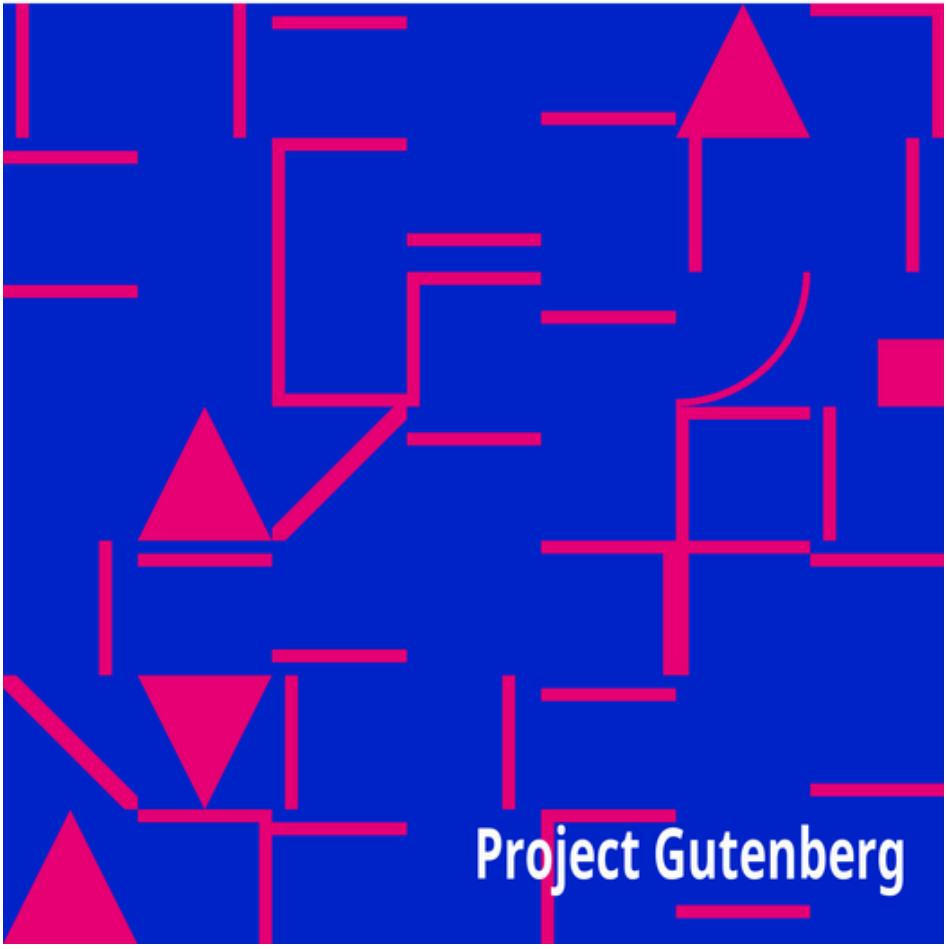
The Rape of the Lock, and Other Poems

Alexander Pope



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Pope's

The Rape of the Lock

Portrait of Pope

and other poems

edited with introduction and notes by

Thomas Marc Parrott

this edition 1906

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Preface

It has been the aim of the editor in preparing this little book to get together sufficient material to afford a student in one of our high schools or colleges adequate and typical specimens of the vigorous and versatile genius of Alexander Pope. With this purpose he has included in addition to *The Rape of the Lock*, the *Essay on Criticism* as furnishing the standard by which Pope himself expected his work to be judged, the *First Epistle* of the *Essay on Man* as a characteristic example of his didactic poetry, and the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, both for its exhibition of Pope's genius as a satirist and for the picture it gives of the poet himself. To these are added the famous close of the *Dunciad*, the *Ode to Solitude*, a specimen of Pope's infrequent lyric note, and the *Epitaph on Gay*.

The first edition of *The Rape of the Lock* has been given as an appendix in order that the student may have the opportunity of comparing the two forms of this poem, and of realizing the admirable art with which Pope blended old and new in the version that is now the only one known to the average reader. The text throughout is that of the Globe Edition prepared by Professor A. W. Ward.

The editor can lay no claim to originality in the notes with which he has attempted to explain and illustrate these poems. He is indebted at every step to the labors of earlier editors, particularly to Elwin, Courthope, Pattison, and Hales. If he has added anything of his own, it has been in the way of defining certain words whose meaning or connotation has changed since the time of Pope, and in paraphrasing certain passages to bring out a meaning which has been partially obscured by the poet's effort after brevity and concision.

In the general introduction the editor has aimed not so much to recite the facts of Pope's life as to draw the portrait of a man whom he believes to have been too often misunderstood and misrepresented. The special introductions to the various poems are intended to acquaint the student with the circumstances under which they were composed, to trace their literary genesis and relationships, and, whenever necessary, to give an outline of the train of thought which they embody. In conclusion the editor would express the hope that his labors in the preparation of this book may help, if only in some slight degree, to stimulate the study of the work of a poet who, with all his limitations, remains one of the abiding glories of English literature, and may contribute not less to a proper appreciation of a man who with all his faults was, on the evidence of those who knew him best, not only a great poet, but a very human and lovable personality.

T. M. P. *Princeton University*, *June* 4, 1906.

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Introduction

Perhaps no other great poet in English Literature has been so differently judged at different times as Alexander Pope. Accepted almost on his first appearance as one of the leading poets of the day, he rapidly became recognized as the foremost man of letters of his age. He held this position throughout his life, and for over half a century after his death his works were considered not only as masterpieces, but as the finest models of poetry. With the change of poetic temper that occurred at the beginning of the nineteenth century Pope's fame was overshadowed. The romantic poets and critics even raised the question whether Pope was a poet at all. And as his poetical fame diminished, the harsh judgments of his personal character increased. It is almost incredible with what exulting bitterness critics and editors of Pope have tracked out and exposed his petty intrigues, exaggerated his delinquencies, misrepresented his actions, attempted in short to blast his character as a man.

Both as a man and as a poet Pope is sadly in need of a defender to-day. And a defense is by no means impossible. The depreciation of Pope's poetry springs, in the main, from an attempt to measure it by other standards than those which he and his age recognized. The attacks upon his character are due, in large measure, to a misunderstanding of the spirit of the times in which he lived and to a forgetfulness of the special circumstances of his own life. Tried in a fair court by impartial judges Pope as a poet would be awarded a place, if not among the noblest singers, at least high among poets of the second order. And the flaws of character which even his warmest apologist must admit would on the one hand be explained, if not excused, by circumstances, and on the other more than counterbalanced by the existence of noble qualities to

which his assailants seem to have been quite blind.

Alexander Pope was born in London on May 21, 1688. His father was a Roman Catholic linen draper, who had married a second time. Pope was the only child of this marriage, and seems to have been a delicate, sweet-tempered, precocious, and, perhaps, a rather spoiled child.

Pope's religion and his chronic ill-health are two facts of the highest importance to be taken into consideration in any study of his life or judgment of his character. The high hopes of the Catholics for a restoration of their religion had been totally destroyed by the Revolution of 1688. During all Pope's lifetime they were a sect at once feared, hated, and oppressed by the severest laws. They were excluded from the schools and universities, they were burdened with double taxes, and forbidden to acquire real estate. All public careers were closed to them, and their property and even their persons were in times of excitement at the mercy of informers. In the last year of Pope's life a proclamation was issued forbidding Catholics to come within ten miles of London, and Pope himself, in spite of his influential friends, thought it wise to comply with this edict. A fierce outburst of persecution often evokes in the persecuted some of the noblest qualities of human nature; but a long-continued and crushing tyranny that extends to all the details of daily life is only too likely to have the most unfortunate results on those who are subjected to it. And as a matter of fact we find that the well-to-do Catholics of Pope's day lived in an atmosphere of disaffection, political intrigue, and evasion of the law, most unfavorable for the development of that frank, courageous, and patriotic spirit for the lack of which Pope himself has so often been made the object of reproach.

In a well-known passage of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, Pope has spoken of his life as one long disease. He was in fact a humpbacked dwarf, not over four feet six inches in height, with long, spider-like legs and arms. He was subject to violent headaches, and his face was lined and contracted with the marks of suffering. In youth he so completely ruined his health

by perpetual studies that his life was despaired of, and only the most careful treatment saved him from an early death. Toward the close of his life he became so weak that he could neither dress nor undress without assistance. He had to be laced up in stiff stays in order to sit erect, and wore a fur doublet and three pairs of stockings to protect himself against the cold. With these physical defects he had the extreme sensitiveness of mind that usually accompanies chronic ill health, and this sensitiveness was outraged incessantly by the brutal customs of the age. Pope's enemies made as free with his person as with his poetry, and there is little doubt that he felt the former attacks the more bitterly of the two. Dennis, his first critic, called him "a short squab gentleman, the very bow of the God of love; his outward form is downright monkey." A rival poet whom he had offended hung up a rod in a coffee house where men of letters resorted, and threatened to whip Pope like a naughty child if he showed his face there. It is said, though perhaps not on the best authority, that when Pope once forgot himself so far as to make love to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the lady's answer was "a fit of immoderate laughter." In an appendix to the *Dunciad* Pope collected some of the epithets with which his enemies had pelted him, "an ape," "an ass," "a frog," "a coward," "a fool," "a little abject thing." He affected, indeed, to despise his assailants, but there is only too good evidence that their poisoned arrows rankled in his heart. Richardson, the painter, found him one day reading the latest abusive pamphlet. "These things are my diversion," said the poet, striving to put the best face on it; but as he read, his friends saw his features "writhen with anguish," and prayed to be delivered from all such "diversions" as these. Pope's enemies and their savage abuse are mostly forgotten to-day. Pope's furious retorts have been secured to immortality by his genius. It would have been nobler, no doubt, to have answered by silence only; but before one condemns Pope it is only fair to realize the causes of his bitterness.

Pope's education was short and irregular. He was taught the rudiments of Latin and Greek by his family priest, attended for a brief period a school in the country and another in London, and at the early age of

twelve left school altogether, and settling down at his father's house in the country began to read to his heart's delight. He roamed through the classic poets, translating passages that pleased him, went up for a time to London to get lessons in French and Italian, and above all read with eagerness and attention the works of older English poets, — Spenser, Waller, and Dryden. He had already, it would seem, determined to become a poet, and his father, delighted with the clever boy's talent, used to set him topics, force him to correct his verses over and over, and finally, when satisfied, dismiss him with the praise, "These are good rhymes." He wrote a comedy, a tragedy, an epic poem, all of which he afterward destroyed and, as he laughingly confessed in later years, he thought himself "the greatest genius that ever was."

Pope was not alone, however, in holding a high opinion of his talents. While still a boy in his teens he was taken up and patronized by a number of gentlemen, Trumbull, Walsh, and Cromwell, all dabblers in poetry and criticism. He was introduced to the dramatist Wycherly, nearly fifty years his senior, and helped to polish some of the old man's verses. His own works were passed about in manuscript from hand to hand till one of them came to the eyes of Dryden's old publisher, Tonson. Tonson wrote Pope a respectful letter asking for the honor of being allowed to publish them. One may fancy the delight with which the sixteen-year-old boy received this offer. It is a proof of Pope's patience as well as his precocity that he delayed three years before accepting it. It was not till 1709 that his first published verses, the *Pastorals*, a fragment translated from Homer, and a modernized version of one of the *Canterbury Tales*, appeared in Tonson's *Miscellany*.

With the publication of the *Pastorals*, Pope embarked upon his life as a man of letters. They seem to have brought him a certain recognition, but hardly fame. That he obtained by his next poem, the *Essay on Criticism*, which appeared in 1711. It was applauded in the *Spectator*, and Pope seems about this time to have made the acquaintance of Addison and the little senate which met in Button's coffee house. His poem the *Messiah*

appeared in the *Spectator* in May 1712; the first draft of *The Rape of the Lock* in a poetical miscellany in the same year, and Addison's request, in 1713, that he compose a prologue for the tragedy of *Cato* set the final stamp upon his rank as a poet.

