

MATRIMONIAL SCENES:

CONSISTING OF

The SEAMAN'S TALE,
The MANCIPLE'S TALE,
The CHARACTER of the WIFE of BATH,
The TALE of the WIFE of BATH,
and her Five HUSBANDS.

All modernized from

C H A U C E R.

THE first *Refiner* of our Native *Lays*
Chanted these *Tales* in Second *Richard's* Days;
Time grudg'd his *Wit*, and on his *Language* fed!
We rescue but the *Living* from the *Dead*;
And *what* was *Sterling Verse*, so long ago,
Is here *new-coin'd* to make it *Current* now.

L O N D O N :

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T H E
SEAMAN'S TALE.

LONG since, a Merchant, where *St. Dennis* lies,
Reputed, for his Riches, wond'rous wife,
Possess'd a Wife, young, charming, brisk and gay,
Who lov'd to feast and revel Life away ;
For Mirth and Music charm'd her curious Ear,
And Visitors were in her Eye as dear :
Expensive these, free Souls Expende disdain ;
For lo, what Thanks and Compliments they gain !
From Feasts and Dancing spring these pleasing Fruits,
Bows, Curt'sies, Smiles, kind Words, and sweet Salutes,
Which transient pass, as Shadows on a Wall ;
But woe to him condemn'd to pay for all.
The luckless Husband's in a doleful Way,
Who must the Belly and the Back array ;
This daily craves, That has imploring Hours,
Habits absorb, and Luxury devours :
In daily Wants, daily Expende inhancing,
The Dress he rues, sets the glad Wife a Dancing.

And Music, Feasts, and Finery, and Fashions,
Exhaust a Husband's Pockets and his Patience.
What Remedy? Restrain'd in Will or Purse,
Others find both, and then the Case is worse!

This Merchant's Wife a mighty Concourse drew,
What with her Banqueting, and Beauty too ;
Thither above the Rest wou'd oft' repair
An oily Monk, demurely bold and fair ;
Who might, perchance, have thirty Winters seen,
And long a constant Visitor had been ;
None else on Earth was so familiar there,
For he had known this Merchant many a Year ;
In one small Village both their Lives began,
And thence this Monk claim'd Kindred with the Man,
And was, as such, without Objection grac'd ;
From this, they far and wide for Cousins pass'd ;
Alliance now eternal Friendship ties,
Between this Pair, 'till one or other dies.

Dan *John*, this Monk, the Hero to my Tale,
Wou'd much with Courtesy himself avail ;
And liberally with Flow'rs, Fruits and Toys,
Gain'd all Hearts here, e'en to the meanest Boys.

Now,

Now somewhat curious to his Cousins brings,
To Male and Female, Menials, other Things ;
For which his Visits such a Welcome won,
As Birds, in chirping, give the rising Sun.

Now it befel, that there at *Bruges* lay
Some Wares on Sale, much in this Merchant's Way ;
A Journey thither he with Speed intends,
But first, to *Paris* for this Cousin sends,
Whose Company, a Day or two he chose,
Which he wou'd spend in Mirth before he goes.

This Monk had such a Reputation gain'd,
His Abbot's Licence he with Ease obtain'd ;
For he was far above each common Elf,
And was indeed an Officer himself ;
Full oft transacted Monast'ry Concerns,
And rode amongst their Granges and their Barns ;
But now, he to Saint *Dennis* ambled on,
And who so welcome, as my Lord Dan *John* !
Our courteous Cousin dear, with kind fore Thought,
Had two rich Flasks of Wine from *Paris* brought ;
And introduc'd them frankly on the Board,
For often Times his Sumpter thus was stor'd :

But whilst they're feasting let us not intrude,
For such dear Friends wou'd curious Eyes preclude.

Two Days expir'd, the third this Merchant rose,
And up into his Counting-House he goes ;
To settle his Affairs, and make 'em plain,
And to cast up his annual Loss and Gain.
His Cash, Books, Bonds, and all his Bills in Trade,
Before him on the Counter were display'd :
And, that he might not interrupted be,
He clos'd the Door within, and turn'd the Key.
His large Accounts could not be cast up soon,
But busy'd him till it was turn'd of Noon.

Now this same Morning, risen too, Dan *John*
To bid his Beads, is to the Garden gone ;
But scarce had Time to mumble o'er his Pray'rs,
Before the good Wife of the House appears :
And as she softly trod the verdant Grass,
She bad *God save him*, as her Custom was ;
A Miss, she rul'd at Pleasure, was her Guard,
Whose Stature yet was much beneath a Yard.

O Kinsman mine, O dear Dan *John* she cries,
What ail'd you this good Day so soon to rise ?

Dear

Dear Niece, says he, five Hours are Rest enough
For those, that still are vigorous and tough:
Not so to him that pall'd and feeble grows,
As are old marry'd Men, that lie and doze;
And void of Motion, and of Life, appear,
Keeping their Form, as squats a weary'd Hare:
But dearest Niece, I wonder what you ail;
Why sure Nocturnal Toil has turn'd you pale!
The Roses left the Lillies in your Face,
When you was busy'd in another Place;
I dare be sworn you've been by our good Man
Sweetly belabour'd since last Night began;
He's Marble sure, yet you suppress your Moans,
Tho', were you Bricks, cou'd you hold out with Stones?
After such Exercise, most certainly
You must require Repose much more than I.

And at that Word the Monk with Mirth immense,
And Peals of Laughter, screen'd his Impudence;
Yet his own Thoughts flush'd all his Face with red:
Not so this Wife, — she only shook her Head.

Alas, Heav'n knows you judge amiss, said she,
Dear Cousin mine, it fares not so with me.

For

For by the Pow'r that gave me Soul and Life,
 Throughout all *France* there is not any Wife,
 That is more flinted of that am'rous Play,
 Whence I may sing, alas, and well-a-day,
 And curse the Star, from which my Lot befel;
 But my whole woeful Case I dare not tell.
 I'm weary of this World, and fain wou'd die,
 In such a miserable State am I!

At this our Monk began on her to stare,
 And said, dear Niece, Heav'n shield you from Despair;
 To me your secret Grievances impart,
 My Counsel, or my Help, may ease your Smart:
 And whatsoe'er you shall disclose to me,
 As in your own dear Breast, shall secret be.
 For, by this sacred * Porthose, now I swear,
 That never whilst I breathe, for Love or Fear,
 Will I what you repose in me betray!
 The same again, to you, quoth she, I say;
 By Heav'n, and by this holy Porthose here,
 Be Racks apply'd, my Flesh with Pincers tear;

* A Porthose, is a Mafs-Book, pendant from their Girdles.

The Seaman's TALE.

7

Forbid me Heav'n, or menace me with Hell,
What you reveal to me I will not tell ;
No Friend, no Kind'red howsoever nigh,
Nor Love, nor Terror, shall the Secret buy.

The League thus sworn, to seal it firm, they kiss'd,
And then they told each other what they list.

Cousin, said she, had I but Time, and Place,
I wou'd be more explicit in my Case,
And tell you the whole Legend of my Life,
With all my Suff'rings, since I've been a Wife ;
And then I'm sure my Spouse you cou'd not clear,
Tho' he's your Cousin, and you love him dear.

Hold, cry'd this Monk, before you further go,
By Heav'n, and by Saint *Martin* here I vow,
Your Husband is no more akin to me,
Than is that Leaf which dangles on the Tree.
That I have call'd him Cousin long, is true,
But 'twas to be more intimate with you.
For Love of whom all others I disclaim,
And hither still, for your dear Sake I came ;
This I'll be sworn, (our Order Truth must own,)
But quickly tell your Grief, ere he come down.

O

O dear Dan *John*, (this doleful Wife reply'd)
Out, must the Secrets, I wou'd gladly hide ;
For if retain'd, they sure wou'd burst me then :
My Husband is to me the worst of Men ;
This World can not produce his parallel,
In Things that scarce befit a Wife to tell ;
We shou'd no Nuptial Secrets open lay,
Unless our Husband's Honour they display ;
His Worth in question, Silence is my Rule ;
Praise misapply'd is poignant Ridicule.
To you alone thus much I may unfold,
That nothing to his Honour can be told.
The naked Truth o'erwhelms him with Disgrace,
Either in Bed, or any other Place.
A busy Fly, where e'er it bites or blows,
If it's delighted, no Delight bestows.
A Woman's Woe's allay'd between the Sheets ;
Bitters I taste, but none of *Hymen's* Sweets.
But this I value little, and wou'd hide,
Had not the Niggard glaring Faults beside.
You know, I'm sure, that Wives by Nature crave,
In Husbands six good Qualities to have.

