Mary Masters, â??The Female Triumphâ?•

Description

MARY MASTERS

â??The Female Triumphâ?•

SWELLâ??D with vain Learning, vainer man conceives,
That â??tis with him the bright Minerva lives;
That she descends to dwell with him alone,
And in his Breast erects her Starry throne:
Pleasâ??d with his own, to Female Reason blind,
Fansys all Wisdom in his Sex confinâ??d.
Proudly they boast of Philosophick rules,
Of Modes and Maxims taught in various Schools,
And look on Women as a Race of Fools.
But if CALISTAâ??s perfect soul they knew,
Theyâ??d own their Error, and her Praise pursue.
Centered in her the brightest Graces meet,
Treasures of Knowledge and rich mines of Wit.
Her Thoughts are beautiful, refinâ??d and new,
Polishâ??d her language and her Judgment true;
Each Word deliverâ??d with that soft address,
That as she speaks the melting Sounds we bless.
O! I could praise her without doing wrong,
Could to the subject raise my daring Song;
Were I enrichâ??d with PRIORâ??s Golden Vein,
Her I would Sing in an exalted Strain;
Her Merit in the noblest Verse proclaim,
And raise my own upon CALISTAâ??s fame:
Her elevated Sense, her Voice, her Mien,
Her innate Goodness, and her Air Serene,
Should in my Lays to future Ages shine,
And some new Charm appear in evâ??ry Line.

Firâ??d with the Theme how great would be the Flight?
In what unbounded Numbers should I write!
Each Line, each Word, would more majestic grow,
And evâ??ry Page with finished Beauty glow.

But me alas the *tuneful Nine* disdain,
Scorn my rude Verse, and mock my feeble Strain:
No kind Poetick Powâ??rs descend to fill
My humble breast, and guide my trembling Quill:
My Thoughts, in rough and artless Terms exprest,

Are incorrect and negligently drest.
Yet sure my just ambition all must own
The well-chose Subject has my Judgment shown
And in the weak Attempt my great Design is known. 40

NOTES:

2 *Minerva* Ancient Roman goddess of wisdom and war (www.newworldencyclopedia.org).

10 *Calista* Potential reference to a female contemporary or companion of the author; Latin feminine form of the Greek name â??Calistoâ?? (www.theoi.com).

20 *Prior* Contemporary poet Matthew Prior (1664-1721), known in the period for his facility with meter and rhyme.

24 *Mien â??*The look, bearing, manner, or conduct of a person, as showing character, moodâ?• (*OED*).

32 *Tuneful Nine* The Greek muses.

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1733), pp. 8-10.

Edited by Taryn Osborne