

APPENDIX 1 Three poems by local authors

- 1 Ann Taylor Gilbert, 'Remonstrance', in J. Conder (ed.), *Associate Minstrels*, 1812.
- 2 Ann Taylor Gilbert, 'My Mother', in A. and J. Taylor, *Original Poems for Infant Minds*, 1805.
- 3 James Luckcock, 'My Husband', in J. Luckcock, *Sequel to Memoirs in Humble Life*, Birmingham, 1825.

Remonstrance

'Women in their course of action describe a smaller circle than men; but the perfection of a circle consists, not in its dimensions, but in its correctness.' (*Coelebs in Search of a Wife*)

***** Why this hopeless feud?

This worse than civil strife,
Which long, with poison'd darts, hath strew'd
The vale of social life?

To each, an helpmate each was made,
Congenial, but diverse:
The rougher path was *his* to tread;
The mild domestic, *hers*.

His iron arm was braced for toil,
Or danger's ruder shock;
To win the curs'd, reluctant soil,
Or fence the cavern'd rock.

The watchful eye, the pliant hand,
To gentler duties led:
By *her* the rural rite was planned,
The simple table spread.

Composed, retiring, modest, *she*;
Impetuous, *he*, and brave; --
His passions, boisterous as the sea;
Hers, oil upon the wave.

Wearied in far-extended chase,
His ready meal she drest;
With smiles illumed his dwelling place,
With kindness soothed his breast.

Thus, in the days of ancient man,
Th' harmonious friendship grew,
Ere yet those hostile names began,
The tyrant and the shrew.

'Twas Nature's will that each obey'd;
Nor envious question rose:
They felt for mutual service made;
For friends, and not for foes.

But tired of Nature's wise controul,
Immediate war began:
He had the power, and, proud of soul,
Became the tyrant, Man.

Too feeble to sustain her part,
She fell a sullen prey,
Content by influence and art
To counteract his sway.

Degenerate, with degenerate time,
Still wider breach was seen:
His was the bold, ferocious crime;
Hers, petulant and mean.

Strange! thus to mar the plan of Heaven,
Ingeniously perverse!
To turn the solace it had given,
A blessing, to a curse.

Sure 'twas a cold unmanly pride
The harmony that broke:
Why should the oak the lily chide,
Because she's not an oak?

If all were lilies, where's the use,
Or strength, the forest yields?
If oaks, the fragrancy we lose,
And beauty of the fields.

Through following ages, dark and drear,
Th' unnatural contest ran;
Nor generous feeling stole a tear
From hard, obdurate Man!

Woman, his haughty will consigned
In joyless paths to run:
No beam of day-light reached her mind,
And sages said she'd none.

At length, the brilliant western star
Of Knowledge 'gan to rise;
The mists of ignorance afar
Rolled sullen from the skies.

Neglected woman, from the night
Of dark oppression raised,
Caught the fair dawn of mental light,
And blest it as she gazed.

One champion, hardy, and alone,
Stood forth her cause to plead:
But no; the weapons we disown
That ask a martial deed.¹

Enlightened feeling shall subdue,
Or may we still endure;
Nor brave a combat, though we knew
That victory were sure.

Triumph were only bright defeat;
Disgrace, the laurel crown: –
OUR conquest is composed retreat;
Concealment our renown.

The right that Nature gave, we claim, –
Just honours of our kind:
We envy not the manly frame
Of body, or of mind.

Man, in *his* way, perfection knows;
And we as much in ours:
The violet is not the rose,
Yet both alike are flowers.

Thus Venus round a narrow sphere
Conducts her silver car;
Nor aims, nor seems, to interfere
With Jove's imperial star.

Athwart the dark and deep'ning gloom
Their blending rays unite,
And with commingled beams illumine
The drear expanse of night.

Boyle, Locke, and Newton, deep in lore,
Man's lofty records trace;
Edgeworth, and Hamilton, and More,
Our living annals grace.²

His soul is thoughtful and profound;
Hers, brilliant and acute; –
Plants cultured, each, in different ground
And bearing different fruit.

Among the social duties led,
Where each excels in part,
Man's proudest glory is his head,
A Woman's, is her heart.

Unwearied in the toilsome course,
He climbs the hill of fame;
Takes immortality by force,
And wins a mighty name.

Along a cool sequestered way,
Her quiet walk she winds;
Sheds milder sunshine on his day,
His brow with flowers binds.

Of art intuitive possest,
Her infant train she rears;
To virtue by her smiles carest,
Or chastened by her tears:

Beside the flitting midnight lamp,
 With fond and wakeful eye,
 Wipes gently off the dying damp,
 Or soothes the parting sigh: --

'Tis here that Woman brightest shines
 (Though bright in other spheres):
 Her name is drawn in fairest lines,
 When written by her tears.

Yet not the weak, the puny thing,
 Subdued to silly woe;
 The firmest dignity may spring,
 Where softest feelings grow.

With you in mental fields to stray,
 She has not ill assumed;
 And follows in the lucid way
 Your studies have illumed.

Then why, *****, why controul
 That dictate of the heart,
 Which could not feel itself a whole
 Till Woman shared a part?

Why look with hard, unkindly view,
 On Woman's frailer part,
 As if the weeds of folly grew
 But in a female heart?

In sorrow and in sin combined,
 Both sentenced to the tomb,
 'Twould better speak a chastened mind,
 To cheer each other's doom.

Sweet were the pilgrimage of those
 Who hand in hand to heaven,
 Would learn the cynic eye to close,
 Forgiving and forgiven.

Eve fled for refuge from her shame,
 Her grief, to Adam's breast;
 The ruined hero felt the claim,
 Nor generous love repress.

Then, still let generous love beguile
 The weary walk of life;
 Nor waste a sigh, nor lose a smile,
 In jealousy and strife.

Ann Taylor Gilbert
August 1807

Notes

- 1 A possible reference to Mary Wollstonecraft.
- 2 Maria Edgeworth, Hannah More and Elizabeth Hamilton, the latter a Scots writer on domesticity.