Wisdom

Wisdom enough to let the Woman reign,
 Courage enough her Whimsies to maintain ;
 Abundant Wealth, scarce to be comprehended,
 And Generosity to let her spend it ;
 Vigour enough to quench the *Paphian* Fire,
 Constant Beneficence, unapt to tire.

These ev'ry Wife requires, but by Saint *Paul*
 My Husband is deficient in them all!

To honour him I've purchas'd Coifs and Gowns,
 The whole amounts but to an hundred Crowns ;
 I'd rather die, than owe these petty Sums,
 And must needs pay them, when next *Monday* comes :
 My Hunks detests to pay, what e'er I tick ;
 Nay, shou'd he know it, I'm ev'n bury'd quick !
 But you, Dan *John*, whom Courtesy renowns,
 Lend me, my dearest Friend, these hundred Crowns :
 Your Kindness in my Mem'ry shall be laid,
 And on the Honour of a Wife repaid.
 Think but wherein, that I may pleasure you,
 Whate'er it be, demand it as your Due ;
 If I refuse, Heav'n strike me with its Thunder,
 Or let wild Horses rend my Limbs asunder.

10 *The Seaman's TALE.*

Assaulting with a luscious Leer her Face,
 The Monk thus answer'd — Piteous is thy Case!
 Some Adder's Dullness sure thy Husband arms;
 Who can be deaf, when such a Charmer charms?
 Soon as the Miser does to *Bruges* go,
 I will supply thy Wants, and ease thy Woe;
 Had I a Realm, and all the Gold therein,
 That and myself shou'd hail thee sov'reign Queen.
This, this, I value more than Crowns or Reigning!
 And with that Word he caught her by the *Meaning*;
 Which found the quick Sensation it convey'd,
 As Trees are nourish'd with the Streams they shade:
 His other Hand her milky Bosom plies,
 Whilst on her Face he feasts his greedy Eyes;
 Till their conjoining Lips with Kisses glow,
 Devoured fast. — At length he let her go,
 To see that Dinner was provided soon,
 For by his Calendar he found it Noon.
 And when they'd plighted each their Faith anew,
 As pert as any Pye, away she flew;
 Gave Orders that the Cooks no Time shou'd lose,
 And to her Husband then this good Wife goes,

Knocks

The Seaman's TALE. 11

Knocks boldly at his Door, which made him cry
Who's there? O, *Peter*, answer'd she, 'tis I ;
Why (went she on) must we for ever fast?
In how long Time will your Accounts be cast?
Your Gold, Books, Bonds, Receipts and other Things,
The Devil o'erspread 'em with his brooding Wings.
You've Bags enough of Heav'n's admired Sand ;
Come down to Day, let them in quiet stand ;
For Shame make haste, what know ye not, Dan *John*.
Has, all this tedious Morning, fasting gone.

Wife, he reply'd, thou scarcely canst conceive
The Difficulties that we Merchants have ;
For so precarious is the Trade we drive,
That, in a Hundred, hardly Ten shall thrive ;
Some little Time, good Fortune is their Page,
But frequently deserts 'em, in old Age.
Oft' to the World a chearful Face we shew,
Left any shou'd our real Condition view ;
And let no Mortal, 'till we break or die,
Suspect the crying Sin of Poverty :
Hence it behoves us to be well advis'd,
Left in this crafty World we be surpriz'd.

In Traffic, Care and Knowledge must unite,
Or soon propitious Fortune takes her Flight.

To *Flanders* I to Morrow must away,
But longer than is needful will not stay ;
Whilst I am absent, 'tis thy Part, my Dear,
To see the Household be well manag'd here.
Pray, all that come on Business entertain,
For usually by such Expence we gain;
Fair Words are cheap, abound in Complaisance,
But be most careful of Extravagance ;
Enough of ev'ry Thing thou hast I know,
Think, — from Oeconomy, what Praises flow !
Rich Habits thou can't wear, — and may'st have more,
If thou be frugal, and increase our Store !
Thou know'st thy Purse will always Silver hold,
Good Huswifry will turn it all to Gold.
With that he lock'd the Door, and took the Key,
And hastily down Stairs descended they ;
Where speedily a Mass was mumb'l'd o'er,
And down they sat, (the Cloth was laid before)
With vig'rous Stomachs to their Dinner fell,
And by this Man the Monk was feasted well.

But

BUT Dinner o'er, Dan *John*, with sober Face,
 Allur'd this Merchant to a private Place ;
 And thus began — Cousin, since it is so,
 That suddenly you will to *Bruges* go,
 God speed you, and St. *Martin* be your Guide !
 But, Cousin, pray be careful, how you ride ;
 Drink temp'rately, for all Excess is Harm,
 And more especially when Weather's warm.
 Our Friendship will no Ceremonies bear ;
 Cousin farewell, God shield you from all Care !
 By Day or Night whatever you devise,
 You may command, if in my Pow'r it lies.

Yet one Thing ere we part, I crave of you.
 If to yourself no Damage might ensue ;
 An Hundred Crowns will all I want supply,
 To pay for certain Cattel, I must buy,
 With which, to stock a distant Grange of ours,
 Heav'n help me, as I wish that it was yours !
 The Cash, at your Return, I can repay,
 Nor, for a Thousand, would I fail my Day :
 I wou'd not have my Purpose blaz'd about,
 'Till I to Morrow lay the Money out.

Cousin

14 *The Seaman's TALE.*

Coufin Dan *John*, (the Merchant thus reply'd)
 This Favour is too small to be deny'd ;
 My Gold is at your Service, ev'ry Hour,
 Nor that alone, but all Things in my Pow'r ;
 Have what you please, -- but think on what you know,
 That, with us Merchants, Money is the Plow :
 Our Credit still encreases with our Store,
 For few will trust, whom they believe are Poor !
 Pay me again no sooner than you can,
 I'd pleasure you before another Man.

And now this Merchant for the Money's gone,
 And brought it privately, to this Dan *John* ;
 This Loan in Secrecy profound was sunk,
 To all beside this Merchant and the Monk,
 Who now to feast and chat, awhile abides,
 Then takes his Leave, and to his Abbey rides.

When Morning came, the Merchant hastes away,
 And rode towards *Bruges*, where his Buſineſs lay.
 There ſafe arriv'd, he neither danc'd nor play'd,
 But carefully full many a Purchase made.
 There let him thrive, in his Mercantile Way,
 To his good Wife we muſt a Viſit pay.

The

The *Sunday* since the Merchant left his Home,
My Lord Dan *John* is to Saint *Dennis* come ;
Full sweet and clean, all over spruce and fresh,
With Crown and Beard shav'd down within the Flesh ;
And all the House rejoic'd, when he return'd,
For ev'ry little Knave, his Gifts suborn'd.
But shortly, (with my Story to proceed)
This virtuous Wife with this good Monk agreed,
That for these hundred Crowns, to her paid down,
All Night he might divert himself with *Roan* ;
Gallop, or amble, all her Paces try,
For Gold enchanted her enchanting Eye :
And this Agreement Action ratify'd ;
That Night he rode, as Monks devoutly ride.
The Leagues he journey'd, or how oft he baited,
I do not find by Lady *Fame* related ;
But with the rising Day Dan *John* arose,
And bidding all farewell, away he goes :
For tho' he ne'er before appear'd so trim,
None in the House or Town suspected him,
Such Piety was pictur'd in his Face ;
But let him go, he may his Abbey graze !

The

The Merchant now had finish'd his Affairs,
And to Saint *Dennis* speedily repairs:
Arriv'd at Home, the virtuous Wife he told,
The Purchase he had made, o'er-run his Gold;
To twenty thousand Crowns his Wants arose,
And he was bound, in Bonds and Notes, for those.
His Wife now left, he is to *Paris* come,
Of certain Friends to borrow such a Sum:
But first he to Dan *John* a Visit made,
Not to require the Crowns to be repaid,
Or borrow more, but by his Love induc'd,
To drink with him and chat, as Friends are us'd.

With oily Words, and chearful Looks put on,
This Man was entertain'd by good Dan *John*;
They feast, and intermix with Mirth their Cares.
The Merchant told, how he had purchas'd Wares:
All that are wealthy, wou'd increase their Heap,
And he rejoic'd, he'd bought his Goods so cheap;
He thank'd the Saint, that prosper'd him that Day,
For all he wanted now, was Cash to pay;
But he must try with those he corresponds,
To raise the Sums, for which he'd giv'n his Bonds.