Pope's friendly relations with Addison and his circle were not, however, long continued. In the year 1713 he gradually drew away from them and came under the influence of Swift, then at the height of his power in political and social life. Swift introduced him to the brilliant Tories, politicians and lovers of letters, Harley, Bolingbroke, and Atterbury, who were then at the head of affairs. Pope's new friends seem to have treated him with a deference which he had never experienced before, and which bound him to them in unbroken affection. Harley used to regret that Pope's religion rendered him legally incapable of holding a sinecure office in the government, such as was frequently bestowed in those days upon men of letters, and Swift jestingly offered the young poet twenty guineas to become a Protestant. But now, as later, Pope was firmly resolved not to abandon the faith of his parents for the sake of worldly advantage. And in order to secure the independence he valued so highly he resolved to embark upon the great work of his life, the translation of Homer.

> "What led me into that," he told a friend long after, "was purely the want of money. I had then none; not even to buy books."

It seems that about this time, 1713, Pope's father had experienced some heavy financial losses, and the poet, whose receipts in money had so far been by no means in proportion to the reputation his works had brought him, now resolved to use that reputation as a means of securing from the public a sum which would at least keep him for life from poverty or the necessity of begging for patronage. It is worth noting that Pope was the first Englishman of letters who threw himself thus boldly upon the public and earned his living by his pen.

The arrangements for the publication and sale of Pope's translation of Homer were made with care and pushed on with enthusiasm. He issued in 1713 his proposals for an edition to be published by subscription, and his friends at once became enthusiastic canvassers. We have a characteristic picture of Swift at this time, bustling about a crowded ante-chamber, and informing the company that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope (a Papist) who had begun a translation of Homer for which they must all subscribe, "for," says he, "the author shall not begin to print till I have a thousand guineas for him." The work was to be in six volumes, each costing a guinea. Pope obtained 575 subscribers, many of whom took more than one set. Lintot, the publisher, gave Pope £1200 for the work and agreed to supply the subscription copies free of charge. As a result Pope made something between £5000 and £6000, a sum absolutely unprecedented in the history of English literature, and amply sufficient to make him independent for life.

But the sum was honestly earned by hard and wearisome work. Pope was no Greek scholar; it is said, indeed, that he was just able to make out the sense of the original with a translation. And in addition to the fifteen thousand lines of the *Iliad*, he had engaged to furnish an introduction and notes. At first the magnitude of the undertaking frightened him.

> "What terrible moments," he said to Spence, "does one feel after one has engaged for a large work. In the beginning of my translating the *Iliad*, I wished anybody would hang me a hundred times. It sat so heavily on my mind at first that I often used to dream of it and do sometimes still."

In spite of his discouragement, however, and of the ill health which so constantly beset him, Pope fell gallantly upon his task, and as time went on came almost to enjoy it. He used to translate thirty or forty verses in the morning before rising and, in his own characteristic phrase, "piddled over them for the rest of the day." He used every assistance possible,

drew freely upon the scholarship of friends, corrected and recorrected with a view to obtaining clearness and point, and finally succeeded in producing a version which not only satisfied his own critical judgment, but was at once accepted by the English-speaking world as the standard translation of Homer.

The first volume came out in June, 1715, and to Pope's dismay and wrath a rival translation appeared almost simultaneously. Tickell, one of Addison's "little senate," had also begun a translation of the *Iliad*, and although he announced in the preface that he intended to withdraw in favor of Pope and take up a translation of the *Odyssey*, the poet's suspicions were at once aroused. And they were quickly fanned into a flame by the gossip of the town which reported that Addison, the recognized authority in literary criticism, pronounced Tickell's version "the best that ever was in any language." Rumor went so far, in fact, as to hint pretty broadly that Addison himself was the author, in part, at least, of Tickell's book; and Pope, who had been encouraged by Addison to begin his long task, felt at once that he had been betrayed. His resentment was all the more bitter since he fancied that Addison, now at the height of his power and prosperity in the world of letters and of politics, had attempted to ruin an enterprise on which the younger man had set all his hopes of success and independence, for no better reason than literary jealousy and political estrangement. We know now that Pope was mistaken, but there was beyond question some reason at the time for his thinking as he did, and it is to the bitterness which this incident caused in his mind that we owe the famous satiric portrait of Addison as Atticus.

The last volume of the *Iliad* appeared in the spring of 1720, and in it Pope gave a renewed proof of his independence by dedicating the whole work, not to some lord who would have rewarded him with a handsome present, but to his old acquaintance, Congreve, the last survivor of the brilliant comic dramatists of Dryden's day. And now resting for a time from his long labors, Pope turned to the adornment and cultivation of

the little house and garden that he had leased at Twickenham.

Pope's father had died in 1717, and the poet, rejecting politely but firmly the suggestion of his friend, Atterbury, that he might now turn Protestant, devoted himself with double tenderness to the care of his aged and infirm mother. He brought her with him to Twickenham, where she lived till 1733, dying in that year at the great age of ninety-one. It may have been partly on her account that Pope pitched upon Twickenham as his abiding place. Beautifully situated on the banks of the Thames, it was at once a quiet country place and yet of easy access to London, to Hampton Court, or to Kew. The five acres of land that lay about the house furnished Pope with inexhaustible entertainment for the rest of his life. He "twisted and twirled and harmonized" his bit of ground "till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns opening and opening beyond one another, the whole surrounded by impenetrable woods." Following the taste of his times in landscape gardening, he adorned his lawns with artificial mounds, a shell temple, an obelisk, and a colonnade. But the crowning glory was the grotto, a tunnel decorated fantastically with shells and bits of looking-glass, which Pope dug under a road that ran through his grounds. Here Pope received in state, and his house and garden was for years the center of the most brilliant society in England. Here Swift came on his rare visits from Ireland, and Bolingbroke on his return from exile. Arbuthnot, Pope's beloved physician, was a frequent visitor, and Peterborough, one of the most distinguished of English soldiers, condescended to help lay out the garden. Congreve came too, at times, and Gay, the laziest and most good-natured of poets. Nor was the society of women lacking at these gatherings. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the wittiest woman in England, was often there, until her bitter quarrel with the poet; the grim old Duchess of Marlborough appeared once or twice in Pope's last years; and the Princess of Wales came with her husband to inspire the leaders of the opposition to the hated Walpole and the miserly king. And from first to last, the good angel of the place was the blue-eyed, sweet-tempered Patty Blount, Pope's best and dearest friend. Not long after the

completion of the *Iliad*, Pope undertook to edit Shakespeare, and completed the work in 1724. The edition is, of course, quite superseded now, but it has its place in the history of Shakespearean studies as the first that made an effort, though irregular and incomplete, to restore the true text by collation and conjecture. It has its place, too, in the story of Pope's life, since the bitter criticism which it received, all the more unpleasant to the poet since it was in the main true, was one of the principal causes of his writing the *Dunciad*. Between the publication of his edition of Shakespeare, however, and the appearance of the *Dunciad*, Pope resolved to complete his translation of Homer, and with the assistance of a pair of friends, got out a version of the Odyssey in 1725. Like the *Iliad*, this was published by subscription, and as in the former case the greatest men in England were eager to show their appreciation of the poet by filling up his lists. Sir Robert Walpole, the great Whig statesman, took ten copies, and Harley, the fallen Tory leader, put himself, his wife, and his daughter down for sixteen. Pope made, it is said, about £3700 by this work.

In 1726, Swift visited Pope and encouraged him to complete a satire which he seems already to have begun on the dull critics and hack writers of the day. For one cause or another its publication was deferred until 1728, when it appeared under the title of the *Dunciad*. Here Pope declared open war upon his enemies. All those who had attacked his works, abused his character, or scoffed at his personal deformities, were caricatured as ridiculous and sometimes disgusting figures in a mock epic poem celebrating the accession of a new monarch to the throne of Dullness. The *Dunciad* is little read to-day except by professed students of English letters, but it made, naturally enough, a great stir at the time and vastly provoked the wrath of all the dunces whose names it dragged to light. Pope has often been blamed for stooping to such ignoble combat, and in particular for the coarseness of his abuse, and for his bitter jests upon the poverty of his opponents. But it must be remembered that no living writer had been so scandalously abused as Pope, and no writer that ever lived was by nature so quick to feel and to

resent insult. The undoubted coarseness of the work is in part due to the gross license of the times in speech and writing, and more particularly to the influence of Swift, at this time predominant over Pope. And in regard to Pope's trick of taunting his enemies with poverty, it must frankly be confessed that he seized upon this charge as a ready and telling weapon. Pope was at heart one of the most charitable of men. In the days of his prosperity he is said to have given away one eighth of his income. And he was always quick to succor merit in distress; he pensioned the poet Savage and he tried to secure patronage for Johnson. But for the wretched hack writers of the common press who had barked against him he had no mercy, and he struck them with the first rod that lay ready to his hands.

During his work on the *Dunciad*, Pope came into intimate relations with Bolingbroke, who in 1725 had returned from his long exile in France and had settled at Dawley within easy reach of Pope's villa at Twickenham. Bolingbroke was beyond doubt one of the most brilliant and stimulating minds of his age. Without depth of intellect or solidity of character, he was at once a philosopher, a statesman, a scholar, and a fascinating talker. Pope, who had already made his acquaintance, was delighted to renew and improve their intimacy, and soon came wholly under the influence of his splendid friend. It is hardly too much to say that all the rest of Pope's work is directly traceable to Bolingbroke. The *Essay on Man* was built up on the precepts of Bolingbroke's philosophy; the *Imitations of Horace* were undertaken at Bolingbroke's suggestion; and the whole tone of Pope's political and social satire during the years from 1731 to 1738 reflects the spirit of that opposition to the administration of Walpole and to the growing influence of the commercial class, which was at once inspired and directed by Bolingbroke. And yet it is exactly in the work of this period that we find the best and with perhaps one exception, the *Essay on Man*, the most original, work of Pope. He has obtained an absolute command over his instrument of expression. In his hands the heroic couplet sings, and laughs, and chats, and thunders. He has turned from the ignoble warfare with the dunces to satirize courtly frivolity and

wickedness in high places. And most important of all to the student of Pope, it is in these last works that his personality is most clearly revealed. It has been well said that the best introduction to the study of Pope, the man, is to get the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* by heart.

Pope gradually persuaded himself that all the works of these years, the *Essay on Man*, the *Satires, Epistles*, and *Moral Essays*, were but parts of one stupendous whole. He told Spence in the last years of his life:

> "I had once thought of completing my ethic work in four books. — The first, you know, is on the Nature of Man [the *Essay on Man*]; the second would have been on knowledge and its limits — here would have come in an Essay on Education, part of which I have inserted in the *Dunciad* [*i.e.* in the Fourth Book, published in 1742]. The third was to have treated of Government, both ecclesiastical and civil — and this was what chiefly stopped my going on. I could not have said what *I would* have said without provoking every church on the face of the earth; and I did not care for living always in boiling water. — This part would have come into my *Brutus* [an epic poem which Pope never completed], which is planned already. The fourth would have been on Morality; in eight or nine of the most concerning branches of it."

It is difficult, if not impossible, to believe that Pope with his irregular methods of work and illogical habit of thought had planned so vast and elaborate a system before he began its execution. It is far more likely that he followed his old method of composing on the inspiration of the moment, and produced the works in question with little thought of their relation or interdependence. But in the last years of his life, when he had made the acquaintance of Warburton, and was engaged in reviewing and perfecting the works of this period, he noticed their general similarity in form and spirit, and, possibly under Warburton's influence, conceived

the notion of combining and supplementing them to form that "Greater Essay on Man" of which he spoke to Spence, and of which Warburton himself has given us a detailed account.

