

5

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
 Who says my hand a needle better fits,
 A poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong,
 For such despite they cast on female wits:
 If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
 They'll say it's stol'n, or else it was by chance.

6

But sure the antique Greeks were far more mild
 Else of our sex, why feigned they those nine
 And poesy made Calliope's⁶ own child;
 So 'mongst the rest they placed the arts divine:
 But this weak knot they will full soon untie.
 The Greeks did nought, but play the fools and lie.

7

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are;
 Men have precedency and still excel,
 It is but vain unjustly to wage war;
 Men can do best, and women know it well
 Preeminence in all and each is yours;
 Yet grant some small acknowledgment of ours.

8

And oh ye high flown quills⁷ that soar the skies,
 And ever with your prey still catch your praise,
 If e'er you deign these lowly lines your eyes
 Give thyme or parsley wreath, I ask no bays;⁸
 This mean and unrefined ore of mine
 Will make your glist'ring gold but more to shine.

1650

In Honor of That High and Mighty Princess
 Queen Elizabeth¹ of Happy Memory

*The Proem*²

Although, great Queen, thou now in silence lie,
 Yet thy loud herald Fame doth to the sky

6. The muse of epic poetry.

7. Pens.

8. Garlands of laurel, used to crown a poet.

1. Elizabeth I (1533–1603), queen of England, ascended to the throne in 1558.

2. Prelude.