



*Old as he was, and void of Eye-sight too,
What could aifst a helpless Husband do.*

Jan. & Mar.

J A N U A R Y
A N D
M A Y.

THERE liv'd in Lombardy, as Authors write,
In days of old, a wife and worthy Knight ;
Of gentle manners, as of gen'rous race,
Blest with much sense, more riches, and some grace ;
Yet, led astray by Venus' soft delights, 5
He scarce could rule some idle appetites :
For long ago, let Priests say what they cou'd,
Weak sinful laymen were but flesh and blood.

But in due time, when sixty years were o'er,
He vow'd to lead this vicious life no more ; 10
Whether pure holiness inspir'd his mind,
Or dotage turn'd his brain, is hard to find ;
But his high courage prick'd him forth to wed,
And try the pleasures of a lawful bed.
This was his nightly dream, his daily care, 15
And to the heav'nly pow'rs his constant pray'r,
Once ere he dy'd, to taste the blissful life
Of a kind husband and a loving wife.

These thoughts he fortify'd with reasons still,
(For none want reasons to confirm their will.) 20
Grave authors say, and witty poets sing,
That honest wedlock is a glorious thing :

N O T E S.

JANUARY AND MAY. This Translation was done at sixteen
or seventeen years of Age.

But depth of judgment mott in him appears,
Who wisely weds in his maturer years.

Then let him chuse a damsel young and fair, 25
To bless his age, and bring a worthy heir ;
To sooth his cares, and free from noise and strife,
Conduct him gently to the verge of life.

Let sinful bachelors their woes deplore,
Full well they merit all they feel, and more : 30
Unaw'd by precepts human or divine,
Like birds and beasts promiscuously they join :

Nor know to make the present blessing last,
'To hope the future, or esteem the past :
But vainly boast the joys they never try'd, 35
And find divulg'd the secrets they would hide.

The marry'd man may bear his yoke with ease,
Secure at once himself and heav'n to please ;
And pass his inoffensive hours away,
In bliss all night, and innocence all day : 40
Tho' fortune change, his constant spouse remains,
Augments his joys, or mitigates his pains.

But what so pure, which envious tongues will spare ?
Some wicked wits have libell'd all the fair.

With matchless impudence they style a wife 45
The dear-bought curse, and lawful plague of life ;
A bosom-serpent, a domestic evil,
A night-invasion, and a mid-day devil.

Let not the wife these fland'rous words regard,
But curse the bones of ev'ry lying bard. 50
All other goods by fortune's hand are giv'n,
A wife is the peculiar gift of heav'n.

Vain fortune's favours, never at a stay,
Like empty shadows, pass, and glide away ;
One solid comfort, our eternal wife, 55
Abundantly supplies us all our life :

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'This blessing lasts (if those who try say true)
As long as heart can wish—and longer too.

Our grandsire Adam, ere of Eve possest,
Alone, and ev'n in Paradise unbless'd, 60
With mournful looks the blissful scenes survey'd,
And wander'd in the solitary shade :
The Maker saw, took pity, and bestow'd
Woman, the lark, the best reserv'd of God.

A Wife! ah gentle deities, can he 65
That has a wife, c'er feel adversity ?
Would men but follow what the sex advise,
All things would prosper, all the world grow wise.
'Twas by Rebecca's aid that Jacob won
His father's blessing from an elder son : 70
Abusive Nabal ow'd his forfeit life
To the wife conduct of a prudent wife :
Heroic Judith, as old Hebrews show,
Preserv'd the Jews, and slew th' Assyrian foe :
At Hester's suit, the persecuting sword 75
Was sheath'd, and Israel liv'd to bless the Lord.

These weighty motives, January the sage
Maturely ponder'd in his riper age ;
And charm'd with virtuous joys, and sober life,
Would try that Christian comfort, call'd a wife. 80
His friends were summon'd on a point so nice,
To pass their judgment, and to give advice ;
But fix'd before, and well resolv'd was he ;
(As men that ask advice are wont to be.)

My friends, he cry'd (and cast a mournful look 85
Around the room, and sigh'd before he spoke :)
Beneath the weight of threescore years I bend,
And worn with cares, and hast'ning to my end ;
How I have liv'd, alas ! you know too well,
In worldly follies, which I blush to tell ; 90

But gracious heav'n has ope'd my eyes at last,
With due regret I view my vices past,
And, as the precept of the Church decrees,
Will take a wife, and live in holy ease.
But since by counsel all things should be done, 95
And many heads are wiser still than one ;
Chuse you for me, who best shall be content
When my desire's approv'd by your consent.

One caution yet is needful to be told,
To guide your choice ; this wife must not be old : 100
There goes a saying, and 'twas shrewdly said,
Old fish at table, but young flesh in bed.
My soul abhors the taleclfs, dry embrace
Of a stale virgin with a winter face :
In that cold season Love but treats his guest 105
With bean-straw, and tough forage at the best.
No crafty widows shall approach my bed ;
Those are too wise for bachelors to wed ;
As subtle clerks by many schools are made,
Twice-marry'd dames are mistresses o' th' trade : 110
But young and tender virgins, rul'd with ease,
We form like wax, and mould them as we please.