Warburton, a wide-read, pompous, and polemical clergyman, had introduced himself to the notice of Pope by a defense of the philosophical and religious principles of the *Essay on Man*. In spite of the influence of the free-thinking Bolingbroke, Pope still remained a member of the Catholic church and sincerely believed himself to be an orthodox, though liberal, Christian, and he had, in consequence, been greatly disconcerted by a criticism of his poem published in Switzerland and lately translated into English. Its author, Pierre de Crousaz, maintained, and with a considerable degree of truth, that the principles of Pope's poem if pushed to their logical conclusion were destructive to religion and would rank their author rather among atheists than defenders of the faith. The very word "atheist" was at that day sufficient to put the man to whom it was applied beyond the pale of polite society, and Pope, who quite lacked the ability to refute in logical argument the attack of de Crousaz, was proportionately delighted when Warburton came forward in his defense, and in a series of letters asserted that Pope's whole intention was to vindicate the ways of God to man, and that de Crousaz had mistaken his purpose and misunderstood his language. Pope's gratitude to his defender knew no bounds; he declared that Warburton understood the *Essay* better than he did himself; he pronounced him the greatest critic he ever knew, secured an introduction to him, introduced him to his own rich and influential friends, in short made the man's fortune for him outright. When the University of Oxford hesitated to give Warburton, who had never attended a university, the degree of D.D., Pope declined to accept the degree of D.C.L. which had been offered him at the same time, and wrote the Fourth Book of the *Dunciad* to satirize the stupidity of the university authorities. In conjunction with Warburton he proceeded further to revise the whole poem, for which his new friend wrote notes and a ponderous introduction, and made the capital mistake of substituting

the frivolous, but clever, Colley Gibber, with whom he had recently become embroiled, for his old enemy, Theobald, as the hero. And the last year of his life was spent in getting out new editions of his poems accompanied by elaborate commentaries from the pen of Warburton.

In the spring of 1744, it was evident that Pope was failing fast. In addition to his other ailments he was now attacked by an asthmatical dropsy, which no efforts of his physicians could remove. Yet he continued to work almost to the last, and distributed copies of his *Ethic Epistles* to his friends about three weeks before his death, with the smiling remark that like the dying Socrates he was dispensing his morality among his friends. His mind began to wander; he complained that he saw all things as through a curtain, and told Spence once "with a smile of great pleasure and with the greatest softness" that he had seen a vision. His friends were devoted in their attendance. Bolingbroke sat weeping by his chair, and on Spence's remarking how Pope with every rally was always saying something kindly of his friends, replied:

> "I never in my life knew a man that had so tender a heart for his particular friends, or a more general friendship for mankind. I have known him these thirty years; and value myself more for that man's love than"

— here his head dropped and his voice broke in tears. It was noticed that whenever Patty Blount came into the room, the dying flame of life flashed up in a momentary glow. At the very end a friend reminded Pope that as a professed Catholic he ought to send for a priest. The dying man replied that he did not believe it essential, but thanked him for the suggestion. When the priest appeared, Pope attempted to rise from his bed that he might receive the sacrament kneeling, and the priest came out from the sick room "penetrated to the last degree with the state of mind in which he found his penitent, resigned and wrapt up in the love of God and man." The hope that sustained Pope to the end was that of immortality.

> "I am so certain of the soul's being immortal," he whispered, almost with his last breath, "that I seem to feel it within me, as it were by intuition."

He died on the evening of May 30, so quietly that his friends hardly knew that the end had come. He was buried in Twickenham Church, near the monument he had erected to his parents, and his coffin was carried to the grave by six of the poorest men of the parish.

It is plain even from so slight a sketch as this that the common conception of Pope as "the wicked wasp of Twickenham," a bitter, jealous, and malignant spirit, is utterly out of accord with the facts of his life. Pope's faults of character lie on the surface, and the most perceptible is that which has done him most harm in the eyes of English-speaking men. He was by nature, perhaps by training also, untruthful. If he seldom stooped to an outright lie, he never hesitated to equivocate; and students of his life have found that it is seldom possible to take his word on any point where his own works or interests were concerned. I have already attempted to point out the probable cause of this defect; and it is, moreover, worth while to remark that Pope's manifold intrigues and evasions were mainly of the defensive order. He plotted and quibbled not so much to injure others as to protect himself. To charge Pope with treachery to his friends, as has sometimes been done, is wholly to misunderstand his character.

Another flaw, one can hardly call it a vice, in Pope's character was his constant practice of considering everything that came in his way as copy. It was this which led him to reclaim his early letters from his friends, to alter, rewrite, and redate them, utterly unconscious of the trouble which he was preparing for his future biographers. The letters, he thought, were good reading but not so good as he could make them, and he set to work to improve them with all an artist's zeal, and without a trace of a historian's care for facts. It was this which led him to embody in his description of a rich fool's splendid house and park certain unmistakable

traces of a living nobleman's estate and to start in genuine amazement and regret when the world insisted on identifying the nobleman and the fool. And when Pope had once done a good piece of work, he had all an artist's reluctance to destroy it. He kept bits of verse by him for years and inserted them into appropriate places in his poems. This habit it was that brought about perhaps the gravest charge that has ever been made against Pope, that of accepting £1000 to suppress a satiric portrait of the old Duchess of Marlborough, and yet of publishing it in a revision of a poem that he was engaged on just before his death. The truth seems to be that Pope had drawn this portrait in days when he was at bitter enmity with the Duchess, and after the reconcilement that took place, unwilling to suppress it entirely, had worked it over, and added passages out of keeping with the first design, but pointing to another lady with whom he was now at odds. Pope's behavior, we must admit, was not altogether creditable, but it was that of an artist reluctant to throw away good work, not that of a ruffian who stabs a woman he has taken money to spare.

Finally Pope was throughout his life, and notably in his later years, the victim of an irritable temper and a quick, abusive tongue. His irritability sprang in part, we may believe, from his physical sufferings, even more, however, from the exquisitely sensitive heart which made him feel a coarse insult as others would a blow. And of the coarseness of the insults that were heaped upon Pope no one except the careful student of his life can have any conception. His genius, his morals, his person, his parents, and his religion were overwhelmed in one indiscriminate flood of abuse. Too high spirited to submit tamely to these attacks, too irritable to laugh at them, he struck back, and his weapon was personal satire which cut like a whip and left a brand like a hot iron. And if at times, as in the case of Addison, Pope was mistaken in his object and assaulted one who was in no sense his enemy, the fault lies not so much in his alleged malice as in the unhappy state of warfare in which he lived.

Over against the faults of Pope we may set more than one noble

characteristic. The sensitive heart and impulsive temper that led him so often into bitter warfare, made him also most susceptible to kindness and quick to pity suffering. He was essentially of a tender and loving nature, a devoted son, and a loyal friend, unwearied in acts of kindness and generosity. His ruling passion, to use his own phrase, was a devotion to letters, and he determined as early and worked as diligently to make himself a poet as ever Milton did. His wretched body was dominated by a high and eager mind, and he combined in an unparalleled degree the fiery energy of the born poet with the tireless patience of the trained artist.

But perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of Pope is his manly independence. In an age when almost without exception his fellow-writers stooped to accept a great man's patronage or sold their talents into the slavery of politics, Pope stood aloof from patron and from party. He repeatedly declined offers of money that were made him, even when no condition was attached. He refused to change his religion, though he was far from being a devout Catholic, in order to secure a comfortable place. He relied upon his genius alone for his support, and his genius gave him all that he asked, a modest competency. His relations with his rich and powerful friends were marked by the same independent spirit. He never cringed or flattered, but met them on even terms, and raised himself by merit alone from his position as the unknown son of an humble shopkeeper to be the friend and associate of the greatest fortunes and most powerful minds in England. It is not too much to say that the career of a man of letters as we know it to-day, a career at once honorable and independent, takes its rise from the life and work of Alexander Pope.

The long controversies that have raged about Pope's rank as a poet seem at last to be drawing to a close; and it has become possible to strike a balance between the exaggerated praise of his contemporaries and the reckless depreciation of romantic critics. That he is not a poet of the first order is plain, if for no other reason than that he never produced a work

in any of the greatest forms of poetry. The drama, the epic, the lyric, were all outside his range. On the other hand, unless a definition of poetry be framed — and Dr. Johnson has well remarked that "to circumscribe poetry by a definition will only show the narrowness of the definer" — which shall exclude all gnomic and satiric verse, and so debar the claims of Hesiod, Juvenal, and Boileau, it is impossible to deny that Pope is a true poet. Certain qualities of the highest poet Pope no doubt lacked, lofty imagination, intense passion, wide human sympathy. But within the narrow field which he marked out for his own he approaches perfection as nearly as any English poet, and Pope's merit consists not merely in the smoothness of his verse or the polish of separate epigrams, as is so often stated, but quite as much in the vigor of his conceptions and the unity and careful proportion of each poem as a whole. It is not too much to say that *The Rape of the Lock* is one of the best-planned poems in any language. It is as symmetrical and exquisitely finished as a Grecian temple.

Historically Pope represents the fullest embodiment of that spirit which began to appear in English literature about the middle of the seventeenth century, and which we are accustomed to call the "classical" spirit. In essence this movement was a protest against the irregularity and individual license of earlier poets. Instead of far-fetched wit and fanciful diction, the classical school erected the standards of common sense in conception and directness in expression. And in so doing they restored poetry which had become the diversion of the few to the possession of the many. Pope, for example, is preeminently the poet of his time. He dealt with topics that were of general interest to the society in which he lived; he pictured life as he saw it about him. And this accounts for his prompt and general acceptance by the world of his day.

For the student of English literature Pope's work has a threefold value. It represents the highest achievement of one of the great movements in the developments of English verse. It reflects with unerring accuracy the life and thought of his time — not merely the outward life of beau and belle

in the days of Queen Anne, but the ideals of the age in art, philosophy, and politics. And finally it teaches as hardly any other body of English verse can be said to do, the perennial value of conscious and controlling art. Pope's work lives and will live while English poetry is read, not because of its inspiration, imagination, or depth of thought, but by its unity of design, vigor of expression, and perfection of finish — by those qualities, in short, which show the poet as an artist in verse.

Contents

Chief Dates In Pope's Life

1688	Born, May 21
1700	Moves to Binfield
1709	*Pastorals*
1711	*Essay on Criticism*
1711-12	Contributes to *Spectator*
1712	*Rape of the Lock*, first form
1713	*Windsor Forest*
1713	Issues proposals for translation of Homer

1714	*Rape of the Lock*, second form
1715	First volume of the *Iliad*
1715	*Temple of Fame*
1717	Pope's father dies
1717	*Works*, including some new poems
1719	Settles at Twickenham
1720	Sixth and last volume of the *Iliad*
1722	Begins translation of *Odyssey*
1725	Edits Shakespeare
1726	Finishes translation of *Odyssey*
1727-8	*Miscellanies* by Pope and Swift
1728-9	*Dunciad*
1731-2	*Moral Essays*: *Of Taste*, *Of the Use of Riches*
1733-4	*Essay on Man*
1733-8	*Satires and Epistles*
1735	*Works*
1735	*Letters* published by Curll

1741	*Works in Prose*; vol. II. includes the correspondence with Swift
1742	Fourth book of *Dunciad*
1742	Revised *Dunciad*
1744	Died, May 30
1751	First collected edition, published by Warburton, 9 vols.

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The Rape of the Lock

An heroi-comical poem

Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos;
Sed juvat, hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.

Mart, [*Epigr*, XII. 84.]

To Mrs. Arabella Fermor

Madam,

It will be in vain to deny that I have some regard for this piece, since I dedicate it to You. Yet you may bear me witness, it was intended only to divert a few young Ladies, who have good sense and good humour enough to laugh not only at their sex's little unguarded follies, but at their own. But as it was communicated with the air of a Secret, it soon found its way into the world. An imperfect copy having been offer'd to a Bookseller, you had the good-nature for my sake to consent to the publication of one more correct: This I was forc'd to, before I had executed half my design, for the Machinery was entirely wanting to compleat it.