By

By good Saint *Martin* (meek Dan *John* reply'd,)
That you are safe return'd, I'm overjoy'd ;
And was I rich in ought but Piety,
The Sums you want, you might command of me !
A friendly Deed requires a like Return,
And your late Loan is in my Mem'ry borne ;
My Pray'rs and Thanks I tender during Life,
Yet, by Saint *Austin*, I repaid your Wife,
The very Sum you lent, as she will vouch,
When put in Mind — she took it on the Couch !
But if her Mem'ry fails, I'll make it clear,
By certain Tokens I remember there.

But by your Leave, I may no longer stay,
Our Abbot's going out of Town to Day ;
And whilst I loiter here, he waits of Course,
Since, without me, he will not mount his Horse ;
From me greet well our Dame, my pious Niece,
Farewel, 'till next we meet, Heav'n give you Peace !

This wary Merchant here no longer stays,
But takes up Cash, and his Engagements pays ;
And, merry as a Jay, he Homeward flew,
For well went his Affairs, and that he knew !

18 *The Seaman's TALE.*

Since full ten Thousand Crowns his Profit made,
And all his Travelling Expence defray'd.

His Wife with welcome met him at the Door,
As was her usual Custom long before.
They made good Cheer, spent merrily the Night,
For, from his good Success, his Heart was light.
When Day peep't forth, his lovely Wife he clips,
And feasted on the Honey of her Lips;
Stroak'd the dear Pad, and bounding toughly rode:
Enough, said she, enough, you've cool'd your Blood;
And wantonly with him again she play'd;
At length to her, this worthy Merchant said.

My Love, I have a Crow to pluck with you,
You're naughty, dear, and I am angry now;
The social Frankness is estrang'd by thee,
Which was between my Coz, Dan *John*, and me.
Why didst thou not disclose, before I went,
That he had paid the Gold, I lately lent?
Of which, he can some certain Tokens bring,
And colour'd, when he thought I touch'd that String;
For, when my Speech of Bonds and borrowing run,
He look'd askance, as if I came to dun,

Yet,

Yet, by Saint *Paul*, 'twas far from my Design,
To him I went in Friendship, not for Coin !
Then prithee, Wife, of such Neglects take heed ;
To pay, and still be dun'd, is hard indeed.

This Wife was neither daunted nor amaz'd,
But boldly thus reply'd, with Accent rais'd ;
Dan *Jahn*, that treach'rous Monk, to Hell may go ;
Him I defy, and all his Tokens too :
May Devils kennel in his Monkish Snout,
'Till He, the greater Fiend, expel 'em out.
That I receiv'd the Gold, I doubtless knew,
But thought it giv'n me, for the Love of you,
For my peculiar Use, in Cloaths or Rings ;
You Husbands have the Credit of such Things !
I know you're Cousins, and he loves good Cheer,
I thought *this* Gratitude, for feasting *here* :
But since I carv'd but ill, and mis'd the Joint,
I now will answer shortly to the Point.

Tho' I'm your *Debtor*, others are as slack,
I'll pay you soon and truly on my Back.
Keep you th' *Account*, and if your Mem'ry fail,
I am your *Wife*, and score it on my *Tail*.

And thus, receive your Payments on demand,
For other Coin, I have it not at Hand.
Yet wastfully have squander'd none away,
But laid out every Crown in rich Array;
And since 'twas all to honour thee, my Life,
I prithee, be not angry with thy Wife.
My Flesh is not insolvent, and we're wed,
And by Saint *Paul*, I'll pay you — but in Bed :
Forgive me then, and this Way turn, dear Spouse,
And take thy Payment of the *Thing* that owes.

The Merchant, seeing Chiding was in vain,
(For Actions past who can recall again ?)

Thus answer'd : Wife, this once I pardon thee,
But never more assume such Liberty !
If Men, tho' Monks or Cousins, return my Crowns,
Ne'er deem them Gifts to purchase Rings and Gowns.

Thus wily Wives are never at a Loss,
But set on darkest Deeds a sudden Gloss ;
Expert in all the *Shifts*, which Devils teach 'em,
But *more* than Devils have Monks that over-reach 'em.

THE
MANCIPLE'S TALE.

WHEN bright *Apollo*, exil'd from the Sky,
Dwelt here on Earth, depriv'd of Deity,
He far exceeded all the Youth below,
In Vigour, Beauty, Wit, and Arch'ry too :
In high Renown for many a martial Deed,
His fatal Shafts made cruel *Python* bleed !
In Music of all kinds, he found no Peer ;
And, when he Sung, charm'd ev'ry mortal Ear.

The *Theban* Stones *Amphion's* Harp obey'd,
Rising in mural Order whilst he play'd,
And Tow'rs, and Bulwarks, from his Music sprung ;
Yet finer *Phæbus* play'd, and sweeter sung !
And in Proportion, Features, and in Mien,
Outshone all Mortals, that had ever been.
With these, he shew'd a noble gen'rous Mind,
Where Courtesy, Wit, Worth, and Honour, shin'd ;

The

22 *The Manciple's* TALE.

The very Flow'r of all the World was he,
As well in all Things as in Chivalry !

And since his Shafts the Serpent's Blood had drain'd,
Oft rode the Bow in his victorious Hand ;
In Sign of Triumph, o'er the vanquish'd Foe,
He joys in this and a domestic Crow :
Which he had choicely foster'd many a Day,
And taught to speak beyond a vocal Jay.
This Crow excell'd in Whiteness any Swan,
And was in Speech as fluent as a Man ;
His Tongue, melodious as a Nightingale's,
Delighted all that heard his pleasing Tales :
And his charm'd Lord the honey'd Music sips,
Like the sweet Accents from fair *Virgins* Lips !

This Son of *Jove*, this God of Day and Wit,
Wou'd yet, it seems, to *Hymen's* Yoke submit ;
But wisely dreading an eternal Wife,
Chose a meer Woman of a transient Life !
One that possess'd all *Hebe's* blooming Glow,
Her Eye was *Cupid's* Quiver, and his Bow ;
Roses and Lillies her sweet Face array'd,
And all the *Graces* in her Motions play'd !

Love

Love sped in her bright Glance a fiery Dart,
Which, swift as Thought, transfix'd *Apollo's* Heart,
He woo'd, and quickly won th' enchanting Prize,
Nor envy'd *Jove* the Pleasure of his Skies!
All Day he strove to feast her with Delight,
And sure a youthful God might please at Night!
But since he knew how Women lov'd that *same*,
Like Mortals he grew jealous of the Dame.
Vulcan became the Jest of Gods themselves,
Which *Phæbus* wou'd avoid from human Elves!
Hence on his Wife he kept a watchful Eye,
But fruitless were his Care and Jealousy!
For when Lust's Fire is kindling in a Dame,
Locks, Bolts, and Spies, but blow it in a Flame.
To curb a headstrong Wife's lascivious Will,
As soon you may a Sieve with Water fill!
But the pure Mind an impure Deed disdains,
And Virtue guards the Throne, on which she reigns,
But to resume my Tale, *Apollo* try'd
All Ways to please, and to secure his Bride.
With soft Endearments rais'd her warm Desires,
And quench'd, as well as kindled, am'rous Fires:

24 *The Manciple's* TALE.

In Hopes with Vigilance, or Love, to win her,
To keep her Vows — unless the Devil was in her !

But who cou'd e'er eradicate with Art
The Seeds Dame Nature planted in the Heart ?

Cage up a Bird but in surrounding Wires,
Then feast him with all Dainties he desires ;
Keep the Cage sweet, and clean it thrice a Day,
And though 'tis Gold, and glitter ne'er so gay,
Yet rather had this Bird a thousand fold
Breathe in a Forest, that is wide and cold,
And feed on Worms, and other wretched Fare ;
To 'scape the hated Cage is all his Care !

Breed up a Cat, and nourish her with Milk,
Feast her with Chickens, let her Couch be Silk,
Yet, if she sees a Mouse run through the Hall,
She flies her Couch, and scorns her Dainties all ;
And furiously pursues the little Creature,
With a most ardent Appetite to eat her !

The young salacious Wolves of Female kind
Will couple with the lowdest Dogs they find ;
Careless of Reputation in the Deed :
Foul Water quenches Flame in Time of Need !

Lo !

Lo ! how wild Lust assumes her burning Throne,
When Appetite once pulls Discretion down !
But all, here instanc'd, only Men affects,
For who'll presume t'include the charming Sex ?
They may have Appetites — but Lust is frightful :
And all will own they deal in Things delightful !

But Man, licentious Creature, ever prizes
Coarse Flesh abroad, and his own Wife despises ;
Tho' she be loving, true, and debonair,
In blooming Youth, and as an Angel fair,
Yet Men will their deprav'd Desire refresh,
And relish nauseous Trulls, as finer Flesh ;
Shewing in this no squeamish Appetite,
For Evil's sake in Evil they delight !

