

SEAT OF THE MUSES.

FROM THE ANNUAL ANTHOLOGY.

THE OLD BACHELOR.

AFTER THE MANNER OF SPENSER.

This Poem is re-printed from the Town and Country Magazine for 1777.—The Editor has never seen it elsewhere, though its excellence ought to have rescued it from obscurity.

IN Phœbus' region while some bards there be
That sing of battles, and the trumpets roar;
Yet these, I ween, more powerful bards than me,
Above my ken, on eagle pinions soar!
Haply a scene of meander view to scan,
Beneath their laurel'd praise my verse may give,
To trace the features of unnoticed man:
Deeds, else forgotten, in the verse may live!
Her lore, mayhap, instructive fœnie may teach,
From weeds of humbler growth within my lowly reach.

A wight there was, who fingle and alone
Had crept from vigorous youth to waning age,
Nor e'er was worth, nor e'er was beauty known
His heart to captive, or his thought engage:
Some feeble joyance, tho' his conscious mind
Might female worth or beauty give to wear,
Yet to the nobler sex he held confin'd
The genuine graces of the soul sincere,
And well could shew with faw or proverb quaint,
All semblance woman's soul, and all her beauty paint.

In plain attire this wight apparel'd was,
(For much he conn'd of frugal love and knew)
Nor, till some day of larger note might cause,
From iron-bound chest his better garb he drew:
But when the Sabbath-day might challenge more,
Or feast, or birth-day, should it chance to be,
A glossy suit devoid of stain he wore,
And gold his buttons glanced so fair to see,
Gold clasp'd his shoon, by maiden brush'd so sheen,
And his rough beard he shav'd, and donn'd his linen clean.

But in his common garb a coat he wore,
A faithful coat that long its lord had known,
That once was black, but now was black no more,
Attunged by various colours not its own.
All from his nostrils was the front imbrown'd,
And down the back ran many a greasy line,
While, here and there, his social moments own'd,
The generous signet of the purple wine.
Brown o'er the bent of eld his wig appear'd,
Like fox's trailing tail by hunters fore affair'd.

One only maid he had, like turtle true,
But not like turtle gentle, soft, and kind;
For many a time her tongue bewray'd the shrew,
And in meet words unpack'd her peevish mind:
Ne form'd was she to raise the soft desire
That flirs the tingling blood in youthful vein,
Ne form'd was she to light the tender fire,
By many a bard is sung in many a strain:
Hook'd was her nose, and countless wrinkles told
What no man durst to her, I ween, that she was old.

When the clock told the wanted hour was come
When from his nightly cups the wight withdrew,
Right patient would the watch his wending home,
His feet he heard, and soon the bolt she drew,
If long his time was past, and leaden sleep
O'er her tir'd eye-lids 'gan his reign to stretch,
Of would she curse that men such hours should keep,
And many a faw 'gainst drunkenness would preach;
Haply if potent gin had arm'd her tongue,
All on the reeling wight a thundering peal she rung.

For tho' the blooming queen of Cyprus' isle
O'er her cold bosom long had ceas'd to reign,
On that cold bosom still could Bacchus smile,
Such beverage to own if Bacchus deign:
For wine she priz'd not much, for stronger drink
Its medicine, oft a cholic-pain will call,
And for the medicine's sake, might envy think,
Oft would a cholic-pain her bowels enthrall;
Yet much the proffer did she loath and say
No dram might maiden taste, and often answer'd nay.

So as in fingle animals he joy'd,
One cat, and eke one dog, his bounty fed;
The first the cate-devouring mice destroy'd,
Thieves heard the last, and from his threshold fled:
All in the sun-beams basked the lazy cat,
Her mottled length in couchant posture laid;
On one accustomed chair while Pompey sat,
And loud he bark'd should Puss his right invade,
The human pair oft mark'd them as they lay,
And haply sometimes thought like cat and dog were they.

A room he had that faced the southern ray,
Where oft he walk'd to set his thoughts in tune,
Pensive he pass'd its length an hour or tway,
All to the music of his creaking shoon.
And at the end a darkling closet stood,
Where books he kept of old research and new,
In seemly order rang'd on shelves of wood,
And rusty nails and phials not a few:
Thilk place a wooden box beset with well,
And papers squar'd and trimm'd for use unmeet to tell.

For still in form he plac'd his chief delight,
Nor lightly broke his old accustom'd rule,
And such uncourteous would he hold the wight
That e'er displaced a table, chair or stool;
And oft in meet array their ranks review'd;
For novel forms, tho' much those forms had graced,
Himself and maiden-minister eschew'd:
One path he trod, nor ever would decline
A hair's unmeasur'd breadth from off the even line,

A Club select there was, where various talk
On various chapters pass'd the ling'ring hour,
And thither oft he bent his evening walk,
And warm'd to mirth by wine's enlivening pow'r,
And oft on politics the preachments ran,
If a pipe lent its thought-begetting tune,
And oft important matters wou'd they scan,
And deep in council fix a nation's doom,
And oft they chuckled loud at jest or jeer,
Or bawdy tale the most, thilk much they lov'd to hear.

For men like him they were of like comfort,
Thilk much the honest muse must needs condemn,
Who made of women's wiles their wanton sport,
And bless'd their stars that kept their curf from them!
No honest love they knew, no melting smile
That shoots the transports to the throbbing heart!
Thilk knew they not but in a harlot's guile
Lascivious smiling thro' the mask of art:
And so of women deem'd they as they knew,
And from a Demon's traits an Angel's picture drew.

But most abhor'd they Hymeneal rites,
And boasted oft the freedom of their fate;
Nor vail'd, as they opin'd, its best delytes
Those ills to balance that on wedlock wait;
And often would they tell of hen-peck'd fool
Snubb'd by the hard bluest of four-ey'd dame,
And vow'd no tongue-arm'd woman's freakish rule
Their mirth should quail, or damp their generous flame:
Then pledged their hands, and tof'd their bumpers o'er.

If e'er a doubt of softer kind arose
Within some breast of less obdurate frame,
Lo! where its hideous form a Phantom flows
Full in his view, and CUCKOLD is its name.
Him Scorn attended with a glance askew,
And Scorpion Shame for delicts not his own,
Her painted bubbles while Suspicion blew,
And vex'd the region round the Cupid's throne:
"Far be from us, they cry'd, the treach'rous bane,
"Far be the dimply guile, and far the flow'ry chain."

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