The Machinery, Madam, is a term invented by the Critics, to signify that part which the Deities, Angels, or Dæmons are made to act in a Poem:

For the ancient Poets are in one respect like many modern Ladies: let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance. These Machines I determined to raise on a very new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of Spirits.

I know how disagreeable it is to make use of hard words before a Lady; but't is so much the concern of a Poet to have his works understood, and particularly by your Sex, that you must give me leave to explain two or three difficult terms.

The Rosicrucians are a people I must bring you acquainted with. The best account I know of them is in a French book call'd *Le Comte de Gabalis*, which both in its title and size is so like a Novel, that many of the Fair Sex have read it for one by mistake. According to these Gentlemen, the four Elements are inhabited by Spirits, which they call Sylphs, Gnomes, Nymphs, and Salamanders. The Gnomes or Dæmons of Earth delight in mischief; but the Sylphs whose habitation is in the Air, are the best-condition'd creatures imaginable. For they say, any mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle Spirits, upon a condition very easy to all true Adepts, an inviolate preservation of Chastity.

As to the following Canto's, all the passages of them are as fabulous, as the Vision at the beginning, or the Transformation at the end; (except the loss of your Hair, which I always mention with reverence). The Human persons are as fictitious as the airy ones; and the character of Belinda, as it is now manag'd, resembles you in nothing but in Beauty.

If this Poem had as many Graces as there are in your Person, or in your Mind, yet I could never hope it should pass thro' the world half so Uncensur'd as You have done. But let its fortune be what it will, mine is happy enough, to have given me this occasion of assuring you that I am, with the truest esteem, Madam,

Your most obedient, Humble Servant,

A. Pope

Canto I

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing — This verse to **Caryl**, Muse! is due:
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If She inspire, and He approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
A well-bred Lord t' assault a gentle Belle?
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd,
Could make a gentle Belle reject a Lord?
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty Rage?

Sol thro' white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,
And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day:
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground,
And the press'd watch return'd a silver sound.
Belinda still her downy pillow prest,

Her guardian **Sylph** prolong'd the balmy rest:
'Twas He had summon'd to her silent bed
The morning-dream that hover'd o'er her head;
A Youth more glitt'ring than a Birth-night Beau,
(That ev'n in slumber caus'd her cheek to glow)
Seem'd to her ear his winning lips to lay,
And thus in whispers said, or seem'd to say.
Fairest of mortals, thou distinguish'd care
Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air!
If e'er one vision touch.'d thy infant thought,
Of all the Nurse and all the Priest have taught;
Of airy Elves by moonlight shadows seen,
The silver token, and the circled green,
Or virgins visited by Angel-pow'rs,
With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flow'rs;
Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.
Some secret truths, from learned pride conceal'd,
To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:
What tho' no credit doubting Wits may give?
The Fair and Innocent shall still believe.
Know, then, unnumber'd Spirits round thee fly,
The light Militia of the lower sky:
These, tho' unseen, are ever on the wing,
Hang o'er the Box, and hover round the Ring.
Think what an equipage thou hast in Air,
And view with scorn two Pages and a Chair.
As now your own, our beings were of old,
And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous mould;
Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
From earthly Vehicles to these of air.
Think not, when Woman's transient breath is fled
That all her vanities at once are dead;
Succeeding vanities she still regards,

And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
Her joy in gilded Chariots, when alive,
And love of Ombre, after death survive.
For when the Fair in all their pride expire,
To their first Elements their Souls retire:
The Sprites of fiery Termagants in Flame
Mount up, and take a Salamander's name.
Soft yielding minds to Water glide away,
And sip, with Nymphs, their elemental Tea.
The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
In search of mischief still on Earth to roam.
The light Coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of Air.

"Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste
Rejects mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:
For Spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.
What guards the purity of melting Maids,
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark,
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
When music softens, and when dancing fires?
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,
Tho' Honour is the word with Men below.

Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
For life predestin'd to the Gnomes' embrace.
These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
When offers are disdain'd, and love deny'd:
Then gay Ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While Peers, and Dukes, and all their sweeping train,

And Garters, Stars, and Coronets appear,
And in soft sounds, Your Grace salutes their ear.
'T is these that early taint the female soul,
Instruct the eyes of young Coquettes to roll,
Teach Infant-cheeks a bidden blush to know,
And little hearts to flutter at a Beau.

Oft, when the world imagine women stray,
The Sylphs thro' mystic mazes guide their way,
Thro' all the giddy circle they pursue,
And old impertinence expel by new.
What tender maid but must a victim fall
To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
When Florio speaks what virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from ev'ry part,
They shift the moving Toyshop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
This erring mortals Levity may call;
Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.

Of these am I, who thy protection claim,
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
Late, as I rang'd the crystal wilds of air,
In the clear Mirror of thy ruling Star
I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
Ere to the main this morning sun descend,
But heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warn'd by the Sylph, oh pious maid, beware!
This to disclose is all thy guardian can:
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!"

He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,

Leap'd up, and wak'd his mistress with his tongue.
'T was then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first open'd on a Billet-doux;
Wounds, Charms, and Ardors were no sooner read,
But all the Vision vanish'd from thy head.

And now, unveil'd, the Toilet stands display'd,
Each silver Vase in mystic order laid.
First, rob'd in white, the Nymph intent adores,
With head uncover'd, the Cosmetic pow'rs.
A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
Th' inferior Priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling begins the sacred rites of Pride.
Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here
The various off'rings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white.
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.
Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms;
The fair each moment rises in her charms,
Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
The busy Sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair,
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the

gown:
And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.

Canto II

Not with more glories, in th' etherial plain,
The Sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.
Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone.
But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never

once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if Belles had faults to hide:
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.

This Nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourish'd two Locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.

Th' advent'rous Baron the bright locks admir'd;

He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd.
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a Lover's toil attends,
Few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends.

For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implor'd
Propitious heav'n, and ev'ry pow'r ador'd,
But chiefly Love — to Love an Altar built,
Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves;
And all the trophies of his former loves;
With tender Billet-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
The pow'rs gave ear, and granted half his pray'r,
The rest, the winds dispers'd in empty air.

But now secure the painted

vessel glides,
The sun-beams trembling on
the floating tides:
While melting music steals
upon the sky,
And soften'd sounds along the
waters die;
Smooth flow the waves, the
Zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smil'd, and all the
world was gay.
All but the Sylph — with
careful thoughts opprest,
Th' impending woe sat heavy
on his breast.
He summons strait his
Denizens of air;
The lucid squadrons round
the sails repair:
Soft o'er the shrouds aërial
whispers breathe,
That seem'd but Zephyrs to
the train beneath.
Some to the sun their insect-
wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in
clouds of gold;
Transparent forms, too fine
for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half
dissolv'd in light,
Loose to the wind their airy
garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring textures of the
filmy dew,
Dipt in the richest tincture of
the skies,

Where light disports in ever-
mingling dyes,
While ev'ry beam new
transient colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er
they wave their wings.
Amid the circle, on the gilded
mast,
Superior by the head, was
Ariel plac'd;
His purple pinions op'ning to
the sun,
He rais'd his azure wand, and
thus begun.

Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to
your chief give ear!
Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves,
and Dæmons, hear!
Ye know the spheres and
various tasks assign'd
By laws eternal to th' aërial
kind.
Some in the fields of purest
Æther play,
And bask and whiten in the
blaze of day.
Some guide the course of
wand'ring orbs on high,
Or roll the planets thro' the
boundless sky.
Some less refin'd, beneath the
moon's pale light
Pursue the stars that shoot
athwart the night,
Or suck the mists in grosser
air below,

Or dip their pinions in the
painted bow,
Or brew fierce tempests on
the wintry main,
Or o'er the glebe distil the
kindly rain.
Others on earth o'er human
race preside,
Watch all their ways, and all
their actions guide:
Of these the chief the care of
Nations own,
And guard with Arms divine
the British Throne.

Our humbler province is to
tend the Fair,
Not a less pleasing, tho' less
glorious care;
To save the powder from too
rude a gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd-
essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from
the vernal flow'rs;
To steal from rainbows e'er
they drop in show'rs
A brighter wash; to curl their
waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and
inspire their airs;
Nay oft, in dreams, invention
we bestow,
To change a Flounce, or add a
Furbelow.

This day, black Omens threat

the brightest Fair,
That e'er deserv'd a watchful
spirit's care;
Some dire disaster, or by
force, or slight;
But what, or where, the fates
have wrapt in night.
Whether the nymph shall
break Diana's law,
Or some frail China jar
receive a flaw;
Or stain her honour or her
new brocade;
Forget her pray'rs, or miss a
masquerade;
Or lose her heart, or necklace,
at a ball;
Or whether Heav'n has
doom'd that Shock must fall.
Haste, then, ye spirits! to
your charge repair:
The flutt'ring fan be
Zephyretta's care;
The drops to thee, Brillante,
we consign;
And, Momentilla, let the
watch be thine;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her
fav'rite Lock;
Ariel himself shall be the
guard of Shock.

To fifty chosen Sylphs, of
special note,
We trust th' important
charge, the Petticoat:
Oft have we known that

seven-fold fence to fail,
Tho' stiff with hoops, and
arm'd with ribs of whale;
Form a strong line about the
silver bound,
And guard the wide
circumference around.

Whatever spirit, careless of
his charge,
His post neglects, or leaves
the fair at large,
Shall feel sharp vengeance
soon o'ertake his sins,
Be stopp'd in vials, or
transfix'd with pins;
Or plung'd in lakes of bitter
washes lie,
Or wedg'd whole ages in a
bodkin's eye:
Gums and Pomatums shall
his flight restrain,
While clogg'd he beats his
silken wings in vain;
Or Alum styptics with
contracting pow'r
Shrink his thin essence like a
rivel'd flow'r:
Or, as Ixion fix'd, the wretch
shall feel
The giddy motion of the
whirling Mill,
In fumes of burning
Chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the sea that
froths below!

He spoke; the spirits from the
sails descend;
Some, orb in orb, around the
nymph extend;
Some thrid the mazy ringlets
of her hair;
Some hang upon the
pendants of her ear:
With beating hearts the dire
event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for
the birth of Fate.

Canto III

Close by those meads, for
ever crown'd with flow'rs,
Where Thames with pride
surveys his rising tow'rs,
There stands a structure of
majestic frame,
Which from the neighb'ring
Hampton takes its name.
Here Britain's statesmen oft
the fall foredoom
Of foreign Tyrants and of
Nymphs at home;
Here thou, great **Anna**!

whom three realms obey.
Dost sometimes counsel take
— and sometimes Tea.

Hither the heroes and the
nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures
of a Court;
In various talk th' instructive
hours they past,
Who gave the ball, or paid the
visit last;
One speaks the glory of the
British Queen,
And one describes a charming
Indian screen;
A third interprets motions,
looks, and eyes;
At ev'ry word a reputation
dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each
pause of chat,
With singing, laughing,
ogling, and *all that*.

Mean while, declining from
the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his
burning ray;
The hungry Judges soon the
sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jury-
men may dine;
The merchant from th'
Exchange returns in peace,
And the long labours of the
Toilet cease.

Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,
Burns to encounter two advent'rous Knights,
At Ombre singly to decide their doom;
And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.
Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,
Each band the number of the sacred nine.

Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aërial guard
Descend, and sit on each important card:
First Ariel perch'd upon a Matadore,
Then each, according to the rank they bore;
For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,
Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.
Behold, four Kings in majesty rever'd,
With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;
And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flow'r,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer pow'r;
Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;

And particolour'd troops, a
shining train,
Draw forth to combat on the
velvet plain.

The skilful Nymph reviews
her force with care:
Let Spades be trumps! she
said, and trumps they were.