But to proceed, — The God with beamy Hair,
Now grown a Spouse, the Spouses Fate must share ;
And his divine Perfections all conspire
To prick him *Sbrive* of ample *Cuckoldshire* ;
For, spite of all his Care, our Wife had found
An under Labourer to till her Ground ;
A Slave, which no Comparison cou'd stand
With the young vigorous Farmer of the Land !

26 *The Manciple's* TALE.

O fickle Sex! O lamentable Cafe!

Must Merit to meer Infamy give Place?

It so befel, in Absence of her Spouse,

This Wife invites the Leacher to her House:

Leacher! O vulgar Term, the Shame of Speech!

Dear gentle Dames, your Pardon I beseech.

But *Plato* says, (and I'm of *Plato* fond,)

Words shou'd with Deeds exactly correspond;

T'exhibit Objects clear, distinct and true,

The Words and Things must wear a Kindred Hue.

I'm a plain Man, and scarce distinguish clear,

(Amidst the nice Punctillio's of the Fair,)

How Ladies differ, save in Quinity,

When plung'd as deep in equal Infamy:

From a mean Wanton that her Favours grants;

This has her Leachers, those have their Gallants:

The Lady, glossing o'er the Scene she plays,

Her am'rous Hunger free from Shame allays;

'Tis all but Love and Gallantry she says.

What tho' she daily prostitute her Ware,

'Tis stil'd Intriguing, ---- or a Love Affair:

Poor,

Poor, these are Punks, — a Name the Rich defy,
Yet, backward fall'n, as low as others lie,
And differ but as Arrows in a Sheaf,
Or as a lawless Tyrant from a Thief.
Tyrants with Armies in a savage Mood
Whole Regions burn, and drench a Land in Blood,
From Death, and Ruin, all their Grandeur flows,
Yet Lawrel must adorn their conqu'ring Brows ;
Who robb'd and murder'd but the Rich and Poor !
Is he a Thief who leads a Thousand Score ?
The daring Captain of Banditti-Braves,
Who scarce e'er fitted Twenty for their Graves ;
But with his petty Band some Straglers Plunders,
Too weak, thank Heav'n, to work those glorious
Tho' signaliz'd around, a gallant Chief [Wonders.
We stile an Outlaw, Villain, Cut-throat Thief !

But to proceed --- This choice Gallant arrives,
And finds warm Welcome with this Flow'r of Wives ;
Who scorn'd to lose the Time in idle Prate,
For sometimes Women Ceremonies hate !
The Business o'er, away th' Advent'rer speeds :
But this white Crow beheld their precious Deeds !

28 *The Manciple's TALE.*

(For in this Room his Cage was ever hung,)
 Yet mute as any Fish remain'd his Tongue ;
 But soon as his returning Lord he spy'd,
 He stretch'd his Throat and -- Cuckow, Cuckow, cry'd!
 What Note is this, (his Lord surpriz'd complains,)
 Thy Tongue was always us'd to charming Strains;
 My Heart rejoic'd, when e'er I heard my Crow,
 These Words are doleful, iterated now!

Now by thy Father *Jove*, the Bird reply'd,
 The Words I spake are too well justify'd
 For all thy Worth, thy Beauty, and thy Parts,
 Thy Skill in Music, and the finest Arts,
 Thy Love, thy Complaisance, all, all, are vain:
 Thou serv'st but for a Dupe, the Case is plain!

A Wretch that is as much surpass'd by thee,
 As any Lion does exceed a Flea;
 So may I relish all the Joys of Life,
 As on that Bed I saw him dight thy Wife!
 Saw the bivalvous End expanding lay'd,
 With an exub'rant *Paphian* Scene display'd,
 Which suddenly was hidden from my View;
 For over all the Cuckow-Maker flew.

What

The Manciple's TALE. 29

What wou'd you more, the Crow no Story feign'd,
But their bold Deed in Words as bold explain'd ;
Describ'd throughout the glutting Exercise,
And swore his Evidence were both his Eyes.

At this amaz'd *Apollo* bent his Brows,
His panting Heart with bursting Anguish glows,
Up flew the Bow, level'd the fatal Dart, [Heart;
Twang'd the tough String, pierc'd is the Woman's
Forth springs the Purple Flood, she falls, she dies !
And now his sad Regret to Frenzy flies ;
Harp, Lute, and all his Instruments of Sound,
He dash'd to scatter'd Fragments on the Ground ;
Broke all his Arrows, and associate Bow,
And, glancing Fury, thus accosts the Crow.

Traytor (says he) thou hast a Venom flung,
Which fires my Blood, from thy vile *Scorpion* Tongue.

O Death ! that I was subject to thy Reign,
For Immortality is now but Pain !
O Gem divine ! O Spouse more dear than Life ;
The sweetest Creature — and the truest Wife !
I've now depriv'd thee of thy Rosy Glow,
Tho' thou wast spotless as the Virgin Snow.

30 *The Manciple's* TALE.

O hairbrain'd Fool, O Rage of Reason void,
 That such a blooming Innocent destroy'd!
 O fond Credulity! O false Suspicion!
 Where was my Wit, and where was my Discretion?
 O well beware, lest idle Tales deceive;
 Require the strongest Proof, ere you believe.
 Refrain your Fury, let Revenge be slow,
 Examine thoroughly ere you strike the Blow.
 Thousands in Frenzy have committed Crimes,
 For which they've curst their Fates a thousand Times!
 O that with Life I cou'd but end my Grief!
 Then to the Crow he cry'd, O thou false Thief,
 I'll soon reward thee for thy groundless Tale;
 Thou, that outsung an Ev'ning Nightingale,
 Shalt for that Voice assume a hoarser Tone,
 And lose thy snowy Feathers ev'ry one;
 Ne'er shalt thou speak one Word articulate,
 To pour invenom'd Malice in thy Prate:
 Plumes black as Night thy Eody shall surround,
 Nor shalt thou ever utter pleasing Sound,
 But still portend wild Tempests, Storms and Rain,
 In Token that through thee my Wife was slain.

Then

The Manciple's TALE. 31

Then on the miserable Crow he flew,
And tore away his Plumes of snowy Hue ;
Made him all black, of Speech and Song bereav'd him,
And out of Door, to Dogs, or Devils heav'd him.
No Crows e'er since were white, or spoke, or sung,
But hoarsely croak, for his loquacious Tongue.

Thus ends my Tale, from which this Moral flows :
Abhorr'd is he, that opens Scenes of Woes ;
The Tongue that all within the Knowledge says,
Upon the Flesh, and Bones, the Danger lays :
Well shou'd you weigh the baleful News you bear,
Before you pour it in the friendly Ear !
Within a Husband's Heart you drench a Knife,
Whilst you display th'Adult'ry of his Wife ;
And, for the Torment he deriv'd from you,
Eternal Hate and Vengeance are your Due.
Associate where you will, with high or low,
Restrain your Tongue, and recollect the Crow.

T H E

THE
CHARACTER of the
WIFE of *BATH*.

AMONGST the rest, appear'd a jovial Wife,
A Dame of *Bath*, in the Decline of Life;
A little deaf, — but that she well might bear,
Who chose much rather to be heard, ---- than hear!

The Clothier's Art most curiously she ply'd,
And those of *Ghent*, and *Ypres* too, defy'd.
In pious Matters, Pride inflam'd her Zeal,
She still the first at holy Shrines wou'd kneel;
If richer Off'rings any Dame bestow'd,
She lost all Patience and with Envy glow'd.

Large was her Kerchief, and embroid'red round
With artful Figures, on a curious Ground;
This deck'd her Head, when she shone out, full dress'd,
Altho' the Pounds it weigh'd, were Ten at least!
But pond'rous Fin'ry weakest Wives sustain;
Fine were her Hose, and dy'd in Scarlet Grain,

And

The Character of the Wife of Bath. 33

And tight upstrain'd, --- Her shining Shoes were new,
Bold was her Face, and of a ruddy Hue.

She bore a good Repute amongst the Dames,
And quench'd, successively, five Spoufes Flames;
Retentive of her Pleasure, and her Truth,
I pass o'er all the Gambols of her Youth.

She'd travell'd far, o'er many a Land and Stream,
Went thrice a Pilgrim to *Jerusalem*;
Had been at *Bollogne*, knew Duke *Godfrey's* Reign,
Saw *Rome*, *Lorretto*, and had rambled *Spain*;
And wond'rous Tales had gather'd by the Way,
Much of St. *James*, and *Collen's* Kings cou'd say.
Her simp'ring Lips, when e'er unclos'd, display'd
Teeth prominent, advancing from their Shade.
Upon an ambling Pad, at Ease she rode,
And, to refresh her hearing, wore a Hood;
An ample Hat appear'd upon her Head,
Whose Brims, in Circuit, like a Buckler spread;
Around her swelling Hips a Mantle wheels,
And glitt'ring Spurs adorn'd her active Heels.
Jefts she had Store, a sharp and biting Wit,
Cou'd rail, or carp, or laugh, as she thought fit:

In am'rous Lore excell'd the Wits of *France*,
 For she knew ev'ry Step of that old Dance!

