

STREPHON AND CHLOE.

1731.

OF Chloe all the town has rung,
By every size of poets sung :
So beautiful a nymph appears
But once in twenty thousand years ;
By Nature form'd with nicest care,
And faultless to a single hair.
Her graceful mien, her shape, and face,
Confess'd her of no mortal race :
And then so nice, and so genteel ;
Such cleanliness from head to heel ;
No humours gross, or frouzy steams,
No noisome whiffs, or sweaty streams,
Before, behind, above, below,
Could from her taintless body flow :
Would so discreetly things dispose,
None ever saw her pluck a rose.
Her dearest comrades never caught her
Squat on her hams to make maid's water :
You'd swear that so divine a creature
Felt no necessities of nature.
In summer had she walk'd the town,
Her armpits would not stain her gown :
At country dances, not a nose
Could in the dog-days smell her toes.
Her milk-white hands, both palms and backs,
Like ivory dry, and soft as wax.

Her hands, the softest ever felt,
 'Though cold would burn, though dry would melt.

Dear Venus, hide this wondrous maid,
 Nor let her loose to spoil your trade.
 While she engrosses every swain,
 You but o'er half the world can reign.
 Think what a case all men are now in,
 What ogling, sighing, toasting, vowing !
 What powder'd wigs ! what flames and darts !
 What hampers full of bleeding hearts !
 What sword-knots ! what poetic strains !
 What billets-doux, and clouded canes !

But Strephon sigh'd so loud and strong,
 He blew a settlement along ;
 And bravely drove his rivals down,
 With coach and six, and house in town.
 The bashful nymph no more withstands,
 Because her dear papa commands.
 The charming couple now unites :
 Proceed we to the marriage rites.

Imprimis, at the temple porch
 Stood Hymen with a flaming torch :
 The smiling Cyprian Goddess brings
 Her infant loves with purple wings :
 And pigeons billing, sparrows treading,
 Fair emblems of a fruitful wedding.
 The Muses next in order follow,
 Conducted by their squire, Apollo :

¹ Though deep, yet clear, &c.—*Denham*. Ed. 1772.

Then Mercury with silver tongue ;
And Hebe, goddess ever young.
Behold, the bridegroom and his bride
Walk hand in hand, and side by side ;
She, by the tender Graces drest,
But he, by Mars, in scarlet vest.
The nymph was cover'd with her *flammeum*,
And Phœbus sung th' epithalamium.
And last, to make the matter sure,
Dame Juno brought a priest demure.
Luna was absent, on pretence
Her time was not till nine months hence.
The rites perform'd, the parson paid,
In state return'd the grand parade ;
With loud huzzas from all the boys,
That now the pair must crown their joys.

But still the hardest part remains :
Strephon had long perplex'd his brains,
How with so high a nymph he might
Demean himself the wedding-night :
For, as he view'd his person round,
Mere mortal flesh was all he found :
His hand, his neck, his mouth, and feet,
Were duly wash'd, to keep them sweet ;
With other parts, that shall be nameless,
The ladies else might think me shameless.
The weather and his love were hot ;
And, should he struggle, I know what—
Why, let it go, if I must tell it—
He'll sweat, and then the nymph may smell it

While she, a goddess dyed in grain,
Was unsusceptible of stain,
And, Venus-like, her fragrant skin
Exhaled ambrosia from within.
Can such a deity endure
A mortal human touch impure ?
How did the humbled swain detest
His prickly beard, and hairy breast !
His night-cap, border'd round with lace,
Could give no softness to his face.

Yet, if the goddess could be kind,
What endless raptures must he find !
And goddesses have now and then
Come down to visit mortal men ;
To visit and to court them too :
A certain goddess, God knows who,
(As in a book he heard it read,)
Took Colonel Peleus to her bed.
But what if he should lose his life
By venturing on his heavenly wife !
(For Strephon could remember well,
That once he heard a school-boy tell,
How Semele, of mortal race,
By thunder died in Jove's embrace.)
And what if daring Strephon dies
By lightning shot from Chloe's eyes !

While these reflections fill'd his head,
The bride was put in form to bed :
He follow'd, stript, and in he crept,
But awfully his distance kept.

Now, "ponder well, ye parents dear ;"
Forbid your daughters guzzling beer ;
And make them every afternoon
Forbear their tea, or drink it soon ;
That, ere to bed they venture up,
They may discharge it every sup ;
If not, they must in evil plight
Be often forced to rise at night.
Keep them to wholesome food confined,
Nor let them taste what causes wind :
'Tis this the sage of Samos means,
Forbidding his disciples beans.
O ! think what evils must ensue ;
Miss Moll, the jade, will burn it blue ;
And, when she once has got the art,
She cannot help it for her heart ;
But out it flies, even when she meets
Her bridegroom in the wedding-sheets.
Carminative and diuretic
Will damp all passion sympathetic ;
And Love such nicety requires,
One blast will put out all his fires.
Since husbands get behind the scene,
The wife should study to be clean ;
Nor give the smallest room to guess
The time when wants of nature press ;
But after marriage practise more
Decorum than she did before ;
To keep her spouse deluded still,
And make him fancy what she will.

In bed we left the married pair ;
'Tis time to show how things went there.
Strephon, who had been often told
That fortune still assists the bold,
Resolved to make the first attack ;
But Chloe drove him fiercely back.
How could a nymph so chaste as Chloe,
With constitution cold and snowy,
Permit a brutish man to touch her ?
Even lambs by instinct fly the butcher.
Resistance on the wedding-night
Is what our maidens claim by right ;
And Chloe, 'tis by all agreed,
Was maid in thought, in word, and deed.
Yet some assign a different reason ;
That Strephon chose no proper season.