Conceive me, Sirs, nor take my sense amiss ;
'Tis what concerns my soul's eternal bliss :
Since if I found no pleasure in my spouse, 115
As flesh is frail, and who (God help me) knows ?
Then should I live in leud adultery,
And sink downright to Satan when I die.
Or were I curs'd with an unfruitful bed,
The righteous end were lost, for which I wed ; 120
To raise up seed to bless the pow'rs above,
And not for pleasure only, or for love.
Think not I doat ; 'tis time to take a wife,
When vig'rous blood forbids a chaster life :

Those that are blest with stote of grace divine, 125
 May live like saints, by heav'n's consent, and mine.

And since I speak of wedlock, let me say,
 (As, thank my stars, in modest truth I may)
 My limbs are active, still I'm sound at heart,
 And a new vigour springs in ev'ry part. 130
 Think not my virtue lost, tho' time has shed
 These rev'rend honours on my hoary head;
 Thus trees are crown'd with blossoms white as snow,
 The vital sap then rising from below:
 Old as I am, my lusty limbs appear 135
 Like winter greens, that flourish all the year.
 Now, Sirs, you know to what I stand inclin'd,
 Let ev'ry friend with freedom speak his mind.

He said; the rest in diff'rent parts divide;
 The knotty point was urg'd on either side: 140
 Marriage, the theme on which they all declaim'd,
 Some prais'd with wit, and some with reason blam'd.
 Till, what with proofs, objections, and replies,
 Each wond'rous positive, and wond'rous wife,
 There fell between his brothers a debate, 145
 Placebo this was call'd, and Jus'tin that.

First to the Knight Placebo thus begun
 (Mild were his looks, and pleasing was his tone)
 Such prudence, Sir, in all your words appears,
 As plainly proves, experience dwells with years! 150
 Yet you pursue sage Solomon's advice,
 To work by counsel when affairs are nice:
 But, with the Wise Man's leave, I must protest,
 So may my soul arrive at ease and rest
 As still I hold your old advice the best. 155 }
 Sir, I have liv'd a Courtier all my days,
 And study'd men, their manners, and their ways;
 And have observ'd this useful maxim still,
 To let my betters always have their will.

Nay, if my Lord affirm'd that black was white, 160

My word was this, Your honour's in the right.

Th' assuming Wit, who deems himself so wise,

As his mistaken patron to advise,

Let him not dare to vent his dang'rous thought,

A noble fool was never in a fault. 165

This, Sir, affects not you, whose ev'ry word

Is weigh'd with judgment, and befits a Lord :

Your will is mine ; and is (I will maintain)

Pleasing to God, and should be so to man ;

At least, your courage all the world must praise, 170

Who dare to wed in your declining days.

Indulge the vigour of your mounting blood,

And let grey fools be indolently good,

Who, past all pleasure, damn the joys of sense,

With rev'rend dulness and grave impotence. 175

Justin, who silent sat, and heard the man,

Thus, with a philosophic frown, began.

A heathen author of the first degree,

(Who, tho' not Faith, had Sense as well as we)

Bids us be certain our concerns to trust 180

To those of gen'rous principles, and just.

The venture's greater, I'll presume to say,

To give your person, than your goods away :

And therefore, Sir, as you regard your rest,

First learn your lady's qualities at least :

Whether she's chaste or rampant, proud or civil,

Meek as a saint, or haughty as the devil ;

Whether an easy, fond, familiar fool,

Or such a wit as no man e'er can rule.

"Tis true, perfection none must hope to find 190

In all this world, much less in womankind ;

But if her virtues prove the larger share,

Bles the kind fates, and thank your fortune rare.

Ah, gentle Sir, take warning of a friend,
Who knows too well the state you thus commend; 195
And, spite of all his praises, must declare,
All he can find is bondage, cost, and care.
Heav'n knows, I shed full many a private tear,
And sigh in silence, lest the world should hear; 200
While all my friends applaud my blissful life,
And swear no mortal's happier in a wife;
Demure and chaste as any vestal Nun,
The meekest creature that beholds the sun!
But, by th' immortal pow'rs, I feel the pain, 205
And he that sinarts has reason to complain.
Do what you list, for me; you must be sage,
And cautious sure; for wisdom is in age:
But at these years, to venture on the fair;
By him who made the ocean, earth and air, 210
To please a wife, when her occasions call,
Would busy the most vig'rous of us all.
And trust me, Sir, the chasteft you can chuse
Will ask observance, and exact her dues.
If what I speak my noble Lord offend, 215
My tedious sermon here is at an end.
'Tis well, 'tis wondrous well, the Knight replies,
Most worthy kinsman, faith you're mighty wise!
We, Sirs, are fools; and must resign the cause
To heath'nish authors, proverbs, and old saws.
He spoke with scorn, and turn'd another way:— 220
What does my friend, my dear Placebo, say?
I say, quoth he, by heav'n the man's to blame,
To slander wives, and wedlock's holy name.
At this the council rose, without delay;
Each, in his own opinion, went his way; 225
With full consent, that, all disputes appeas'd,
The knight should marry, when and where he pleas'd.

