

I am extremely happy to learn, that your precious health is re-established, and that you are once more fit to enjoy that satisfaction in existence, which health alone can give us. My old friend Ainslie has indeed been kind to you. Tell him, that I envy him the power of serving you. I had a letter from him a while ago, but it was so dry, so distant, so like a card to one of his clients, that I could scarcely bear to read it, and have not yet answered it. He is a good honest fellow; and *can* write a friendly letter, which would do equal honour to his head and his heart; as a whole sheaf of his letters I have by me will witness: and though Fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach *now*, as she did *then*, when he first honoured me with his friendship, yet I am as proud as ever; and when I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at my full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground which I have a right to.

You would laugh were you to see me where I am just now!—would to Heaven you were here to laugh with me! though I am afraid that crying would be our first employment. Here am I set, a solitary hermit, in the solitary room of a solitary inn, with a solitary bottle of wine by me—as grave and as stupid as an owl—but, like that owl, still faithful to my old song; in confirmation of which, my dear Mrs. Mac., here is your good health! May the hand-waled [hand-picked] benisons of Heaven bless your bonnie face; and the wratch wha skellies [looks askance] at your weelfare, may the auld tinkler deil get him, to clout his rotten heart! Amen.

You must know, my dearest Madam, that these now many years, wherever I am, in whatever company, when a married lady is called on as a toast, I constantly give you; but as your name has never passed my lips, even to my most intimate friend, I give you by the name of Mfs. Mac. This is so well known among my acquaintances, that when my married lady is called for, the toast-master will

say—"O, we need not ask him who it is—here's Mrs. Mac.!" I have also, among my convivial friends, set on foot a round of toasts, which I call a round of Arcadian Shepherdesses; that is, a round of favourite ladies, under female names celebrated in ancient song; and then you are my Clarinda. So, my lovely Clarinda, I devote this glass of wine to a most ardent wish for your happiness!

In vain would Prudence, with decorous sneer,
Point out a cens'ring world, and bid me fear:
Above that world on wings of love I rise,
I know its worst, and can that worst despise,
"Wrong'd, injur'd, shunn'd, unpitied, unredrest,
The mock'd quotation of the scorner's jest,"
Let Prudence' direst bodements on me fall,
Clarinda, rich reward! o'erpays them all!¹

I have been rhyming a little of late, but I do not know if they are worth postage.—Tell me what you think of the following monody.

MONODY ON A LADY FAMED FOR HER CAPRICE.
How cold is that bosom which folly once fir'd, &c.²

The subject of the foregoing is a woman of fashion in this country, with whom at one period I was well acquainted. By some scandalous conduct to me, and two or three other gentlemen here as well as me, she steered so far to the north of my good opinion, that I have made her the theme of several ill-natured things. The following epigram struck me the other day as I passed her carriage.³

¹ The poem, itself a fragment, to which the above belongs, will be found in vol. iii. p. 21.

² The monody will be found in vol. iii. p. 170—the subject of it being Mrs. Walter Riddell, of Woodley Park.

³ This is the epigram beginning

If you rattle along like your Mistress's tongue.

which will be found in vol. iii. p. 174. Referring to the epigram, Chambers justly remarks:—"To have given expression to such sentiments regarding a female, even though a positive wrong had been inflicted, would have been totally indefensible, and still more astounding is it to find that the bard could have thought of exhibiting such an effusion to another female," and that, too, several months after the quarrel had taken place.