, EXEMPLIFYING
THEIR CHARACTER AND CONDITION
IN
VARIOUS AGES AND NATIONS. WITH**

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

BY

LUCY AIKIN.

TO Mrs. CHARLES ROCHEMONT AIKIN, THE FOLLOWING EPISTLES, ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED TO HER BY THE SOLE APPELLATION OF FRIEND, ARE NOW INSCRIBED, TOGETHER WITH THE REMAINING CONTENTS OF THIS VOLUME, BY HER AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND SISTER LUCY AIKIN.

INTRODUCTION.

The poetical epistles occupying the principal part of this volume are presented to the public with all the diffidence and anxiety of a literary novice conscious of a bold and arduous undertaking. As I am not, however, aware of any circumstances in my own case which peculiarly appeal to the indulgence of the reader, I shall decline any further exposure of feelings purely personal, and proceed to the proper business of this introduction,....to offer such preliminary remarks on the plan of the work as may be necessary to prevent misapprehension.

Let me in the first place disclaim entirely the absurd idea that the two sexes ever can be, or ever ought to be, placed in all respects on a footing of equality. Man when he abuses his power may justly be considered as a tyrant; but his power itself is no tyranny, being founded not on usurpation, but on certain unalterable necessities;....sanctioned, not by prescription alone, but by the fundamental laws of human nature. As long as the bodily constitution of the species shall remain the same, man must in general assume those public and active offices of life which confer authority, whilst to woman will usually be allotted such domestic and private ones as imply a certain degree of subordination. Nothing therefore could, in my opinion, be more foolish than the attempt to engage our sex in a struggle for stations

that they are physically unable properly to fill; for power of which they must always want the means to possess themselves. No! instead of aspiring to be inferior men, let us content ourselves with becoming noble women:....but let not sex be carried into every thing. Let the impartial voice of History testify for us, that, when permitted, we have been the worthy associates of the best efforts of the best of men; let the daily observation of mankind bear witness, that no talent, no virtue, is masculine alone; no fault or folly exclusively feminine;....that there is not an endowment, or propensity, or mental quality of any kind, which may not be derived from her father to the daughter, to the son from his mother. These positions once established, and carried into their consequences, will do every thing for woman. Perceiving that any shaft aimed at her, must strike in its recoil upon some vulnerable part of common human nature, the Juvenals and Popes of future ages will abstain from making her the butt of scorn or malice. Feeling with gratitude of what her heart and mind are capable, the scholars, the sages, and the patriots of coming days will treat her as a sister and a friend.

The politic father will not then leave as a "legacy" to his daughters the injunction to conceal their wit, their learning, and even their good sense, in deference to the "*natural malignity*" with which most men regard every woman of a sound understanding and cultivated mind; nor will even the reputation of our great Milton himself secure him from the charge of a blasphemous presumption in making his Eve address to Adam the acknowledgement, "God is thy head, thou mine;" and in the assertion that the first human pair were formed, "He for God only, she for God in him."

To mark the effect of various codes, institutions, and states of manners, on the virtue and happiness of man, and the concomitant and proportional elevation or depression of woman in the scale of existence, is the general plan of

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this work. The historical and biographical authorities from which its facts and many of its sentiments are derived, will easily be recognised by the literary reader, who will know how to estimate my correctness and fidelity: for the use of other readers a few notes are subjoined.

With respect to arrangement, I may remark, that as a strictly chronological one was incompatible with the design of tracing the progress of human society not in one country alone, but in many, I have judged it most advisable to form to myself such an one as seemed best adapted to my own peculiar purposes, moral and poetical. We have no records of any early people in a ruder state than some savage tribes of the present day; and it would be in vain to seek amongst the ancient writers for such distinct and accurate delineations of the customs of Lotophagi and Troglodytes as we now possess of the life and manners of New Hollanders, American Indians and Hottentots. From these latter, therefore, my first descriptions have been borrowed. Of the tribes of ancient Germany, indeed, we possess an unrivaled portraiture; but in the age of Tacitus most of them had already risen far above the lowest stage of human society; and the progenitors of the noblest nations of modern Europe ought not to be classed with families of men whose name has perished from the earth, or wandering hordes of which we do not yet know whether or not they contain a living seed of future greatness.

In the way of explanation I have little more to add. I make no specific claims for my sex. Convinced that it is rather to the policy, or the generosity, of man, than to his justice that we ought to appeal, I have simply endeavoured to point out, that between the two partners of human life, not only the strongest family likeness, but the most complete identity of interest subsists: so that it is impossible for man to degrade his companion without degrading himself, or to elevate her without receiving a proportional accession of dignity and happiness. This is the chief "moral of my song;" on this point all my examples are brought to bear. I regard it as the Great Truth to the support of which my pen has devoted itself; and whoever shall rise from the perusal of these epistles deeply impressed with its importance, will afford me the success dearest to my heart,....the hope of having served, in some small degree, the best interests of the human race.

With respect to the Miscellaneous Poems, I have only to announce, that they comprise such pieces of mine contained in The Athenæum, and the earlier volumes of The Monthly Magazine, as appeared to me in any respect worthy of preservation; and that to these two others have been added.

EPISTLE I.

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE I.

Subject proposed the fame of man extended over every period of life that of woman transient as the beauty on which it is founded Man renders her a trifler, then despises her, and makes war upon the sex with Juvenal and Pope. A more impartial view of the subject to be attempted. Weakness of woman, and her consequent subserviency. General view of various states of society undertaken. Birth of Eve Angels prophesy the doom of the sex description of Adam before he sees her a joyless, hopeless, indolent creature. Meeting of Adam and Eve Change produced in both their mutual happiness and primary equality. Reflections. Conclusion.

EPISTLE I.

HEAR, O my friend, my Anna, nor disdain
My sober lyre and moralizing strain!
I sing the Fate of Woman:....Man to man
Adds praise, and glory lights his mortal span;
Creation's lord, he shines from youth to age,
The blooming warrior or the bearded sage;
But she, frail offspring of an April morn,

Epistles on Women

Poor helpless passenger from love to scorn,
While dimpled youth her sprightly cheek adorns
Blooms a sweet rose, a rose amid the thorns;
A few short hours, with faded charms to earth
She sinks, and leaves no vestige of her birth.
E'en while the youth, in love and rapture warm,
Sighs as he hangs upon her beauteous form,
Careless and cold he views the beauteous mind,
For virtue, bliss, eternity designed.
"Banish, my fair," he cries, "those studious looks;
Oh ! what should beauty learn from crabbed books?
Sweetly to speak and sweetly smile be thine;
Beware, nor change that dimple to a line !"

Well pleased she hears, vain triumph lights her eyes;
Well pleased, in prattle and in smiles complies;
But eyes, alas! grow dim, and roses fade,
And man contemns the trifler he has made.
The glass reversed by magic power of Spleen,
A wrinkled idiot now the fair is seen;
Then with the sex his headlong rage must cope,
And stab with Juvenal, or sting with Pope.
Be mine, while Truth with calm and artless grace
Lifts her clear mirror to the female face,
With steadier hand the pencil's task to guide,
And win a blush from Man's relenting pride.

No Amazon, in frowns and terror drest,
I poise the spear, or nod the threatening crest,
Defy the law, arraign the social plan,
Throw down the gauntlet in the face of man,
And, rashly bold, divided empire claim,
Unborrowed honours, and an equal's name:
No, Heaven forbid! I touch no sacred thing,
But bow to Right Divine in man and king;
Nature endows him with superior force,
Superior wisdom then I grant, of course;
For who gainsays the despot in his might,
Or when was ever weakness in the right ?
With passive reverence too I hail the law,
Formed to secure the strong, the weak to awe,
Impartial guardian of unerring sway,
Set up by man for woman to obey.
In vain we pout or argue, rail or chide,
He mocks our idle wrath and checks our pride;
Resign we then the club and lion's skin,
And be our sex content to knit and spin;
To bow inglorious to a master's rule,
And good and bad obey, and wise and fool;
Here a meek drudge, a listless captive there,
For gold now bartered, now as cheap as air;

Epistles on Women

Prize of the coward rich or lawless brave,
Scorned and caressed, a plaything and a slave,
Yet taught with spaniel soul to kiss the rod,
And worship man as delegate of God.

Ah! what is human life? a narrow span
Eked out with cares and pains to us and man;
A bloody scroll that vice and folly stain,
That blushing Nature blots with tears in vain,
That frowning Wisdom reads with tone severe,
While Pity shudders with averted ear.
Yet will I dare its varying modes to trace
Through many a distant tribe and vanished race;
The sketch perchance shall touch the ingenuous heart,
And hint its moral with a pleasing art.
Aid me, Historic Muse! unfold thy store
Of rich, of various, never-cloying lore;
Thence Fancy flies with new-born visions fraught,
There old Experience lends his hoards to Thought.

When slumbering Adam pressed the lonely earth,....
Unconscious parent of a wondrous birth,....
As forth to light the infant-woman sprung,
By pitying angels thus her doom was sung:
"Ah! fairest creature! born to changeful skies,
To bliss and agony, to smiles and sighs:
Beauty's frail child, to thee, though doomed to bear
By far the heavier half of human care,
Deceitful Nature's stepdame-love assigned
A form more fragile, and a tenderer mind;
More copious tears from Pity's briny springs,
And, trembling Sympathy! thy finest strings:
While ruder man she prompts, in pride of power,
To bruise, to slay, to ravage, to devour;
On prostrate weakness turn his gory steel,
And point the wounds not all thy tears can heal.
Poor victim! stern the mandate of thy birth,
Ah dote not, smile not, on the things of earth!
Subdue thyself; those rapturous flutterings still!
Armed with meek courage and a patient will,
With thoughtful eye pursue thy destined way,
Adore thy God, and hope a brighter day!"
In solemn notes thus flowed the prescient strain,....
But flowed on Eve's unpractised ear in vain;
In smiling wonder fixt, the new-born bride

[In original work, this and the following two lines connected by large right brace not represented here.]

Drank the sweet gale, the glowing landscape eyed,

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And murmured untried sounds, and gazed on every side.
With look benign the boding angels view
The fearless innocent, and wave adieu:
"Too well thy daughters shall our strain believe;
Too short thy dream of bliss, ill-fated Eve."

Prophetic spirits! that with ken sublime
Sweep the long windings of the flood of time,
Joyless and stern, your deep-toned numbers dwell
On rocks, on whirlpools, and the foaming swell,
But pass unmarked the skiffs that gaily glide
With songs and streamers down the dimpling tide:
Else rapturous notes had floated on the wind,
And hailed the stranger born to bless her kind,
To bear from heaven to earth the golden ties,
Bind willing man, and draw him to the skies.

See where the world's new master roams along,
Vainly intelligent and idly strong;
Mark his long listless step and torpid air,
His brow of densest gloom and fixt infantile stare!
Those sullen lips no mother's lips have prest,
Nor drawn, sweet labour! at her kindly breast;
No mother's voice has touched that slumbering ear,
Nor glistening eye beguiled him of a tear;
Love nursed not him with sweet endearing wiles,
Nor woman taught the sympathy of smiles;
Vacant and sad his rayless glances roll,
Nor hope nor joy illumines his darkling soul;
Ah! hapless world that such a wretch obeys!
Ah! joyless Adam, though a world he sways!