Now move to war her sable
Matadores,
In show like leaders of the
swarthy Moors.
Spadillio first, unconquerable
Lord!
Led off two captive trumps,
and swept the board.
As many more Manillio forc'd
to yield,
And march'd a victor from the
verdant field.
Him Basto follow'd, but his
fate more hard
Gain'd but one trump and one
Plebeian card.
With his broad sabre next, a
chief in years,
The hoary Majesty of Spades
appears,
Puts forth one manly leg, to
sight reveal'd,
The rest, his many-colour'd
robe conceal'd.
The rebel Knave, who dares
his prince engage,
Proves the just victim of his

royal rage.
Ev'n mighty Pam, that Kings
and Queens o'erthrew
And mow'd down armies in
the fights of Lu,
Sad chance of war! now
destitute of aid,
Falls undistinguish'd by the
victor spade!

Thus far both armies to
Belinda yield;
Now to the Baron fate
inclines the field.
His warlike Amazon her host
invades,
Th' imperial consort of the
crown of Spades.
The Club's black Tyrant first
her victim dy'd,
Spite of his haughty mien,
and barb'rous pride:
What boots the regal circle on
his head,
His giant limbs, in state
unwieldy spread;
That long behind he trails his
pompous robe,
And, of all monarchs, only
grasps the globe?

The Baron now his Diamonds
pours apace;
Th' embroider'd King who
shows but half his face,
And his refulgent Queen, with
pow'rs combin'd

Of broken troops an easy
conquest find.
Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in
wild disorder seen,
With throngs promiscuous
strow the level green.
Thus when dispers'd a routed
army runs,
Of Asia's troops, and Afric's
sable sons,
With like confusion different
nations fly,
Of various habit, and of
various dye,
The pierc'd battalions dis-
united fall,
In heaps on heaps; one fate
o'erwhelms them all.

The Knave of Diamonds tries
his wily arts,
And wins (oh shameful
chance!) the Queen of Hearts.
At this, the blood the virgin's
cheek forsook,
A livid paleness spreads o'er
all her look;
She sees, and trembles at th'
approaching ill,
Just in the jaws of ruin, and
Codille.
And now (as oft in some
distemper'd State)
On one nice Trick depends
the gen'ral fate.
An Ace of Hearts steps forth:
The King unseen

Lurk'd in her hand, and
mourn'd his captive Queen:
He springs to Vengeance with
an eager pace,
And falls like thunder on the
prostrate Ace.
The nymph exulting fills with
shouts the sky;
The walls, the woods, and
long canals reply.

Oh thoughtless mortals! ever
blind to fate,
Too soon dejected, and too
soon elate.
Sudden, these honours shall
be snatch'd away,
And curs'd for ever this
victorious day.

For lo! the board with cups
and spoons is crown'd,
The berries crackle, and the
mill turns round;
On shining Altars of Japan
they raise
The silver lamp; the fiery
spirits blaze:
From silver spouts the
grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives
the smoking tide:
At once they gratify their
scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong
the rich repast.
Straight hover round the Fair

her airy band;
Some, as she sipp'd, the
fuming liquor fann'd,
Some o'er her lap their
careful plumes display'd,
Trembling, and conscious of
the rich brocade.
Coffee, (which makes the
politician wise,
And see thro' all things with
his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the
Baron's brain
New Stratagems, the radiant
Lock to gain.
Ah cease, rash youth! desist
ere't is too late,
Fear the just Gods, and think
of Scylla's Fate!
Chang'd to a bird, and sent to
flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus'
injur'd hair!

But when to mischief mortals
bend their will,
How soon they find fit
instruments of ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with
tempting grace
A two-edg'd weapon from her
shining case:
So Ladies in Romance assist
their Knight,
Present the spear, and arm
him for the fight.
He takes the gift with

rev'rence, and extends
The little engine on his
fingers' ends;
This just behind Belinda's
neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant steams
she bends her head.
Swift to the Lock a thousand
Sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns,
blow back the hair;
And thrice they twitch'd the
diamond in her ear;
Thrice she look'd back, and
thrice the foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious
Ariel sought
The close recesses of the
Virgin's thought;
As on the nosegay in her
breast reclin'd,
He watch'd th' Ideas rising in
her mind,
Sudden he view'd, in spite of
all her art,
An earthly Lover lurking at
her heart.
Amaz'd, confus'd, he found
his pow'r expir'd,
Resign'd to fate, and with a
sigh retir'd.

The Peer now spreads the
glitt'ring Forfex wide,
T' inclose the Lock; now joins
it, to divide.
Ev'n then, before the fatal

engine clos'd,
A wretched Sylph too fondly
interpos'd;
Fate urg'd the shears, and cut
the Sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon
unites again)
The meeting points the sacred
hair dissever
From the fair head, for ever,
and for ever!

Then flash'd the living
lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend
th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying
heav'n are cast,
When husbands, or when
lapdogs breathe their last;
Or when rich China vessels
fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust and painted
fragments lie!

Let wreaths of triumph now
my temples twine
(The victor cry'd) the glorious
Prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or
birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the
British Fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be
read,
Or the small pillow grace a
Lady's bed,

While visits shall be paid on
solemn days,
When num'rous wax-lights in
bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or
assignations give,
So long my honour, name,
and praise shall live!
What Time would spare, from
Steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men,
submit to fate!
Steel could the labour of the
Gods destroy,
And strike to dust th' imperial
tow'rs of Troy;
Steel could the works of
mortal pride confound,
And hew triumphal arches to
the ground.
What wonder then, fair
nymph! thy hairs should feel,
The conqu'ring force of
unresisted steel?

Canto IV

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppress'd,
And secret passions labour'd in her breast.
Not youthful kings in battle seiz'd alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
Not ardent lovers robb'd of all their bliss,
Not ancient ladies when refus'd a kiss,
Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinn'd awry,
E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,
As thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd Hair.

For, that sad moment, when the Sylphs withdrew
And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,
Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
As ever sully'd the fair face of light,
Down to the central earth, his proper scene,
Repair'd to search the gloomy Cave of Spleen.

Swift on his sooty pinions flits

the Gnome,
And in a vapour reach'd the
dismal dome.
No cheerful breeze this sullen
region knows,
The dreaded East is all the
wind that blows.
Here in a grotto, shelter'd
close from air,
And screen'd in shades from
day's detested glare,
She sighs for ever on her
pensive bed,
Pain at her side, and Megrim
at her head.

Two handmaids wait the
throne: alike in place,
But diff'ring far in figure and
in face.
Here stood Ill-nature like an
ancient maid,
Her wrinkled form in black
and white array'd;
With store of pray'rs, for
mornings, nights, and noons,
Her hand is fill'd; her bosom
with lampoons.
There Affectation, with a
sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses
of eighteen,
Practis'd to lisp, and hang the
head aside.
Faints into airs, and
languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with

becoming woe,
Wrapt in a gown, for sickness,
and for show.
The fair ones feel such
maladies as these,
When each new night-dress
gives a new disease.

A constant Vapour o'er the
palace flies;
Strange phantoms rising as
the mists arise;
Dreadful, as hermit's dreams
in haunted shades,
Or bright, as visions of
expiring maids.
Now glaring fiends, and
snakes on rolling spires,
Pale spectres, gaping tombs,
and purple fires:
Now lakes of liquid gold,
Elysian scenes,
And crystal domes, and
angels in machines.

Unnumber'd throngs on every
side are seen,
Of bodies chang'd to various
forms by Spleen.
Here living Tea-pots stand,
one arm held out,
One bent; the handle this,
and that the spout:
A Pipkin there, like Homer's
Tripod walks;
Here sighs a Jar, and there a
Goose-pie talks;

Men prove with child, as pow'rful fancy works,
And maids turn'd bottles, call aloud for corks.

Safe past the Gnome thro' this fantastic band,
A branch of healing Spleenwort in his hand.
Then thus address'd the pow'r: "Hail, wayward Queen!
Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen:
Parent of vapours and of female wit,
Who give th' hysteric, or poetic fit,
On various tempers act by various ways,
Make some take physic, others scribble plays;
Who cause the proud their visits to delay,
And send the godly in a pet to pray.
A nymph there is, that all thy pow'r disdains,
And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.
But oh! if e'er thy Gnome could spoil a grace,
Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,
Like Citron-waters matrons cheeks inflame,
Or change complexions at a losing game;

If e'er with airy horns I
planted heads,
Or rumpled petticoats, or
tumbled beds,
Or caus'd suspicion when no
soul was rude,
Or discompos'd the head-
dress of a Prude,
Or e'er to costive lap-dog gave
disease,
Which not the tears of
brightest eyes could ease:
Hear me, and touch Belinda
with chagrin,
That single act gives half the
world the spleen."

The Goddess with a
discontented air
Seems to reject him, tho' she
grants his pray'r.
A wond'rous Bag with both
her hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses
held the winds;
There she collects the force of
female lungs,
Sighs, sobs, and passions, and
the war of tongues.
A Vial next she fills with
fainting fears,
Soft sorrows, melting griefs,
and flowing tears.
The Gnome rejoicing bears
her gifts away,
Spreads his black wings, and
slowly mounts to day.

Sunk in Thalestris' arms the
nymph he found,
Her eyes dejected and her
hair unbound.
Full o'er their heads the
swelling bag he rent,
And all the Furies issu'd at
the vent.
Belinda burns with more than
mortal ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the
rising fire.
"O wretched maid!" she
spread her hands, and cry'd,
(While Hampton's echoes,
"Wretched maid!" reply'd)
"Was it for this you took such
constant care
The bodkin, comb, and
essence to prepare?
For this your locks in paper
durance bound,
For this with tort'ring irons
wreath'd around?
For this with fillets strain'd
your tender head,
And bravely bore the double
loads of lead?
Gods! shall the ravisher
display your hair,
While the Fops envy, and the
Ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose
unrivall'd shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all our
sex resign.

Methinks already I your tears
survey,
Already hear the horrid
things they say,
Already see you a degraded
toast,
And all your honour in a
whisper lost!
How shall I, then, your
helpless fame defend?
'T will then be infamy to seem
your friend!
And shall this prize, th'
inestimable prize,
Expos'd thro' crystal to the
gazing eyes,
And heighten'd by the
diamond's circling rays,
On that rapacious hand for
ever blaze?
Sooner shall grass in Hyde-
park Circus grow,
And wits take lodgings in the
sound of Bow;
Sooner let earth, air, sea, to
Chaos fall,
Men, monkeys, lap-dogs,
parrots, perish all!"

She said; then raging to Sir
Plume repairs,
And bids her Beau demand
the precious hairs;
(Sir Plume of amber snuff-
box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a
clouded cane)

With earnest eyes, and round
unthinking face,
He first the snuff-box open'd,
then the case,
And thus broke out — "My
Lord, why, what the devil?
"Z — ds! damn the lock! 'fore
Gad, you must be civil!
Plague on't!'t is past a jest —
nay prithee, pox!
Give her the hair" — he spoke,
and rapp'd his box.

"It grieves me much" (reply'd
the Peer again)
"Who speaks so well should
ever speak in vain.
But by this Lock, this sacred
Lock I swear,
(Which never more shall join
its parted hair;
Which never more its
honours shall renew,
Clipp'd from the lovely head
where late it grew)
That while my nostrils draw
the vital air,
This hand, which won it, shall
for ever wear."
He spoke, and speaking, in
proud triumph spread
The long-contended honours
of her head.

But Umbriel, hateful Gnome!
forbears not so;
He breaks the Vial whence

the sorrows flow.
Then see! the nymph in
beauteous grief appears,
Her eyes half-languishing,
half-drown'd in tears;
On her heav'd bosom hung
her drooping head,
Which, with a sigh, she rais'd;
and thus she said.
"For ever curs'd be this
detested day,
Which snatch'd my best, my
fav'rite curl away!
Happy! ah ten times happy
had I been,
If Hampton-Court these eyes
had never seen!
Yet am not I the first
mistaken maid,
By love of Courts to num'rous
ills betray'd.
Oh had I rather un-admir'd
remain'd
In some lone isle, or distant
Northern land;
Where the gilt Chariot never
marks the way,
Where none learn Ombre,
none e'er taste Bohea!
There kept my charms
conceal'd from mortal eye,
Like roses, that in deserts
bloom and die.
What mov'd my mind with
youthful Lords to roam?
Oh had I stay'd, and said my
pray'rs at home!