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Who now but January exults with joy?
 The charms of wedlock all his soul employ:
 Each nymph by turns his wav'ring mind possest, 230
 And reign'd the short-liv'd tyrant of his breast;
 While fancy pictur'd ev'ry lively part,
 And each bright image wander'd o'er his heart.
 Thus, in some public Forum fix'd on high,
 A Mirrour shows the figures moving by; 235
 Still one by one, in swift succession, pass
 The gliding shadows o'er the polish'd glafs.
 This Lady's charms the niceſt could not blame,
 But vile ſuspicions had aspers'd her fame;
 That was with ſenſe, but not with virtue, bleſt; 240
 And one had grace, that wanted all the reſt.
 Thus doubting long what nymph he ſhould obey,
 He fix'd at laſt upon the youthful May.
 Her faults he knew not, Love is always blind,
 But ev'ry charm revolv'd within his mind: 245
 Her tender age, her form divinely fair,
 Her eaſy motion, her attractive air,
 Her ſweet behaviour, her enchanting face,
 Her moving softneſs, and majestic grace.

Much in his prudence did our knight rejoice, 250
 And thought no mortal could diſpute his choice:
 Once more in haſte he ſummon'd ev'ry friend,
 And told them all, their pains were at an end.
 Heav'n; that (ſaid he) inspir'd me firſt to wed,
 Provides a conforſt worthy of my bed: 255
 Let none oppoſe th' election, ſince on this
 Depends my quiet, and my future bliſs.

A dame there is, the darling of my eyes,
 Young, beauteous, artleſs, innocent, and wiſe;
 Chaste, tho' not rich; and, tho' not nobly born, 260
 Of honeſt parents, and may ſerve my turn.

Her will I wed, - if gracious Heav'n so please ;
 To pass my age in sanctity and ease :
 And thank the pow'rs, I may possess alone
 The lovely prize, and share my bliss with none ! 265
 If you, my friends, this virgin can procure,
 My joys are full, my happiness is sure.

One only doubt remains : Full oft I've heard,
 By casuists grave, and deep divines averr'd ;
 That 'tis too much for human race to know 270
 The bliss of heav'n above, and earth below.
 Now should the nuptial pleasures prove so great,
 To match the blessings of the future state,
 Those endless joys were ill-exchang'd for these ;
 Then clear this doubt, and set my mind at ease. 275

This Justin heard, nor could his spleen controul,
 Touch'd to the quick, and tickled at the soul.
 Sir Knight, he cry'd, if this be all you dread,
 Heav'n put it past your doubt, whene'er you wed ;
 And to my fervent pray'rs so far consent, 280
 That ere the rites are o'er, you may repent !
 Good Heav'n, no doubt, the nuptial state approves,
 Since it chastises still what best it loves.
 Then be not, Sir, abandon'd to despair ;
 Seck, and perhaps you'll find among the fair, 285
 One that may do your business to a hair ;
 Not ev'n in wish, your happiness delay,
 But prove the scourge to lash you on your way :
 Then to the skies your mounting soul shall go,
 Swift as an arrow soaring from the bow ! 290
 Provided still, you moderate your joy,
 Nor in your pleasures all your might employ,
 Let reason's rule your strong desires abate,
 Nor please too lavishly your gentle mate.
 Old wives there are, of judgment most acute, 295
 Who solve these questions beyond all dispute ;

Consult with thosé, and be of better chear ;
Marry, do penance, and dismiss your fear.

So said, they rose, nor more the work delay'd ;
'The match was offer'd, the proposals made. 300
'The parents you may think would soon comply ;
'The Old have int'rest ever in their eye.
Nor was it hard to move the Lady's mind ;
When fortune favours, still the Fair are kind.

I pass each previous settlement and deed, 305
'Too long for me to write, or you to read ;
Nor will with quaint impertinence display
The pomp, the pageantry, the proud array.
The time approach'd, to Church the parties went,
At once with carnal and devout intent : 310
Forth came the Priest, and bade th' obedient wife
Like Sarah or Rebeccah lead her life :
Then pray'd the pow'rs the fruitful bed to bless,
And made all sure enough with holiness. 314

And now the palace-gates are open'd wide,
The guests appear in order, side by side, }
And plac'd in state the bridegroom and the bride.
The breathing flute's soft notes are heard around,
And the shrill trumpets mix their silver sound ;
The vaulted roofs with echoing music ring, 320
These touch the vocal stops, and those the trembling
string.