But see!....they meet,....they gaze,....the new-born pair;....
Mark now the wakening youth, the wondering fair:
Sure a new soul that moping idiot warms,
Dilates his stature, and his mien informs!
A brighter crimson tints his glowing cheek;
His broad eye kindles, and his glances speak.
So roll the clouds from some vast mountain's head,
Melt into mist, and down the valleys spread;
His crags and caves the bursting sunbeams light,
And burn and blaze upon his topmost height;
Broad in full day he lifts his towering crest,
And fire celestial sparkles from his breast.
Eve too, how changed!....No more with baby grace
The smile runs dimpling o'er her trackless face,
As painted meads invite her roving glance,
Or birds with liquid trill her ear intrance:
With downcast look she stands, abasht and meek,
Now pale, now rosy red, her varying cheek;
Now first her fluttering bosom heaves a sigh,

Epistles on Women

Now first a tear stands trembling in her eye;
For hark! the youth, as love and nature teach,
Breathes his full bosom, and breaks forth in *speech*;
His quivering lips the winged accents part,
And pierce, how swift! to Eve's unguarded heart.

Now rose complete the mighty Maker's plan,
And Eden opened in the heart of Man;
Kindled by Hope, by gentle Love refined,
Sweet converse cheered him, and a kindred mind;
Nor deem that He, beneficent and just,
In woman's hand who lodged this sacred trust,
For man alone her conscious soul informed,
For man alone her tenderer bosom warmed;
Denied to her the cup of joy to sip,
But bade her raise it to his greedy lip,
Poor instrument of bliss, and tool of ease,
Born but to serve, existing but to please:....
No;....hand in hand the happy creatures trod,
Alike the children of no partial God;
Equal they trod till want and guilt arose,
Till Savage blood was spilt, and man had foes:
Ah! days of happiness,....with tearful eye
I see you gleam, and fade, and hurry by:
Why should my strain the darkening theme pursue ?
Be husht, my plaintive lyre! my listening friend, adieu!

EPISTLES ON THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF WOMEN, IN VARIOUS AGES AND NATIONS.

EPISTLE II.

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE II.

The subject resumed. Sketch of savage life in general The sex oppressed by slaves and barbarians, but held in honour by the good and the brave. New Holland brutality of the inhabitants their courtship. North American Indians one of their women describes her wretched condition and destroys her female infant. Hardening effect of want on the human mind. Transition to Otaheite Licentious manners of those islanders Infanticide. Address to maternal affection exemplified in the hind fawns destroyed by the stag. Coast of Guinea a native sells his son for a slave agony of the mother her speech. Pastoral life Chaldee astronomers King David. Tartars removal of a Tartar camp their gaiety and happy mediocrity of condition relative to the gifts of nature yet no refined affection between the sexes female captives and women sent in tribute preferred to the natives No perfect Arcadia to be found on earth Caffres and Hottentots sprightly and harmless but all pastoral and hunting tribes deficient in mental cultivation hence the weaker sex held by all in some kind of subjection.

EPISTLE II.

ONCE more my Muse uplifts her drooping eye,
Checks the weak murmur and restrains the sigh;
Once more, my friend, incline thy candid ear,
And grace my numbers with a smile and tear.
Not mine the art in solemn garb to dress
The shadowy forms of *delicate distress*;
With baleful charms to call from Fancy's bower
Vain shapes of dread to haunt the lonely hour;
In feverish dreams to feed the pampered thought
With heavenly bliss....on earth how vainly sought!
Fan with rash breath the passions' smouldering fire,
Whet the keen wish, the thrilling hope inspire,
Woo the young soul its blossoms to unfold,
Then leave it chilled with more than wintry cold.

No;....rude of hand, with bolder lines I trace
The rugged features of a coarser race :
Fierce on thy view the savage world shall glare,
And all the ills of wretched woman there;
Unknown to her fond love's romantic glow,
The graceful throbs of sentimental woe,
The play of passions and the feelings' strife
That weave the web of finely–chequered life.
But thou possesst, unspoiled by tyrant art,
Of the large empire of a generous heart,
Thou wilt not scorn plain nature's rudest strain,
Nor *homely* misery claim thy sighs in vain.

Come then, my friend; my devious way pursue;
Pierce every clime, and search all ages through;
Stretch wide and wider yet thy liberal mind,
And grasp the sisterhood of womankind:
With mingling anger mark, and conscious pride,
The sex by whom exalted or decried;
Crusht by the savage, fettered by the slave,
But served, but honoured, by the good and brave.

With daring keel attend yon convict train
To new–found deserts of the Southern Main;
Beasts of strange gait there roam the trackless earth,
And monstrous compounds struggle into birth;
A younger world it seems, abortive, crude,
Where untaught Nature sports her fancies rude,
By slow gradations rears her infant plan,
And shows, half–humanized, the monster–man.
Mark the grim ruffian roll his crafty glance,
And crouching, slow, his tiger–step advance,
With brandisht club surprise his human prey,

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And drag the bleeding victim bride away,
While shouts triumphant wake the orgies dire,
And Rage and Terror trim the nuptial fire.

E'en such is Savage Man, of beasts the worst,
In want, in guilt, in lawless rapine nurst.
To the dumb tribes that plod their even life
Unbruised by tyranny, unvext by strife,
Instincts and appetites kind Nature gave,
These just supplying what the others crave;
The human brute the headlong passions rule,
While infant Reason flies the moody fool,
Hope, Fear, and Memory play their busy part
And mingle all their chaos in his heart;
Hence Vengeance fires, hence Envy's stings infest,
Hence Superstition goads his timorous breast.
O! not for him life's healthful current flows;
An equal stream that murmurs as it goes;
As rage and torpor hold alternate rule,
It roars a flood, or stagnates in a pool,
Whose sterile brink no buds of fragrance cheer
By love or pity nurtured with a tear.

What wonder then, the Western wilds among
Where the red Indian's hunter-bow is strung,
(Nature's tough son, whose adamant frame
No pleasures soften and no tortures tame)
If, fiercely pondering in her gloomy mind
The desperate ills that scowl on womankind,
The maddening mother gripes the infant slave,
And forces back the worthless life she gave?

"Swift, swift," she cries, "receive thy last release;
Die, little wretch; die once and be at peace!
Why shouldst thou live, in toil, and pain, and strife,
To curse the names of mother and of wife?
To see at large thy lordly master roam,
The beasts his portion and the woods his home,
Whilst thou, infirm, the sheltering hut must seek,
Poorly dependent, timorously weak,
There hush thy babe, with patient love carest,
And tearful clasp him to thy milkless breast
Hungry and faint, while feasting on his way
Thy reckless hunter wastes the jocund day?
Or, harder task, his rapid courses share,
With patient back the galling burden bear,
While he treads light, and smacks the knotted thong,
And goads with taunts his staggering troop along?
Enough;... 'tis love, dear babe, that stops thy breath;
'Tis mercy lulls thee to the sleep of death:
Ah! would for me, by like indulgent doom,

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A mother's hand had raised the early tomb!
O'er these poor bones the moons had rolled in vain,
And brought nor stripes nor famine, toil nor pain;
I had not sought in agony the wild,
Nor, wretched, frantic mother! killed my child."
Want hardens man; by fierce extremes the smart
Inflames and chills and indurates his heart,
Arms his relentless hand with brutal force,
And drives o'er female necks his furious course.

Not such his mind where Nature, partial queen,
With lavish plenty heaps the bounteous scene;
In laughing isles with broad bananas crowned,
Where tufted cocoas shade the flowery ground;
Here, here at least, where dancing seasons shed
Unfading garlands on his sleeping head,
Love melts to love, and man's ingenuous mind
Feels nature's kindness prompt him to be kind;
He acts no tyranny, he knows no strife,
One harmless holiday his easy life.
Ah cheated hopes!....see Lawless Love invade
The withering scene, and poison every shade;
Embruted nations couch beneath his yoke,
And infant gore on his dire altars smoke!
Lost Otaheite!....Breathe one parting sigh,
Then swift, my friend, we turn the bashful eye.

Thrice holy Power, whose fostering, bland embrace
Shields the frail scions of each transient race,
To whom fair Nature trusts the teeming birth
That fills the air, that crowds the peopled earth,
Maternal Love! thy watchful glances roll
From zone to zone, from pole to distant pole;
Cheer the long patience of the brooding hen,
Soothe the she-fox that trembles in her den,
'Mid Greenland ice-caves warm the female bear,
And rouse the tigress from her sultry lair.
At thy command, what zeal, what ardour, fires
The softer sex! a mightier soul inspires:....
Lost to themselves, our melting eyes behold
Prudent, the simple, and the timid, bold.
All own thy sway, save where, on Simoom wing
Triumphant sailing o'er the blasted spring,
(Whether in Otaheitan groves accurst,
Or Europe's polisht scenes the fiend be nurst)
Unhallowed Love bids Nature's self depart,
And makes a desert of the female heart.
But O! how oft, their tender bosoms torn
By countless shafts, thy noblest votaries mourn!
See the soft hind forsake the dewy lawns
To shroud in thicket-shades her tender fawns;

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Fearless for them confront the growling foe,
And aim with hoof and head the desperate blow
Freely for them with new-born courage face
The howling horrors of the deathful chase:
Ah! fond in vain, see fired by furious heat
The jealous stag invade her soft retreat,
Wanton in rage her pleading anguish scorn,
And gore his offspring with relentless horn.

Hark to that shriek! from Afric's palmy shore
The yell rolls mingling with the billows' roar:
Groveling in dust the frantic mother lies;....
"My son, my son, O spare my son!" she cries:
"Sell not thy child ! Yon dreary ocean crost,
To thee, to me, to all forever lost,
The white man's slave, no swift-returning oar
Shall homeward urge the wretched captive more,
No tidings reach:....Who then with kindly care
Shall tend our age, and leafy beds prepare?
Who climb for us the cocoa's scaly side,
Or drain the juicy palm?....who skim the tide,
Or bold in woods with pointed javelin roam,
And bear to us the savoury booty home?
Save thine own flesh!....we must not, will not part....
O save this bleeding, bursting, mother's heart!"

Ah fruitless agony! ah slighted prayer!
That bids the husband and the father, spare!
On to the mart the sable tyrant drives
His flocks of children and his herds of wives:
For toys, for drams, their kindred blood is sold,
And broken female hearts are paid with gold;
Exulting Avarice gripes his struggling prize,
The savage tenders, and the christian....*buys* .

Shrinkst thou, my startled friend, with feeling tear,
From tints too lively, numbers too sincere?
Swift wouldst thou fly to some unspotted scene
Where love and nature rule the blue serene?
Hail, Pastoral Life; to thy calm scenes belong
The lore of sages and the poet's song;
Nurse of rude man, in whose soft lap reclined,

[In original work, this and following two lines connected by large right brace not represented here.]

