Elizabeth Hands, â??A Poem, on the Supposition of an Advertisement Appearing in a Morning Paper, of the Publication of a Volume of Poems, by a Servant-Maidâ?•

Description

ELIZABETH HANDS

â??A Poem, on the Supposition of an Advertisement Appearing in a Morning Paper, of the Publication of a Volume of Poems, by a Servant-Maidâ?•

The tea-kettle bubbled, the tea things were set,
The candles were lighted, the ladies were met;
The how dâ??yeâ??s were over, and entering bustle,
The company seated, and silks ceasâ??d to rustle:
The great Mrs. Consequence openâ??d her fan;
And thus the discourse in an instant began:
(All affected reserve, and formality scorning,)
I suppose you all saw in the paper this morning,
A volume of Poems advertisâ??dâ??â??tis said
Theyâ??re produced by the pen of a poor Servant Maid.
A servant write verses! says Madam Du Bloom;
Pray what is the subjectâ??a Mop, or a Broom?
He, he, he, â??says Miss Flounce; I suppose we shall see
An Ode on a Dishcloutâ??what else can it be?
Says Miss Coquettilla, why ladies so tart?
Perhaps Tom the Footman has fired her heart;
And sheâ??ll tell us how charming he looks in new clothes,
And how nimble his hand moves in brushing the shoes;
Or how the last time that he went to May-Fair,
He bought her some sweethearts of ginger-bread ware.
For my part I think, says old lady Marr-joy,
A servant might find herself other employ:
Was she mine Iâ??d employ her as long as â??twas light,
And send her to bed without candle at night.
Why so? says Miss Rhymer, displeasâ??d; I protest
â??Tis pity a genius should be so deprest!
What ideas can such low-bred creatures conceive,
Says Mrs. Noworthy, and laught in her sleeve.
Says old Miss Prudella, if servants can tell
How to write to their mothers, to say they are well,
And read of a Sunday the Duty of Man;
Which is more I believe than one half of them can;
I think â??tis much *properer* they should rest there,

Than be reaching at things so much out of their sphere.
Says old Mrs. Candour, Iâ??ve now got a maid
Thatâ??s the plague of my lifeâ??a young gossiping jade;
Thereâ??s no end of the people that after her come,
And whenever Iâ??m out, she is never at home;
Iâ??d rather ten times she would sit down and write,
Than gossip all over the town evâ??ry night.
Some whimsical trollop most like, says Miss Prim,
Has been scribbling of nonsense, just out of a whim,
And conscious it neither is witty or pretty,
Conceals her true name, and ascribes it to Betty.
I once had a servant myself, says Miss Pines,
That wrote on a Wedding, some very good lines:
Says Mrs. Domestic, and when they were done,
I canâ??t see for my part what use they were *on*;
Had she wrote a receipt, toâ??ve instructed you how
To warm a cold breast of veal, like a ragou,
Or to make a cowslip wine, that would pass for Champaign;
It might have been useful, again and again.
On the sofa was old lady Pedigree placâ??d,
She ownâ??d that for poetry she had no taste,
That the study of heraldry was more in fashion,
And boasted she knew all the crests in the nation.
Says Mrs. Routella, â??Tom, take out the urn,
And stir up the fire, you see it donâ??t burn.
The tea-things removâ??d, and the tea-table gone,
The card-tables brought, and the cards laid thereon,
The ladies ambitious for each others crown,
Like courtiers contending for honours sat down.

NOTES:

Title *Supposition* â??Position laid down;â?¦imagination yet unprovedâ?• (Johnson).

13 *Flounce* â??To express displeasure or ill-temper by agitated movementsâ?• (*OED*).

14 *Dishclout* Dishcloth.

15 *Coquettilla* A play on the word â??coquette,â?• â??a girl who endeavors to attract noticeâ?• (Johnson).

19 *May-Fair* A district in London, â??Mayfair was developed from the mid-17th century, and its proximity to St. Jamesâ??s Palace made it a fashionable neighborhoodâ?• (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Mayfair, with its growing â??aristocratic village[s],â?• attracted buyers and sellers to popular â??modish shopping centre[s],â?• such as Regents Park and Bond Street, which were places known for â??carriage folkâ?• (Richardson, â??Shops and Shopkeeping Throughout the Ages,â?• p. 616).

21 *Marr* â??To hamper or hinderâ?• (*OED*).

26 *deprest* â??To humble; to deject; to sinkâ?• (Johnson); â??to lower in station, fortune, or influenceâ?• (*OED*).

27 *low-bred* â??Of humble origin or social statue; not respectable of welcome in good societyâ?• (*OED*).

31 *Duty of Man* Short title for *The Whole Duty of Man: Laid Down in a Plain and Familiar Way for the Use of All but Especially the Meanest Reader*, â??first published anonymously in 1658 and variously attributed to Lady Dorothy Pakington, Archbishop Richard Sterne, Bishop John Fell, Humphrey Henchman and others, although now generally attributed to Richard Allestreeâ?• (ESTC); â??the dominant book of religious instruction throughout the eighteenth centuryâ?• (Lehmberg, *Cathedrals Under Siege*, p. 115)

34 *sphere* â??A standard of comparison to denote a great difference in rank, intelligence, etc.â?• (*OED*).

35 *Candour* â??Sweetness of temper; purity of mind; openness; ingenuity; kindnessâ?• (Johnson).

36 *jade* â??A term of reprobation applied to a womanâ?• (*OED*).

41 *trollop* â??An untidy or slovenly woman; a slut; a morally loose womanâ?• (*OED*).

50 *ragou* Alternate spelling of â??ragout,â?• â??a highly seasoned dish, usually consisting of meat cut into small pieces and stewed with vegetablesâ?• (*OED*).

51 *cowslip wine* A wine made from cowslip-blossoms,â??a well-known wild plant in pasturesâ?¦ with drooping fragrant yellow flowersâ?• (*OED*).

53 *Pedigree* â??The system of social rank based on genealogyâ?• (*OED*).

55 *heraldry* â??Heraldic title, rank, or precedenceâ?• (*OED*).

56 *crests* â??The ornament of the helmet in heraldryâ?• (Johnson), â??also used separately, as a cognizance, upon articles of personal property, as a seal, plate, note-paper, etc.â?• (*OED*).

57 *Routella* The root word, â??rout,â?• meansâ??to cry; to roar; to bellow; to shoutâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: *The Death of Amnon: A Poem. With an Appendix: Containing Pastorals, and Other Poetical Pieces* (Coventry, 1789), pp. 47-50. [*Google Books*]

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