Not thus Amphion tun'd the warbling lyre,
Nor Joab the sounding clarion could inspire,
Nor fierce Theodamas, whose sprightly strain 324
Could swell the soul to rage, and fire the martial train.

Bacchus himself, the nuptial seat to grace,
(So Poets sing) was present on the place :
And lovely Venus, Goddess of delight,
Shook high her flaming torch in open sight,
And danc'd around, and smil'd on ev'ry Knight : } 330

JANUARY AND MAY. 219

Pleas'd her best servant would his courage try, 331
 No less in wedlock, than in liberty.

Full many an age old Hymen had not spy'd
 So kind a bridegroom, or so bright a bride.
 Ye bards ! renown'd among the tuneful throng 335
 For gentle lays, and joyous nuptial song ;
 Think not your softest numbers can display
 The matchless glories of this blissful day :
 The joys are such, as far transcend your rage,
 When tender youth has wedded stooping age. 340

The beauteous dame sat smiling at the board,
 And darted am'rous glances at her Lord,
 Not Hester's self, whose charms the Hebrews sing,
 E'er look'd so lovely on her Persian King :
 Bright as the rising sun, in summer's day, 345
 And fresh and blooming as the month of May !
 The joyful Knight survey'd her by his side,
 Nor envy'd Paris with the Spartan bride :
 Still as his mind revolv'd with vast delight
 Th' entrancing raptures of th' approaching night, 350
 Restless he sat, invoking ev'ry pow'r
 To speed his bliss, and hasten the happy hour.
 Meantime the vig'rous dancers beat the ground,
 And songs were sung, and flowing bowls went round.
 With od'rous spices they perfum'd the place, 355
 And mirth and pleasure shone in ev'ry face.

Damian alone, of all the menial train,
 Sad in the midst of triumphs, sigh'd for pain ;
 Damian alone, the Knight's obsequious tquire,
 Consum'd at heart, and fed a secret fire. 360
 His lovely Mistress all his soul possess'd,
 He look'd, he languish'd, and could take no rest :
 His task perform'd, he sadly went his way,
 Fell on his bed, and loath'd the light of day.

220 JANUARY AND MAY.

There let him lie; till his relenting dame 365
 Weep in her turn, and waste in equal flame.

The weary sun, as learned Poets write,
 Forsook th' Horizon, and roll'd down the light;
 While glitt'ring stars his absent beams supply,
 And night's dark mantle overspread the sky. 370
 Then rose the guests; and as the time requir'd,
 Each paid his thanks, and decently retir'd.

The foe once gone, our Knight prepar'd t' undress,
 So keen he was, and eager to posses:
 But first thought fit th' assistance to receive, 375
 Which grave Physicians scruple not to give;
 Satyron near, with hot Eringos flood,
 Cantharides, to fire the lazy blood,
 Whose use old Bards describe in luscious rhymes,
 And Critics learn'd explain to modern times. 380

By this the sheets were spread, the bride undress'd,
 The room was sprinkled, and the bed was bles'd.
 What next ensu'd beseems not me to say;
 'Tis sung, he labour'd till the dawning day, 384
 Then briskly sprung from bed, with heart so light,
 As all were nothing he had done by night; }
 And sip'd his cordial as he sat upright.
 He kiss'd his balmy spouse with wanton play,
 And feebly fung a lusty roundelay:
 Then on the couch his weary limbs he cast; 390
 For ev'ry labour must have rest at last.

But anxious cares the pensive Squire oppress'd,
 Sleep fled his eyes, and peace forsook his breast;
 The raging flames that in his bosom dwell,
 He wanted art to hide, and means to tell. 395
 Yet hoping time th' occasion might betray,
 Compos'd a sonnet to the lovely May;
 Which writ and folded with the nicest art,
 He wrapp'd in silk, and laid upon his heart.

When now the fourth revolving day was run, 400
 ('Twas June, and Cancer had receiv'd the sun)
 Forth from her chamber came the beauteous bride;
 The good old Knight mov'd slowly by her side.
 High mafs was sung; they feasted in the hall;
 The servants round stood ready at their call. 405
 The Squire alone was absent from the board,
 And much his sickness griev'd his worthy Lord,
 Who pray'd his spouse, attended with her train,
 To visit Damian, and divert his pain.
 Th' obliging dames obey'd with one consent; 410
 They left the hall, and to his lodging went,
 The female tribe surround him as he lay,
 And close beside him sat the gentle May:
 Where, as she try'd his pulse, he softly drew
 A heaving sigh, and cast a mournful view! 415
 Then gave his bill, and brib'd the pow'rs divine,
 With secret vows, to favour his design.

