

With Beautie restes she not; nor wooes to lighte

Her hallow'd taper at proud Honour's flame;

Nor Circe's cuppe doth crown; nor comes in flighte

Upon th' Icarian winge of bablinge Fame:

Not shrine of golde dothe this fair fainte embower,

She glides from Heaven, but not in Danaë's shower.

Go, Blossome, wanton in suche joyous aire,

But ah!—oft soone thy buxome blast is oer!

When the sleek pate shall grow far 'bove its haire,

And creeping Age shall reap this pitceous lore!

To broode o'er Follie, and with me confesse,

“ Earth's flattering dainties prove but sweete distresse.”

THE OLDE HERMITE.

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## THE FEMINEAD: OR FEMALE GENIUS.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR MDCCLII.

BY JOHN DUNCOMBE, M. A.

SHall lordly man, the theme of every lay,

Usurp the Muse's tributary bay?

In kingly state on Pindus' summit sit,

Tyrant of verse, and arbiter of wit?

By



By Salic law the female right deny,  
 And view their genius with regardless eye?  
 Justice forbid! and every muse inspire  
 To sing the glories of a sister-choir!  
 Rise, rise, bold swain; and to the listening grove  
 Resound the praises of the sex you love;  
 Tell how, adorn'd with every charm, they shine,  
 In mind and person equally divine,  
 Till man, no more to female merit blind,  
 Admire the person, but adore the mind.

To these weak strains, O thou! the sex's friend  
 And constant patron, <sup>m</sup> Richardson! attend:  
 Thou, who so oft with pleas'd, but anxious care,  
 Hast watch'd the dawning genius of the fair,  
 With wonted smiles wilt hear thy friend display  
 The various graces of the female lay;  
 Studious from Folly's yoke their minds to free,  
 And aid the generous cause espous'd by thee.

Long o'er the world did Prejudice maintain,  
 By sounds like these, her undisputed reign:  
 "Woman! she cried, to thee, indulgent Heaven  
 "Has all the charms of outward beauty given:  
 "Be thine the boast, unrival'd, to enslave  
 "The great, the wise, the witty, and the brave;  
 "Deck'd with the Paphian rose's damask glow,  
 "And the vale-lily's vegetable snow,

<sup>m</sup> The author of those three celebrated works, Pamela, Clarissa, and  
 Sir Charles Grandison,



" Be thine, to move majestic in the dance,  
 " To roll the eye, and aim the tender glance,  
 " Or touch the strings, and breathe the melting song,  
 " Content to emulate that airy throng,  
 " Who to the sun their painted plumes display,  
 " And gaily glitter on the hawthorn spray,  
 " Or wildly warble in the beechen grove,  
 " Careless of aught but music, joy, and love."

Heavens! could such artful, slavish sounds beguile  
 The free-born sons of Britain's polish'd isle?  
 Could they, like fam'd Ulysses' dastard crew,  
 Attentive listen, and enamour'd view,  
 Nor drive the Syren to that dreary plain,  
 In loathsome pomp, where eastern tyrants reign;  
 Where each fair neck the yoke of slavery galls,  
 Clos'd in a proud seraglio's gloomy walls,  
 And taught, that levell'd with the brutal kind,  
 Nor sense, nor souls to women are assign'd.

Our British nymphs with happier omens rove,  
 At freedom's call, thro' wisdom's sacred grove,  
 And, as with lavish hand each sister grace  
 Shapes the fair form, and regulates the face,  
 Each sister muse, in blissful union join'd,  
 Adorns, improves, and beautifies the mind.  
 Ev'n now fond Fancy in our polish'd land  
 Assembled shews a blooming, studious band:  
 With various arts our reverence they engage,  
 Some turn the tuneful, some the moral page;  
 These, led by Contemplation, soar on high,  
 And range the Heavens with philosophic eye;



While those, surrounded by a vocal choir,  
 The canvas tinge, or touch the warbling lyre.  
 Here, like the stars' mix'd radiance, they unite  
 To dazzle and perplex our wandering sight:  
 The muse each charmer singly shall survey,  
 And tune to each her tributary lay.

So when, in blended tints, with sweet surprize  
 Assembled beauties strike our ravish'd eyes,  
 Such as in Lely's melting colours shine,  
 Or spring, great Kneller! from a hand like thine,  
 On all with pleasing awe at once we gaze,  
 And, lost in wonder, know not which to praise,  
 But, singly view'd, each nymph delights us more,  
 Disclosing graces unperceiv'd before.

