



AN

EPISTLE

FROM A

BRITISH LADY

TO HER

COUNTRYWOMEN.



[Price Sixpence.]

AN
E P I S T L E

FROM A
BRITISH LADY
TO HER
COUNTRYWOMEN,
ON THE
OCCASION
OF THE
PRESENT REBELLION.

MARCIA to JUBA.

*I should be griev'd, young Prince, to think my Presence
Unbent your Thoughts., and slacken'd 'em to Arms.
While, warm with slaughter, our victorious Foe
Threatens aloud, and calls you to the Field.*

ADDISON'S CATO.

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MDCCLV.

AN

E P I S T L E

FROM A

BRITISH LADY

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COUNTRYWOMEN.

I MUST confess I am surprized, when Public Danger threatens the Nation, when universal Horror spreads its Banner over us, when Slavery and Confusion seem to be the terrible Prospect before us; when we have a View of Religion, Order and Decency's being trampled under Foot; I say I am surprized, at such a Time when the public Papers every Day abound with the Zeal which his Majesty's male Subjects have so unanimously shewn on this Occasion, that not one finale instance should be given of public Spirit among all the Females in this Nation. As if they had nothing to fear or to lose in this Conflict; as if that Religion which they are known to possess with equal Zeal, at least, to the Men, might be destroyed without alarming their Apprehensions, or the

Liberties and Properties of almost the only Country in which Women have any Share in those Blessings, might be invaded, without their endeavouring to exert themselves in their Support.

This surely cannot be the Case; is it, therefore, my fair Country women, that you imagine yourselves of such little Consequence at this Season, and however great your Concern is, that you have no Power to do any Service to the Public in this Time of Danger? Will you bear to think thus meanly of yourselves? Will you, in a Time of publick Commotion, think Diversion to be your Province? Can you be so humble as to imagine you may indulge yourselves at this Time in patronizing *Italian Singers* and *French Harlequins*; because what you do is of no Consequence; tho' the well known Stories of almost all the Nations in the World are evident Proofs of the contrary, and shew that however less able we may be actually to wield the Sword of War, that of State hath been often as wisely trusted to our Hands, and as judiciously and successfully managed by us: For which I shall quote no foreign Instances, having those two great Examples of Queen *Elizabeth* and Queen *Anne* before my Eyes, whose Reigns do not only an Honour to their Sex, but in particular to their Countrywomen.

Nay, if Martial Glory itself was our Ambition, might we not appeal to the Example of *Semiramis*, who after having made *Media*, *Lybia*, and *Ægypt*

submit to her Power, extended her Husband's Conquests on the one Side as far as *Ethiopia*, and on the other advanced not only to the *Indies*, but made a great Progress in the Conquest thereof: *Zenobia*, Queen of *Palmyra* in *Syria*, by her own Wisdom and Valour, enjoy'd the Title of *Augusta*, and the Empire of the East for many Years, in Opposition to the Emperor *Gallienus*, and his Successor *Claudius*; and at last, before she could be conquered, *Aurelian* thought it worth his while to head his Forces through a March, in which they sustained great Miseries and Difficulties, through the Enemy's continual Molestation, to besiege this great Queen's Capital City *Palmyra*; where they met so brave a Resistance, that they were miserably distressed, and the Emperor himself often in great Danger; nor could *Zenobia* be prevailed on by any Promises or Threats to yield herself a Slave, before irresistible Force overcame her. To return nearer home, and nearer to my Purpose, Did not *Joan of Orleans* save *France*? Did not the *Czarina's* Schemes and Conduct preserve the *Russian* Empire to her Husband? But Examples of a much less Heroic Kind will serve my Purpose; and if the Mention of these glorious Names can fire you, by shewing you, you are not all such poor inconsiderable Creatures as sometimes disgrace their Sex in a Side-Box or an Assembly, I shall have soon raised sufficient Spirit not to make you emulate the Courage of Men yourselves; but to do all in your Power to raise that Emulation amongst them. Let every Woman who hath any Power over a

Husband or a Lover, a Son or a Brother, exert it on this Occasion to rouse him in the Defence of his Country. A Woman of Honour should despise, by the base whining Arts of a *Cleopatra*, to gratify selfish Desires, or the Tenderness of a Wife or a Mother, at the Expence of making her Husband or Son either sacrifice their Duty or Honour. Had *Cleopatra* loved *Mark Anthony* as she ought, with that Love which possesses a sensible and a noble Mind, she should have driven him from her; she should have buckled on his Armour, concealed her own Anxiety, and by her Chearfulness spirited him on to Battle; and as odd Doctrine as this may at first Sight appear, if we will consider it seriously, I believe we shall find that all true Tenderness must exert itself for the Good, for the real happiness of its Object. What does any Woman who hangs upon her Husband, Father or Brother, with such a dead Weight as to prevent his joining in the common Interest for his own preservation, till the Enemy is at the Door, and she may see him barbarously destroyed before her Eyes, but tacitly confess, she would sacrifice the very Man she thus pretends to love, her Family, her Posterity, every Thing which should be most dear and sacred, to her own unreasonable Whims, to an overgrown Fear of her own immediate Safety, or some overgrown Desire, which she would be more unwilling and ashamed to own than any of the other Motives? What is this but acting like Children, who will not suffer their Nurse to depart from them, tho' the House is on Fire, to assist in extinguishing the Flames? If therefore we