Art, science, dawn upon his wakening mind,
And passion's tender strains, and sentiment refined!

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Where cloudless heavens o'erarch Chaldea's plain,
Stretched by his nightly flock, the vacant swain,
His upturned gaze as sportful fancy warmed,
With ready crook the sand-drawn monsters formed;
Thence learn'd, Astronomy, thy studious eye,
To track yon orbs, to sweep yon pathless sky.
While still young David roamed the pastoral wild,
The harp, the song, his ardent soul beguiled,
And now to heaven upsoared the ethereal flame,
Now blazed some humble charmer's rustic fame.
E'en now, by Freedom led, see gay Content
Stoop from above, to shepherd-wanderers sent;
See o'er the green expanse of pathless plain
The sunburnt Tartars urge the tented wain;
How gay the living prospect! far and wide
Spread flocks and herds, and shouting herdsmen ride;
And hark! from youths and maids, a mingled throng,
How full, how joyous, bursts the choral song!

Free are these tribes and blest; a churlish soil
They till not, bowed by tyranny and toil;
Nor troll the deep for life's precarious stay;
Nor, beastlike, roam the tangled woods for prey;
Their lot, with sober kindness, gives to share
Labour with plenty, and with freedom, care:
Yet seek not here the boon, all boons above,
The generous intercourse of equal love;
A homely drudge, the Tartar matron knows
No eye that kindles and no heart that glows;
For foreign charms the faithless husband burns,
And clasps in loathed embrace, which fear returns,
The captive wife or tributary maid
By conquest snatched, or lawless terror paid.

No!....vain the search,....of warm poetic birth,
Arcadian blossoms scorn the fields of earth;
No lovelorn swains, to tender griefs a prey,
Sigh, sing, and languish through the livelong day;
No rapturous husband and enamoured wife,
To live and love their only care in life,
With crook and scrip on flowery banks reclined
Breathe the warm heart and share the answering mind:
The sprightly Caffre o'er the moonlight meads
In jovial dance his dusky partner leads,
And vacant Hottentots, short labour done,
Toy, pipe, and carol, in the evening sun;
But the high promptings of the conscious soul
The weak that elevate, the strong control,
Respect, decorum, friendship, ties that bind
To woman's form the homage of the mind,
Heaven's nobler gifts, to riper ages lent,

Disdain the hunter's cave, the shepherd's tent,
And *lawless* man, or cold, or fierce, or rude,
Proves every mode of female servitude.

**EPISTLES
ON THE
CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF WOMEN,
IN
VARIOUS AGES AND NATIONS.**

EPISTLE III.

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE III.

Dawn of civilization, freedom, and the virtues. Troy taken captives Andromache. Spartans character of their women remarks. Athens Phryne Aspasia degradation of the married women. Rome present degraded state of both sexes women in a condition approaching freedom, follow and imitate the course of the men with whom they are connected, as his shadow, the traveller. Ancient Rome its female deities Sabine women mother and wife of Coriolanus. Cornelia. Portia. Arria. Corruption of manners in Rome its conquest by the barbarians. Another scene of virtue and glory unfolded by the promulgation of christianity its favourable effect on the condition of women their zeal in its defence equal to that of men Female martyrs. Marriage rendered indissoluble belief of a reunion in a future state. Rise of superstition monastic institutions. Convent. Saints Theresa, Clara, and Catharine of Siena. Conclusion.

EPISTLE III.

YE heaven-taught bards, who first for human woe
Bade human tears to melting numbers flow;
Ye godlike sages, who with plastic hand
Moulded rude man, and arts and cities planned;
Ye holy patriots, whose protecting name

[In original work, this and following two lines connected by large right brace not represented here.]

Still lives, and issuing from the trump of fame
Fans sacred Freedom's everlasting flame,
All hail!....by you sublimed, the expanding heart
First learned the bliss its blessings to impart;
The fierce barbarian checked his headlong course,
And bent to Wisdom's hand his yielded force;
Each loftier Virtue bowed to meet the brave,
And clasped, a freeman, whom she scorned, a slave;
And smiling round, the daughter, mother, wife,
Fed the dear charities of social life.

Epistles on Women

Bright as the welcome orb that wakes to chase
The polar Night from Earth's reviving face....
(Grim Power that shakes the meteor from his hair,
While shaggy prowlers in the fitful glare
Roam with rude yells along the mountains drear,
Ravens and yet undisciplined to fear)
Behold, my friend, with pleased and anxious gaze
Fair Reason's day—star light her gradual blaze;
Pant up the steepness of her high career,
And win by toil the empire of the sphere;
While with slow hand the ungenial shades withdrawn,
Vapours and tempests struggle with the dawn.

Mark the last hour of Ilium,....work divine!
Sunk her proud towers, and sunk each holy shrine:
Slaughter has done his work: the manly brave
Sighed as they fell, despairing of a grave.
Yet, weep not them! behold yon captive train;
Houseless and bound they strew the smoking plain;
Matrons and maids, gray sires and babes are there,
Shrill wails and frantic screams, deep groans and dumb despair.
Hark! 'tis the lost Andromache that shrieks,
Her loose locks rent, and bruised her bleeding cheeks:
Home the proud victor bears his beauteous prize;
For death, for death she sues with fruitless cries.
Ah ! might she wait that kind, that last release,
And drain the dregs of bitterness in peace!
But no;....she bears the vengeful brand of strife,
Fires the loose rover, stings the jealous wife
What scorn, what rage, the wretched captive waits,
Envied and hated for the love she hates!
The rest, a mingled, nameless, feeble throng,
The savage squadrons drive with taunts along,
Destined to whirl with pain the slavish mill;
Bear ponderous logs, and sparkling goblets fill
To hostile Gods; explore the distant spring,
And faint with heat the cooling burthen bring;
In housewife tasks the midnight hours employ,
And lave those feet that spurned the dust of Troy.

These were the days, while yet the scourge and chain
Quivered and clanked in wild War's demon train,
When Honour first his calm firm phalanx ranged;
Fury to Valour, men to heroes changed:
And mark! emerging from the gulf of night,
What towering phantom strikes our wondering sight?
Fierce with strange joy she stands, the battle won,
Elate and tearless o'er her slaughtered son.
"He died for Sparta, died unknown to fear,
His wounds all honest, and his shield his bier;
And shall I weep?" Stern daughters of the brave,

Epistles on Women

Thus maids and matrons hailed the Spartan's grave;
By turns they caught, they lit, the hero-flame,
And scorned the Woman's for the Patriot's name;
Unmoved, unconquered, bowed to fate's decree,
And taught in chains the lesson....to be free.
Souls of gigantic mould, they fill our gaze
With pigmy wonder and despairing praise:....
Thus when, 'mid western wilds, the delver's toil
Reared the huge mammoth from the quaking soil,
Columbia's swains in mute amazement eyed
And heaved the monstrous frame from side to side;
Saw bones on bones in mouldering ruin lie,
And owned the relics of a world gone by:....
Yet self-same clay our limbs of frailty formed,
And hearts like ours those dreadless bosoms warmed;
But war, and blood, and Danger's gorgon face,
Froze into stone the unconquerable race.

Graced by the sword, the chisel, and the pen,
Athens! illustrious seat of far-famed men,
Receive my homage! Hark! what shouts arise
As Phryne gilds the pomp of sacrifice!
To Beauty's Queen the graceful dance they twine,
Trill the warm hymn, and dress the flowery shrine;
Priestess of love she fills the eager gaze,
And fires and shares the worship that she pays.
Haste, sculptor, haste! that form, that heavenly face
Catch ere they fade, and fix the mortal grace;
Phryne in gold shall deck the sacred fane,
And Pallas' virgin image frown in vain.
Rise, bright Aspasia, too! thy tainted name
Sails down secure through infamy to fame;
Statesmen and bards and heroes bend the knee,
Nor blushes Socrates to learn of thee.
Thy wives, proud Athens! fettered and debased,
Listlessly duteous, negatively chaste,
O vapid summary of a slavish lot!
They sew and spin, they die and are forgot.
Cease, headlong Muse! resign the dangerous theme,
Perish the glory that defies esteem!
Inspire thy trump at Virtue's call alone,
And blush to blazon whom She scorns to own.

Mark where seven hills uprear yon stately scene,
And reedy Tiber lingering winds between:
Ah mournful view! ah check to human pride!
There Glory's ghost and Empire's phantom glide:
Shrunk art thou, mighty Rome; the ivy crawls,
The vineyard flaunts, within thy spacious walls;
Still, still, Destruction plies his iron mace,
And fanes and arches totter to their base:

Epistles on Women

Thy sons...O traitors to their fathers' fame!
O last of men, and Romans but in name!
See where they creep with still and listless tread,
While cowls, not helmets, veil the inglorious head.
If then, sad partner of her country's shame,
To nobler promptings deaf, the Latian dame
Nor honour's law nor nuptial faith can bind,
Vagrant and light of eye, of air, of mind,....
Whom now a vile gallant's obsequious cares
Engage, now mass, processions, penance, prayers,....
Think not 'twas always thus:.... what generous view,
What noble aim that noble men pursue,
Has never woman shared? As o'er the plain
The sun-drawn shadow tracks the wandering swain,
Treads in his footsteps, counterfeits his gait,
Erect or stooping, eager or sedate;
Courses before, behind, in mimic race,
Turns as he turns, and hunts him pace by pace;....
Thus, to the sex when milder laws ordain
A lighter fetter and a longer chain,
Since freedom, fame, and lettered life began,
Has faithful woman tracked the course of man.
Strains his firm step for Glory's dazzling height,
Panting she follows with a proud delight;
Led by the sage, with pausing foot she roves
By classic fountains and religious groves;
In Pleasure's path if strays her treacherous guide,
By fate compelled, she deviates at his side,....
Yet seeks with tardier tread the downward way,
Averted eyes, and timorous, faint delay.
In mystic fable thus, together trod
The dire Bellona and the Warrior God;
The golden Archer and chaste Huntress' queen
With deaths alternate strewed the sickening scene;
And Jove-born Pallas shared the Thunderer's state,
The shield of horror and the nod of fate.

The indignant Muse from yon polluted ground
Shall chase the vampire forms that flit around;
Restore the scene with one commanding glance;
Awake old Rome, and bid her shades advance:
A sad but glorious pageant!....First are borne
Her sculptured deities, and seem to mourn;
Dian and Vesta, powers of awful mien,
And in her purer garb the Paphian Queen;
Here smiles the Appeaser of the angry spouse,
There *distaffed* Pallas knits her thoughtful brows;
Imperial Juno rears her head on high,
Unspotted guardian of the nuptial tie.
See then advance with wild disordered charms
The matron Sabines....prize of lawless arms....