First let the muse with generous ardor try  
 To chase the mist from dark opinion's eye:  
 Nor mean we here to blame that father's care,  
 Who guards from learned wives his booby heir,  
 Since oft that heir with prudence has been known  
 To dread a genius that transcends his own:  
 The wise themselves should with discretion chuse,  
 Since letter'd nymphs their knowledge may abuse,  
 And husbands oft experience to their cost  
 The prudent housewife in the scholar lost:  
 But those incur deserv'd contempt, who prize  
 Their own high talents, and their sex despise,  
 With haughty mien each social blis defeat,  
 And sully all their learning with conceit:  
 Of such the parent justly warns his son,  
 And such the muse herself will bid him shun.

But,



But lives there one, whose unassuming mind,  
 Tho' grac'd by nature, and by art refin'd,  
 Pleas'd with domestic excellence, can spare  
 Some hours from studious ease to social care,  
 And with her pen that time alone employs  
 Which others waste in visits, cards, and noise;  
 From affectation free, tho' deeply read,  
 " With wit well natur'd, and with books well bred,"  
 With such (and such there are) each happy day  
 Must fly improving, and improv'd away;  
 Inconspicuous might fix and settle there,  
 And wisdom's voice approve the chosen fair.

Nor need we now from our own Britain rove,  
 In search of Genius, to the Lesbian grove,  
 Tho' Sappho there her tuneful lyre has strung,  
 And amorous griefs in sweetest accents sung,  
 Since here, in Charles's days, amidst a train  
 Of shameless bards, licentious and profane,  
 The chaste<sup>n</sup> Orinda rose; with purer light,  
 Like modest Cynthia, beaming thro' the night:  
 Fair Friendship's lustre, undisguis'd by art,  
 Glows in her lines, and animates her heart;  
 Friendship, that jewel, which, tho' all confess  
 Its peerless value, yet how few possess!  
 For her the never-dying myrtle weaves  
 A verdant chaplet of her odorous leaves;

<sup>n</sup> Mrs. Catherine Phillips: she was distinguished by most of the virtues  
 of king Charles's reign, and died young. Her pieces on friendship are  
 particularly admired.



If Cowley's or Roscommon's song can give  
Immortal fame, her praise shall ever live.

Who can unmov'd hear ° Winchelsea reveal  
Thy horrors, Spleen! which all, who paint, must feel?  
My praises would but wrong her sterling wit,  
Since Pope himself applauds what she has writ.

But say, what matron now walks musing forth  
From the bleak mountains of her native North?  
While round her brows two sisters of the Nine  
Poetic wreaths with philosophic twine!

Hail, ♀ Cockburne, hail! ev'n now from Reason's bowers  
Thy Locke delighted culls the choicest flowers  
To deck his great, successful champion's head,  
And Clarke expects thee in the laurel shade.

Tho' long to dark, oblivious want a prey,  
Thy aged worth pass'd unperceiv'd away,  
Yet Scotland now shall ever boast thy fame,  
While England mourns thy undistinguish'd name,  
And views with wonder, in a female mind,  
Philosopher, divine, and poet join'd!

The modest muse a veil with pity throws  
O'er vice's friends, and virtue's female foes;

° Anne countess of Winchelsea, a lady of great wit and genius,  
wrote (among others) a poem, much admired, on the Spleen, and is  
praised by Mr. Pope, &c. under the poetical name of Ardelia.

♀ Mrs. Catherine Cockburne was the wife of a clergyman, lived ob-  
scurely, and died a few years ago in an advanced age in Northumber-  
land; her works on dramatic, philosophical, and sacred subjects have  
been lately collected by the learned Dr. Birch, and are generally ad-  
mired.



Abash'd she views the bold unblushing mien  
Of modern <sup>q</sup> Manley, Centlivre, and Behn;  
And grieves to see one nobly born disgrace  
Her modest sex, and her illustrious race.

'Tho' harmony thro' all their numbers flow'd,  
And genuine wit its every grace bestow'd,  
Nor genuine wit, nor harmony, excuse  
The dangerous fallies of a wanton muse:  
Nor can such tuneful, but immoral, lays  
Expect the tribute of impartial praise:

As soon might <sup>r</sup> Philips, Pilkington, and V—  
Deserv'd applause for spotless virtue gain.

But hark! what <sup>s</sup> nymph, in Frome's embroider'd vale,  
With strains seraphic swells the vernal gale?  
With what sweet sounds the bordering forest rings?  
For sportive Echo catches, as she sings,  
Each falling accent, studious to prolong  
The warbled notes of Rowe's ecstatic song.  
Old Avon pleas'd his reedy forehead rears,  
And polish'd Orrery delighted hears.  
See with what transport she resigns her breath,  
Snatch'd by a sudden, but a wish'd-for death!