T H E

TALE of the WIFE of *BATH*,
 and her five HUSBANDS, re-
 counted by herself.

O F Marriage, Love, Contention, Joys and Woes,
 I tell what from a long Experience flows.

My Knowledge bought with Grief, in many a Year,
 You purchase, for one Hour's Audience, Here.

The Anguish, destin'd to a Nuptial Life,

None can delineate truer than a Wife;

Who was the Source of all the shooting Pains,

The Scourge of Slaves, herself a Slave in Chains!

Th'intangled Captive cries --- avoid the Snare,

Left others may, by your Mishaps, beware!

Sinceturn'd of twelve, by Cunning, Charms, or Gold,

I have atchiev'd five Husbands, young and old;

All

All Men in good Esteem ; to ev'ry one
I swore Allegiance firſt, and then uſurp'd the Throne !

Our Saviour once beheld a Wedding Feaſt,
But never twice, (that we can find, at leaſt ;)
Whence ſome infer, (but ſure the Text they ſtrain,)
All People ſhou'd from wedding twice abſtain !
And then the Woman of *Samaria's* Cafe,
Who, when requir'd to bring her Spouſe in Place ;
Reply'd ſhe'd none, but was ſeverely told,
The laſt of Five ſhe well for none might hold !

This Point is dark, enlight'n it, you that can ;
Might ſhe have four, and not the fifth good Man ?
I know not how the learn'd explain the Text,
But ſure no Limit to the Number's fix'd.
T'increase and multiply, was Heav'n's Decree,
And that's a Paſſage mighty clear to me ;
This too, that ev'ry Huſband, during Life,
Shall leave his Parents, for his dearer Wife !

Good *David's* Son, for Wiſdom ſo renown'd,
With num'rous Wives took many a merry Round ;
In Woman's Matters a moſt potent Prince,
Sure none were half ſo well appointed ſince ;

36 *The T A L E of the*

To be refresh'd by such a Man — ! For yet
 Degen'rate Moderns raise a pleasing Fit,
 Which I've endur'd, as tender Women do ;
 And still, when Duty calls, will undergo !
 For if my bounteous Spouse shou'd chance to fail me,
 I trust to find some other to regale me !
 Women were not created Nuns to turn ;
 And *Paul* declares, we'd better Wed than Burn :
 Virginity he prais'd, but never press'd,
 He gave no Precept, only thought it best.
 A single Life injoin'd — implicitly
 Condemns the Nuptial State to Infamy :
 If all were Virgins, Virgins soon wou'd cease ;
 Seed must be sow'd, before it will increafe.
 But be fair Virgin Purity the Prize,
 The Goal in View, let's see who swiftest flies.
 Start either Sex, for one must foremost go,
 Since dang'rous 'tis assembling Fire and Tow !
 I envy not their Blifs, who are renown'd
 For hoarding Maiden-heads for hallow'd Ground ;
 As bright Examples may their Virtues shine,
 I'm not so vain, as to grow Proud of mine.

No

No Palace e'er was furnish'd all with Gold ;
 Brass, Iron, Wood, their various Stations hold ;
 Each have their Use ; so Heav'n inclines us here,
 To chuse that Life, which is our proper Sphere.
Sell all you have, and feed the Poor ; — 'tis well ;
 But *who* must Buy, were *all* requir'd to Sell ?
 Aspire thus high, you live a perfect Saint,
 But, by your Leave, I'm not the Person meant ;

A pious Woman, in a Virgin State,
 I fooner will applaud than imitate :
 Years fly too swift, tho' they by Moments go,
 For me t'enjoy what *Hymen's* Rites allow.

But why these diff'rent Sexes ; you must grant,
 No Workman carries Tools, he ne'er will want !
 They're form'd, you'll say, t'effuse the glowing Tide ;
 'Tis true --- but for another Use beside ;
Husbands give Wives their Due --but how? I say
 We take these Dues but one peculiar Way !
 Presume not hence, those furnish'd for the Feat
 May lewdly leap on ev'ry one they meet,
 By Law, or decent Order, unconfin'd,
 And level human to the brutal Kind !

I speak of Marriage, and the Virgin State,
 And Freedom in the Choice is the Debate.
 In all past Ages some had Pow'r and Will
 To die pure Maids, and some may live so still;
 With fine white Bread may such indulge their Lives,
 The coarser Brown will serve less dainty Wives!
 The Station Heav'n assign'd shall bound my Wish;
 Flesh be my Lot --- let Virgins feast on Fish!
 I'm not so nice, nor emulate with those,
 But will expatiate in the Way I chose;
 Treasure with which by Nature I'm endow'd,
 I'll use as freely as it was bestow'd!
 My Heart in it's own Bounty feels Delight,
 I'm at my Spouse's Service ev'ry Night;
 He keeps the Key that opens all my Store,
 And ne'er had Reason to repine for more!
 His Dues I tender, and my own Will have,
 For I'm his Creditor, and he's my Slave;
 His Flesh is mine, and shall be during Life,
 Husbands shou'd Love — mine shall obey his Wife!
 These Points discuss'd, see *Hymen's* Bow'r unfold,
 And all the blessed Furniture behold!

Of

Of five egregious Spouſes, which I had,
 Three were ſcarce excellent, and two ſcarce bad :
 My firſt three Lords were rich indeed, --- but truly,
 Full old to pay the nuptial Tribute duly ;
 Good Heav'n forgive me, but I laugh outright,
 When I revolve their Warfare of the Night,
 How piteouſly they toil'd, yet toil'd in vain ;
 An evil *Rider* knowing *Steeds* diſdain !
 I bore what I contemn'd ; for in this Caſe
 The Lands and Gold are what we Wives embrace :
 With theſe indow'd (all that were good of theirs)
 To loſe their Love was not amongſt my Fears ;
 When they and all their Wealth were in my Pow'r,
 'Twas idle Care to pleaſe them ev'ry Hour,
 Unleſs my Pleaſure, Eaſe, or Int'reſt ſee'd me,
 Then cou'd no *Bride* in *Honey-Moon* exceed me !
 But whether by my Wit, or Beauty fir'd,
 They doated on me, more than I deſir'd !
 For *Fondle-wives* I hold no dainty *Diſh* :
Trouts I muſt tickle are my fav'rite *Fiſh* !
 Why ſhou'd I more inflame the glowing Heart ?
 To warm the Cold is the moſt needful Part !

It is our Buſineſs, cunning Women hold,
 To gain *new* Lovers, not to cheriſh *old*;
 My Spouſes well might mone my gauling Chain,
 Hard were my Laws, deſpotic was my Reign;
 Appealing vain, Reſiſtance too muſt fail,
 Cow'd by a *Tongue*, and haraſ'd by a *Tail*!
 The *Dunmow* * *Monks* might their own *Bacon* chew,
 For thence I'm ſure we'd not one *Gammon* due!

* At *Dunmow* in *Effex* was a Monaſtry, where a *Gammon* of Bacon would be given to any, who kneeling on two pointed Stones in the Church-Yard, before the Prior and Monks, would take the following Oath. (See *Fuller's Worthies*.)

You ſhall ſwear by the Cuſtom of our Confeſſion,
 That you never made any nuptial Tranſgreſſion,
 Since you were marry'd Man and Wife,
 By houſhold Brawls or contentious Strife;
 Or otherwiſe in Bed or at Board,
 Offended each other in Deed or Word;
 Or ſince the Pariſh Clerk ſaid Amen,
 Wiſhed yourſelves unmarried again;
 Or in a Twelve Month and a Day,
 Repented not in Thought any Way;
 But continued true and in Deſire,
 As when you joined Hands in holy Choir:
 If to theſe Conditions without all Fear,
 Of your own Accord you will freely ſwear:
 A Gammon of Bacon you ſhall receive,
 And carry it hence with Love and free Leave;
 For this is our Cuſtom at *Dunmow* well known,
 Tho' the Sport be ours, the Bacon's your own.

It appears on Record, that *Richard Wright* of *Norfolk*, in 1465; *Stephen Samuel*, in 1467; and *Tho' le Fuller*, in 1511, took this Oath, and receiv'd their Bacon.

So

So rare my Favours, he was happy made,
Whose choicest Presents were with Smiles repaid:
Sometimes with *Words*, sometimes with kinder *Eyes*
I threw them, as I pleas'd, in Extasies.

