

however it is not the superstructure, but the foundation of her character; principles on which her education was built, that I mean to affect warmly as I admire the genius of that able writer, whose opinions I often have occasion to cite, indignation always takes place of admiration; the rigid frown of insulted virtue effaces the smile of complacency, when eloquent periods are wont to raise, when I read his voluptuous reveries this the man, who, in his ardour for virtue, would banish all the soft delights to paint the useful struggles of passion, the triumphs of good situations, and the heroic flights which carry the glowing soul out of itself. How are these mighty sentiments lowered when he describes the pretty and enticing airs of his little favourite! But, for the present, I wave the subject, and, instead of severely reprehending the transient effusions of weening sensibility, I shall only observe, that whoever has cast a benign eye on society, must often have been gratified by the sight of a husband and wife, not dignified by sentiment, or strengthened by a union of intellectual pursuits. The domestic trifles of the day have afforded matter for cheerful converse, and innocent caresses have softened toils which did require great exercise of mind or stretch of thought: yet, has not the sight this moderate felicity excited more tenderness than respect? An emotion similar to what we feel when children are playing, or animals sporting, whilst the contemplation of the noble struggles of suffering merit has admiration, and carried our thoughts to that world where sensation will place to reason.

Women are, therefore, to be considered either as moral beings, or as creatures that they must be entirely subjected to the superior faculties of men. Let us examine this question. Rousseau declares that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and made a coquetish slave to render her a more alluring object of desire, a *sweeter* companion than whenever he chooses to relax himself. He carries the arguments, which pretends to draw from the indications of nature, still further, and insists that truth and fortitude, the corner stones of all human virtue, should be cultivated with certain restrictions, because, with respect to the female character, obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour.⁶

What nonsense! when will a great man arise with sufficient strength of mind to puff away the fumes which pride and sensuality have thus poured over the subject! If women are by nature inferior to men, their virtues will be the same in quality, if not in degree, or virtue is a relative idea, and

4. A common spelling for "waive" in the eighteenth century.

5. Similar feelings has Milton's pleasing picture of paradisaical happiness ever raised in my mind; yet, instead of envying the lovely pair, I have, with conscious dignity, or Satanic pride, turned to hell for sublimer objects. In the same style, when viewing some noble monument of human art, I have traced the emanation of the Deity in the order I admired, till, descending from that giddy height, I have caught myself contemplating the grandest of all human sights;—for fancy quickly placed, in some solitary recess, an outcast of fortune, rising superior to passion and discontent

that conduct should be founded on the same principles, and have equal with man as daughters, wives, and mothers, their moral character to be estimated by their manner of fulfilling those simple duties; but the grand end of their exertions should be to unfold their own and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue. They may try to render themselves pleasant; but ought never to forget, in common with man, to hold out the felicity which can satisfy an immortal soul. I do not hesitate, that either sex should be so lost in abstract reflections or speculations, as to forget the affections and duties that lie before them, and truth, the means appointed to produce the fruit of life; on the other hand, I would warmly recommend them, even while I assert, that they should not be satisfied when they are considered in their true, sober light, but by the prevailing opinion, that woman was created for man, may be seen in the following story;⁷ yet, as very few, it is presumed, who have bestowed any serious thought on the subject, ever supposed that woman, literally speaking, one of Adam's ribs, the deduction must be made, that she was created from the ribs of Adam, and that she was to be equal to the ground; or, only be so far admitted as it proves that man, in the constant antiquity, found it convenient to exert his strength to subvert the yoke, and his invention to shew that she ought to have her share in the yoke, because the whole creation was only created for his pleasure.

It is not to be concluded that I wish to invert the order of things; I have not intended, that, from the constitution of their bodies, men seem to be created by Providence to attain a greater degree of virtue. I speak collectively of the whole sex; but I see not the shadow of a reason to conclude that the sexes should differ in respect to their nature. In fact, how can they, when they are only one eternal standard? I must therefore, if I reason consistently, strenuously maintain that they have the same simple direction, and that there is a God.

Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create,

As when she touch'd the brink of all we hate.⁸

That light this sally places men and women, I shall leave to the judgment to determine; meanwhile I shall content myself with observing, that I do not discover why, unless they are mortal, females should always be considered by being made subservient to love or lust.

I speak disrespectfully of love is, I know, high treason against sentiment and fine feelings; but I wish to speak the simple language of truth, and to address the head than the heart. To endeavour to reason love

7. Pope's Epistle 2, lines 31–23 for one account of the origin of woman. Moses was thought to be the author of the first five books of the Old Testament.

8. Alexander Pope, "Of the Characters of Women," Epistle 2, lines 51–52, of his *Moral Essays* (1735).