<sup>q</sup> The first of these wrote the scandalous memoirs called *Atalantis*, and the other two are notorious for the indecency of their plays.

<sup>r</sup> These three ladies have endeavoured to immortalize their shame by writing their own memoirs.

<sup>s</sup> The character of Mrs. Rowe and her writings is too well known to be dwelt on here. It may be sufficient to say, that without any previous illness she met at last with that sudden death for which she had always wished.



Releas'd from earth, with smiles she soars on high  
 Amidst her kindred spirits of the sky,  
 Where faith and love those endless joys bestow,  
 That warm'd her lays, and fill'd her hopes below,

Nor can her noble <sup>t</sup> friend escape unseen,  
 Or from the muse her modest virtues screen;  
 Here, sweetly blended, to our wondering eyes,  
 The peers, poets, and Christian rise:  
 And tho' the Nine her tuneful strains inspire,  
 We less her genius, than her heart, admire,  
 Pleas'd, 'midst the great, one truly good to see,  
 And proud to tell that Somerset is she.

By generous views one <sup>u</sup> peers more demands  
 A grateful tribute from all female hands;  
 One, who to shield them from the worst of foes,  
 In their just cause dar'd Pope himself oppose.  
 Their own dark forms deceit and envy wear,  
 By Irwin touch'd with <sup>w</sup> truth's celestial spear,  
 By her disarm'd, ye wittings! now give o'er  
 Your empty sneers, and shock the sex no more;

<sup>t</sup> Frances, Countess of Hertford, and afterwards dutches dowager of Somerset, Mrs. Rowe's illustrious friend, lamented her death in some verses prefixed to her poems, and was author of the letters in her collection signed Cleora.

<sup>u</sup> Anne, viscountess Irwin, and aunt to the present earl of Carlisle: this lady, in a poetical epistle to Mr. Pope, has rescued her sex's cause from the aspersions cast on them by that satyrist in his essay on the characters of women.

<sup>w</sup> See Milton, book iv. ver. 811.



Thus bold Camilla, when the Trojan chief  
Attack'd her country, flew to its relief;

Beneath her lance the bravest warriors bled,  
And fear dismay'd the host which great Æneas led.

But ah! why heaves my breast this pensive sigh?  
Why starts this tear unbidden from my eye?  
What breath from sighs, what eye from tears refrains,  
When, sweetly-mournful, hapless <sup>x</sup> Wright complains?  
And who but grieves to see her generous mind,  
For nobler views and worthier guests design'd,  
Admit the hateful form of black despair,  
Wan with the gloom of superstitious care?  
In pity-moving lays, with earnest cries,  
She call'd on Heaven to close her weary eyes,  
And, long on earth by heart-felt woes oppress'd,  
Was borne by friendly death to welcome rest.

In nervous strains, lo! <sup>y</sup> Madan's polish'd taste  
Has poetry's successive progress trac'd,  
From antient Greece, where first she fix'd her reign,  
To Italy, and Britain's happier plain.  
Praise well-bestow'd adorns her glowing lines,  
And manly strength with female softness joins.  
So female charms and manly virtues grace,  
By her example form'd, her blooming race,

<sup>x</sup> Mrs. Wright, sister to the famous Westceys, has published some pieces, which, tho' of a melancholy-cast, are written in the genuine spirit of poetry.

<sup>y</sup> Mrs. Madan is author of a poem called the Progress of Poetry; wherein the characters of the best Grecian, Roman, and English poets are justly and elegantly drawn.

And,

<sup>z</sup> Mrs. convinced  
squalling  
and the vi



And, fram'd alike to please our ears and eyes,  
There new Cornelias and new Gracchi rise.

O that you now, with genius at command,  
Would snatch the pencil from my artless hand,  
And give your sex's portraits, bold and true,  
In colours worthy of themselves and you!

Now in ecstatic visions let me rove,  
By Cynthia's beams, thro' Brackley's glimmering grove,  
Where still each night, by startled shepherds seen,  
Young <sup>z</sup> Leapor's form flies shadowy o'er the green.  
Those envied honours nature lov'd to pay

The briar-bound turf, where erst her Shakespear lay,  
Now on her darling Mira she bestows;  
There o'er the hallow'd ground she fondly strows  
The choicest fragrance of the breathing spring,  
And bids each year her favourite linnet sing.