Who studies now but discontented May?
 On her soft couch uneasily she lay:
 The lumpish husband snor'd away the night, 420
 'Till coughs awak'd him near the morning light.
 What then he did, I'll not presume to tell,
 Nor if she thought herself in heav'n or hell:
 Honest and dull in nuptial bed they lay,
 Till the bell toll'd, and all arose to pray. 425

Were it by forceful destiny decreed,
 Or did from chance, or nature's pow'r proceed;
 Or that some star, with aspect kind to love,
 Shed its selectest influence from above;
 Whatever was the cause, the tender dame 430
 Felt the first motions of an infant flame;
 Receiv'd th' impressions of the love-sick Squire,
 And wasted in the foft infectious fire:

Ye fair, draw near, let May's example move
Your gentle minds to pity those who love! 435

Had some fierce tyrant in her stead been found,
The poor adorer sure had hang'd, or drown'd :
But she, your sex's mirrour, free from pride,
Was much too meek to prove a homicide.

But to my tale : Some sages have defin'd 440

Pleasure the sov'reign bliss of humankind :

Our Knight (who study'd much, we may suppose)

Deriv'd his high philosophy from those ;

For, like a prince, he bore the vast expence

Of lavish pomp, and proud magnificence : 445

His house was stately, his retinue gay,

Large was his train; and gorgeous his array.

His spacious garden made to yield to none,

Was compass'd round with walls of solid stone ;

Priapus could not half describe the grace 450

(Tho' God of gardens) of this charming place :

A place to tire the rambling wits of France

In long descriptions, and exceed Romance ;

Enough to shame the gentlest bard that sings

Of painted meadows, and of purling springs. 455

Full in the centre of the flow'ry ground,

A crystal fountain spread its streams around,

The fruitful banks with verdant laurels crown'd :

About this spring (if ancient faine say true)

The dapper Elves their moon-light sports pursue : 460

Their pigmy king, and little fairy queen,

In circling dances gambol'd on the green,

While tuneful sprites a merry concert made,

And airy music warbled thro' the shade.

Hither the noble knight would oft repair, 465

(His scene of pleasure, and peculiar care)

For this he held it dear, and always bore

The silver key that lock'd the garden-door.

To this sweet place in summer's sultry heat,
He us'd from noise and bus'ness to retreat ;
And here in dalliance spend the live-long day,
Solus cum sola, with his sprightly May,
For whate'er work was undischarg'd a-bed,
The duteous knight in this fair garden sped.

470

But ah ! what mortal lives of bliss secure ?
How short a space our worldly joys endure ?
O Fortune, fair, like all thy treach'rous kind,
But faithless still, and wav'ring as the wind !
O painted moniter, form'd mankind to cheat,
With pleasing poison, and with soft deceit !
This rich, this am'rous, venerable knight,
Amidst his ease, his solace and delight,
Struck blind by thee, resigns his days to grief,
And calls on death, the wretch's last relief.

475

The rage of jealousy then seiz'd his mind, 485
For much he fear'd the faith of womankind.
His wife not suffer'd from his side to stray ;
Was captive kept, he watch'd her night and day, {
Abridg'd her pleasures, and confin'd her sway.
Full oft in tears did hapless May complain, 490
And sigh'd full oft ; but sigh'd and wept in vain :
She look'd on Damian with a lover's eye,
For oh, 'twas fix'd ; she must possess or die !
Nor less impatience vex'd her am'rous Squire,
Wild with delay, and burning with desire. 495
Watch'd as she was, yet could he not refrain
By secret writing to disclose his pain :
The dame by signs reveal'd her kind intent,
Till both were conscious what each other meant.

Ah, gentle Knight, what would thy eyes avail, 500
Tho' they could see as far as ships can sail ?
'Tis better, sure, when blind, deceiv'd to be,
Than be deluded when a man can see !

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This rich, this am'rous, venerable knight,
Amidst his ease, his solace and delight,
Struck blind by thee, resigns his days to grief,
And calls on death, the wretch's last relief. 480

The rage of jealousy then seiz'd his mind,
For much he fear'd the faith of womankind.
His wife not suffer'd from his side to stray ;
Was captive kept, he watch'd her night and day, }
Abridg'd her pleasures, and confin'd her sway.
Full oft in tears did hapless May complain, 490

And sigh'd full oft ; but sigh'd and wept in vain :
She look'd on Damian with a lover's eye,
For oh, 'twas fix'd ; she must possess or die !
Nor less impatience vex'd her am'rous Squire,
Wild with delay, and burning with desire. 495

Watch'd as she was, yet could he not refrain
By secret writing to disclose his pain :
The dame by signs reveal'd her kind intent,
Till both were conscious what each other meant.

Ah, gentle Knight, what would thy eyes avail, 500
Tho' they could see as far as ships can sail ?
'Tis better, sure, when blind, deceiv'd to be,
Than be deluded when a man can see !

Argus himself, so cautious and so wise,
Was over-watch'd, for all his hundred eyes: 505
So many an honest husband may, 'tis known,
Who, wisely, never thinks the case his own.