'T was this, the morning
omens seem'd to tell,
Thrice from my trembling
hand the patch-box fell;
The tott'ring China shook
without a wind.
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock
was most unkind!
A Sylph too warn'd me of the
threats of fate,
In mystic visions, now
believ'd too late!
See the poor remnants of
these slighted hairs!
My hands shall rend what
ev'n thy rapine spares:
These in two sable ringlets
taught to break,
Once gave new beauties to the
snowy neck;
The sister-lock now sits
uncouth, alone,
And in its fellow's fate
foresees its own;
Uncurl'd it hangs, the fatal
shears demands,
And tempts once more thy
sacrilegious hands.
Oh hadst thou, cruel! been
content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any
hairs but these!"

Canto V

She said: the pitying audience
melt in tears.
But Fate and Jove had
stopp'd the Baron's ears.
In vain Thalestris with
reproach assails,
For who can move when fair
Belinda fails?
Not half so fix'd the Trojan
could remain,
While Anna begg'd and Dido
rag'd in vain.
Then grave Clarissa graceful
wav'd her fan;
Silence ensu'd, and thus the
nymph began.

"Say why are Beauties prais'd
and honour'd most,
The wise man's passion, and
the vain man's toast?
Why deck'd with all that land
and sea afford,
Why Angels call'd, and Angel-
like ador'd?
Why round our coaches
crowd the white-glov'd Beaux,
Why bows the side-box from
its inmost rows;
How vain are all these glories,
all our pains,
Unless good sense preserve

what beauty gains:
That men may say, when we
the front-box grace:
'Behold the first in virtue as
in face!'
Oh! if to dance all night, and
dress all day,
Charm'd the small-pox, or
chas'd old-age away;
Who would not scorn what
housewife's cares produce,
Or who would learn one
earthly thing of use?
To patch, nay ogle, might
become a Saint,
Nor could it sure be such a sin
to paint.
But since, alas! frail beauty
must decay,
Curl'd or uncurl'd, since
Locks will turn to grey;
Since painted, or not painted,
all shall fade,
And she who scorns a man,
must die a maid;
What then remains but well
our pow'r to use,
And keep good-humour still
whate'er we lose?
And trust me, dear! good-
humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and
screams, and scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty
eyes may roll;
Charms strike the sight, but
merit wins the soul."

So spoke the Dame, but no applause ensu'd;
Belinda frown'd, Thalestris call'd her Prude.
"To arms, to arms!" the fierce Virago cries,
And swift as lightning to the combat flies.
All side in parties, and begin th' attack;
Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;
Heroes' and Heroines' shouts confus'dly rise,
And bass, and treble voices strike the skies.
No common weapons in their hands are found,
Like Gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.

So when bold Homer makes the Gods engage,
And heav'nly breasts with human passions rage;
'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms;
And all Olympus rings with loud alarms:
Jove's thunder roars, heav'n trembles all around,
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound:
Earth shakes her nodding tow'rs, the ground gives way.
And the pale ghosts start at

the flash of day!

Triumphant Umbriel on a
sconce's height
Clapp'd his glad wings, and
sate to view the fight:
Propp'd on the bodkin spears,
the Sprites survey
The growing combat, or assist
the fray.

While thro' the press enrag'd
Thalestris flies,
And scatters death around
from both her eyes,
A Beau and Witling perish'd
in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and
one in song.
"O cruel nymph! a living
death I bear,"
Cry'd Dapperwit, and sunk
beside his chair.
A mournful glance Sir
Fopling upwards cast,
"Those eyes are made so
killing" — was his last.
Thus on Mæander's flow'ry
margin lies
Th' expiring Swan, and as he
sings he dies.

When bold Sir Plume had
drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stepp'd in, and kill'd
him with a frown;
She smil'd to see the doughty

hero slain,
But, at her smile, the Beau
reviv'd again.

Now Jove suspends his
golden scales in air,
Weighs the Men's wits against
the Lady's hair;
The doubtful beam long nods
from side to side;
At length the wits mount up,
the hairs subside.

See, fierce Belinda on the
Baron flies,
With more than usual
lightning in her eyes:
Nor fear'd the Chief th'
unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on
his foe to die.
But this bold Lord with manly
strength endu'd,
She with one finger and a
thumb subdu'd:
Just where the breath of life
his nostrils drew,
A charge of Snuff the wily
virgin threw;
The Gnomes direct, to ev'ry
atom just,
The pungent grains of
titillating dust.
Sudden, with starting tears
each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes
to his nose.

Now meet thy fate, incens'd
Belinda cry'd,
And drew a deadly bodkin
from her side.
(The same, his ancient
personage to deck,
Her great great grandsire
wore about his neck,
In three seal-rings; which
after, melted down,
Form'd a vast buckle for his
widow's gown:
Her infant grandame's
whistle next it grew,
The bells she jingled, and the
whistle blew;
Then in a bodkin grac'd her
mother's hairs,
Which long she wore, and
now Belinda wears.)

"Boast not my fall" (he cry'd)
"insulting foe!
Thou by some other shalt be
laid as low,
Nor think, to die dejects my
lofty mind:
All that I dread is leaving you
behind!
Rather than so, ah let me still
survive,
And burn in Cupid's flames —
but burn alive."

"Restore the Lock!" she cries;
and all around

"Restore the Lock!" the
vaulted roofs rebound.
Not fierce Othello in so loud a
strain
Roar'd for the handkerchief
that caus'd his pain.
But see how oft ambitious
aims are cross'd,
And chiefs contend 'till all the
prize is lost!
The Lock, obtain'd with guilt,
and kept with pain,
In ev'ry place is sought, but
sought in vain:
With such a prize no mortal
must be blest,
So heav'n decrees! with
heav'n who can contest?

Some thought it mounted to
the Lunar sphere,
Since all things lost on earth
are treasur'd there.
There Hero's wits are kept in
pond'rous vases,
And beau's in snuff-boxes and
tweezer-cases.
There broken vows and
death-bed alms are found,
And lovers' hearts with ends
of riband bound,
The courtier's promises, and
sick man's pray'rs,
The smiles of harlots, and the
tears of heirs,
Cages for gnats, and chains to
yoke a flea,

Dry'd butterflies, and tomes
of casuistry.

But trust the Muse — she saw
it upward rise,
Tho' mark'd by none but
quick, poetic eyes:
(So Rome's great founder to
the heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confess'd
in view)
A sudden Star, it shot thro'
liquid air,
And drew behind a radiant
trail of hair.
Not Berenice's Locks first
rose so bright,
The heav'ns bespangling with
dishevell'd light.
The Sylphs behold it kindling
as it flies,
And pleas'd pursue its
progress thro' the skies.

This the Beau monde shall
from the Mall survey,
And hail with music its
propitious ray.
This the blest Lover shall for
Venus take,
And send up vows from
Rosamonda's lake.
This Partridge soon shall view
in cloudless skies,
When next he looks thro'
Galileo's eyes;
And hence th' egregious

wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall
of Rome.
Then cease, bright Nymph! to
mourn thy ravish'd hair,
Which adds new glory to the
shining sphere!
Not all the tresses that fair
head can boast,
Shall draw such envy as the
Lock you lost.
For, after all the murders of
your eye,
When, after millions slain,
yourself shall die:
When those fair suns shall
set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be
laid in dust,
This Lock, the Muse shall
consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe
Belinda's name.

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An Essay on Criticism

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Contents

An Essay on Criticism

'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
A fool might once himself alone expose,
Now one in verse makes many more in prose.

'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.
In Poets as true genius is but rare,
True Taste as seldom is the Critic's share;
Both must alike from Heav'n derive their light,
These born to judge, as well as those to write.
Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well.
Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true,
But are not Critics to their judgment too?

Yet if we look more closely, we shall find
Most have the seeds of judgment in their mind:
Nature affords at least a glimm'ring light;
The lines, tho' touch'd but faintly, are drawn right.
(But as the slightest sketch, if justly trac'd,
(Is by ill-colouring but the more disgrac'd,
(So by false learning is good sense defac'd:
Some are bewilder'd in the maze of schools,
And some made coxcombs Nature meant but fools.

In search of wit these lose their common sense,
And then turn Critics in their own defence:
Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write,
Or with a Rival's, or an Eunuch's spite.
All fools have still an itching to deride,
And fain would be upon the laughing side.

If Mævius scribble in Apollo's spite,
There are who judge still worse than he can write.

Some have at first for Wits, then Poets past,
Turn'd Critics next, and prov'd plain fools at last.
Some neither can for Wits nor Critics pass,
As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass.
Those half-learn'd witlings, num'rous in our isle,
As half-form'd insects on the banks of Nile;
Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,
Their generation's so equivocal:
To tell 'em, would a hundred tongues require,
Or one vain wit's, that might a hundred tire.

But you who seek to give and merit fame,
And justly bear a Critic's noble name,
Be sure yourself and your own reach to know,
How far your genius, taste, and learning go;
Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
And mark that point where sense and dulness meet.

Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit,
And wisely curb'd proud man's pretending wit.
As on the land while here the ocean gains,
In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains;
Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
The solid pow'r of understanding fails;
Where beams of warm imagination play,
The memory's soft figures melt away.
One science only will one genius fit;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit:
Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
But oft in those confin'd to single parts.
Like kings we lose the conquests gain'd before,
By vain ambition still to make them more;
Each might his sev'ral province well command,
Would all but stoop to what they understand.

First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same:
Unerring **Nature**, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of Art.
Art from that fund each just supply provides,
Works without show, and without pomp presides:
In some fair body thus th' informing soul
With spirits feeds, with vigour fills the whole,
Each motion guides, and ev'ry nerve sustains;
Itself unseen, but in th' effects, remains.
Some, to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse,
Want as much more, to turn it to its use;
For wit and judgment often are at strife,
Tho' meant each other's aid, like man and wife.
'T is more to guide, than spur the Muse's steed;
Restrain his fury, than provoke his speed;
The winged courser, like a gen'rous horse,
Shows most true mettle when you check his course.

Those **Rules** of old discovered, not devis'd,
Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd;
Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.
Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,
When to repress, and when indulge our flights:
High on Parnassus' top her sons she show'd,
And pointed out those arduous paths they trod;
Held from afar, aloft, th' immortal prize,
And urg'd the rest by equal steps to rise.
Just precepts thus from great examples giv'n,
She drew from them what they deriv'd from Heav'n.
The gen'rous Critic fann'd the Poet's fire,
And taught the world with reason to admire.
Then Criticism the Muse's handmaid prov'd,

To dress her charms, and make her more belov'd:
But following wits from that intention stray'd,
Who could not win the mistress, woo'd the maid;
Against the Poets their own arms they turn'd,
Sure to hate most the men from whom they learn'd.
So modern 'Pothecaries, taught the art
By Doctor's bills to play the Doctor's part,
Bold in the practice of mistaken rules,
Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fools.
Some on the leaves of ancient authors prey,
Nor time nor moths e'er spoil'd so much as they.
Some drily plain, without invention's aid,
Write dull receipts how poems may be made.
These leave the sense, their learning to display,
And those explain the meaning quite away.

You then whose judgment the right course would steer,
Know well each **Ancient's** proper character;
His fable, subject, scope in ev'ry page;
Religion, Country, genius of his Age:
Without all these at once before your eyes,
Cavil you may, but never criticize.
Be Homer's works your study and delight,
Read them by day, and meditate by night;
Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims bring,
And trace the Muses upward to their spring.
Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse;
And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse.