Say, fair ones, must I make a pause,
Or freely tell the secret cause ?

Twelve cups of tea (with grief I speak)
Had now constrain'd the nymph to leak.
This point must needs be settled first :
The bride must either void or burst.
Then see the dire effects of pease ;
Think what can give the colic ease.
The nymph oppress'd before, behind,
As ships are toss'd by waves and wind,
Steals out her hand, by nature led,
And brings a vessel into bed ;
Fair utensil, as smooth and white
As Chloe's skin, almost as bright.

Strephon, who heard the fuming rill
 As from a mossy cliff distil,
 Cried out, Ye Gods! what sound is this?
 Can Chloe, heavenly Chloe, ——?
 But when he smelt a noisome steam
 Which oft attends that lukewarm stream;
 (Salerno both together joins,¹
 As sov'reign medicines for the loins :)
 And though contrived, we may suppose,
 To slip his ears, yet struck his nose ;
 He found her while the scent increased,
 As mortal as himself at least.
 But soon, with like occasions press'd,
 He boldly sent his hand in quest
 (Inspired with courage from his bride)
 To reach the pot on t'other side ;
 And, as he fill'd the reeking vase,
 Let fly a rouser in her face.

The little Cupids hovering round,
 (As pictures prove) with garlands crown'd,
 Abash'd at what they saw and heard,
 Flew off, nor ever more appear'd.

Adieu to ravishing delights,
 High raptures, and romantic flights ;
 To goddesses so heavenly sweet,
 Expiring shepherds at their feet ;

¹ Vide Schol. Salern. Rules of Health, written by the School of Salernum.

To silver meads and shady bowers,
Dress'd up with amaranthine flowers.

How great a change ! how quickly made !
They learn to call a spade a spade.
They soon from all constraint are freed ;
Can see each other do their need.
On box of cedar sits the wife,
And makes it warm for dearest life ;
And, by the beastly way of thinking,
Find great society in stinking.
Now Strephon daily entertains
His Chloe in the homeliest strains ;
And Chloe, more experienced grown,
With interest pays him back his own.
No maid at court is less ashamed,
Howe'er for selling bargains famed,
Than she to name her parts behind,
Or when a-bed to let out wind.

Fair Decency, celestial maid !
Descend from Heaven to Beauty's aid !
Though Beauty may beget desire,
'Tis thou must fan the Lover's fire ;
For Beauty, like supreme dominion,
Is best supported by Opinion :
If Decency bring no supplies,
Opinion falls, and Beauty dies.

To see some radiant nymph appear
In all her glittering birth-day gear,
You think some goddess from the sky
Descended, ready cut and dry :

But ere you sell yourself to laughter,
Consider well what may come after ;
For fine ideas vanish fast,
While all the gross and filthy last.

O Strephon, ere that fatal day
When Chloe stole your heart away,
Had you but through a cranny spied
On house of ease your future bride,
In all the postures of her face,
Which nature gives in such a case ;
Distortions, groanings, strainings, heavings,
'Twere better you had lick'd her leavings,
Than from experience find too late
Your goddess grown a filthy mate.
Your fancy then had always dwelt
On what you saw and what you smelt ;
Would still the same ideas give ye,
As when you spied her on the privy ;
And, spite of Chloe's charms divine,
Your heart had been as whole as mine.

Authorities, both old and recent,
Direct that women must be decent ;
And from the spouse each blemish hide,
More than from all the world beside.

Unjustly all our nymphs complain
Their empire holds so short a reign ;
Is, after marriage, lost so soon,
It hardly lasts the honey-moon :
For, if they keep not what they caught,
It is entirely their own fault.

They take possession of the crown,
And then throw all their weapons down :
Though, by the politician's scheme,
Whoe'er arrives at power supreme,
Those arts, by which at first they gain it,
They still must practise to maintain it.

What various ways our females take
To pass for wits before a rake !
And in the fruitless search pursue
All other methods but the true !

Some try to learn polite behaviour
By reading books against their Saviour ;
Some call it witty to reflect
On every natural defect ;
Some show they never want explaining
To comprehend a double meaning.
But sure a tell-tale out of school
Is of all wits the greatest fool ;
Whose rank imagination fills
Her heart, and from her lips distils ;
You'd think she utter'd from behind,
Or at her mouth was breaking wind.

Why is a handsome wife adored
By every coxcomb but her lord ?
From yonder puppet-man inquire,
Who wisely hides his wood and wire ;
Shows Sheba's queen completely drest,
And Solomon in royal vest :
But view them litter'd on the floor,
Or strung on pegs behind the door ;

Punch is exactly of a piece
With Lorrain's duke, and prince of Greece.

A prudent builder should forecast
How long the stuff is like to last ;
And carefully observe the ground,
To build on some foundation sound.
What house, when its materials crumble,
Must not inevitably tumble ?
What edifice can long endure
Raised on a basis unsecure ?
Rash mortals, ere you take a wife,
Contrive your pile to last for life :
Since beauty scarce endures a day,
And youth so swiftly glides away ;
Why will you make yourself a bubble,
To build on sand with hay and stubble ?

On sense and wit your passion found,
By decency cemented round ;
Let prudence with good-nature strive,
To keep esteem and love alive.
Then come old age whene'er it will,
Your friendship shall continue still ;
And thus a mutual gentle fire
Shall never but with life expire.