The dame at last, by diligence and care,
Procur'd the key her Knight was wont to bear;
She took the wards in wax before the fire, 510
And gave th' impression to the trusty Squire.
By means of this, some wonder shall appear,
Which, in due place and season, you may hear.

Well sung sweet Ovid, in the days of yore,
What flight is that, which love will not explore? 515
And Pyramus and Thisbe plainly shew
The feats true lovers, when they list, can do:
Tho' watch'd and captive, yet in spite of all,
They found the art of kissing thro' a wall.

But now no longer from our tale to stray; 520
It happ'd, that once upon a summer's day,
Our rev'rend Knight was urg'd to am'rous play;
He rais'd his spouse ere Matin-bell was rung,
And thus his morning canticle he sung.

Awake, my love, disclose thy radiant eyes; 525
Arise, my wife, my beauteous lady, rise!
Hear how the doves with pensive notes complain,
And in soft murmurs tell the trees their pain;
The winter's past; the clouds and tempests fly;
The sun adorns the fields, and brightens all the sky.
Fair without spot, whose ev'ry charming part 530
My bosom wounds, and captivates my heart:
Come, and in mutual pleasures let's engage,
Joy of my life, and comfort of my age.

This heard, to Damian straight a sign she made, 535
To haste before; the gentle Squire obey'd:
Secret, and undescry'd, he took his way,
And ambush'd close behind an arbour lay.

It was not long ere January came,
And hand in hand with him his lovely dame ; 540
Blind as he was, not doubting all was sure,
He turn'd the key, and made the gate secure.

Here, let us walk, he said, observ'd by none ;
Conscious of pleasures to the world unknown :
So may my soul have joy, as thou, my wife, 545
Art far the dearest solace of my life ;
And rather would I chuse, by Heav'n above,
To die this instant, than to lose thy love.
Reflect what truth was in my passion shewn,
When unendow'd, I took thee for my own, 550 }
And sought no treasure but thy heart alone.
Old as I am, and now depriv'd of sight,
Whilst thou art faithful to thy own true Knight,
Nor age, nor blindnes rob me of delight.
Each other losſ with patience I can bear, 555
The losſ of thee is what I only fear.

Consider then, my lady, and my wife,
The solid comforts of a virtuous life :
As first, the love of Christ himself you gain ;
Next, your own honour undefil'd maintain ; 560
And lastly, that which sure your mind must move,
My whole estate shall gratify your love :
Make your own terms, and ere to-morrow's sun
Displays his light, by Heav'n it shall be done..
I seal the contract with a holy kiss, 565
And will perform, by this—my dear, and this—
Have comfort, spouse, nor think thy Lord unkind ;
'Tis love, not jealousy, that fires my mind.
For when thy charms my sober thoughts engage,
And join'd to them my own unequal age, 570
From thy dear side I have no pow'r to part,
Such secret transports warm my melting heart.
For who that once possess'd those heav'nly charms,
Could live one moment absent from thy arms ?

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For who that once posses'd those heav'nly charms,
Could live one moment absent from thy arms ?

He ceas'd, and May with modest grace reply'd ; 575
 (Weak was her voice, as while she spoke she cry'd :)
 Heav'n knows (with that a tender sigh she drew)
 I have a foul to fave as well as you ;
 And, what no less you to my charge commend,
 My dearest honour, will to death defend. 580
 To you in holy Church I gave my hand,
 And join'd my heart in wedlock's sacred band :
 Yet after this, if you distrust my care,
 Then hear, my Lord, and witness what I swear.

First may the yawning earth her bosom rend, 585
 And let me hence to hell alive descend ;
 Or die the death I dread no less than hell,
 Sew'd in a sack, and plung'd into a well ;
 Ere I my famè by one lewd act disgrace,
 Or once renounce the honour of my race. 590
 For know, Sir Knight, of gentle blood I came,
 I loath a whore, and startle at the name.
 But jealous men on their own crimes reflect,
 And learn from thence their ladies to suspect :
 Else why these needless cautions, Sir, to me ? 595
 These doubts and fears of female constancy !
 This chime still rings in every lady's ear,
 The only strain a wife must hope to hear.

Thus while she spoke a sidelong glance she cast,
 Where Daimian kneeling, worship'd as she past. 600
 She saw him watch the motions of her eye,
 And singled out a pear-tree planted nigh :
 'Twas charg'd with fruit that made a goodly show,
 And hung with dangling pears was ev'ry bough.
 Thither th' obsequious Squire address'd his pace, 605
 And climbing, in the summit took his place ;
 The Knight and Lady walk'd beneath in view,
 Where let us leave them, and our tale pursue.

'Twas now the season when the glorious sun
 His heav'nly progres thro' the Twins had run ; 610
 And Jove, exalted; his mild influence yields,
 To glad the glebe, and paint the flow'ry fields,
 Clear was the day, and Phœbus, rising bright,
 Had streak'd the azure firmament with light ; 614
 He pierc'd the glitt'ring clouds with golden streams,
 And warm'd the womb of earth with genial beams.