You sov'reign Wives, attend, and learn the Way
To manage Slaves, who dare oppose your Sway;
Our Sex, of Nature, can themselves avail,
To face down Men that all their Senses fail!
For never yet cou'd self-sufficient Man
So boldly pour out Lies as Woman can,
And Oaths and Vows, and Tears her Point to gain,
Or ratify whatever she can feign;
Her Spouse hears, sees, and feels, is sure awake,
Yet, shall her Maid be sworn he must mistake!

O, you sly Fox, ('twas thus I preach'd to mine)
How comes my Neighbour's Wife so rich and fine?
She flaunts, and roves and revels far and near,
Whilst I'm coop'd up, with scarce a Rag to wear:
Her thou dost haunt --- and why --- prevents Inquiry,
Is she so charming? Or art thou so fiery?
Abroad industrious, negligent at Home,
Busy your *Shuttle* in it's proper *Loom*!

My Maid must hear your luscious Whispers too,
 Like a Town-Bull you the whole Sex pursue!
 Yet if I entertain some *friendly Soul*,
 Lord! how you chafe, and like old *Cerb'rus* growl;
 What, no Amusement to a Wife afford?
 Whilst you reel Home as drunk as any Lord!
 Your Place resum'd, the Sermon then begins,
 All Men, you preach, are marry'd for their Sins;
 We Wives what costly Toys, at best what Evils,
 But Poor and Proud, are meer domestic Devils!
 If Rich, and of illustrious Pedigree,
 We stun all Ears with our Nobility;
 Our Pride and Spleen assume alternate Sway:
 We're Sick and Peevish, or we're madly Gay!
 If Poor, you're beggar'd with our Aunts and Cousins,
 If fair, Gallants besiege us round by Dozens:
 And, thus environ'd, who can long be chaste?
 For ev'ry Fortrefs may be won at last.
 Aspiring Walls, if open to the Sky,
 May be surmounted, tho' they're ne'er so high!
 All Women will to Gold or Flatt'ry yield;
 If this is vanquish'd, that shall win the Field:

But

But some, impatient 'till the Men propound,
Will leap upon 'em like a *Spanish* Hound.

Some Men, you say, for Gain pursue the Chace,
Some for a Shape, or an enchanting Face :
One Dances fine, another sweetly Sings,
Now to an Eye, th'attracted Lover springs ;
A swimming Motion, or a swelling Breast,
Or peeping Feet, allure the amorous Guest ;
Fine Fingers, Lilly Hands, the well-turn'd Arm,
Are ev'ry one, for some fond Fool a Charm ;
Survey all round, there swims no Goose so grey,
But finds some courteous Gander in her Way.

A chiding Wife, and smoaky House you blame,
And fly from Home, as if 'twas in a Flame :
Still mutt'ring of ungrateful Toil in Bed,
And cry who can with Hopes of Heav'n wed !
Vain Wretch ! what grown as wicked as you're weak ?
How if Heav'n's Light'ning blast you as you speak !

With Care a Virgin hides her Faults, you say,
But *Hymen* rends the treach'rous Veil away :
A Horse, or Ass, thou say'st, is chose with Care,
A Habit try'd, and rung all cracking Ware ;

44 *The TALE of the*

Eyes are distrustful, Feeling searches Flaws,
 And ev'ry Blemish bids the Buyer pause;
 But Wives they rashly take, nor once suppose,
 There can be Vices, where such Beauty glows!
 Yet the dear Bride, so sweet, demure, and meek,
 Starts up a Fury from the Nuptial Week!
 Thou say'st too, I'm so vain, I frown and chide,
 Unless thy constant Flatt'ries feed my Pride;
 My Face must be a Model all divine,
 And poring fixt thy rapt'rous Eyes on mine:
 My Voice as Heav'nly Music must be priz'd,
 And thine with Lifes and Dears be richly spic'd;
 From strain'd Encomiums shou'd my Blushes spring,
 They're but thy Cue my rosy Bloom to sing!
 My Banquets too you grudge, and swear, at least
 My Birth-day is esteem'd an annual Feast;
 Then when my Kind'red come, --- what State I take!
 My very Nurse is honour'd for my Sake!
 Eternal Treats, --- the Guests at Bed and Board!
 Thus you declaim, --- and lie at ev'ry Word!
Jenkin, poor Youth, alas, excites your Fear,
 It seems the Stripling shews a Manly Air;

A sparkling Eye, a Cheek where Roses glow,
 And his fine Hair in glitt'ring Ringlets flow;
 Then he delights to 'squire me up and down,
 And when I pay him with my Smiles, you frown!
 But quit these idle Fears, and clear your Brow,
 I scorn your Boy, tho' you were bury'd now!
 How dare you turn o'er Gold a Miser's Key,
 Since all your worldly Goods belong to me?
 Make me your Idiot, by Saint *James* I swear,
 You shan't ingross both Wealth and Woman's Ware;
 One you shall quit, were you stuck o'er with Eyes,
 Spite of your Locks, your Scouts, and Train of Spies.
 Immure me, Man! or whelm me in your Chest,
 All, that have Wit, let Wives go where they list!
My dearest, please thyself; — (thus you shou'd say,)

Spare not for Gold, shine forth in rich Array;
 Respire fresh Air, 'twill make thy Spirits flow,
 Scandal may prate in vain, thy Truth I know.
 Restraint we scorn, and love to gad and gaze,
 But hate the Wretch who watches all our Ways;
 What if all Day I revel, dance, and sing,
 Banquets partake, and yield as good a Thing?

Shall

Shall you presume to grudge at our Delight,
 You'll find enough, and overplus — at Night?
 Your Neighbour's Torch is burning, --- can he blame
 The Man that lights a Candle at the Flame?
 No Light is lost. --- And tender Women sure
 May salve the Wounds, which without Cost they cure!

Our Trinkets, Pendants, Knots and Lace (you hold)
 Serve but for Signs where *female Flesh* is fold;
 A Matron, careful of her Fame, detects
 A glaring Dress, curl'd Locks, and naked Breasts;
 Cats have their Foibles too (you sagely note)
 For, singe but Puss's variegated Coat,
 She rests at Home; but, when she's sleek and gay,
 She prunes her Whiskers, and leaps out to play;
 Frisks o'er the Garden, Gutter, Hedge or Lane,
 Gets Catterwawl'd, and then returns again.

For me, you such fine Similies select;
 Thus you presume I range, when nicely deek'd!
 Will this avail you? Watching I despise,
 Tho' *Argus* help you with his hundred Eyes,
 Yet will I bring about my own Design,
 In spite of all within his View or thine!

You

You cry, three Things imbitter human Life,
 Yet are meer Trifles to that Plague a Wife !
 Whose very Favours prove infernal Pain,
 She's greedier than the barren Land of Rain,
 Like Wild-fire her fierce Appetite prevails,
 Unquenchable before the *Matter* fails.
 As the vile Worm in Wood devours her Way,
 So Wives perfidious on their Husbands prey.

'Twas thus by Force or Cunning I controul'd
 My three first Spouses, mighty fage and old ;
 They prated thus, when drunk ; I fac'd them down,
 And how their nightly Pranks amus'd the Town ;
 Took that for evident, which false I knew,
 But *Jenkin* and my Niece wou'd swear 'twas true.

I winc'd, and bit, like any Horse untam'd,
 And when most Guilty, first at them exclaim'd !
 This gave the whole Dispute a dext'rous Turn,
 For Millers first must grind th' earliest Corn ;
 I feign'd Suspicion of their Love Affairs, [Stairs ;
 Yet knew they scarce cou'd drag their Legs down
 And vow'd I rambled out, and broke my Rest,
 Only to find what Misses they caref'd ;

These

These sly Pretences feasted me with Mirth,
For all such Wit is giv'n us at our Birth ;
Boon Nature found us weak, and gave us then,
To spin, to weep, and to make Fools of Men ;
And to my Praise, what e'er Contention pass'd,
By Fraud, or Force, I still prevail'd at last.
I murmur'd all the Day, and when in Bed,
Eternally a Curtain Lecture read :
When e'er I felt his Arm across my Side,
Dispos'd to play, then I began to chide ;
And for his Tenure claim'd a Tribute due,
Then suffer'd — 'twas a Nicety I knew.
But sov'rain Gold with Women will prevail,
Marry who will, the Sex are all on Sale ;
For who with empty Hand a Hawk can lure !
But we for Interest nauseous Love endure ;
Can sigh, and languish, ogle, curl, and kiss,
And counterfeit the most extatic Bliss :
Yet well we know a Pigeon from a Kite,
And whom we hug and kiss, could curse and bite.
My Spouse might swell, and Lord-it, I wou'd chide
Altho' the Pope, or Devil had sat beside him ; [him,

In

In all Contentions, or at Bed or Board,
 I still made sure of the concluding Word !
 When e'er I die, my Conscience bids me swear,
 I'm not one Syllable in Man's Arrear.
 When once I'd fac'd him down, thus wou'd I say,
 Good Lord, how sheepishly you look to Day ;
 Approach, my Lamb, that I may kiss thy Cheek,
 You always look so sweetly, when you're Meek !
Job you have study'd, and can Patience teach,
 But shou'd in Conscience practise what you preach ;
 You dictate still ; —— but learn of me, my Life,
 As you love Peace and Quiet, please your Wife :
 You claim most Reason, boast of Strength and Skill ;
 Well may you let weak Women have their Will !
 What makes you droop and murmur ? Ah ! my Dear,
 You wou'd alone ingross my joyous Ware !
 Why take it, Man, 'tis thine, enjoy the whole,
 Bestrew you, but you love it at your Soul !
 O, Sir, if I wou'd traffick once that Way,
 How quickly might I shine in rich Array ;
 But 'tis your own choice Bit--- nay, fye, my Dear,
 Psha, pish, what in the Face of Day, — and here !