Let cloister'd pedants, in an endless round,  
Tread the dull mazes of scholastic ground;  
Brackley unenvying views the glittering train  
Of learning's uselefs trappings idly vain;  
For, spite of all that vaunted learning's aid,  
Their fame is rivall'd by her rural maid.

So, while in our Britannia's beechen sprays  
Sweet Philomela trills her mellow lays,

<sup>z</sup> Mrs. Leapor, daughter to a Northamptonshire gardener, has lately convinced the world of the force of unassisted nature, by imitating and equalling some of our most approved poets, by the strength of her parts, and the vivacity of her genius.



We to the natives of the sultry line  
 Their boasted race of parrots pleas'd resign:  
 For tho' on citron boughs they proudly glow  
 With all the colours of the watery bow,  
 Yet thro' the grove harsh discord they prolong,  
 Tho' rich in gaudy plumage, poor in song.

Now bear me, Clio, to that Kentish strand,  
 Whose rude o'erhanging cliffs and barren sand  
 May challenge all the myrtle-blooming bowers  
 Of fam'd Italia, when, at evening hours,  
 Thy own <sup>a</sup> Eliza muses on the shore,  
 Serene, tho' billows beat, and tempests roar.  
 Hail, Carter, hail! your favourite name inspires  
 My raptur'd breast with sympathetic fires;  
 Ev'n now I see your lov'd Ilyssus lead  
 His mazy current thro' th' Athenian mead;  
 With you I pierce thro' academic shades,  
 And join in Attic bowers th' Aonian maids;  
 Beneath the spreading plane with Plato rove,  
 And hear his morals echo thro' the grove.  
 Joy sparkles in the sage's looks, to find  
 His genius glowing in a female mind;  
 Newton admiring sees your searching eye  
 Dart thro' his mystic page, and range the sky;

<sup>a</sup> Mrs. Eliza Carter of Deal, well known to the learned world for her late translation of Epictetus, has translated, from the Italian, *Algorotti's dialogues on light and colours*; and lately published a small collection of elegant poems.



By you his colours to your sex are shown,  
 And Algarotti's name to Britain known.  
 While, undisturb'd by pride, you calmly tread  
 Thro' life's perplexing paths, by wisdom led;  
 And, taught by her, your grateful muse repays  
 Her heavenly teacher in nocturnal lays.

So when Prometheus from th' Almighty Sire,  
 As sings the fable, stole celestial fire,  
 Swift thro' the clay the vital current ran,  
 In look, in form, in speech resembling man;  
 But in each eye a living lustre glow'd,  
 That spoke the heavenly source from whence it flow'd.

“ What magic powers in <sup>b</sup> Celia's numbers dwell,

“ Which thus th' unpraetis'd breast with ardor swell

“ To emulate her praise, and tune that lyre

“ Which yet no bard was able to inspire!

“ With tears her suffering Virgin we attend,

“ And sympathize with father, lover, friend!

“ What sacred rapture in our bosom glows,

“ When at the shrine she offers up her vows!

“ Mild majesty and virtue's awful power

“ Adorn her fall, and grace her latest hour.”

Transport me now to those embroider'd meads,

Where the slow Ouze his lazy current leads;

There, while the stream soft-dimpling steals along,

And from the groves the green-hair'd Dryads throng,

<sup>b</sup> We could not here, with justice, withhold our tribute of praise  
 from Mrs. Brooke, author of the tragedy of Virginia.



Clio herself, or <sup>c</sup> Ferrar tunes a lay,  
 Sweet as the darkling Philomel of May.  
 Haste, haste, ye Nine, and hear a sister sing  
 The charms of Cynthia, and the joys of spring :  
 See! night's pale goddess with a grateful beam  
 Paints her lov'd image in the shadowy stream,  
 While, round his votary, spring profusely showers  
 " A snow of blossoms, and a wild of flowers."  
 O happy nymph, tho' winter o'er thy head,  
 Blind to that form, the snow of age shall shed ;  
 Tho' life's short spring and beauty's blossoms fade,  
 Still shall thy reason flourish undecay'd ;  
 Time, tho' he steals the roseate bloom of youth,  
 Shall spare the charms of virtue and of truth,  
 And on thy mind new charms, new bloom bestow,  
 Wisdom's best friend, and only beauty's foe.