Epistles on Women

Such as they rushed athwart the clanging fight,
Bold in their fears and strong in nature's right:
Each lifts her babe; the babe, 'mid vengeful strife,
Lisps to his grandsire for his father's life;
The vanquish't grandsire clasps the blooming boy;
Rage sinks in tears, in smiles, in shouting joy;
Peace joins their hands, Love mingles race with race,
And Woman triumphs in the wide embrace.

I see her rise, the chaste polluted fair,
And claim the death of honour in despair.
Rome's Saviour wakes"By that ennobled shade,
By this pure blood, and by this reeking blade,
Vengeance I swear!"Heaven blessed the generous rage
That lit the splendours of a brightening age;
The patriot spark from dying honour springs,
And female virtue buys....the flight of Kings.

And who are they that lead yon suppliant train?
Mother and wife, when Latium's fertile plain
Fierce Volscians trod, the rebel's armed hate
They soothed, and soothing saved the tottering state:
Rome crowned the sex....a high and graceful meed....
And bade yon temple consecrate the deed.

Hail! who thy sons to Glory's altar led,
And boldly called her lightnings on their head:
What though they fell? the pure ethereal flame.
Touched but the life, and spared the nobler fame.
Lift thy proud head, and proudly tell their tale;
Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, hail!

See there the ghost of noble Portia glide,
Cato to lead, and Brutus at her side!
Souls have no sex; sublimed by Virtue's lore
Alike they scorn the earth and try to soar;
Buoyant alike on daring wing they rise
As Emulation nerves them for the skies.
See Pætus' wife, by strong affection manned,
Taste the sharp steel and give it to his hand:
But what avails? On Rome's exhausted soil
Nor patriots' fattening blood, nor heroes' toil,
One plant, one stem, of generous growth may rear
To grace the dark December of her year.
Whelmed in the flood of vice, one putrid heap,
Rank, sex, age, race, are hurried to the deep;
Low-bending sycophant and upstart knave,
Athlete and mime, loose dame and minion slave.
Wild in the frightened rear the crowds recoil,
Urged by the barbarous brood of war and spoil;
Nearer and nearer yet, with harpy rush

Epistles on Women

They sweep; they pounce, they violate, they crush;
Flap their triumphant wings o'er grovelling Rome,
And roost in Glory's desolated home.
Scared at the portent, see the phantom train
Veil their wreathed brows; then, rising in disdain,
With thunders borne upon the howling wind,
Leave Rome and all her infamy behind.

Is frightened Virtue then for ever fled
To veil in heaven her scorned and houseless head,
While Vice and Misery lord it here below
O'er God's waste scene of bliss and beauty? No!
Virtue, pure essence mingled with the whole,
Its subtle, viewless, all-inspiring soul,....
Virtue, the mental world's pervading fire,
Unquenched remains, or nature must expire.
Now fresh and strong in renovated rays
She flings on eastern hills the glorious blaze;
Now, wrapt in richer lustre, slopes her beams
Tranquil and sweet along the western streams;
Now, with faint twinkling of a single star,
She greets the guideless pilgrim from afar;
And red with anger now, a dreadful form,
She glares in lightning through the howling storm.

From Juda's rocks the sacred light expands,
And beams and broadens into distant lands;
Heaven's thunder speaks, the mighty bolt is hurled;
Pride, bite the dust! and quake, thou guilty world!
But, O ye weak, beneath a master's rod
Trembling and prostrate, own a helping God!
Ardent in faith, through bonds and toil and loss
Bear the glad tidings, triumph in the cross!
Away with woman's fears! proud man shall own
As proud a mate on Virtue's loftiest throne;
On to the death in joy....for Jesus' sake
Writhed on the rack, or blackening at the stake,
Scorn the vain splendours of the world below,
And soar to bliss that only martyrs know!

Now comrades, equals, in the toilsome strife,
Partners of glory and coheirs of life,
See sex to sex with port sublimer turn,
And steadier flames and holier ardours burn;
At God's pure altar pledged, the nuptial band
Turns to a lifelong vow, and dreads no severing hand;
E'en death, they deem, (once sped the second blow
That social lays the sad survivor low,
Shrouds the dissolving forms in kindred gloom,
Mingles in dust and marries in the tomb,)
With stronger, purer, closer ties shall bind

Epistles on Women

The blest communion of the immortal mind,
Free the winged soul to larger bliss above,
And ope the heaven of everlasting love.
O faith, O hope divine! ordained to flow
A stream of comfort through the vales of woe!
Rise, mystic dove! explore on venturous wing
The wastes of winter and the wilds of spring;
Bear back thine olive from the emerging strand,
Restore the virtues, and redeem the land:
Rebel no more, again repentant man
Shall own, shall bless, the mighty Maker's plan;
Heaven's warmest beam salute his second birth,
And one wide Eden round the peopled earth.
Vain hope! the wretch, or slave or tyrant born,
Who looked with terror up, or down with scorn,
Untaught to hope in that all-seeing mind
Unbounded love with boundless power combined,
Self-judged, self-doomed, a timorous outcast trod,
Nor dared to claim a father in his God:
Hence, Superstition, spleenful, doting, blind,
Thy mystic horrors shake his palsied mind;
Hence, as thy baleful spells in misty gloom
Wrap the fair earth and dim her orient bloom,
'Wildered, the maniac eyes a fancied waste,
And starves 'mid banquets that he dares not taste.
The yawning cloister shows its living grave,
Receives the trembler, and confirms him....slave.
And thee, O woman, formed with smiling mien
To temper man, and gild the social scene,....
Bid home-born blessings, home-born virtues rise,
And light the sunbeam in a husband's eyes,....
Thy dearest bliss the sound of infant mirth,
His heart thy chief inheritance on earth,....
Thee too, as fades around heaven's blessed light,
And age to age rolls on a darker night,
With steely gripe the exulting hag invades,
And drags relentless to her sullen shades:
O hear the sighs that break the sluggish air

[In original work, this and following two lines connected by large right brace not represented here.]

Mixt with the convent hymn, the convent prayer,
The languid lip-devotion of despair!
But ne'er could cloister rule or midnight bell,
Penance, or fast, in dank and lonesome cell,
Break the mind's spring, or stupefy to rest
The master-passion of an ardent breast.
In that dim cell the rapt Theresa lies
Ingulft and lost in speechless ecstasies;

Epistles on Women

All-powerful Love has lit the holy flame,
The fewel altered, but the fire the same.

Her fearful nuns see dark-browed Clara school,
And tight and tighter strain her rigid rule:
Claims not the Thirst of Sway his lion's part
E'en in that pale ascetic's bloodless heart?

Hail, lofty Catharine, visionary maid !
Carest by princes, by a pope obeyed;
Nor blush to own, though dead to all below,
A brave ambition and a patriot glow.

But cease! of amorous worship, bigot pride,
Distorted virtue, talent misapplied,
No more:....with anxious heart and straining mind
Long have I scanned the annals of the kind;
Here let me pause, o'erwearied and opprest;
Thou, my calm friend, thou moralize the rest.

EPISTLES ON THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF WOMEN, VARIOUS AGES AND NATIONS.

EPISTLE IV.

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE IV.

Recurrence to the subject many varieties of female condition still unnoticed ancient German women inhabitants of the Haram Hindoo widow fascinating French woman English mother. Survey of a Turkish haram mean and childish character of the women, haughty yet contemptible one of the men fatal effects of polygamy Man cannot degrade the female sex without degrading the whole race. Ancient Germans their women free and honoured hence the valour of the men, the virtue of both sexes, the success of their resistance to Rome. Chivalry personified and depicted his valour his devotion to the ladies, his pure and romantic love his lady described as endowed with all virtues and graces, but found to be a visionary being, only existing in the Fairy land of Spenser contrasted by the giddy and unprincipled women introduced into the French court by Francis I. Gallantry, the parasite and treacherous corruptor of the sex Man always suffers by degrading woman public freedom dependent on domestic virtue. Switzerland virtuous when first made free virtuous still, though opprest by France Swiss women died fighting for their country. France not pure enough for freedom, yet had some heroines Cordé Roland. Transition to England address to the author's female companions survey of its female characters from the earliest times. Boadicea Ethelfleda. Revival of letters gives consequence to women Sir Thomas More and his daughter Lady Jane Grey Queen Elizabeth Mrs. Hutchinson Lady Russell. Enumeration concluded Exhortation to Englishmen to look with favour on the mental improvement of females to English women to improve and principle their minds, and by their merit induce the men to treat them as friends. Valediction.

EPISTLE IV.

FAIN would I greet my gentle friend again;
 Yet how renew, or where conclude, the strain?
 Still as I gaze what mingled throngs appear!
 What varying accents rush upon my ear!
 Stern, awful, chaste, in savage freedom bred,
 Here, German matrons shout o'er Varus dead;
 There, languid beauties, 'mid a haram's gloom,
 In jealous bickerings pine away their bloom;
 Here, well-dissembling, with a decent pride,
 The victim-widow laves in Ganges' tide,
 Clasps the loathed corse, invites the dreaded flame,
 And dies in anguish, not to live with shame.
 I turn, and meet the animated glance
 Shot by the dames of gay seductive France;
 Then melting catch the gaze, so fond, so mild,
 Some English mother bends upon her child.
 A thought, a look, a line, the meanest ask
 To swell my growing tale, and lengthen out my task.

A glorious task! were mine the godlike power,
 By Genius snatched in some propitious hour,
 To bid the fleeting airy forms be still,
 Or move, or change, obedient to my will;
 Then fix the groupe, and pour in living light
 Its vivid picture on the enraptured sight,
 And bid it speak, in forceful tones and clear,
 To Truth and Feeling just, to Fancy dear.
 It may not be:....my fainter sketch shall glide
 Like dim reflections on an evening tide;
 My task like hers, the soft Corinthian maid,
 To trace a tintless shadow of a shade!
 But to *that* shade fond fancy would supply
 The bloom, the grace, the all-expressive eye;
 Still would she gaze, till swam her cheated sight,
 And the true lover blessed her wild delight.
 Me such bright dreams delude not:....thoughtful, cold,
 The fading lines I languidly behold;
 But thou, my friend, assert the generous part,
 O praise, O foster, with a partial heart!
 So shall the power my happier pencil guide,
 And Friendship grant me what the Muse denied.

Come, pierce with me the Haram's jealous walls:
 I see, I see, the soul-degraded thralls!
 With childlike smile, one glittering dame surveys
 Her splendid *caftan* and her diamonds' blaze;
 One spreads the *henna* ; one with sable dye
 Wakes the dim lustre of her languid eye;

Epistles on Women

Some seek the bath:.... O life, are these thy joys ?
These all thy cares ? How the dull prospect cloy!
Yet turn not from the view; deign first to scan
That lordly thing, the Asiatic Man.
O speaking lesson! marked with grateful awe;
Self is his God, his wildest will is law;
Him Beauty serves, all emulous to bless;
Yet where his envied, dear-bought happiness?
'Tis his,....each proud, each manly virtue wreckt,
Truth, science, freedom lost in base neglect,....
A pampered slave, in lazy state to sit
Shut from the sun of reason and of wit,
By senses cloyed of sensual bliss bereft,
And a dull drug his only refuge left.
One equal sole companion, skilled to blend
In one dear name the mistress and the friend,
Was Nature's boon; but when insatiate Man
Grasps wider joys, and scorns her sacred plan,
Farewell life's loveliest charm, farewell the glow
Affection casts upon the scene below;
Farewell each finer art, each softer grace,
All that adorns and all that lifts the race!
Woman no more, a deed-inspiring mate,
Shall fan the kindling glories of the state;
Suspicion's evil eye, with dire control,
Blights all the fairest blossoms of her soul,
And bids each rankling thorn, each poisonous weed,
A hostile crop, by righteous doom succeed.
Man, stamp the moral on thy haughty mind:
Degrade the sex, and thou degrad'st the kind!

