

Sewell George A Defence of Women



A DEFENCE OF WOMEN;
OF THE
Proclamation of CUPID:
A POEM from CHAUCER.

To the LADIES.

To You, bright British Fair, whom she defends,
The Muse her undesigning Verse commends:
Smile, while she makes old Chaucer plead your Cause;
It is no Crime to give the Dead Applause,
For never Man, nor even Woman yet
Made lewd Constructions on a buried Wit.
If Graves and Tombstones don't offend your Ears,
He has been shrowded—full three hundred Years;
And now returns to shame this graceless Age,
Who Libel Woman from the Press, and Stage:
Fools, with ill Faces, and ill Manners too,
Who wild and rough like ancient Satyrs woove;
And when they by their Fate, or Folly fail,
Fly to the Loser's Privilege,—and Rail.

Our Bard, who if from Picture we may trace,
Had Strength, and Vigour, and an English Face,
Scorn'd the Design of Nature's Gifts to spoil,
And damn his comely Person by his Style.

He knew, whate'er might be his secret Thoughts,
The Sex to dwell, to tell them half their Faults,
Not that he flatter'd them, and gave Pretence
To those he courted, to suspect his Sense.
Women to those an equal Scorn have shown,
Who grant them all Things, or allow them none.
Hence Fops, whom Nature made to grin, and give,
The Sexes Bubbles, and Aversion live.
And Wits of nicer parts with Over-Care;
Seeking a Perfect One, lose all the Fair.

Chaucer, who shuns the Folly of Extremes,
With Wit and Truth records these common Themes;
Not wholly to the Fair devotes his Pen,
But wifely turns the Satyr on the Men:
Their Arts, their Stratagems at large displays,
And telling them, gives Women silent Praise.
He nor too much extols the Sex, nor blames,
(For surely there have been some guilty Dames)
But gilds their Weakness with an artful Touch,
For fulsom Panegyrick is too much.
See! how he pities where he can't defend,
The granting Mistress, and deceitful Friend:
Alas! He knew the Torrent of Desire,
When the Nerves tremble, and the Eyes shake Fire.

But I offend—let Chaucer's Muse advise;
The Nymph is safe who on the Bard relies:
For in the mighty Calendar of Love,
Many are Confessors, Few Martyrs prove.

Pages 16-19 of Sewall George-A New Collection of Original
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