

Classic Poetry Series

Anne Hecht
- poems -

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Anne Hecht(1786)

Nothing is known about the life of Anne Hecht, except that she appears well educated and not to have married, perhaps for reasons she may allude to in her verse advice, particularly in its breath-taking last line, which speaks to women's daily life in 18th-century North America.

Advice To Mrs. Mowat

Dear Hetty -
Since the single state
You've left to choose yourself a mate,
Since metamorphosed to a wife,
And bliss or woe insured for life,
A friendly muse the way should show
To gain the bliss and miss the woe.
But first of all I must suppose
You've with mature reflection chose.
And thus premised I think you may
Here find to married bliss the way.
Small is the province of a wife
And narrow is her sphere in life,
Within that sphere to walk aright
Should be her principal delight.
To grace the home with prudent care
And properly to spend and spare,
To make her husband bless the day
He gave his liberty away,
To train the tender infants mind,
These are the tasks to wives assigned.
Then never think domestic care
Beneath the notice of the fair.
But matters every day inspect
That naught be wasted by neglect.
Be frugal (plenty round you seen)
And always keep the golden mean.
Let decent neatness round you shine
Be always clean but seldom fine.
If once fair decency be fled
Love soon deserts the genial bed.
Not nice your house, though neat and clean
In all things there's a proper mean.
Some of our sex mistake in this;
Too anxious some - some too remiss.
The early days of married life
Are oft o'er cast with childest strife
Then let it be your chiefest care
To keep that hour bright and fair;

Then is the time, by gentlest art
To fix his empire in your heart.
For should it by neglect expire
No art again can light the fire.
To charm his reason dress your mind
Till love shall be with friendship joined.
Raised on that basis t'will endure
From time and death itself secure.
Be sure you ne'er for power contend
Or try with tears to gain your end
Sometimes the tears that dim your eyes
From pride and obstancy arise.
Heaven gave to man unquestioned sway.
Then Heaven and man at once obey.
Let sullen looks your brow ne'er cloud
Be always cheerful, never loud.
Let trifles never discompose
Your temper, features or repose.
Abroad for happiness ne'er roam
True happiness resides at home.
Still make your partner easy there
Man finds abroad sufficient care.
If every thing at home be right
He'll always enter with delight.
Your presence he'll prefer to all,
That cheats the world does pleasure call.
With cheerful chat his cares beguile
And always greet him with a smile,
Never with woe his thoughts engage
Nor ever meet his rage with rage,
With all our sex's softening art
Recall lost reason to his heart.
Thus calm the tempest in his breast
And sweetly soothe his soul to rest.
Be sure you ne'er arraign his sense,
Few husbands pardon that offence,
T'will discord raise, disgust it breeds
And hatred certainly succeeds.
Then shun, O shun that hated self,
Still think him wiser than yourself.
And if you otherwise believe
Ne'er let him such a thought perceive.

When cares invade your partners heart
Bear you a sympathetic part.
From morn till noon, from noon till night
To see him pleased your chief delight.
And now, methinks, I hear you cry;
Shall she presume - Oh vanity!
To lay down rules for wedded life
Who never was herself a wife?
I've done nor longer will presume
To trespass on time that's not your own.

Anne Hecht