Mark the bold contrast! hail, my friend, with me
The generous son of German liberty:
Barbarian? Yes: To spread the winged sail
Of venturous Commerce to the speeding gale,
To urge his ploughshare o'er the conquered soil,
And earn from Culture's hand the meed of toil,
As yet he knew not; nurst amid alarms,
His care was freedom, his rude trade was arms:
But this he knew; to woman's feeling heart
Its best its dearest tribute to impart;
Not the cheap falsehoods of a flattering strain,
Not idle gauds, vain incense to the vain;
But such high fellowship, such honoured life
As throws a glory round the exulting wife,
Seats her revered, sublime, on Virtue's throne,
Judge of his honour, guardian of her own.
Dear was to him the birthright of the free;
More welcome death than her captivity;
And *hence* his valour's rude but vigorous stroke
Stunned Rome, and snapped her vainly-fitted yoke;

Epistles on Women

(So swells Araxes foaming in his pride,
So wrecks the insulting Spanner of his tide;)
And still he lives along the warning page
Of piercing Tacitus:...Prophetic Sage!
With awe, with envy, with a patriot dread,
He saw the Western Genius lift his head;
Marked his large limbs to bracing hardship bared,
His stubborn mind for worst extremes prepared;
Marked the chaste virtues of his frugal home,
And read the destinies of stooping Rome.

From Elbe and Weser, or some unknown North
Derived, what bold yet courteous form rides forth
To view? At all points armed, with lance in rest,
Gilded his spurs, and plumed his haughty crest;
One steel-clad arm uprears a silver shield,
"Such is my faith!" upon its burnisht field
The motto quaint; its fond device, a heart
That burns and bleeds with Cupid's fiery dart.
Claspt to his mailed breast he bears a glove,
Dear parting token of his lady-love:
At speed he comes; he 'lights, he bends the knee
Proud where she sits....It is, 'tis Chivalry!.....
Love's gallant martyr! Honour's generous child!
Thy bright extravagance, thy darings wild,
O who may think by pedant rules to try
That owns a woman's heart, a poet's eye;
An eye by Glory's dazzling glance controled,
A coward heart that dotes upon the bold?
How dear the contrast! he, whose haughty brow
Scowls on the pride of man, nor deigns to bow;
Stung by a look, who challenges the strife
Where angry comrades stake the bauble, life;
Humble and suppliant bows her scorn to meet,
And soothes himself to meekness at her feet:
Then, at a word, again her own true knight
Tilts for her fame, or combats in her right.

Courts, tourneys, camps, high dames, a dazzling train,
A masque of glory, danced before his brain;
He lived in trance, and so the enchantment wrought
That 'mid the high illusions of his thought
Passion grew worship, and his heart a shrine
Where Beauty reigned all awful and divine;
Where steadfast, pure, Love burned a sacred flame;
Long years it burned, unquenchably the same,
Fed but on looks, and fanned with suppliant breath,
To her whose smile was life, whose frown was death.
But she, his Goddess; how may fancy trace
Her bright perfections and amazing grace?
Methinks I see a sweet and holy band,

Epistles on Women

A wreath of hovering Virtues, hand in hand
The new Pandora bless, and on her head
In one rich dower their mingled treasury shed.
Majestic Honour, first, with matron care
Forms her high gait, and dignifies her air;
But chasing Pride, sweet Modesty the while
On her cheek blushes, Cheerfulness her smile
Blends with the blush, and innocently free
She learns the look, the tone, of Courtesy.
A thousand Graces in harmonious play
Throned in her eyes assert alternate sway;
With frank Benevolence they glance around,
Or dewed by Pity bend upon the ground,
Now seek the skies, by soaring Faith inspired,
Now beam with pure Serenity retired.

But say, this paragon, this matchless fair,
Trode she this care-crazed earth? No;....born of air,
A flitting dream, a rainbow of the mind,
The tempting glory leaves my grasp behind;
Formed for no rugged clime, no barbarous age,
She blooms in Fairy land the grace of Spenser's page.

Not such the dames with revelry and sport
Who tripped the wanton maze of Gallia's court,
By love and Francis lured in evil hour
From hearths domestic and the sheltering bower.
New to the discipline of good and ill,
Unformed of manners, impotent of will,
What thirst of empire seized the giddy train!
Man bowed obsequious, and deferred the rein;
(So Mars on Venus smiled in courts above,
So crouched in all the loyalty of love,)
Ah! feigned humility to scorn allied,
That stoops to conquer, flatters to deride!
Learn, thoughtless woman, learn his arts to scan,
And dread that fearful portent....kneeling Man!
Dread the gay form whom now, her favourite birth,
Some smiling mischief trusts upon the earth
Veiled in a scented cloud;....it melts, and see
Come dancing forth the phantom Gallantry.
His are the lowly bow, the adoring air,
The attentive eye that dwells upon the fair;
His the soft tone to grace a tender tale,
And his the flattering sighs that more prevail;
His the whole art of love:...but all is art,
For kindly Nature never warmed his heart;
No hardy knight with wrong-redressing brand
He roams on Honour's pilgrimage the land;
No awful champion vowed to Virtue's aid
He flings his buckler o'er the trembling maid;

Epistles on Women

No high enthusiast to his peerless love
He plights pure vows and registered above;.....
Canker of Innocence! he lives at ease,
His only care his wanton self to please:
Hymen's dear tie, for him a sordid league
Knit by Ambition, Avarice, or Intrigue,
He scorns, he tramples, and insulting bears
To other shrines his incense and his prayers;
There, skilled in perfidy, he hangs to view
A hundred fopperies Passion never knew....
Liveries that love by telegraph convey,
Lines traced in blood, and quaint acrostic lay....
Poor trifles all;...but trifles poor as these
Cheat the cold heart, the vagrant fancy seize,
From sober love, from faithful duty wean,
And sell to fear and sin the fancied queen.

Thus woman sinks, withdrawn each thin pretence,
The dupe of Vanity, the slave of Sense:
The light seducer, with brief rapture fraught,
Smiles on her prostrate dignity of thought,
And boasts his deeper wiles, his keener art,
Lord of the fond, confiding, female heart.
Vain boast, as profligate! he too shall find,
The sex dishonoured, Honour scorns the kind;
For never yet with cap and oaken crown,
Symbol of joy and charter of renown,
Has man-exalting Freedom deigned to grace

[In original work, this and following two lines connected by large right brace not represented here.]

A spurious rabble and adulterous race,
Steeped in corruption, destined to be base.
Pure was the heart of Switzerland, when Tell
Aimed the avenging shaft, and cried "Rebel!"
Pure was the self-devoted blood that dyed
The mangled breast of her bold Winkelreid;
Pure were the mountain homes whence foaming out
The patriot-torrent rushed, and gave the rout,
Where rose the pile of bones to tell mankind
"This monument the Spoiler left behind."
Nor Virtue yet had fled her rock-built bower
When Gaul's intruding Demon, drunk with power,
Burst on that paradise: appalled he found
A Spartan fortitude embattled round;
Rapt by a fine despair, the maid, the wife,
Charged by their heroes' side and fired the strife....
The strife victorious;....but opprest, betrayed,
Fell the brave patriot few....no friend to aid.

Epistles on Women

Then, spotless victims of a doom severe,
They died upon their murdered country's bier;
Died not in vain,....to stamp on that proud name
The weight of vengeance and the curse of shame.
Plant thy bright eagles o'er each prostrate realm,
Audacious France! and headlong from his helm
Each dozing steersman dash,....but hope not thou,
Amid the plundered baubles of thy brow,
To twine a wreath from Freedom's sacred tree:
It blooms with virtue, but it dies with thee.

Once we had hope. When Tyranny and Wrong
Had stung thy patient bosom deep and long,
To vengeance roused, a generous short-lived red
Flushed o'er thy cheek, and all the wanton fled:
And failed thy daughters then? No, by thy hand,
Devoted brave Cordé! No, pure Roland!
No, by thy high "Appeal," thy parting breath,
Thy sage's fortitude, thy patriot's death!

But blest the land where ages glide away,
And not a single heroine starts to day:
'Tis angry skies must nurse that daring form,
As billows rock the Petrel of the Storm:
Domestic virtue, femininely frail,
Courts the pure azure and the summer gale,
A brooding Halcyon, on her island-nest
Lulled on old Neptune's pleased pacific breast.
Such lot is ours, So rests our rock-bound isle,
A soft asylum reared in ocean's smile.
Thither fond Fancy flies, with busy care
Decks forth the scene, and paints it fresh and fair;
Soft Memory comes, adds every touching grace,
The form familiar, and the well-known face;
Quick beats my heart, mine eyes with rapture stream,
And truth and daylight burst upon my dream.

Rapt while I stand, my weary wanderings past,
Like some poor exile, welcomed home at last,
You, you I hail, dear playmates, who with me
Led the blind game, or wove the dance of glee;
(Fond mothers now, who watch with tenderer joy
Your tottering girl, or prompt your lisping boy;)
And rapt, inspired, beyond the trick of art,
Trace English manners with an English heart.
But not alone one fleeting speck of time
Shall flash in my contemporary rhyme;
Our sex's honour, and our country's weal,
Past or to come, this patriot breast must feel;
O'er the long lapse of years these eyes must roll,
And all its mazes agitate my soul:

Epistles on Women

For who that marks along the valley gleam
The silver waves of some majestic stream,
Served by a hundred rills, that winds along
Pride of the land and theme of poet's song,
Burns not, enamoured of the scene, to climb
Some airy mount, contemplative, sublime,
Whence all its sweeps, its whole expanding course;
Trackt from its small and weed-entangled source
To that wide rush of waves that spreads the plain
Where mists o'erhang its marriage with the main,
With eagle-ken in fleet succession caught,
May fill at once the hunger of his thought ?