would not be treated like Children, if we wish or hope Men of Sense should use us as Companions or Friends, let us not act a childish Part, but make ourselves worthy to be used according to our own Desire. Let us consider that we are more nearly interested in striving to prevent the Admission of a *Banditti* into the Kingdom, than even the Men themselves, if we have that Notion of Honour which we desire to be thought to have. Let us not incur *David's* Curse of being afraid where no Fear is, but look with due horror on the Exchange of that precious Liberty of making our own Choice, of being won by soft Persuasion and Proofs of gentle Love, to that of being subject to lawless Force, and sacrificed to a Mixture of Wantonness and Tyranny. Let every Mother consider, if this Inundation is not stopt, her prattling Boys, the Pledges of her Love, and the Darlings of her Heart, may be torn from her Sight; and Slavery, the *French* Gallies, and the *Spanish* Inquisition, be their Portion. What may be the Fate of her Girls, whom she watches over with so much tender Care, I have already hinted, and think the Subject too horrible to resume; indeed almost too horrible even but to mention; what then must be the Reality? If Motherly Tenderness be, as it is commonly apprehended, superior to that of a Father, the greater must be her Concern, the more must she feel, must she fear those Distresses which threaten her Posterity, and consequently the more must the Apprehension of their Slavery, and all those Evils which this Rebellion, if successful, would entail upon them, awaken her Vigilance, and

put her on doing, on suffering, on sacrificing every Thing in her Power to prevent it.

In short, in this Time of public Calamity, when Peace, Plenty, Liberty and Religion, are on the one Hand, and Ravage, Desolation, Rapine, Cruelty, Slavery, and Popish Superstition on the other, a Woman of Sense and Honour cannot sit quietly down unconcerned at the Event, in which she hath an equal, nay I think a superior Interest even to the Men themselves. To give up herself at this Time to Diversion and idle Amusement, must argue a weak and a childish Mind, and must make those Men of Sense who have hitherto been our Advocates, hereafter ashamed to vindicate our Cause, and be silent when Fools and Coxcombs lay their usual Claim to Ascendency over us in Understanding;. Let us therefore exert ourselves in our Sphere; let the Young and Fair, who have it in their Power to reward Heroes, look with Contempt on every Man who does not attend his King and Country's Call in their Defence; and let Mothers and Wives gird on the Sword, and even drive (harsh as it may found) their Sons and Husbands to the Field. If there is any Woman mean enough to act the contrary Part, let her not, at the same time, indulge her Pride, in the Imagination that she has more Love, more Tenderness than the rest of her Sex. Let not those amiable Qualities, by Mistake, be so debased; but let her consider herself in the Light Truth must represent her, as too silly to foresee any Consequences, or to selfish to give up to any

Consideration; her own present Humour; and Woman *Great Britain* but would be shocked at so deformed a Picture of herself.

Be not deceived, my Countrywomen, tho' rough military Encounters are peculiar to the Men, there is a Spirit which becomes our Sex as well as theirs, a Spirit without which our Chastity, nay our Tenderness, is a mere illusion. The Woman who hath a Fear superior to that of Baseness, is at best an ignoble Animal, and (he who would desire, nay who would suffer her Husband to be a Coward, can never love a brave Man as she ought.

If all these Considerations are too weak, if King, Country, Interest, Husband, Father, Brother, and Posterity, are not Arguments sufficient, let us see what is to be said on the Side of Glory, of which as the *Roman* History will furnish us with numberless Instances in Men, so neither is it deficient with regard to us. At the very Beginning of the *Roman* Empire, in the Reign of *Romulus*; the Women by their Courage in running into the Midst of a Battle, and afterwards by their Mediation, calmed the Fury of two great Armies, and turned a bloody War into Peace and Friendship. Here was true Spirit and true Tenderness exerted in one and the same Instance. When the enraged *Condemns* was at the Gates of *Rome*, at the Head of her Enemies, menacing Destruction, nothing but the Entreaties of his Wife and Mother could have blunted the Edge of his Sword, softened his Heart, and saved the State

from Definition. When *Rome* was taken by the *Gauls*, and the Scene of all Kinds of Misery and Desolation, the Capitol being their only remaining Hope, the Women, to their immortal Honour, ran with Emulation which should get foremost to present their Gold in order to redeem their Country.