H

Such

Such precious Lives I made three Spouses pass,
 The very Wife proclaim'd what Woman was :
 Some Youth I had, and roll'd a wanton Eye,
 Wild as a Buck, and prated like a Pye ;
 The Harp ne'er waited my responsive Feet,
 I fung down *Philomel*, with Voice as sweet ;
 And then to clear my Pipe, and chear my Heart,
 At the crown'd Goblet, briskly play'd my Part !
 (That Churl *Metellus* of the *Roman* Line,
 Murder'd his Wife, 'tis said, for drinking Wine :
 Were I his Spouse, I would not be restrain'd,
 Spight of his bloody Mind, and mortal Hand !
 For Wine allays all Grief, and clears the Brow,
 Creates young Blood, and makes the Spirits flow,
 And certain 'tis, as Cold engenders Hail,
 A liq'rish Mouth must have a leach'rous Tail ;
 For where gay *Bacchus* reigns, *Love* triumphs there,
 As all true Sportsmen on their Knowledge swear.

But Lord ! to recollect my youthful Days,
 My Heart now bounds, so sweet th' Idea plays ;
 Of Fairs, of Wakes, of Weddings, and the rest,
 I have enjoy'd this wicked World at least.

But

But Time imbitters all the Sweets below ;
 My Charms are gone, the Devil with 'em go !
 I've traffick'd with the Flow'r of Life full well,
 And as the Market goes the Bran must sell !

My fourth dear Spouse was in the Spring of Life,
 And with a Miss or two reliev'd the Wife ;
 O how this made my jealous Frenzy burn,
 But by Saint *Paul* he found a sharp Return ;
 A Brand, from his own Fire, my Fury caught,
 And in ideal Strokes my Vengeance wrought :
 I dress'd, I rang'd, I look'd so gay, and then
 I shot such tender Glances at the Men,
 I danc'd, I sung, I laugh'd, and quaff'd so free,
 I made him drink the Cup he spic'd for me ;
 And so compleatly play'd the Wanton's Part,
 That Flames of Jealousy devour'd his Heart.
 I hope his Soul now rests in endless Glory,
 For in this World I was his Purgatory ;
 And many a tedious Hour he tun'd and sung,
 To hide how bitterly his Foot was wrung ;
 No Mortal cou'd his Misery conceive,
 But he that felt, and I that made him grieve :

52 *The T A L E of the*

He dy'd, when from *Jerusalem* I came,
 And lies interr'd beneath a wooden Beam;
 Fix'd at his Head, a Rood denotes the Place;
 His Tomb, 'tis true, no precious Sculptures grace!
 Short of that curious Fabric, which they tell us,
 Was for *Darius* fashion'd by *Apelles*;
 But costly Tombs are Vanities at best,
 So Spouse farewell,--- and may thy Spirit rest.

Now of my fifth lov'd Husband will I tell,
 Oh may his Soul escape the Jaws of Hell!
 Yet his Caresses oft' wou'd shrewdly fall,
 I feel them on my Ribs, and ever shall.
 But then at Night he was so fresh and gay,
 I lost the Vengeance hoarded all the Day.
 With that good Turn, which for all Ill atones,
 He won my Heart, tho' he had flea'd my Bones;
 In Bed, tho' dang'rous his pretended Spear,
 I lov'd him more, the more I suffer'd there.

For strange fantastic Minds we Women have,
 Joys bought with Pain most eagerly we crave;
 And only what is rare or dear we prize,
 For barren Seasons make Provision rise.

What

What lightly comes our Appetites will pall,
 As in a fruitful Year the Markets fall;
 When Men will fly, we follow them as fast,
 If they pursue, we fly with headlong Haste.

But to my Tale: This Spouse, of whom I told,
 I took for naked Love, and not for Gold;
 He was a Clerk, from Oxford just come down,
 And boarded with my Gossip in the Town,
 Dame *Alison*, a Friend so true and kind,
 I treasur'd all her Counsel in my Mind;
 And, in return, the Secrets of my Breast
 She knew far better than the Parish Priest:
 I told her the minutest Things, ——— and all;
 Ay, had my Spouse but piss'd against a Wall!
 Or acted something that might cost his Life,
 To her, — and to another worthy Wife;
 And to my Niece, ---- whom I affected well,
 Spite of his Heart, I wou'd the Secret tell.
 In such Exploits I never was to seek;
 Full many a Time I flush'd his glowing Cheek,
 With Shame to fall into a Snare so common,
 As e'er to share his Secrets with a Woman.

It

It so befel, once in the Time of *Lent*,
That daily to this Gossip's House I went;
In gayest Garbs I ever lov'd to shine,
And shew myself, in Seasons warm and fine!
Jenkin, this Clerk, my Gossip *Alce*, and I,
To spread, and gather News, be spy'd and spy,
Rambled from House to House, full many a Mile;
(My Husband was at *London* all the while.)
For how knew I, but in some lucky Place,
My Stars design'd me some peculiar Grace!
For this in ev'ry Village was I seen,
And in Processions trampled ev'ry Green;
Heard Sermons, and with Pilgrims was enroll'd,
Saw Plays, which ancient Miracles extoll'd;
Revell'd at Weddings, whilst the Feasting lasted;
And oft' at Churches pray'd, but seldom fasted.
This was a pleasant Life, and who but I,
All gay in Scarlet of the richest Dye,
Which vermin Moth cou'd never yet infest;
They had not Time, --- I never let it rest.

Once, as o'er flow'ry Fields we rang'd about,
This Clerk, as if by Chance, I singl'd out;

And

And, as we grew familiar on the Way,
 We toy'd, and am'rous Tattle came in play;
 I blushing hinted, shou'd I lose my Dear,
 Himself alone might dry the flowing Tear:
 (For, not to boast, in all my Spoufes Reigns,
 Suitors for Widowhood employ'd my Brains;
 That Mouse improvident of Holes and Crannies,
 I cannot hold a Mouse of Wit and Genius,)
 I told him, sure he some Inchantment us'd,
 For Day and Night, of late, on him I mus'd;
 That once he strove to kill me, as I dream'd,
 And o'er my Bed the glowing Purple stream'd;
 But cry'd, such Visions we propitious hold,
 Th' Event of bloody Dreams is always Gold.
 But Dreams I'd none, 'twas but a crafty Lie,
 A wily Lure my Gossip bid me try, [had I.
 She taught me Numbers more, and Numbers more }
 But what ensues? ---- How does my Mem'ry fail!
 A! ha! by *Jove* I recollect my Tale. [Care,
 At length, Heav'n eas'd my fourth dear Spouse of
 I wrung my Hands, and wildly tore my Hair;

And

56 *The TALE of the*

And press'd my Handkerchief, with Looks of Woe,
To dry my Eyes of Tears, that wou'd not flow ;
My Voice grew soft, my Motions seem'd to weep,
As Widows must —— who due Decorum keep !

Now, to the Church-yard, the deceas'd they bear,
Mourn'd by his Friends, --- my *Jenkin* too was there..

But, as Heav'n help me ! when he mov'd along,

I saw a Pair of Legs, so fair, so strong,

He stept so firm, and all the rest outshone ;

I from that very Moment was his own.

He might perhaps have twenty Winters told,

But, to say true, myself was twice as old.

My Teeth stood prominent, yet graceful too,

And some retain'd their nat'ral coltish Glow :

I still was spritely, for I wore like Steel,

And was true Metal by the *Paphian* Seal,

Which left an obvious Circle on my Face,

That Nature copy'd in another Place.

