Elizabeth Thomas, â??Epistle to Clemenaâ?•

Description

[ELIZABETH THOMAS]

***â??*Epistle to Clemenaâ?•**

Occasioned by an Argument she had maintainâ??d against the AUTHOR.

Thoâ?? you my Resolution still accuse,
And for *Misanthropy* condemn the Muse;
Still finding Fault with what I most commend,
And lose good Humour in the Name of *Friend*:
Yet if these pettish Heats you lay aside,
And by calm *Reason* let the *Cause* be tryâ??d.
I make no Question, but it would appear,
You had no Cause to *boast*, nor I to *fear*.

For when two bind themselves in Marriage Bands,
Fidelity in each, the *Church* commands;
Equalâ??s the Contract, equal are the Vows,
Yet Custom, diffâ??rent Licences allows:
The *Man* may range from his unhappy *Wife*,
But *Woman*â??s made a Property for *Life*.
To no dear *Friend* the Grief may be revealâ??d,
No, she poor Soul, must keep her Shame concealâ??d:
And, to the Height of doating Folly grown,
Believe her *Husband*â??s Character her own.

So I have seen a lovely beauteous *Maid*,
By *Duty* forcâ??d, by *Interest* betrayâ??d,
Resign her self into *Nefario*â??s Arms,
And make the sordid Wretch sole Master of her Charms.
With seeming Transport he the Bliss receives,
With seeming Gratitude, rich Presents gives:
The finest *Brillants* throâ?? the Town are sought,
The costliest *Livâ??ries* for her Servants bought;
The richest *Tissues* for her self to wear,
And nothing that she likâ??d could purchasâ??d be too dear.
But â??ere the Sun his annual Course had run,

Or thrice three Moons with borrowâ??d *Lustre* shone;
The *Libertine* resumâ??d his brutal Life:
Oh! then how nauseous grew the Name of *Wife*.
Her Conversation, and her Charms were stale,
Nor *Wit* and *Beauty*, longer could prevail:
The Night he turnâ??d to Day, the Day to Night,
Yet still uneasy in *Amintâ*??s Sight.

At two, perhaps, he condescends to rise,
Fetches a Yawn or two, and rubs his Eyes:
Run, run, cries he, to Captain *Hackum*â??s straight,
And tell the Rakes, I for their Coming wait;
Be sure you bring the *Dogs*, and heark, dâ??ye hear,
Bid *Tom*, the *Butler*, in my Sight appear.

The hungry *Bravo*â??s to their Patron run,
And wonder that his *Levee* is so soon:
Bless me, says one, how well you look to Day!
Tâ??other replies, ay, he may well look Gay,
When *Wine*, and *Women*, pass his Time away.
While Busâ??ness other Mortals Peace destroys,
He gives his Soul a nobler Loose to Joys.
Enough, *Nefario* cries, sit down my Friends,
See where the sparkling *Burgundy* attends.
This *Wine* was sent from *France* but tâ??other Day,
And never yet in *Vinter*â??s Cellar lay.

Set in for Drinking thus, they each recite
The wonderful Atchievement of the Night.
One tells how he did *Phillis* serenade,
Fought with the *Watch*, and made them run afraid:
While tâ??other shrugging cries, I changâ??d my *Bed*,
And was in *Triumph* to the *Counter* led.
But if the Town does *Canes* enough afford,
Iâ??ll drub that *Rascal* where I bought my *Sword*.

Sated at last with fulsome *Lies* and *Wine*,
Nefario swears aloud, â??Tis *Dinner* Time.
Amintâ??s callâ??d, and calmly down they sit,
But she not one poor Word or Look can get.
This *Meat*â??s too salt, tâ??otherâ??s too fresh, he cries,
And from the *Table* in a Passion flies:
Not, that his *Cook* is faulty in the least,
But â??tis the *Wife* that palls his squeamish Taste.

Well, after having ransackâ??d *Park* and *Play*,
He with some *hackney Vizor* sneaks away,
To famâ??d *Pontack*â??s, or noted Monsieur *Locket*â??s,
Where Mrs. *Jilt*, as fairly picks his Pockets.

â??Thus bubbled, in Revenge, he walks his Round,
From *Loft* three Stories high, to *Cellar* under Ground:
Scowâ??rs all the *Streets*, some Brother *Rake* doth fight,
And with a broken *Pate* concludes the *Night*.
Or in some *Tavern* with the gaming Crew,
He *drinks*, and *swears*, and *plays*, â??till Day doth Night pursue.

Mean while *Aminta* for his Stay doth mourn,
And sends up pious *Vows* for his Return:
Fears some Mishap, looks out at evâ??ry Noise,
And thinks each Breath of Wind, her dear *Nefario*â??s Voice.
At last the Clock strikes Five, and Home he comes,
And kicks the *spaniel* Servants throâ?? the Rooms;
â??Till he the lovely pensive *Fair* doth spy,
Nor can she â??scape the sordid *Tyranny*:
A thousand brutish Names to her he gives,
Which she poor Lady patiently receives:
A thousand *Imprecations* doth bestow,
And scarcely can refrain to give thâ?? impending Blow.
â??Till tirâ??d with *Rage*, and overcome with *Wine*,
Dead drunk he falls, and snoring lies supine.

Wretched *Nefario*! no Repentance shows,
But mocks those ills *Aminta* undergoes:
Ruinâ??d by him, with Pain she draws her *Breath*,
And still survives *an Evil worse than Death*.

Ah *Friend*! in these depravâ??d unhappy Times,
When *Vice* walks barefacâ??d, *Virtues* pass for Crimes:
Many *Nefario*â??s must we think to find,
Thoâ?? not so bad as this, yet *Villains* in their Kind.
Hard is that Venture where our *All* we lose;
But harder yet an honest Man to choose.

NOTES:

23 *Transport* â??Vehement emotionâ?¦mental exaltation, rapture, ecstasyâ?• (*OED*)

26 *Livâ??ries* â??The uniform or insignia worn by a householdâ??s servantsâ?• (*OED*)

31 *Libertine* â??A person (typically a man) who is not restrained by morality, esp. with regard to sexual relations; a person of dissolute or promiscuous habitsâ?• (*OED*); also called â??rakes.â?•

43 *Bravoâ??s* In this context, fellow rakes.

44 *Levee* â??A reception of visitors on rising from bed; a morning assembly held by a prince or person of distinctionâ?• (*OED*).

57 *Watch* Watchman, â??appointed to keep watch and ward in all towns from sunset to sunriseâ?• (*OED*).

59 *Counter* â??Prisonâ?• (*OED*).

70 *Park and Play* References to St. Jamesâ??s Park and the theatre, both known haunts for rakish men and prostitutes in the period.

71 *hackney Vizor* *â??*A prostituteâ?• (*OED*).

72 *Pontackâ??s* A popular London tavern located on Abchurch Lane; *Monsieur Locketâ??s* Another â??fashionable tavern where the young and gay met to dine,â?• located in Gerard street, Soho (John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London*(London, [1875]), pp. 379-80, 322).

74 *bubbled* â??Deluded, duped, or cheatedâ?• (*OED*).

77 *Pate* â??The head, the skullâ?• (*OED*).

85 *spaniel* â??Submissive or cringingâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: ***Poems on Several Occasions. By a Lady*** **(London, 1726), pp. 174-79. [Google Books]**

Edited by Will Hinds