Like Ceres maddening on her car-borne way,
Her virgin daughter snatcht in face of day,
The fierce Bonduca, brave and injured queen,
In fire and carnage wraps the blasted scene,
And bids her barbarous wrongs, her vengeful rage,
Tell the dark story of the Roman age.
Roused at her call, yon rude and frantic band
Yell round their Mona's violated strand,
Dire with funereal weeds and streaming hair,
And lurid torches tost with angry glare:
The chilled invader bows his pallid face,
And deprecates the Furies of the place.
Hail, Ethelfleda! On his Alfred's child
The parting Genius gazed, and fondly smiled;
Wise in the council, dauntless in the fight,
She streaks the gloom and sheds a troubled light,
A beacon fire, whose fitful gleams display
The raging Dane, and England's evil day.
But few our Amazons. While Egypt bleeds,
And Syrian echoes ring of Richard's deeds,
Edwards and Henries with victorious lance
Bear down the lily in the field of France,
And York and Lancaster with rival hate
Shake at the deep foundations of the state,
(Bred of intestine fires, the earthquake's shock
So strews the forest, splits the solid rock,)
Our timorous mothers, from invading strife
Wrapt in a meek monotony of life,
Humbly content to pace with duteous round
Their little world,....the dear domestic ground,....
Wards of protecting Man, nor dared to claim,
Nor dared to wish, the dangerous meed of fame,
Till, snatcht in triumph from his ancient tomb,
The lamp of Learning blazed upon the gloom,
And wide around to kindling hope revealed
The bloodless contests of a nobler field,
And courteous Wisdom to the bashful throng
Waved his pure hand, and beckoned them along.

Epistles on Women

Thou gav'st the call, O England's martyred sage!
O More! the grief and glory of thy age!
Bounteous as Nature's self, thy heart assigned
Its own large charter to a daughter's mind;
Spread with adventurous hand its swelling sails
Free to the breath of Greek and Roman gales,
And heaped its freight with riches, dug or wrought
In mines of science and in looms of thought.
Splendid example! fame that shall not fade!
Large debt, in gratitude how fondly paid !
She, she it was, when that stern tyrant's breath
Doomed thy firm virtue to the axe of death,
Burst the mute throng to snatch a last farewell,
And pale and shrieking on thy bosom fell;
Weeping who clasped thy knees, and felt it sweet
To kiss in dust thy consecrated feet;
Called thy soul back, that winged her flight above,
And drew thy latest looks of sorrowing love.

Rise, gentle Grey! forth from the sainted dead
Lift the meek honours of thy victim-head!
Mockt with no pageant-rule, no vain renown,
Take thy due homage, take thy lasting crown!
O ripe in suffering, fair in spotless truth!
The fruits of Virtue with the flowers of Youth
Shall wreath thy brow, and Learning to thy hand
Yield his large scroll, thy sceptre of command,
While Wisdom hears thy parting accents mild,
And cries, "Behold me honoured in my child!"

The dread Eliza bids. Wake, O my strain!
Wake the long triumph of the Maiden Reign:
Here Faction, vanquish't terror of the land,
Suppliant to kiss the chastenings of her hand;
(The fiend of Rome with imprecating eye
Fang-drawn and chained, and idly muttering by,)
Reviving France with fixt and awful air
Watching her glance, and grateful Henry there:
Here refuged Belgia from the tyrant's frown
Creeps to her knees, and lifts the proffered crown;
There gloomy Philip eyes a hostile main,
And o'er his foiled Armada mourns in vain.
High o'er her head the golden censer swings
That wafts all sweetness to the sense of kings;
Her dulcet voice each hymning Muse applies,
And the graced mortal half assumes the skies.
But mark pale Mary's vengeful spectre gleam
Clouding the pomp, and dash her glorious dream,
Brand her base envy, blaze each treacherous art,
And bare the meanness of her selfish heart;
Stung to the soul, her gallant Essex chide

Epistles on Women

Her captious favour and exacting pride,
Then bow his neck to death,....and seem to cry,
"Relentless Mistress, see, despair, and die!"
Yet, O Britannia! on thy glory's car
The brightest gem shall flame that Maiden Star,
Queen of the' ascendant, whose propitious ray
Wisdom and wit, and arts and arms obey;
Blest orb, that flashed on Spenser's dazzling sight
Long meteor—streams and trails of fairy—light;
Twinkled on Shakespeare's lowly lot, and shed
A smile of love on Bacon's boyish head:
Now gleams the lode—star of our northern skies,
And points our galaxy to distant eyes.

But thou, pure partner of man's noblest cause,
Take, generous Hutchinson, this heart's applause:
'Twas thine to stem a foul and angry tide,
A high—souled helpmate at the patriot's side;
Then cast, sad relict! on an angry shore,
All wreckt, all lost, the gallant struggle o'er,
Yet, greatly constant to a husband's trust,
True to the joyful memory of the just,
Chide back thy tears, uplift thy mourning head,
And live, the high historian of the dead;
Knock at thy children's breasts, and cry with pride,
"Thus lived our patriot, thus our martyr died!"
So virtuous Russell burst the shades of life,
And shone a heroine, for she loved, a wife.
"Grant me but her! the noble culprit cried,
"No friend, no advocate, I ask beside."
Secure in conscious fortitude she rose,
A present aid,....and checked her gushing woes
And ruled her trembling hand,....while all around
A thrill of anguish ran, and mingling cries resound.
Vain every hope; the murderous doom is sped,
And Charles and vengeance claim his forfeit head.
But not from life, from only life to part,
Could wring a murmur from that patriot heart;
One dear companion of the darksome way
His eyes require, and mourn her lonely stay:
"Farewell, farewell!" he cries, "I look my last,
And now 'tis o'er;....death's bitterness is past!

Such were the dames who grace our storied page:
Life's guiding lamp they hand from age to age
Assert their sex beyond the loftiest pen,
And live on tongues and reign in hearts of men.
Enough, indulgent Muse! evoke no more
The blissful phantoms from their silent shore,
Nor give again my curious eye to range
O'er times, o'er realms, remote and rude and strange;

Yet O be present still! but meek, subdued,
 In sober, wistful, contemplative mood:
 Her trusted stores while faithful Memory brings,
 And Judgement ponders o'er the sum of things,
 Aid my full heart, obtest the mingled throng,
 And point the varied moral of my song.

** Vitai lampada tradunt. "*

LUCRETIUS

Sons of fair Albion, tender, brave, sincere,
 (Be this the strain) an earnest suppliant hear!
 Feel that when heaven, evolved its perfect plan,
 Crowned with its last best gift transported Man,
 It formed no creature of ignoble strain,
 Of heart unteachable, obtuse of brain;
 (Such had not filled the solitary void,
 Nor such his soul's new sympathies employed,)
 But one all eloquent of eye, of mien;
 Intensely human; exquisitely keen
 To feel, to know: Be generous then, unbind
 Your barbarous shackles, loose the female mind;
 Aid its new flights, instruct its wavering wing,
 And guide its thirst to Wisdom's purest spring:
 Sincere as generous, with fraternal heart
 Spurn the dark satirist's unmanly part;
 Scorn too the flatterer's, in the medium wise,
 Nor feed those follies that yourselves despise.

For you, bright daughters of a land renowned,
 By Genius blest, by glorious Freedom crowned;
 Safe in a polisht privacy, content
 To grace, not shun, the lot that Nature lent,
 Be yours the joys of home, affection's charms,
 And infants clinging with caressing arms:
 Yours too the boon, of Taste's whole garden free,
 To pluck at will her bright Hesperian tree,
 Uncheckt the wreath of each fair Muse assume,
 And fill your lap with amaranthine bloom.
 Press eager on; of this great art possest,
 To seize the good, to follow still the best,
 Ply the pale lamp, explore the breathing page,
 And catch the soul of each immortal age.
 Strikes the pure bard his old romantic lyre?
 Let high Belphoebe warm, let Amoret sweet inspire:
 Does History speak? drink in her loftiest tone,
 And be Cornelia's virtues all your own.
 Thus self-endowed, thus armed for every state,
 Improve, excel, surmount, subdue, your fate!

Epistles on Women

So shall at length enlightened Man efface
That slavish stigma seared on half the race,
His rude forefathers' shame; and pleased confess,
'Tis yours to elevate, 'tis yours to bless;
Your interest one with his; your hopes the same;

[In original work, this and following two lines connected by large right brace not represented here.]

Fair peace in life, in death undying fame,
And bliss in worlds beyond, the species' general aim.
"Rise," shall he cry, "O Woman, rise! be free!
My life's associate, now partake with me:
Rouse thy keen energies, expand thy soul,
And see, and feel, and comprehend the whole;
My deepest thoughts, intelligent, divide;
When right confirm me, and when erring guide;
Soothe all my cares, in all my virtues blend,
And be, my sister, be at length my friend."

Anna, farewell! O spirit richly fraught
With all that feeds the noble growth of thought!
(For not the Roman, not the Attic store,
Nor poets' song, nor reverend sages' lore,
To thee a Wakefield's liberal love denied,
His child and friend, his pupil and his pride.)
Whose life of female loveliness shall teach
The finish charm that precept fails to reach;....
Born to delight, instructed to excel,
My judge, my sister, take this heart's farewell!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

CAMBRIA,

AN ODE.

O CAMBRIA! ere in misty blue
(With tardy foot and lingering eye)
Thy poet-land I dimly view,
Its summits fading into sky;
Warm from the heart receive one parting song,
And bid thy echoing vales the votive strain prolong!

I love thy mountains, giant forms!
Darkly clad in gathering storms;
While sweeps around their caverns black,
Half cloud, half rain, the fleeting rack:
I love thy rocks, down whose steep side

Epistles on Women

With foaming dizzying crash
Thunders the torrent's tan-brown tide,
The roaring whirlwinds dash.

With toiling step I love to climb
Thy wave-beat cliffs' tempestuous height,
And view, with terror-mixt delight,
The ocean scene sublime;
Dim distant isles in ambient ether seen,
And stormy peaks, and deep-retiring bays,
Foam-crested breakers, and the boundless green
Streakt by the transient sun's swift-glancing rays.
'Mid clouds and crags, dark pools, and mountains drear,
The wild wood's silence and the billows' roll,
Great Nature rules, and claims with brow austere
The shuddering homage of the inmost soul.
The vagrant goat well-pleas'd I mark
Percht scornful on the giddy brink,
While panting dogs affrighted shrink,
And bay beneath with idle bark:
Ragged of fleece the straggling flock
Bounding o'er the turfy rock;
The nimble herd of sparkling eye,
With black-tipt horns o'erarching high,
Their fetlocks bathing in the lucid stream
Where softened suns thro' pendent birches gleam:
The stately heron that sweeps in flagging flight
The lonely rock-bound lake, the cormorant black
Poised on the ridgy wave, and piercing the dun rack
The falcon pouncing from his airy height.

But livelier pleasure heaves my breast,
And tears my softening eyes bedew,
As scenes by smiling Labour drest,
And Man's creative hand, I view.
The mountain oak, no longer doom'd
In the deep pathless glen entomb'd
His sturdy strength to waste,
Obedient to the shipwright's art,
Here launches for the crowded mart
With gaudy streamers graced.
Dragged up with toil, the searching plough
Furrows the mountain's rugged brow;
The mealy root with purple flower
There fattens in the misty shower.
The lonely shepherd of the heath-clad hill
Views the new harvest with paternal joy
As infant hands the ample basket fill;
And buxom Plenty smiles, no longer coy;
Plinlimmon wild the peaceful triumph sounds,
And Snowdon, king of crags, the jocund strain, rebounds.