When first young Maro in his boundless mind
A work t' outlast immortal Rome design'd,
Perhaps he seem'd above the critic's law,
And but from Nature's fountains scorn'd to draw:
But when t' examine ev'ry part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.
Convinc'd, amaz'd, he checks the bold design;
And rules as strict his labour'd work confine,

As if the Stagirite o'erlook'd each line.
Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;
To copy nature is to copy them.

Some beauties yet no Precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness as well as care.
Music resembles Poetry, in each
Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
And which a master-hand alone can reach.
If, where the rules not far enough extend,
(Since rules were made but to promote their end)
Some lucky Licence answer to the full
Th' intent propos'd, that Licence is a rule.
Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common track;
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
Which without passing thro' the judgment, gains
The heart, and all its end at once attains.
In prospects thus, some objects please our eyes,
Which out of nature's common order rise,
The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice.
Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to faults true Critics dare not mend.
But tho' the Ancients thus their rules invade,
(As Kings dispense with laws themselves have made)
Moderns, beware! or if you must offend
Against the precept, ne'er transgress its End;
Let it be seldom, and compell'd by need;
And have, at least, their precedent to plead.
The Critic else proceeds without remorse,
Seizes your fame, and puts his laws in force.
I know there are, to whose presumptuous thoughts
Those freer beauties, ev'n in them, seem faults.
Some figures monstrous and mis-shap'd appear,
Consider'd singly, or beheld too near,
Which, but proportion'd to their light, or place,

Due distance reconciles to form and grace.
A prudent chief not always must display
His pow'rs in equal ranks, and fair array.
But with th' occasion and the place comply,
Conceal his force, nay seem sometimes to fly.
Those oft are stratagems which error seem,
Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream.

Still green with bays each ancient Altar stands,
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;
Secure from Flames, from Envy's fiercer rage,
Destructive War, and all-involving Age.
See, from each clime the learn'd their incense bring!
Hear, in all tongues consenting Pæans ring!
In praise so just let ev'ry voice be join'd,
And fill the gen'ral chorus of mankind.
Hail, Bards triumphant! born in happier days;
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow;
Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!
Oh may some spark of your celestial fire,
The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
(That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes)
To teach vain Wits a science little known,
T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!

Of all the Causes which conspire to blind
Man's erring judgment, and misguide the mind,
What the weak head with strongest bias rules,
Is *Pride*, the never-failing voice of fools.
Whatever nature has in worth denied,
She gives in large recruits of needful pride;
For as in bodies, thus in souls, we find
What wants in blood and spirits, swell'd with wind:

Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
And fills up all the mighty Void of sense.
If once right reason drives that cloud away,
Truth breaks upon us with resistless day.
Trust not yourself; but your defects to know,
Make use of ev'ry friend — and ev'ry foe.

A *little learning* is a dang'rous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.
Fir'd at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of Arts,
While from the bounded level of our mind
Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;
But more advanc'd, behold with strange surprise
New distant scenes of endless science rise!
So pleas'd at first the tow'ring Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
Th' eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last;
But, those attain'd, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen'd way,
Th' increasing prospect tires our wand'ring eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

A perfect Judge will read each work of Wit
With the same spirit that its author writ:
Survey the **Whole**, nor seek slight faults to find
Where nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;
Nor lose, for that malignant dull delight,
The gen'rous pleasure to be charm'd with Wit.
But in such lays as neither ebb, nor flow,
Correctly cold, and regularly low,
That shunning faults, one quiet tenour keep,
We cannot blame indeed — but we may sleep.
In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts

Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts;
'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.
Thus when we view some well-proportion'd dome,
(The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!)
No single parts unequally surprize,
All comes united to th' admiring eyes;
No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear;
The Whole at once is bold, and regular.

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.
In every work regard the writer's End,
Since none can compass more than they intend;
And if the means be just, the conduct true,
Applause, in spight of trivial faults, is due;
As men of breeding, sometimes men of wit,
T' avoid great errors, must the less commit:
Neglect the rules each verbal Critic lays,
For not to know some trifles, is a praise.
Most Critics, fond of some subservient art,
Still make the Whole depend upon a Part:
They talk of principles, but notions prize,
And all to one lov'd Folly sacrifice.

Once on a time, La Mancha's Knight, they say,
A certain bard encount'ring on the way,
Discours'd in terms as just, with looks as sage,
As e'er could Dennis of the Grecian stage;
Concluding all were desp'rate sots and fools,
Who durst depart from Aristotle's rules.
Our Author, happy in a judge so nice,
Produc'd his Play, and begg'd the Knight's advice;
Made him observe the subject, and the plot,
The manners, passions, unities; what not?
All which, exact to rule, were brought about,
Were but a Combat in the lists left out.

"What! leave the Combat out?" exclaims the Knight;
Yes, or we must renounce the Stagirite.
"Not so, by Heav'n" (he answers in a rage),
"Knights, squires, and steeds, must enter on the stage."
So vast a throng the stage can ne'er contain.
"Then build a new, or act it in a plain."

Thus Critics, of less judgment than caprice,
Curious not knowing, not exact but nice,
Form short Ideas; and offend in arts
(As most in manners) by a love to parts.

Some to *Conceit* alone their taste confine,
And glitt'ring thoughts struck out at ev'ry line;
Pleas'd with a work where nothing's just or fit;
One glaring Chaos and wild heap of wit.
Poets like painters, thus, unskill'd to trace
The naked nature and the living grace,
With gold and jewels cover ev'ry part,
And hide with ornaments their want of art.
True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;
Something, whose truth convinc'd at sight we find,
That gives us back the image of our mind.
As shades more sweetly recommend the light,
So modest plainness sets off sprightly wit.
For works may have more wit than does 'em good,
As bodies perish thro' excess of blood.

Others for Language all their care express,
And value books, as women men, for Dress:
Their praise is still — the Style is excellent:
The Sense, they humbly take upon content.
Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found,
False Eloquence, like the prismatic glass,
Its gaudy colours spreads on ev'ry place;

The face of Nature we no more survey,
All glares alike, without distinction gay:
But true expression, like th' unchanging Sun,
Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon,
It gilds all objects, but it alters none.
Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent, as more suitable;
A vile conceit in pompous words express'd,
Is like a clown in regal purple dress'd:
For diff'rent styles with diff'rent subjects sort,
As several garbs with country, town, and court.

Some by old words to fame have made pretence,
Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense;
Such labour'd nothings, in so strange a style,
Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile.
(Unlucky, as Fungoso in the play,
(These sparks with awkward vanity display
(What the fine gentleman wore yesterday;
And but so mimic ancient wits at best,
As apes our grandsires, in their doublets drest.
In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold;
Alike fantastic, if too new, or old:
Be not the first by whom the new are try'd,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

But most by Numbers judge a Poet's song;
And smooth or rough, with them is right or wrong:
In the bright Muse though thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;
(Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
(Not mend their minds; as some to Church repair,
(Not for the doctrine, but the music there.
These equal syllables alone require,
Tho' oft the ear the open vowe's tire;
While expletives their feeble aid do join;
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line:

While they ring round the same unvary'd chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes;
Where-e'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
In the next line, it "whispers through the trees:"
If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
The reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with "sleep:"
Then, at the last and only couplet fraught
With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
A needless Alexandrine ends the song
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.
Leave such to tune their own dull rhymes, and know
What's roundly smooth or languishingly slow;
And praise the easy vigour of a line,
Where Denham's strength, and Waller's sweetness join.
True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must seem an Echo to the sense:
Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar:
When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labours, and the words move slow;
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main.
Hear how Timotheus' varied lays surprize,
And bid alternate passions fall and rise!
While, at each change, the son of Libyan Jove
Now burns with glory, and then melts with love,
Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow,
Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow:
Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found,
And the world's victor stood subdu'd by Sound!
The pow'r of Music all our hearts allow,
And what Timotheus was, is **Dryden** now.

Avoid Extremes; and shun the fault of such,
Who still are pleas'd too little or too much.
At ev'ry trifle scorn to take offence,
That always shows great pride, or little sense;
Those heads, as stomachs, are not sure the best,
Which nauseate all, and nothing can digest.
Yet let not each gay Turn thy rapture move;
For fools admire, but men of sense approve:
As things seem large which we thro' mists descry,
Dulness is ever apt to magnify.

Some foreign writers, some our own despise;
The Ancients only, or the Moderns prize.
Thus Wit, like Faith, by each man is apply'd
To one small sect, and all are damn'd beside.
Meanly they seek the blessing to confine,
And force that sun but on a part to shine,
Which not alone the southern wit sublimes,
But ripens spirits in cold northern climes;
Which from the first has shone on ages past,
Enlights the present, and shall warm the last;
Tho' each may feel increases and decays,
And see now clearer and now darker days.
Regard not then if Wit be old or new,
But blame the false, and value still the true.

Some ne'er advance a Judgment of their own,
But catch the spreading notion of the Town;
They reason and conclude by precedent,
And own stale nonsense which they ne'er invent.
Some judge of author's names, not works, and then
Nor praise nor blame the writings, but the men.
Of all this servile herd the worst is he
That in proud dulness joins with Quality,
A constant Critic at the great man's board,
To fetch and carry nonsense for my Lord.
What woful stuff this madrigal would be,

In some starv'd hackney sonneteer, or me?
But let a Lord once own the happy lines,
How the wit brightens! how the style refines!
Before his sacred name flies ev'ry fault,
And each exalted stanza teems with thought!

The Vulgar thus through Imitation err;
As oft the Learn'd by being singular;
So much they scorn the crowd, that if the throng
By chance go right, they purposely go wrong;
So Schismatics the plain believers quit,
And are but damn'd for having too much wit.
Some praise at morning what they blame at night;
But always think the last opinion right.
A Muse by these is like a mistress us'd,
This hour she's idoliz'd, the next abus'd;
While their weak heads like towns unfortify'd,
'Twixt sense and nonsense daily change their side.
Ask them the cause; they're wiser still, they say;
And still to-morrow's wiser than to-day.
We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow,
Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us so.
Once School-divines this zealous isle o'er-spread;
Who knew most Sentences, was deepest read;
Faith, Gospel, all, seem'd made to be disputed,
And none had sense enough to be confuted:
Scotists and Thomists, now, in peace remain,
Amidst their kindred cobwebs in Duck-lane.
If Faith itself has diff'rent dresses worn,
What wonder modes in Wit should take their turn?
Oft', leaving what is natural and fit,
The current folly proves the ready wit;
And authors think their reputation safe,
Which lives as long as fools are pleas'd to laugh.
Some valuing those of their own side or mind,
Still make themselves the measure of mankind:
Fondly we think we honour merit then,

When we but praise ourselves in other men.

Parties in Wit attend on those of State,
And public faction doubles private hate.
Pride, Malice, Folly, against Dryden rose,
In various shapes of Parsons, Critics, Beaus;
But sense surviv'd, when merry jests were past;
For rising merit will buoy up at last.
Might he return, and bless once more our eyes,
New Blackmores and new Milbourns must arise:
Nay should great Homer lift his awful head,
Zoilus again would start up from the dead.
Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue;
But like a shadow, proves the substance true;
For envy'd Wit, like Sol eclips'd, makes known
Th' opposing body's grossness, not its own,
When first that sun too pow'rful beams displays,
It draws up vapours which obscure its rays;
But ev'n those clouds at last adorn its way,
Reflect new glories, and augment the day.

Be thou the first true merit to befriend;
His praise is lost, who stays, till all commend.
Short is the date, alas, of modern rhymes,
And 'tis but just to let them live betimes.
No longer now that golden age appears,
When Patriarch-wits surviv'd a thousand years:
Now length of Fame (our second life) is lost,
And bare threescore is all ev'n that can boast;
Our sons their fathers' failing language see,
And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.
So when the faithful pencil has design'd
Some bright Idea of the master's mind,
Where a new world leaps out at his command,
And ready Nature waits upon his hand;
When the ripe colours soften and unite,
And sweetly melt into just shade and light;

When mellowing years their full perfection give,
And each bold figure just begins to live,
The treach'rous colours the fair art betray,
And all the bright creation fades away!