It so besel, in that fair morning-tide,
 The Fairies sported on the garden-side, 618
 And in the midst their Monarch and his bride.
 So feately tripp'd the light-foot ladies round, 620
 The knights so nimbly o'er the greensward bound,
 That scarce they bent the flow'rs, or touch'd the
 ground.

The dances ended, all the fairy train
 For pinks and daisies search'd the flow'ry plain ;
 While on a bank reclin'd of rising green, 625
 Thus, with a frown, the King bespoke his Queen.

'Tis too apparent, argue what you can,
 The treachery you women use to man :
 A thousand authors have this truth made out,
 And sad experience leaves no room for doubt. 630

Heav'n reft thy spirit, noble Solomon,
 A wiser monarch never saw the sun ;
 All wealth, all honours, the supreme degree
 Of earthly bliss, was well below'd on thee !
 For sagely hast thou said : Of all mankind, 635
 One only just, and righteous, hope to find :
 But shouldst thou search the spacious world around,
 Yet one good woman is not to be found.

Thus, says the King, who knew your wickedness :
 'The son of Sirach testifies no less. 640
 So may some wildfire on your bodies fall,
 Or some devouting plague consume you all ;

As well you view the leacher in the tree,
 And well this honourable Knight you see:
 But since he's blind and old (a helpless case) 645
 His Squire shall cuckold him before your face.

Now by my own dread majesty I swear,
 And by this awful sceptre which I bear,
 No impious wretch shall 'scape unpunish'd long,
 That in my presence offers such a wrong. 650
 I will this instant undeceive the Knight,
 And in the very act restore his sight:
 And set the strumpet here in open view,
 A warning to these Ladies, and to you,
 And all the faithless sex, for ever to be true. 655

And will you so, reply'd the Queen, indeed?
 Now, by my mother's soul it is decreed,
 She shall not want an answer at her need. 660
 For her, and for her daughters, I'll engage,
 And all the sex in each succeeding age;
 Art shall be theirs to varnish an offence,
 And fortify their crimes with confidence.
 Nay, were they taken in a strict embrace,
 Seen with both eyes, and pinion'd on the place;
 All they shall need is to protest and swear, 665
 Breathe a soft sigh, and drop a tender tear;
 Till their wise husbands, gull'd by arts like these,
 Grow gentle, tractable, and tame as geese.

What tho' this fland'rous Jew, this Solomon,
 Call'd women fools, and knew full many a one; 670
 The wiser wits of later times declare,
 How constant, chaste, and virtuous women are:
 Witness the martyrs, who resign'd their breath,
 Serene in torments, un concern'd in death;
 And witness next what Roman authors tell, 675
 How Arria, Portia, and Lucretia fell.

But since the sacred leaves to all are free,
 And men interpret texts, why should not we?
 By this no more was meant, than to have shewn,
 That sov'reign goodness dwells in him alone 680 }
 Who only is, and is but only One.
 But grant the worst; shall women then be weigh'd.
 By ev'ry word that Solomon has said?
 What tho' this King (as ancient story boasts)
 Built a fair Temple to the Lord of Hosts; 685
 He ceas'd at last his Maker to adore,
 And did as much for Idol gods, or more.
 Beware what lavish praises you confer.
 On a rank leacher and idolater;
 Whose reign, indulgent God, says holy writ, 690
 Did but for David's righteous sake permit;
 David, the monarch after Heav'n's own mind,
 Who lov'd our sex, and honour'd all our kind.
 Well, I'm a Woman, and as such must speak;
 Silence would swell me, and my heart would break.
 Know then, I scorn your dull authorities, 695
 Your idle wits, and all their learned lies.
 By Heav'n, those authors are our sex's foes,
 Whom, in our right, I must and will oppose.
 Nay (quoth the King) dear Madam, be not wroth:
 I yield it up; but since I gave my oath, 700
 That this much-injur'd knight again should see;
 It must be done—I am a King, said he,
 And one, whose faith has ever sacred been.
 And so has mine (she said)—I am a Queen: 705
 Her answer she shall have, I undertake;
 And thus an end of all dispute I make.
 Try when you list; and you shall find, my Lord,
 It is not in our sex to break our word.
 We leave them here in this heroic strain, 710
 And to the Knight our story turns again;

230 JANUARY AND MAY.

Who in the garden, with his lovely May,
 Sung merrier than the Cuckow or the Jay :
 This was his song ; " Oh kind and constant be,
 " Constant and kind I'll ever prove to thee." 715