No longer now the labouring swain
Of sweeping floods and scanty soil,
Inclement skies, and unrewarded toil,
Shall, pincht by hopeless penury, complain.
On the life—deserted wild,
Thro' the rocks in ruin piled,
Science darts her piercing ray;
Bursts kind Nature's secret store,....
Leafy slate or ponderous ore,....
And vindicates her sway.

Ye too, proud torrents! with unbridled force
Leaping your mad innavigable course
'Mid rocks and clefts and gulfs profound;
Ye too Man's conquering prowess feel,
Subdued to whirl the giddy wheel
In white unvarying round.

Not always thus, to works of peace
By patriot wisdom planned,
The labourer lent his willing hand,
And reaped the rich increase:
Mark yon tower's embattled wall,
Proud, yet nodding to its fall;
Proud work of many a wretched thrall!

Edward! on thy parted soul
Heavy sit the murderous guilt
Of Cambrian blood in battle spilt!
Heavier still the unnumbered sighs
Of Cambria's vanquish't bands,
As slow, beneath their forced reluctant hands,
They saw thy castles rise!

But not the warrior's blasting breath,
But not the conqueror's scythed arm,
Can spread eternal death;
Far refuged from the loud alarm,
Gentle Peace with healing hand
Returns: obedient to her whisper bland
Her own attendant Arts are seen,
And Time the furrows smooths of Desolation's plough.
See, on stern Denbigh's towered brow,
The bowler's smooth and level green
O'erlook, 'mid ruin—heaps forlorn,
Fair Clwyd's tranquil vale, one sea of waving corn!
By proud Caernarvon's wave-beat wall
The light skiff shelters from the squall;
And Harlech rent by many a storm,
And graceful Conway's mouldering form,
Serve but to prompt the poet's moral lay,
And charm the painter's eye with tints of soft decay.

DIRGE

FOR THE LATE JAMES CURRIE, M.D., OF LIVERPOOL.

SPEED on the night-wind's wing, my sighs,
While bends my head to earth;
Go seek the grave where CURRIE lies,
The grave of parted worth!

The piercing, rapid, ardent mind,
To useful science bent;
The' expansive soul, to human kind
With free devotion lent;

Ambition high of noble fame,
From pride, from envy clear,
That burnt, a bright benignant flame,
His onward course to cheer;

The large discourse of lucid flow,
With bland persuasion fraught;
The beaming glance, that lurked below
The furrowed brow of thought;

The helping hand, the watchful eye,
Awake to every call;
The heartfelt tone of sympathy
That dearer was than all:....

These, these, grim Death! thy hasty prey,
To yon cold tomb are borne;
And Memory, still, from day to day
Must linger there to mourn.

Speed on the night-wind's wing, my sighs,
While bends my head to earth;
Go seek the grave where CURRIE lies,
The grave of parted worth !

FUTURITY.

**"Tell us, ye dead! will none of you in pity
To those you left behind disclose the secret?
O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!"**

BLAIR'S Grave.

RISE, spectres, rise! some pitying ghost, appear,
And pour the grave's dread secret on mine ear!
Ye live, ye live! Yes, by the generous glow
Of Virtue struggling thro' a night of woe;
By the fell tyrant on his blood-stained throne;

Epistles on Women

By nameless wretchedness that dies alone;
By lovely Hope that soothes the parting sigh;
By Faith, bright-beaming from the death-fixt eye,
Ye live! From forth the narrow dark abode
The spirit steals....some viewless unknown road;....
Then, each fond tie to earth and matter broke
By the free soul, disdainful of the yoke,
Shall it not soar on vigorous pens away
Beyond the ken of thought and golden eye of day?
Or, by fierce flames from mortal dross refined,
Shall it not mingle with the mass of mind?
Absorbed and lost the old familiar store
Of treasuring Memory's many-coloured lore.
Or does this self, this conscious self, remain
Awake to human joys, to human pain?
Hangs the fond mother o'er her orphan's head?
Cheers the fond spouse the widow's sorrowing bed?
In airy watch do guardian spirits stand,
And guide our faltering steps, an angel band?
Or, senseless, wrapt in lone sepulchral gloom,
Sleeps the regardless tenant of the tomb
Till the dread blast shall rouse the silent earth,
And joyful Nature start to second birth,
All nations waken from the awful trance,
And times and realms in wondering gaze advance,
While Memory's voice renews its tuneful sound,
And marshals all the tribes of earth around,
Bids fresh reviving scenes salute their eyes,
And friend with virtuous friend to lasting bliss arise?

Cease, curious thoughts! too close the shades of night
Veil the dread Future from our anxious sight;
The boldest here may urge their course in vain,
Nor pass one bulwark of the drear domain.
Then,....when the last faint panting heaves my heart,
And weary Life stands fluttering to depart,....
One beam of joy shall warm my trembling soul
As Doubt's dun clouds to awful distance roll;
Truth's angel form my fleeting spirit own,
And spring to clasp her in the world unknown.

SONNET TO FORTUNE.

FROM METASTASIO.

"Che spero, instabil Dea, di sassi é spine, &c."

WHAT hopest thou, Goddess, when thy envious care
Strews rocks and thorns to check my onward way?
That I should tremble at thy fickle sway?
Or toil in vain to catch thy flying hair?

SONNET TO FORTUNE.

Epistles on Women

With threats like these, awake the dastard fears
Of him who crouches to thy base controul:
Know, I could see, with calm intrepid soul,
The world in ruins and the falling spheres.

Nor am I new to dangers and alarms;
Long didst thou prove me in the doubtful fight;
From trying conflicts and opposing harms
I rose more valiant, and confirmed in might.
From falling hammers thus, the tempered arms
Strike with a keener edge, and beam more dazzling light.

TO MR. MONTGOMERY.

OCCASIONED BY AN ILLIBERAL ATTACK ON HIS
POEMS.

DROOP not, sweet Bard! the envious cloud
Pale Malice breathes, thy fame to shroud,
 Shall quickly pass away:
No meteor lights thy sky adorn,
'Tis the true promise of a morn,
 And it *must* turn to day.

Strike, strike again the quivering wire,
Awake old Memnon's magic lyre,
 And give thy soul to song;
By Fancy blest, to Feeling dear,
Their guardian forms shall hover near
 And shield thy head from wrong.

Whence beams the light that guides the soul
Beyond our nature's humble goal,
 The hope that points on high?
It beams from Pity's aspect meek,
From generous Feeling's moistened cheek,
 From Fancy's sparkling eye.

'Tis these that feed the patriot's flame,
'Tis these that prompt each gentler aim;
 And he whose heart is cold,
A loveless sojourner on earth,
Might sell the freedom of his birth,
 His British birth, for gold.

Hence! groveling and unfeeling band,
With cruel eye and deadening hand
 And grin Sardonic,.... hence!
Rise, sons of Virtue, sons of Praise,
Avenge the violated bays,

TO MR. MONTGOMERY.

Our glory and defence!

Droop not, sweet Bard! the candid mind
By Genius warmed, by Taste refined,
Shall open to thy lay:
So generous soils expand to meet
The fosterings of the solar heat,
While shrinks the sterile clay.

THE SWISS EMIGRANT.

FAREWELL, farewell, my native land,
A long farewell to joy and thee!
On thy last rock I lingering stand,
Thy last rude rock how dear to me!

Once more I view thy valleys fair,
But dimly view, with tearful eye;
Once more I breathe thy healthful air,
But breathe it in how deep a sigh!

Ye vales, with downy verdure spread,
Ye groves that drink the sparkling stream,
As bursting from the mountain's head
Its foaming waves in silver gleam;

Ye lakes, that catch the golden beam
That floods with fire yon peak of snow,
As evening vapours blue steam
And dimly roll their volumes stow;

Scenes on this bursting heart imprest
By every thrill of joy, of woe,
The bliss of childhood's vacant breast,
Of warmer youth's impassion'd glow,

The tears by filial duty shed
Upon the low, the peaceful tomb,
Where sleep, too blest, the reverend dead
Unconscious of their country's doom;

Say, can Helvetia's patriot child
A wretched exile bear to roam,
Nor sink upon the lonely wild,
Nor die to leave his native home?

His native home? No home has he;
He scorns in servile yoke to bow;
He scorns the land no longer free;
Alas! he has no country now!

THE SWISS EMIGRANT.

Epistles on Women

Ye snow-clad Alps, whose mighty mound,
Great Nature's adamant wall,
In vain opposed its awful bound
To check the prone-descending Gaul,

What hunter now with daring leaps
Shall chase the ibex o'er your rocks?
Who clothe with vines your rugged steeps?
Who guard from wolves your rambling flocks?

While low the freeborn sons of toil
Lie sunk amid the slaughtered brave,
To freedom true the stubborn soil
Shall pine and starve the puny slave.

Spoilers, who poured your ravening bands
To gorge on Latium's fertile plains,
And filled your gold-rapacious hands
From regal domes and sculptured fanes,

What seek ye here?...Our niggard earth
Nor gold nor sculptured trophies owns;
Our wealth was peace and guileless mirth,
Our trophies are the invader's bones!

Burst not, my heart, as dimly swell
Morat's proud glories on my view!
Heroic scenes, a long farewell!
I fly from madness and from you.

Beyond the dread Atlantic deep
One gleam of comfort shines for me;
There shall these bones untroubled sleep,
And press the earth of Liberty.

Wide, wide that waste of waters rolls,
And sadly smiles that stranger land;
Yet there I hail congenial souls,
And freemen give the brother's hand.

Columbia, bear the exile's prayer;
To him thy fostering love impart;
So shall he watch with patriot care,
So guard thee with a filial heart!

Yet O forgive, with anguish fraught
If sometimes start the unbidden tear,
As tyrant Memory wakes the thought,
"Still, still I am a stranger here!"

Thou vanquish'd land, once proud and free,
Where first this fleeting breath I drew,
This heart must ever beat for thee,
In absence near,....in misery true.

MIDNIGHT THOUGHTS.

YE loud–howling tempests, fell roamers of night,
O cease your intrusion, and leave me to rest!
I drink—in the terrors you waft in your flight,
And I feel a rude chill at my breast.

In fancy I stand on the surf–beaten shore;
I view the tost vessel that reels on the waves;
I hear the wild shriek and the groan....but 'tis o'er;
It died 'mid the rocks and the caves.

Yet the slumber of infancy smiles at the blast:
Deep draw'st thou, young orphan, thy innocent breath;
Lulled e'en by the voice of the Spoiler that past
To whelm thy lost father in death.

I see the fierce storm sweep the snow on the moor;
It flies in dim eddies bewildering and chill;
Ah, traveller! thy death–bed's the wilderness hoar,
Thy tomb is the drift of the hill.

I hear the poor exile, forgotten, forlorn,
Who breathes from Siberia his famishing prayer;
And I shrink at the merciless blast of her morn,
That blights the cold home of despair.

