

(183)



The F E M A L E D R U M:

Or, The Origin of CARDS. A Tale.

Address'd to the Honourable Miss CARPENTER.

THOU, whom to counsel is to praise,
With candor view these friendly lays,
Nor from the vice of gaming free,
Believe the satire points at thee ;
Who truth and worth betimes can't prize,
Nor yet too sprightly to be wise,
But hear this tale of ancient time,
Nor think it vain, tho' told in rhyme.

Elate with wide-extended pow'r,
Sworn rivals from the natal hour,
AV'RICE and SLOTH, with hostile art
Contended long for woman's heart ;
She fond of wealth, afraid of toil,
Still shifted the capricious smile ;
By turns, to each the heart was sold,
Now bought with ease, and now with gold ;
Scarce either grasp the sov'reign sway,
When chance revers'd the prosp'rous day.

The doubtful strife was still renew'd,
 Each baffled oft, but ne'er subdu'd;
 When AV'RICE shew'd the glitt'ring prize,
 And hopes and fears began to rise,
 SLOTH shed on ev'ry busy sense
 The gentle balm of indolence.
 When SLOTH had screen'd, with artful night,
 The soft pavilion of delight;
 Stern AV'RICE, with reproachful frown,
 Would scatter thorns amongst her down.

Thus each by turns the realm controul'd,
 Which each in turn despair'd to hold;
 At length unable to contend,
 They join to chuse a common friend,
 To close in love the long debate,
 Such love, as mutual fears create;
 A friend they chose, a friend to both,
 Of AV'RICE born, and nurs'd by SLOTH;
 An artful nymph, whose reign began
 When Wisdom ceas'd to dwell with man;
 In Wisdom's awful robes array'd,
 She rules o'er politicks and trade;
 And by the name of CUNNING known,
 Makes wealth, and fame, and pow'r her own.

In quest of CUNNING then they rove
 O'er all the windings of the grove,
 Where twining boughs their shade unite,
 For CUNNING ever flies the light;

At length thro' maze perplex'd with maze,
Through tracts confus'd, and private ways,
With sinking hearts and weary feet,
They gain their fav'rite's dark retreat ;
There, watchful at the gate, they find
SUSPICION, with her eyes behind ;
And wild ALARM, awaking, blows
The trump that shakes the world's repose.

The guests well known, salute the guard,
The hundred gates are soon unbarr'd ;
Through half the gloomy cave they press,
And reach the wily queen's recess ;
The wily queen disturb'd, they view,
With schemes to fly, though none pursue ;
And, in perpetual care to hide,
What none will ever seek, employ'd.

“ Great queen (they pray'd) our feuds compose,
“ And let us never more be foes.”
“ This hour (she cries) your discord ends,
“ Henceforth, be SLOTH and AV'RICE friends ;
“ Henceforth, with equal pride, prepare
“ To rule at once the captive fair.”

Th' attentive pow'rs in silence heard,
Nor utter'd what they hop'd or fear'd,
But search in vain the dark decree,
For CUNNING loves obscurity ;
Nor wou'd she soon her laws explain,
For CUNNING ever joys to pain.

She

She then before their wond'ring eyes,
 Bid piles of painted paper rise ;
 " Search now these heaps, (she cries) here find
 " Fit emblem of your pow'r combin'd."
 The heap to Av'RICE first she gave,
 Who soon descry'd her darling Knave :
 And SLOTH, ere Envy long cou'd sting,
 With joyful eyes beheld a King,

 " These gifts (said CUNNING) bear away,
 " Sure engines of despotick sway ;
 " These charms dispense o'er all the ball,
 " Secure to rule where'er they fall.
 " The love of cards let SLOTH infuse,
 " The love of money soon ensues ;
 " The strong desire shall ne'er decay,
 " Who plays to win, shall win to play ;
 " The breast, where love has plann'd his reign,
 " Shall burn, unquench'd, with lust of gain ;
 " And all the charms that wit can boast,
 " In dreams of better luck be lost."

Thus neither innocent, nor gay,
 The useless hours shall fleet away,
 While TIME o'erlooks the trivial strife,
 And, scoffing, shakes the sands of life ;
 Till the wan maid, whose early bloom
 The vigils of quadrille consume ;
 Exhausted, by the pangs of play,
 To SLOTH and Av'RICE falls a prey.