Nor shall thy much-lov'd <sup>d</sup> Pennington remain  
 Unfung, unhonour'd in my votive strain.  
 See where the soft enchantress, wandering o'er  
 The fairy ground that Philips trod before,  
 Exalts her chymic wand, and swift behold  
 The basest metals ripen into gold :  
 Beneath her magic touch, with wondering eye,  
 We view vile copper with pure sterling vie ;  
 Nor shall the farthing, fung by her, forbear  
 To claim the praises of the smiling fair ;

<sup>c</sup> This lady has written two beautiful odes to Cynthia and the Spring.

<sup>d</sup> Mrs. Pennington has happily imitated Mr. Philips's Splendid Shilling, in a burlesque poem called The Copper Farthing.



Till chuck and marble shall no more employ  
The thoughtless leisure of the truant boy.

Returning now to Thames's flowery side,  
See how his waves in still attention glide!  
And, hark! what songstresses shakes her warbling throat?  
Is it the nightingale, or <sup>e</sup> Delia's note?  
The balmy zephyrs, hovering o'er the fair,  
On their soft wings the vocal accents bear;  
Thro' Sunbury's low vale the strains rebound,  
Ev'n neighbouring Chertsey hears the chearful sound,  
And wondering sees her Cowley's laurel'd shade  
Transported listen to the tuneful maid.

O may those nymphs, whose pleasing power she sings,  
Still o'er their suppliant wave their fostering wings!  
O long may Health and soft-ey'd Peace impart  
Bloom to her cheek, and rapture to her heart!  
Beneath her roof the red-breast shall prolong,  
Unchill'd by frosts, his tributary song;  
For her the lark shall wake the dappled morn,  
And linnet twitter from the blossom'd thorn.  
Sing on, sweet maid! thy Spenser smiles to see  
Kind Fancy shed her choicest gifts on thee,  
And bids his Edwards, on the laurel spray  
That shades his tomb, inscribe thy rural lay.

<sup>e</sup> This lady has written odes to Peace, Health, and the Robin Red-breast, which are here alluded to; and she has been celebrated in a sonnet by Mr. Edwards, author of the *Caunons of Criticism*.



With lovely mien † Eugenia now appears,  
 The muse's pupil from her tenderest years;  
 Improving tasks her peaceful hours beguile,  
 The sister arts on all her labours smile,  
 And while the Nine their votary inspire,  
 " One dips the pencil, and one strings the lyre."  
 O may her life's clear current smoothly glide,  
 Unruffled by misfortune's boisterous tide!  
 So while the charmer leads her blameless days  
 With that content which she so well displays,  
 Her own Honoria we in her shall view,  
 And think her allegoric vision true.

Thus wandering wild among the golden grain  
 That fruitful floats on Bansted's airy plain,  
 Careless I sung, while summer's western gale  
 Breath'd health and fragrance thro' the dusky vale;  
 When from a neighbouring hawthorn, in whose shade  
 Conceal'd she lay, up-rose th' Aonian maid:  
 Pleas'd had she listen'd; and, with smiles, she cried,  
 " Cease, friendly swain! be this thy praise and pride,  
 " That thou, of all the numerous tuneful throng,  
 " First in our cause hast fram'd thy generous song.  
 " And ye, our sister choir! proceed to tread  
 " The flowery paths of fame, by science led!  
 " Employ by turns the needle and the pen,  
 " And in their favourite studies rival men!

† This lady has successfully applied herself to the sister arts of drawing and poetry, and has written an ingenious allegory, wherein two pilgrims, Fidelio and Honoria, after a fruitless search for the palace of Happiness, are at last conducted to the house of Content.



" May all our sex your glorious track pursue,  
 " And keep your bright example still in view!  
 " These lasting beauties will in youth engage,  
 " And smooth the wrinkles of declining age,  
 " Secure to bloom, unconscious of decay,  
 " When all Corinna's roses fade away.  
 " For ev'n when love's short triumph shall be o'er,  
 " When youth shall please, and beauty charm no more,  
 " When man shall cease to flatter; when the eye  
 " Shall cease to sparkle, and the heart to sigh,  
 " In that dread hour, when parent dust shall claim  
 " The lifeless tribute of each kindred frame,  
 " Ev'n then shall wisdom for her chosen fair  
 " The fragrant wreaths of virtuous fame prepare;  
 " Those wreaths which flourish in a happier clime,  
 " Beyond the reach of envy and of time;  
 " While here, th' immortalizing muse shall save  
 " Your darling names from dark Oblivion's grave;  
 " Those names the praise and wonder shall engage  
 " Of every polish'd, wise, and virtuous age;  
 " To latest times our annals shall adorn,  
 " And save from folly thousands yet unborn."