Thus singing as he went, at last he drew
 By easy steps, to where the Pear-tree grew :
 The longing dame look'd up, and spy'd her Love
 Full fairly perch'd among the boughs above.
 She stopp'd, and sighing : Oh good Gods ! she cry'd,
 What pangs, what sudden shoots distend my side ? 721
 O for that tempting fruit, so fresh, so green ;
 Help, for the love of Heav'n's immortal Queen !
 Help, dearest Lord, and save at once the life
 Of thy poor infant, and thy longing wife ! 725

Sore sigh'd the Knight to hear his Lady's cry,
 But could not climb, and had no servant nigh :
 Old as he was, and void of eye-sight too,
 What could, alas ! a helpless husband do ?
 And must I languish then, she said, and die, 730
 Yet view the lovely fruit before my eye ?
 At least, kind Sir, for charity's sweet sake,
 Vouchsafe the trunk between your arms to take ;
 Then from your back I might ascend the tree ;
 Do you but stoop, and leave the rest to me. 735

With all my soul, he thus reply'd again,
 I'd spend my dearest blood to ease thy pain.
 With that, his back against the trunk he bent,
 She seiz'd a twig, and up the tree she went.

Now prove your patience, gentle ladies all ! 740
 Nor let on me your heavy anger fall :
 'Tis truth I tell, tho' not in phrase refin'd ;
 Tho' blunt my tale, yet honest is my mind.
 What feats the Lady in the Tree might do,
 I pass, as gambols never known to you ; 745

But sure it was a merrier fit, she swore,
Than in her life she ever felt before.

In that nice moment, lo ! the wond'ring knight
Look'd out, and stood restor'd to sudden sight.
Straight on the tree his eager eyes he bent, 750
As one whose thoughts were on his spouse intent ;
But when he saw his bosom-wife so dress'd,
His rage was such as cannot be express'd :
Not frantic mothers when their infants die,
With louder clamours rend the vaulted sky : 755
He cry'd, he roar'd, he storm'd, he tore his hair ;
Death ! hell ! and furies ! what dost thou do there ?

What ails my Lord ? the trembling dame reply'd ;
I thought your patience had been better try'd :
Is this your love, ungrateful and unkind, 760
This my reward for having cur'd the blind ?
Why was I taught to make my husband see,
By struggling with a Man upon a Tree ?
Did I for this the pow'r of magic prove ?
Unhappy wife, whose crime was too much love ! 765

If this be struggling, by this holy light,
'Tis struggling with a vengeance (quoth the Knight)
So Heav'n preferre the sight it has restor'd,
As with these eyes I plainly saw thee whor'd ;
Whor'd by my slave—perfidious wretch ! may hell
As surely seize thee, as I saw too well. 771

Guard me, good Angels ! cry'd the gentle May,
Pray Heav'n, this magic work the proper way !
Alas, my love ! 'tis certain, could you see,
You ne'er had us'd these killing words to me : 775
So help me, Fates, as 'tis no perfect sight,
But some faint glimm'ring of a doubtful light.

What I have said (quoth he) I must maiutain,
For by th' immortal pow'rs it seem'd too plain — 779

By all those pow'rs, some frenzy seiz'd your mind,
(Reply'd the dame) are these the thanks I find ?
Wretch that I am, that e'er I was so kind ! }
She said ; a rising sigh expres'd her woe,
The ready tears apace began to flow,
And, as they fell, she wip'd from either eye 785
The drops (for women when they list, can cry).

The Knight was touch'd, and in his looks appear'd
Signs of remorse, while thus his spouse he chear'd :
Madam, 'tis past, and my short anger o'er ;
Come down, and vex your tender heart no more : 790
Excuse me, dear, if aught amiss was said,
For, on my soul, amends shall soon be made :
Let my repentance your forgiveness draw,
By Heav'n, I swore but what I *thought* I saw.

Ah, my lov'd lord ! 'twas much unkind (she cry'd)
On bare suspicion thus to treat your bride. 796
But till your fight's establish'd, for a while,
Imperfect objects may your sense beguile.

Thus when from sleep we first our eyes display,
The balls are wounded with the piercing ray, 800 }
And dusky vapours rise, and intercept the day.
So just recov'ring from the shades of night,
Your swimming eyes are drunk with sudden light, }
Strange phantoms dance around, and skim before }
your sight :

Then, Sir, be cautious, nor too rashly deem ; 805
Heav'n knows how seldom things are what they seem !
Consult your reason, and you soon shall find
'Twas you were jealous, not your wife unkind :
Jove ne'er spoke oracle more true than this,
None judge so wrong as those who think amiss. 810
With that she leap'd into her Lord's embrace,
With well dissembled virtue in her face.

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He hugg'd her close, and kiss'd her o'er and o'er,
Disturb'd with doubts and jealousies no more:
Both, pleas'd and bles'd, renew'd their mutual vows,
A fruitful wife, and a believing spouse. 816

Thus ends our tale, whose moral next to make,
Let all wise husbands hence example take;
And pray, to crown the pleasure of their lives,
'To be so well deluded by their wives. 820