

Says old Miss Prudella, if servants can tell

How to write to their mothers, to say they are well, 30

And read of a Sunday the Duty of Man;

Which is more I believe than one half of them can;

I think 'tis much *properer* they should rest there,

Than be reaching at things so much out of their sphere.

Says old Mrs. Candour, I've now got a maid 35

That's the plague of my life a young gossiping jade;

There's no end of the people that after her come,

And whenever I'm out, she is never at home;

I'd rather ten times she would sit down and write,

Than gossip all over the town every night. 40

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, 45

That wrote on a Wedding, some very good lines:

Says Mrs. Domestic, and when they were done,

I can't see for my part what use they were on;

Had she wrote a receipt, to've instructed you how

To warm a cold breast of veal, like a ragou, 50

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 plac'd,

She own'd that for poetry she had no taste,

That the study of heraldry was more in fashion, 55

And boasted she knew all the crests in the nation.

Says Mrs. Routella, 'Tom, take out the urn,

And stir up the fire, you see it don't burn.

The tea-things remov'd, and the tea-table gone,

The card-tables brought, and the cards laid

thereon, 60

The ladies ambitious for each others crown,

Like courtiers contending for honours sat down.

NOTES:

Title *Supposition* 'Position laid down;...imagination yet unproved' (Johnson).

13 *Flounce* To express displeasure or ill-temper by agitated movements (QED).

14 *Dishclout* Dishcloth.

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

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

21 *Marr* To hamper or hinder (QED).

26 *deprest* To humble; to deject; to sink (Johnson); to lower in station, fortune, or influence (QED).

27 *low-bred* Of humble origin or social status; not respectable or welcome in good society (QED).

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*, 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 Allestree (ESTC); the dominant book of religious instruction throughout the eighteenth century (Lehmberg *Cathedrals Under Siege*, p. 115).

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

35 *Candour* Sweetness of temper; purity of mind; openness; ingenuity; kindness (Johnson).

36 *jade* A term of reprobation applied to a woman (QED).

41 *trollop* An untidy or slovenly woman; a slut; a morally loose woman (QED).

50 *ragou* Alternate spelling of *ragout*, a highly seasoned dish, usually consisting of meat cut into small pieces and stewed with vegetables (QED).

51 *cowslip wine* A wine made from cowslip-blossoms, a well-known wild plant in pastures... with drooping fragrant yellow flowers (QED).

53 *Pedigree* The system of social rank based on genealogy (QED).

55 *heraldry* Heraldic title, rank, or precedence (QED).

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

57 *Routella* The root word, *rout*, means to cry; to roar; to bellow; to shout (QED).

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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