My Glebe was pleasant, all my Spoufes own'd,

No Parson cultivated finer Ground.

A Sage, by whom the Book of Heav'n was known,

Said, I was born, when *Mars* in *Taurus* shone ;

Hence

Hence am I stubborn, dauntless, fierce and loud,
 But *Venus* Love and liqu'rish Lips bestow'd ;
 My Flesh conceals no vestal Blood within ;
 Alas, alas, that ever Love was Sin !
 For, from this Influence of my Constellation,
 I follow'd still my reigning Inclination ;
 When e'er I lov'd, Discretion then good Night,
 I still prefer'd my own blind Appetite ;
 Complexion, Stature, high or low Degree,
 I valu'd not, so they delighted me !

But to proceed, this *Yenkin* prov'd so kind,
 Within a Month, we were in Marriage join'd ;
 And all I had from former Spouses drain'd,
 By my free Gift, this Clerk at once obtain'd.
 I rue the Deed, and shall do during Life,
 For he rebell'd against his sov'reign Wife ;
 And often fiercely wou'd my Will withstand,
 Nay, once, by Heav'n I felt his fiery Hand.

I'm stubborn, as a Lionsess, I grant,
 And have a Tongue, that wou'd provoke a Saint ;
 Wou'd gossip then as usual, never doubt it,
 Tho' he had sworn himself to Hell about it :

He preach'd against all this, and gravely too,
Brought Instances to shun, and to pursue.
Rehears'd, how *Gallus* put his Wife away,
For, wand'ring out of Doors unvail'd one Day ;
And then, another famous Matron names,
Divorc'd, for visiting the *Roman Games* !
Then he wou'd open holy Writ, and find,
What *Solomon* remarks of Woman-kind ;
And cries, who builds his House with Willow Wands,
And pricks his blind Horse over fallow Lands,
Or trusts his Wife with Fiddlers, Fools, and Play'rs,
Deserves as many Horns as he has Hairs.

I heard, 'tis true, but wou'd not give two Straws
For musty Maxims, or proverbial Saws ;
That busy Fool, who still my Vices blames,
Who e'er he be, I hate him as Hell Flames ;
And this for thousand Thousands I'll be sworn,
Down from the first to the last Woman born.

My Husband, who in Learning took Delight,
With Books wou'd oft amuse himself at Night :
But one engag'd him most amongst the many,
Valerius call'd, but 'twas a Miscellany ;

Authors

Authors, and Parts of Authors, great and small,
 Collected, and one Binding held them all;
 Therein *Cryſippus* with *Tertullian* lay,
 Some Leaves turn'd o'er, Saint *Jerome* you ſurvey,
 With Script'ral Proverbs, *Ovid's* am'rous Guide,
 Fair *Heloisa's* Loves, and more beſide:
 Trite Legends, which more wicked Wives afforded,
 Than there are good, in holy Writ recorded;
 For Scholars will no Woman virtuous paint,
 Except they write the Legend of a Saint.
 Who drew the Lion vanquiſh'd? tell me, who?
 Good Lord! cou'd Women write, as Scholars do,
 The Men ſhou'd ſtand of blacker Crimes indicted,
 Than all they have of Woman-kind recited!
 Love ſtill diſclaims the Heart, which Learning ſhares,
 When *Mercury* riſes, *Venus* diſappears;
 Hence the vile *Cynic* his foul Pen directs
 (Himſelf grown impotent) to ſtab the Sex;
 He cannot taſte, nor give Delight, but ſtrives
 To brand all wedded Dames, for wicked Wives;
 All, all, are lewd,—thus will the Dotard rail:
 But to the Purpoſe, — I reſume my Tale.

60 *The T A L E of the*

My Spouse, one Night, when his Affairs were o'er,
 Open'd the Book, which I describ'd before ;
 And read, how *Eve*, the earliest Wife we find,
 O'erwhelm'd with Woe her Spouse and Human-kind;
 How vain was Strength, since *Samson's* treach'rous Wife
 Cou'd steal his Hair, and sell his Eyes and Life ;
 And *Hercules*, who Monsters cou'd subdue,
 One jealous Wife's invenom'd Shirt o'erthrew ;
 Valour avails not, great *Atrides* found,
 Whose Wife's curst Incest his own Murder crown'd ;
 Then how *Amphi'rus* fell at *Thebes*, he read,
 Whom for vile Gold his viler Wife betray'd ;
 How Wisdom speeds, by *Socrates* was known,
 And Madam's Jordans empty'd o'er his Crown !
 He shook his drizzly Locks, and calmly said,
 The Thunder always must with Rain be lay'd ;
 Then at the Bull-Gallant, and *Cretan* Queen,
 He laugh'd profuse — fie ! 'twas a horrid Scene !
 Next he found two, that did their Husbands kill,
 For Hatred one, one out of pure good-will ;
 The first for Vengeance will in Poison trust,
 This deals in am'rous Philtres, out of Lust :

The

The Potion work'd, but not as she desir'd,
 He rav'd all Night, and in the Morn expir'd.
 Here he deplor'd the Husband's woeful State,
 Since a Wife's Love proves mortal as her Hate :
 Then read of him, who did one *Arius* shew
 A fatal Tree, that in his Garden grew,
 Which caus'd Despair, and Wives with Frenzy fir'd
 Thereon to hang ; thus three of his expir'd ;
 Dear Friend, cry'd *Arius*, grant my earnest Suit,
 (Since never Branches can bear better Fruit)
 Some Slips resign, which in my Ground I'll plant,
 That my sweet Wife may no Convenience want.
 And then a List of modern Wives he read,
 How some had murder'd Husbands in the Bed ;
 Others found Poniards, if the Poison fail'd,
 Or, when their Husbands slept, their Brains have nail'd ;
 Of some that had been smother'd when in Drink ;
 In short he spake all Ill that Heart cou'd think !
 And then his Mem'ry more vile Proverbs yields,
 Than there are Grass-Blades springing in the Fields.

Better, he said, with savage Beasts to roam,
 Than with a noisy Wife to stay at Home :

Or

62 *The T A L E of the*

Or on the Mansion Top endure the Cold,
 Than sit before the Fire, where Women scold.
 Then cries, in Wickedness all Wives agree,
 And whom their Husbands love, hate mortally ;
 At Infamy they laugh, as well they may,
 Who, with their Wedding Smocks cast Shame away.
 What's Beauty, that in wanton Women glows ?
 'Tis but a gold Ring in a rank Sow's Nose.

Thus he went on ; --- a Heart of Flint wou'd melt,
 Cou'd it conceive the bitter Pangs I felt ;
 But when 'twas plain, I for no End must look,
 And he wou'd read all Night in that curst Book,
 Enrag'd I started, with a sudden Bound, [Ground ;
 Tore out three Leaves, and dash'd them on the
 And unappeas'd, cou'd not his Person spare,
 But at one Buffet fell'd him from his Chair.
 At this, he like a furious Lion rose,
 And sunk me soon beneath repeated Blows :
 I lay and groan'd as if my Death was nigh,
 Which he suspecting, was about to fly ;
 I feebly cry'd, my parting Kifs receive,
 Altho' thou'st murder'd me, my Wealth to have !

Let

Let me die reconcil'd. — He then stoop'd down,
 And cry'd, my Dear, my much lov'd *Alison*,
 By Heaven, this Crime I never will renew ;
 Yet from thyself, alas, th'Occasion grew !
 Forgive me, Dear, --- and then inclin'd his Face,
 With Arms extending for a last Embrace,
 When wing'd with Rage, my Fist like Light'ning flew,
 And made his Eyes flash Fire, and stunn'd him too ;
 I'm now reveng'd, I cry'd, and may forgive,
 Farewel, farewel, — I have not long to live.

But after all the Struggles which befel,
 We struck a League at last, and all was well ;
 He trusted me with absolute Command,
 And made me Ruler of his House and Land ;
 His Tongue and Hands, as I ordain'd, comply'd,
 We burnt the Book, which branded Wives beside.

When like a Monarch, seated on his Throne,
 I found the sov'reign Pow'r was all my own ;
 And when my subject Spouse, cry'd dearest Wife,
 Do as you list the Term of all your Life,
 Take to thy Charge my Honour and Estate,
 We from that Moment never had Debate.

So help me Heav'n, as I was kind and true,
As any Wife from *England* to *Peru*,
And may the Pow'r who sits in Maiefty
So bless his Soul, as he was kind to me!
And ev'ry nuptial Plague their Lives devour,
Who dare refuse their Wives the sov'reign Pow'r!

F I N I S.

