

REPORT of a select Committee from the BELLER ASSEMBLY, on the subject of the production of Miss FEMES and her Respondents.

MR. SPOONER,

As our sex will readily be acknowledged to be peculiarly interested in the debate which has arisen on the production of FEMES; the BELLER Assembly, after a sitting, and due deliberation respecting the subject, have thought proper to depute us a select committee on the affair; carefully to examine and animadvert upon the merits of whatever is, or in future may be offered on each side of the question. And we are invested with full power to approve, disapprove, receive or reject in the name of the said Assembly, whatever sentiment may be advanced in favor of, or in opposition to the tenets of FEMES: utterly forbidding all male critics' intermeddling with this our decision, under the penalty of thereby becoming completely obnoxious to the custom and usage of actions; as we can shew, that from time immemorial, the deciding power in all disputes upon this subject is left exclusively to our sex.

In the first place to prove that this plea is well founded, we will appeal to all novel-writers from BOCCACCIO to Mrs. HAYWOOD—say, that enchanting creature—that prince of novel-writings, HARRY FIELDING himself, expressly says, that LOVE is the whole business of our lives, and that therefore our actions are all our days influenced by some incommunicable principles, which the best adepts of the other sex can only conceive of, and that imperfectly, but never describe—which discovers the superiority of our judgment in this matter, and the propriety of their acquiescence in the same. Our second (tho unnecessary) appeal shall be to the laws of the land; which forbid our loving without their immediate sanction, under the pain of everlasting contempt. From whence it follows, that as matrimony is but the seal of love, we have as absolute a prerogative in that as in love. And in support of the dignified point of view in which we ought to be considered, (and in which we ought to consider ourselves) among innumerable very respectable authors on the subject, we need only quote that justly celebrated polite philosopher, Colonel FORRESTER (who, our Assembly have long decreed is no flatterer) and who declares, that to speak sincerely, it is to the fair sex they owe the most shining qualities of which theirs is master; and that women seem designed by Providence to spread the same cheerfulness thro the intellectual economy, that the celestial bodies diffuse over the material part of the creation. Having therefore, for the satisfaction of the curious, proved our mission to be essential and legitimate, and our title to this Censorship just, i. e. founded on the nature and fitness of things, we proceed next to act in our official capacity.

We shall therefore firstly consider Miss FEMES' performance in a critical view; and as it obviously appears to be a local piece, and entirely confined to some particular vicinity or neighborhood, & therefore not meant to apply to the world at large, in order "accurately" to determine upon the merits or demerits of the production, it is indispensably necessary to fix on some certain spot of earth, where this neighborhood must exist, and to which her ideas were limited. A learned English writer fixes the abode of the Robinhood society, on some part of the Eastern continent, and its era soon after the destruction of Babel, with much less reason, and with less plausible arguments than we shall advance, to shew that Miss FEMES is a resident of the island called the Grand Cayman, or some part of the great Mogul's Empire—for we are told that a year past, there were but fifty marriageable females on the Grand Cayman; and upon enquiry we found the oldest was but sixteen years and three months of age: whereby we very justly conclude, that the pursuits of the inhabitants of that island or neighborhood after matrimony were "too eager." But on the whole, 'tis our opinion that she is a subject of the great Mogul; for travellers affirm (which we find also corroborated by Geographies) that the females of that country frequently become mothers at 11 years old. But a still greater evidence of her being of this nation, is her style, some of her particular words, especially, "munificent" being almost peculiar to Eastern compositions, which we could readily prove by many translations, but we decline it as foreign to our purpose.

Concluding Miss FEMES, therefore, among the inhabitants of Indostan, her piece is extremely judicious, and admirably executed; excepting in the manner, which, for the following reasons we must censure: first, because of her servile imitation of Mr. PRAEDPREFOR—it evidently appearing

that she is a writer of his description. For like him she tells serious errors in a lying manner. Secondly, we object to her using the word *moving* in the manner and place she does, as it strikes the delicate ears of the ladies of Massachusetts (by whom we are authorized) disagreeably:—and for the same reason, we cannot but object to her explication—"with animation"—And as the learned SCRIBBLERIOUS, in his notes on the Dunciad, says, "A true critic should not only know when a word is wrong, but know what to insert in its place to make it read right!"—we therefore order all readers, henceforth, instead of "with animation," to read "but-lessly." Our last objection is against her cautioning virgins not to marry, till they are well experienced in what will "accurately" concern them in matrimony; at least, she insinuates such a caution; and however such sentiments may relish in Agra, Delhi, &c. cities in her country, we can only say it is held to be *bad policy* among us Massachusettsian damsels, and therefore expect they will pay but little attention to it. In all other points of view we affirm her performance to be unexceptionable.

