

Jonathan Swift, "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind"

Description

JONATHAN SWIFT

• The Furniture of a Woman's Mind •

Written in the Year 1727

A Set of Phrases learn'd by Rote;
A Passion for a Scarlet-Coat;
When at a Play to laugh, or cry,
Yet cannot tell the Reason why:
Never to hold her Tongue a Minute; 5
While all she prates has nothing in it.
Whole Hours can with a Coxcomb sit,
And take his Nonsense all for Wit;
Her Learning mounts to read a Song;
But, half the Words pronouncing wrong; 10
Has ev'ry Rapartee in Store,
She spoke ten Thousand Times before,
Can ready Compliments supply
On all Occasions, cut and dry.
Such Hatred to a Parson's Gown, 15
The Sight will put her in a Swoon.
For Conversation well endu'd;
She calls it witty to be rude;
And, placing Raillery in Railing;
Will tell aloud your greatest Failing; 20
Nor makes a Scruple to expose
Your bandy Leg, or crooked Nose.
Can at her Morning Tea, run o'er
The Scandal of the Day before,
Improving hourly in her Skill, 25
To cheat and wrangle at Quadrille.

Â 2 *Scarlet-Coat* Â A reference to a soldier in the British army; from the seventeenth century onwards known as “redcoats” (*OED*).

Â 6 *prates* To speak foolishly or with little purpose (*OED*).

Â 7 *Coxcomb* Â A fool or simpleton (*OED*).

Â 11 *Rapartee* Â A witty or sharp reply (*OED*).

15 *Parson*™s Clergyman of the Anglican Church of England (*OED*).

Â 19 *Raillery* Â Abusive, unpleasant or unkind criticism (*OED*).

Â 26 *Quadrille* Â A trick-taking card game for four players using forty cards (*OED*).

Â 28 *Groat* Â An English coin worth four pence that ceased to be issued for circulation in 1662 (*OED*).

32 *Patch* Â A small piece of black material, typically silk or velvet, cut into a decorative shape and worn on the face, either for adornment or to conceal a blemish, esp. in the 17th and 18th centuries (*OED*).

Â 37 *teize* Tease; to worry, vex or annoy (*OED*).

Â 43 *Molly* Â A girl, a woman, esp. a lower-class one (*OED*).

Â 44 *Hair-Lace* Â A string or tie for binding the hair; a fillet, headband (*OED*).

Â 50 *Whig* Â One faction of two opposing political parties in England, particularly during the 18th century. “Whigs”™ was applied to those who claimed the power of excluding the heir from the throne (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*); *Tory* Â One faction of two opposing political parties in England. “Tory”™ applied to those who supported the hereditary right of James, duke of York, despite his Roman Catholic faith (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*); *sow*™r Â Variant of sour: having a harsh, morose, or peevish disposition (*OED*).

59 *Mrs. Harding* Â Sarah Harding, widow of Dublin printer John Harding who was prosecuted for publishing Swift’s *Drapier’s Letters* in 1724. Â At her husband’s death in 1725, Â Sarah took over the business and, despite being taken into custody briefly in 1725 herself, she continued to publish politically controversial work by Swift (James Woolley, “Sarah Harding as Swift’s Printer,” in *Walking Naboth’s Vineyard: New Studies of Swift*, pp. 164-77).

Â 60 *Farthing* Â The quarter of a penny; the coin representing this value (*OED*).

SOURCE: *The Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1751), pp. 248-50. [*HathiTrust*]

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