I have a strong Imagination a Lady would smile at the celebrated *Busa's* Fate, who from her generously feeding and cloathing the *Roman* Soldiers at her own Expence, after the memorable Defeat at *Cantus*, was at the End of the War decreed uncommon Honours by the *Roman* Senate, and her Fame preserved even to this Day. In what a different Light does she appear from those others of her Sex, who in the Time of public Calamity, when *Hannibal* ravaged *Italy*, and the public Treasure was exhausted, were forced to be restrained by Law from Luxury and Ostentation. But let the Glory of the *British* exceed that of the *Roman* Ladies, as far as the Choice of what is right does that of being constrained to it. Let it not be said in future Ages, when Desolation threatened our King and Country, that Diversion, Luxury and Ostentation filled our Minds. Let us contradict the heavy Censures of the old severe *Cato*, not by Rage and Invectives, but by our Actions, when all is at Stake. Let us not childishly clasp fast a Rattle, whilst we let go every Thing that is most valuable and dear to us.

I remember the seeing a poor Tradesman utterly

ruined, his Credit destroyed, and his Children Beggars, for the want of a small Sum which his Wife insisted on laying out in Things she imagined she could not live without. The Contemptibleness of this poor foolish Woman's Conduct, and the Mischief she brought upon herself, as well as on her Husband, must be obvious to every Eye; 'tis needless to make the Application; and I heartily wish the Behaviour of all my Countrywomen may be such, that not one of them may bring this Story to the Remembrance of any of their Acquaintance.

In short, now is the Time, Ladies, when you have an Opportunity of exerting yourselves, and throwing all general and ungenerous Satyrs against you, whether in the Railing or Humourous Stile, back on the Authors of them. And for God's sake, in such a Time as this, turn all your Thoughts on the general Interest; let your whole Application be on the Means to make yourselves (as far as your Province will allow; Instruments to preserve the Nation: In such a Time as this, instead of thinking yourselves adorned by costly Jewels, or great by the Possession of any Signs of Magnificence, look upon them as so many Marks of want of Spirit. Those Signs of Magnificence, those Jewels now in the publick Treasury, would throw a greater Lustre over the Possessors of them, and show them in more beautiful Colours to the Eyes of Men worth wishing to be seen by, than the wearing them could possibly do. Consider the Glory which this would cast on the Sex in general, and on every Individual

in particular; and I am convinced a few Days will produce a Fund of this Kind, which of itself alone will be able to defeat the Pretender's Hopes. Nor do I doubt, that as we are unable to contribute personal Strength in Concert with the Men, we shall outdo them in Subscriptions on this Occasion.

In such a Time as this, throw off every Thought but for the public Good; prove yourselves capable of real Affection, by daring rather to think on the Venture of the Lives of your Husbands, Fathers, Sons or Brothers, than the much more terrible Venture of their Fortunes, Liberty, Religion; in short, of every human Happiness. What a Degree of Selfishness must that be, which makes us wish to keep before our Eyes the Objects we vainly fancy we love, altho' at the Expence of seeing them groaning in Slavery, and almost curling their Being, which they are forced thus to languish away in Misery? What *English* Woman could behold her Husband a Slave, and view her little Infants, her own Progeny, with a Thought of their being born to the same disastrous Fate, without raving with Madness, and being drove to the utmost Despair, without wishing her Husband was past the Sense of his Suffering, and that her Children might never live to come to it. To be reduced, as the most eligible Alternative, to wish those we love were no more, is a State so very deplorable, I cannot mention it without Horror, nor think on it but with the utmost Consternation. I therefore hope it will not be thought impertinent, if I once more, Ladies, beg you will gird on the Sword, and drive from you, in this Time of public Danger,

your Husbands, Fathers, Sons, in short, every Man whose Preservation is most dear to you. Let Indignation, Contempt, and the utmost Scorn from every Woman in *Great Britain*, be the Fate of the Wretch who can be supinely indolent, or from dastardly Cowardice think of his own Safety in the Midst of his Country's Wreck, In all your Conventions treat him with Reproach, and in your continual Frowns make him despair, till he be convinced, by being despised, scorned, and drove from amongst you, that such. Wretches as make themselves utterly unworthy of your Favour, can have no Hopes of obtaining it. Use all your Influence to promote amongst the Men a general Unanimity in Defence of his present Majesty's Person and Government, as the only Means by which you can hope to avoid the horrible Miseries abovementioned, and as the only Means by which you can hope to enjoy Peace, Plenty, Liberty of Choice, Love, Honour, or any one of those Blessings which can make Life desirable in the Eyes of a *British Lady*.

F I N I S.