We come now to speak of her respondents.—As to Mr. IGNORAMUS, his work it appears was suppressed; which (if the "Gossip Fame" says true as to the author) is an instance of Mr. SPOONER's judgment and delicacy. How ungenerous it is to pitch upon some one of our acquaintance, tell private stories of them, and then industriously report them to be the author! This conduct we do censure and despise; we hold it to be base that we will not tell who Mr. IGNORAMUS is; notwithstanding we need only tell his name, to give Miss FEMES ample revenge, as he is known to the public only by his—

Mr. CANDOR, who places himself in front of the battle, we suspect fee'd himself, at this juncture, zealously interested in defence of matrimony; but we declare him guilty of a most intolerable piece of injustice, in attributing to her the words of PINDAR,—"stormy state," telling her "she now termed it a stormy state," which is false: we also censure his definition of her words "lower class"—which, considering her sex, is forced and unmanly in him.—He also calls her PETER PINDAR's Prosefyte, and other harsh names, too shocking to mention.—He cannot therefore have that compliment of "brevity" returned which he paid to Miss FEMES; and which, like Mr. DRAPER'S Poetry, she so justly deserved.

The next combatant appears to be one Mr. ALONZO, who mounts the Rostrum as gravely and metaphysically as if MITTON had engaged him to defend his Tetrachordon. That she has reflected dishonor on our sex, we, in the strongest terms, and in the name of our constituents deny. She has proved to the world that the sex can write: and that her performance stands high on the scale of merit, we know by adverting to the number and abilities of her opponents; for whoever dismounted from his horse to kill a grasshopper? Besides, She has inconceivably proved our consequence to the Gentlemen; for the extreme buffle they make on the appearance of her production, evidently shews that the idea of our enjoying happiness independent of them is quite insupportable. Mr. Alonzo's insinuating by the mouth of a Poet, that she has hurt her friends, we take as very unkind in him; as we can assure the public he knows nothing about them, as he is no Bramin: but by his name, and the stiffness of his style we conclude he is a Spaniard.—From his seriousness we likewise think ourselves authorized to say he is no Batchelor—as one of his cast would, undoubtedly, make his conduct correspond with his doctrine. Here we must exert our critical authority, and inform our readers that the word which they now read "arrelling," must be hereafter read (to keep to his style and manner) "brandishing the British sceptre," &c. and upon the same Scribblerian authority, we assert that we expected to see the word "had" immediately precede the word "ought" in the first line. Again, we submit it to the world to determine, whether it be characteristic of the Gentleman, to impose so many hard epithets upon the ears of a female, as we find in his performance; viz. "martial field," "yawning gulf," "frowning precipice," "cruel tiger," "bloody panther," "raging lion;" especially the three last, where either adjective would apply with equal propriety to each beast of prey.

As to Mr. PLAINDEALER, who occupies the rear, the place for which nature seems to have designed him, and who we find has not wit enough to deal otherwise; as he is but little noticed by any body else, we shall say but little of him ourselves—he has however been most complaisant to her merit, as he allows her to be a person of "distinction," which she really is.—But on the other hand, he has wickedly

and maliciously perverted her meaning of the word "faculty" which he applies to the child, and she to the parent—he meant the powers of the mind, the ability to obtain a livelihood. In answer to this MAN (a gentleman he cannot be) we only add, that we expect his sentence between the parents is unintelligible to our readers; & therefore by virtue of our aforesaid critical authority, we forbid their evermore pronouncing the pronoun "it" after the word "difficulty."

We here take our leave of the respondents and Miss FEMES for this week, after giving them full liberty to write on their respective favorite topics again. We likewise assure the public that we shall continue our exertions to support the cause of truth, as often as may be found necessary, while this debate is afoot.

We present our respectful compliments to Mr. SPOONER, and return him our grateful thanks for his politeness to Miss FEMES, at the bottom of Mr. PLAINDEALER'S production; and wishing him and all others success in their labors to promote the interest of truth; we, in the name of our constituents, remain his and the public's

most humble servants,
CHARLOTTE LISPER,
LAVINA PRATTLE,
PARTHENIA TRIPPETT.
BELLEVILLE,
Feb. 25th, 1794. }