O ! ne'er at my ease may I fancy a charm
In the voice of the tempest that beats not on me;
Ne'er enliven my safety with scenes of alarm,
Composed by the rage of the sea!

No; be cheerless my musings, be broken my rest;
Let the outcry of nature sound sad in my ears:...
Such pitiless pleasure I chase from my breast,
And quench my thanksgiving in tears.

TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE REV. GILBERT WAKEFIELD.

FRIEND of departed worth! whose pilgrim feet
Trace injured merit to its last retreat,
Oft will thy steps imprint the hallowed shade
Where WAKEFIELD's dust embalmed in tears is laid:
"Here," wilt thou say, "a high undaunted soul,

Epistles on Women

That spurned at palsied Caution's chill controul,
A mind by Learning stored, by Genius fired,
In Freedom's cause with generous zeal inspired,
Slumbers in dust: the fabric of his fame
Rests on the pillar of a spotless name!"
Tool of corruption! spaniel—slave of power!
Should thy rash steps in some unguarded hour
Profane the shrine, deep on thy shrinking heart
Engrave this awful moral, and depart:...
That not the slanderer's shaft, the bigot's hate,
The dungeon's gloom, or the keen stroke of Fate,
Can rob the good man of that peerless prize
Which not pale Mammon's countless treasure buys;
The conscience clear whence secret pleasures flow,
And friendship kindled 'mid the night of woe,
Assiduous love that stays the parting breath,
And honest fame triumphant over death.

For you, who o'er the sacred marble bend
To weep the husband, brother, father, friend,
And, mutely eloquent, in anguish raise
Of keen regrets his monument of praise,
May Faith, may Friendship dry your streaming eyes,
And Virtue mingle comfort with your sighs;
Till Resignation, softly stealing on,
With pensive smile bid lingering Grief begone,
And tardy Time veil o'er with gradual shade
All but the tender tints you would not wish to fade!

ON SEEING THE SUN SHINE IN AT MY WINDOW FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE YEAR.

CALM the evening sun declines,
Bright his western glory shines;
Long by wintry clouds concealed,
Now he glows; he burns revealed;
Now he darts a stronger ray,
And smiles upon the lengthened day.
It comes, it comes, the welcome beam!
See the ruddy radiance stream;
See the long—lost splendour fall
Playful on the brightening wall!
Hail, stranger, to my lonely room;
Disperse the cold ungenial gloom!
Thy keen, thy quickening beams diffuse,
And wake to song my torpid Muse!
Carol all the feathered choir
Touct by thy reviving fire;
By it the glittering insect throng
Fills the air with murmuring song.

Epistles on Women

From clime to clime, the birds of spring
Follow thee on gaudy wing;
The buds, the flowers, thy light obey,
All that gem the car of May:
Unblest by thee, with drooping head
They sink upon their earthy bed.

Let others fly the golden noon
To stray beneath the pallid moon,
And in languid strains relate
Hapless loves, and hostile fate;
While the cold and glimmering ray
Sadly glides, the ghost of day,
And the boding owlet screams,
Flitting thro' the doubtful gleams:
Be mine to hail thee, source of light!
Gorgeous in thy western plight,
Now my cheerful song employ,
Source of music, life, and joy !
And when sportive youth expires,
Feeling cools, and Fancy tires,
Often may thy evening glow
Gild again my locks of snow;
Oft at noon, with tottering feet,
May I woo thy vital heat;
Amid thy radiance bask at will,
And smiling bid thee welcome still!

ON SEEING BLENHEIM CASTLE.

O ASK not me of Blenheim's marble halls,
Her towering column and triumphal gate;
With vacant glance I viewed the trophied walls,
The wide unsocial haunt of sullen state!

Boast not to me the wooded green domain,
Formed by the labourer's hand, the artist's rule;
Joyless I saw, in yon extended plain,
A *cultured* desert and a stagnant pool.

Be mine the cheerful view of village green
With ruddy children scattered far and near,
The babbling brook thro' willow hedgerows seen
That turns the mill with current cold and clear!

At scenes like these the feeling breast may warm,
And tears of young philanthropy may start,
The poet's mind new dreams of beauty form,
And fancy own the promptings of the heart.

But ask not me of Blenheim's marble halls;
Tho' Marlborough's triumphs grace her sculptured gate,
With careless glance I viewed her trophied walls,
Chilled by the frown of dull unsocial state.

ODE TO LUDLOW CASTLE.

PROUD pile! that rearest thy hoary head
In ruin vast, in silence dread,
 O'er Teme's luxuriant vale,
Thy moss-grown halls, thy precincts drear,
To musing Fancy's pensive ear
 Unfold a varied tale.

When Terror stalked the prostrate land
With savage Cambria's ruthless band,
 Beneath thy frowning shade,
Mixt with the grazers of the plain,
The plundered, helpless, peasant train
 In sacred ward were laid.

From yon high tower the archer drew
With steady hand the twanging yew,
 While, fierce in martial state,
The mailed host in long array,
With crested helms and banners gay,
 Burst from the thundering gate.

In happier times, how brightly blazed
The hearth with ponderous billets raised,
 How rung the vaulted halls,
When smoked the feast, when care was drowned,
When songs and social glee went round....
 Where now the ivy crawls!

'Tis past! the marcher's princely court,
The strength of war, the gay resort,
 In mouldering silence sleeps;
And o'er the solitary scene
While Nature hangs her garlands green,
 Neglected Memory weeps.

The Muse too weeps:....in hallowed hour
Here sacred Milton owned her power,
 And woke to nobler song;
The wizard's baffled wiles essayed,
Here first the pure majestic maid
 Subdued the enraptured throng.

But see! beneath yon shattered roof

What mouldy cavern, sun-beam proof,
 With mouth of horror yawns ?
O sight of grief! O ruthless doom!
On that deep dungeon's solid gloom
 Nor hope nor daylight dawns.

Yet there, at midnight's sleepless hour,
While boisterous revels shook the tower,
 Bedewed with damps forlorn,
The warrior-captive pressed the stones,
And lonely breathed unheeded moans,
 Despairing of the morn.

That too is past: unsparing Time,
Stern miner of the tower sublime,
 Its night of ages broke;
Freedom and Peace with radiant smile
Now carol o'er the dungeon vile
 That cumbrous ruins choke.

Proud relic of the mighty dead!
Be mine with shuddering awe to tread
 Thy roofless, weedy hall;
And mark, with fancy's kindling eye,
The steel-clad ages gliding by
 Thy feudal pomp recall.

Peace to thy stern heroic age!
No stroke of wild unhallowed rage
 Assail thy tottering form !
We love, when smiles returning day,
In cloudy distance to survey
 The remnant of the storm.

NECESSITY.

YES, I too mark with anxious eye
The world's great pageant passing by!
Breathless I catch the mighty Name
That swells, that fills, the trump of fame;
On wings of speed, with eye of fire,
He comes, I shudder and admire:
The battle roars, the day is won,
Exulting Fortune crowns her son:
Sickening I turn on yonder plain
To mourn the widows and the slain;
To mourn the woes, the crimes of man,
To search in vain the eternal plan,
In outraged nature claim a part,
And ponder, desolate of heart.

But, restless long, the wanderer Thought
Returns at length with comfort fraught;
And thus, with look benign, serene,
Would moralize the mortal scene.
Weep'st thou the dead? and who are *they*?
Those powerless limbs, that senseless clay?
Weep'st thou the dead? and canst thou read
The spirit's doom, the spirit's meed?
Go, fold thine arms, and bow the head
In reverence o'er their lowly bed;
Then lift thy brow, and calmly trust
The Wise, the Merciful, the Just.
The widowed....yes, they claim a tear,
Yet comfort meets us even here:
'Tis but the fate of one short span
That lies within the gripe of man:
Whate'er of joy the oppressor steals,
Whate'er of ill the victim feels,
The lapse of ages in their course
Shall bring a compensating force,
Succeeding worlds atone the past,
And strike our balance right at last.

Unclench thy hand, subdue thine eye!
Recall those curses loud and high!
Tame thy rude breast's vindictive swell,
Nor rave of everlasting hell!
"I hate the oppressor!" say'st thou. Hate
A poor, blind, instrument of fate?
Does not the tyrant's self obey
Some feller tyrant's lawless sway?
See Anger goad his fiery breast,
Remorse, Suspicion, kill his rest,
And rather say, "Thou suffering soul,
Doomed for a time beneath the pole
In guilt, in fear, short breath to fetch,
A hated, solitary wretch,....
May Death his friendly stroke extend,
And soon thy hard commission end,
And bear thee hence, O sweet release!
To taste of innocence and peace!"

For human woe, for human weal,
Man will, man must, man ought to feel;
And while they feel, the untutored crowd
With clamours vehement and loud
Will rend the skies, and wildly trust
God shall *revenge*, for God is just!
They see not a resistless might
Still guide us on, and guide us right;
Foreseen our passions' utmost force,

NECESSITY.

Epistles on Women

Foredoomed our most eccentric course,
We seem to will, nor cease to be
Slaves of a strong necessity.
This knows the sage, and calmly sees
Vice, matter's weakness or disease;
The eternal Mind, the first great Cause,
A power immense, but bound by laws;
Wise all its ways....contriving still
The most of good, the least of ill,
Redressing all it can redress,
And turned to pity and to bless.
Touched by this faith, his mellowing mind,
From terror and from wrath refined,
Light from the scene upsprings, and wrought
To tender ecstasy of thought,
Sees a just God's impartial smile
Relieve the opprest, restore the vile,
Pour good on all:....with joy, with love,
He looks around, he looks above;
And views no more with anxious eye
The world's great pageant passing by.

THE END.

In addition to *Epistles on Women*, this Broadview Edition also includes a wide selection of poetry, historical writing, fiction, memoir, and literary criticism by Aikin, as well as letters, contemporary reviews, and other feminist historiographies. Comments. "This excellent edition of Aikin's first poem, delineating beliefs to which she subscribed her whole life, firmly situates her work between Mary Wollstonecraft's "equality feminism" and Anna Letitia Barbauld's essentialism. New Testament > Epistles > On Women. 1 Corinthians 11:4 Every man who prays with his head covered disgraces his head. Lucy Aikin's *Epistles on Women, Exemplifying their Character and Condition in Various Ages and Nations* (1810) traces the deplorable condition of women in western civilization from "ill-fated Eve" in the Garden of Eden to the daughters of "fair Albion" in the eighteenth century. In her first epistle, Aikin characterizes the "natural" subordination of women to men as the "Right Divine" of kings to censure those, like the "great [Republican] Milton," who... An epistle is a letter in the form of prose or poetry to a particular person or group. "NOTHING so true as what you once let fall, "Most Women have no Characters at all. "Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear, and best distinguished by black, brown, or fair. How many pictures of one Nymph we view, all how unlike each other, all how true! Arcadia's Countess, here, in ermin'd pride, is, there, Pastora by a fountain side. This extract is written in the form of Horatian epistle, a verse letter, which is a satire on women.