Unhappy Wit, like most mistaken things,
Atones not for that envy which it brings.
In youth alone its empty praise we boast,
But soon the short-liv'd vanity is lost:
Like some fair flow'r the early spring supplies.
That gaily blooms, but ev'n in blooming dies.
What is this Wit, which must our cares employ?
The owner's wife, that other men enjoy;
Then most our trouble still when most admir'd,
And still the more we give, the more requir'd;
Whose fame with pains we guard, but lose with ease,
Sure some to vex, but never all to please;
'Tis what the vicious fear, the virtuous shun,
By fools't is hated, and by knaves undone!

If Wit so much from Ign'rance undergo,
Ah let not Learning too commence its foe!
Of old, those met rewards who could excel,
And such were prais'd who but endeavour'd well:
Tho' triumphs were to gen'rals only due,
Crowns were reserv'd to grace the soldiers too,
Now, they who reach Parnassus' lofty crown,
Employ their pains to spurn some others down;
And while self-love each jealous writer rules,
Contending wits become the sport of fools:
But still the worst with most regret commend,
For each ill Author is as bad a Friend.
To what base ends, and by what abject ways,
Are mortals urg'd thro' sacred lust of praise!
Ah ne'er so dire a thirst of glory boast,
Nor in the Critic let the Man be lost.
Good-nature and good-sense must ever join;

To err is human, to forgive, divine.

But if in noble minds some dregs remain
Not yet purg'd off, of spleen and sour disdain;
Discharge that rage on more provoking crimes,
Nor fear a dearth in these flagitious times.
No pardon vile Obscenity should find,
Tho' wit and art conspire to move your mind;
But Dulness with Obscenity must prove
As shameful sure as Impotence in love.
In the fat age of pleasure wealth and ease
Sprung the rank weed, and thriv'd with large increase:
When love was all an easy Monarch's care;
Seldom at council, never in a war:
Jilts rul'd the state, and statesmen farces writ;
Nay wits had pensions, and young Lords had wit:
The Fair sate panting at a Courtier's play,
And not a Mask went unimprov'd away:
The modest fan was lifted up no more,
And Virgins smil'd at what they blush'd before.
The following licence of a Foreign reign
Did all the dregs of bold Socinus drain;
Then unbelieving priests reform'd the nation,
And taught more pleasant methods of salvation;
Where Heav'n's free subjects might their rights dispute,
Lest God himself should seem too absolute:
Pulpits their sacred satire learn'd to spare,
And Vice admir'd to find a flatt'rer there!
Encourag'd thus, Wit's Titans brav'd the skies,
And the press groan'd with licens'd blasphemies.
These monsters, Critics! with your darts engage,
Here point your thunder, and exhaust your rage!
Yet shun their fault, who, scandalously nice,
Will needs mistake an author into vice;
All seems infected that th' infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the jaundic'd eye.

Learn then what **Morals** Critics ought to show,
For't is but half a Judge's task, to know.
'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
In all you speak, let truth and candour shine:
That not alone what to your sense is due
All may allow; but seek your friendship too.

Be silent always when you doubt your sense;
And speak, tho' sure, with seeming diffidence:
Some positive, persisting fops we know,
Who, if once wrong, will needs be always so;
But you, with pleasure own your errors past,
And make each day a Critic on the last.

'T is not enough, your counsel still be true;
Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods do;
Men must be taught as if you taught them not,
And things unknown propos'd as things forgot.
Without Good Breeding, truth is disapprov'd;
That only makes superior sense belov'd.

Be niggards of advice on no pretence;
For the worst avarice is that of sense.
With mean complacence ne'er betray your trust,
Nor be so civil as to prove unjust.
Fear not the anger of the wise to raise;
Those best can bear reproof, who merit praise.

'T were well might critics still this freedom take,
But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
And stares, tremendous, with a threat'ning eye,
Like some fierce Tyrant in old tapestry.
Fear most to tax an Honourable fool,
Whose right it is, uncensur'd, to be dull;
Such, without wit, are Poets when they please,
As without learning they can take Degrees.
Leave dang'rous truths to unsuccessful Satires,

And flattery to fulsome Dedicators,
Whom, when they praise, the world believes no more,
Than when they promise to give scribbling o'er.
'T is best sometimes your censure to restrain,
And charitably let the dull be vain:
Your silence there is better than your spite,
For who can rail so long as they can write?
Still humming on, their drowsy course they keep,
And lash'd so long, like tops, are lash'd asleep.
False steps but help them to renew the race,
As, after stumbling, Jades will mend their pace.
What crowds of these, impenitently bold,
In sounds and jingling syllables grown old,
Still run on Poets, in a raging vein,
Ev'n to the dregs and squeezings of the brain,
Strain out the last dull droppings of their sense,
And rhyme with all the rage of Impotence.

Such shameless Bards we have; and yet't is true,
There are as mad abandon'd Critics too.
The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
With loads of learned lumber in his head,
With his own tongue still edifies his ears,
And always list'ning to himself appears.
All books he reads, and all he reads assails.
From Dryden's Fables down to Durfey's Tales.
With him, most authors steal their works, or buy;
Garth did not write his own Dispensary.

Name a new Play, and he's the Poet's friend,
Nay show'd his faults — but when would Poets mend?
No place so sacred from such fops is barr'd,
Nor is Paul's church more safe than Paul's churchyard:
Nay, fly to Altars; there they'll talk you dead:
For Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread.
(Distrustful sense with modest caution speaks,
(It still looks home, and short excursions makes;

(But rattling nonsense in full volleys breaks,
And never shock'd, and never turn'd aside,
Bursts out, resistless, with a thund'ring tide.

But where's the man, who counsel can bestow,
Still pleas'd to teach, and yet not proud to know?
Unbiass'd, or by favour, or by spite;
Not dully prepossess'd, nor blindly right;
Tho' learn'd, well-bred; and tho' well-bred, sincere,
Modestly bold, and humanly severe:
Who to a friend his faults can freely show,
And gladly praise the merit of a foe?
Blest with a taste exact, yet unconfin'd;
A knowledge both of books and human kind:
Gen'rous converse; a soul exempt from pride;
And love to praise, with reason on his side?

Such once were Critics; such the happy few,
Athens and Rome in better ages knew.
The mighty Stagirite first left the shore,
Spread all his sails, and durst the deeps explore:
He steer'd securely, and discover'd far,
Led by the light of the Mæonian Star.
Poets, a race long unconfin'd, and free,
Still fond and proud of savage liberty,
Receiv'd his laws; and stood convinc'd 't was fit,
Who conquer'd Nature, should preside o'er Wit.

Horace still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense,
Will, like a friend, familiarly convey
The truest notions in the easiest way.
He, who supreme in judgment, as in wit,
Might boldly censure, as he boldly writ,
Yet judg'd with coolness, tho' he sung with fire;
His Precepts teach but what his works inspire.
Our Critics take a contrary extreme,

They judge with fury, but they write with fle'me:
Nor suffers Horace more in wrong Translations
By Wits, than Critics in as wrong Quotations.

See Dionysius Homer's thoughts refine,
And call new beauties forth from ev'ry line!
Fancy and art in gay Petronius please,
The scholar's learning, with the courtier's ease.

In grave Quintilian's copious work, we find
The justest rules, and clearest method join'd:
Thus useful arms in magazines we place,
All rang'd in order, and dispos'd with grace,
But less to please the eye, than arm the hand,
Still fit for use, and ready at command.

Thee, bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire,
And bless their Critic with a Poet's fire.
An ardent Judge, who zealous in his trust,
With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just;
Whose own example strengthens all his laws;
And is himself that great Sublime he draws.

Thus long succeeding Critics justly reign'd,
Licence repress'd, and useful laws ordain'd.
Learning and Rome alike in empire grew;
And Arts still follow'd where her Eagles flew;
From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom,
And the same age saw Learning fall, and Rome.
With Tyranny, then Superstition join'd,
As that the body, this enslav'd the mind;
Much was believ'd, but little understood,
And to be dull was constru'd to be good;
A second deluge Learning thus o'er-run,
And the Monks finish'd what the Goths begun.

At length Erasmus, that great injur'd name,

(The glory of the Priesthood, and the shame!)
Stemm'd the wild torrent of a barb'rous age,
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.

But see! each Muse, in **Leo's** golden days,
Starts from her trance, and trims her wither'd bays,
Rome's ancient Genius, o'er its ruins spread,
Shakes off the dust, and rears his rev'rend head.
Then Sculpture and her sister-arts revive;
Stones leap'd to form, and rocks began to live;
With sweeter notes each rising Temple rung;
A Raphael painted, and a Vida sung.
Immortal Vida: on whose honour'd brow
The Poet's bays and Critic's ivy grow:
Cremona now shal ever boast thy name,
As next in place to Mantua, next in fame!

But soon by impious arms from Latium chas'd,
Their ancient bounds the banish'd Muses pass'd;
Thence Arts o'er all the northern world advance,
But Critic-learning flourish'd most in France:
The rules a nation, born to serve, obeys;
And Boileau still in right of Horace sways.
But we, brave Britons, foreign laws despis'd,
And kept unconquer'd, and unciviliz'd;
Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold,
We still defy'd the Romans, as of old.
Yet some there were, among the sounder few
Of those who less presum'd, and better knew,
Who durst assert the juster ancient cause,
And here restor'd Wit's fundamental laws.
Such was the Muse, whose rules and practice tell,
"Nature's chief Master-piece is writing well."

Such was Roscommon, not more learn'd than good,
With manners gen'rous as his noble blood;
To him the wit of Greece and Rome was known,

And ev'ry author's merit, but his own.
Such late was Walsh — the Muse's judge and friend,
Who justly knew to blame or to commend;
To failings mild, but zealous for desert;
The clearest head, and the sincerest heart.
This humble praise, lamented shade! receive,
This praise at least a grateful Muse may give:
The Muse, whose early voice you taught to sing,
Prescrib'd her heights, and prun'd her tender wing,
(Her guide now lost) no more attempts to rise,
But in low numbers short excursions tries:
Content, if hence th' unlearn'd their wants may view,
The learn'd reflect on what before they knew:
Careless of censure, nor too fond of fame;
Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame,
Averse alike to flatter, or offend;
Not free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend.

Contents

An Essay on Man, Epistle I

To H. St. John Lord Bolingbroke

The Design

Having proposed to write some pieces on Human Life and Manners, such as (to use my Lord Bacon's expression) *come home to Men's Business and Bosoms*, I thought it more satisfactory to begin with considering *Man* in the abstract, his *Nature* and his *State*; since, to prove any moral duty, to enforce any moral precept, or to examine the perfection or imperfection of any creature whatsoever, it is necessary first to know what *condition* and *relation* it is placed in, and what is the proper end and purpose of its *being*.

The science of Human Nature is, like all other sciences, reduced to a *few clear points*: There are not *many certain truths* in this world. It is therefore in the Anatomy of the mind as in that of the Body; more good will accrue to mankind by attending to the large, open, and perceptible parts, than by studying too much such finer nerves and vessels, the conformations and uses of which will for ever escape our observation. The *disputes* are all upon these last, and, I will venture to say, they have less sharpened the *wits* than the *hearts* of men against each other, and have diminished the practice, more than advanced the theory of Morality. If I could flatter myself that this Essay has any merit, it is in steering betwixt the extremes of doctrines seemingly opposite, in passing over terms utterly unintelligible, and in forming a *temperate* yet not *inconsistent*, and a *short* yet not *imperfect* system of Ethics.

This I might have done in prose, but I chose verse, and even rhyme, for two reasons. The one will appear obvious; that principles, maxims, or precepts so written, both strike the reader more strongly at first, and are more easily retained by him afterwards: The other may seem odd, but is true, I found I could express them more *shortly* this way than in prose itself; and nothing is more certain, than that much of the *force* as well as *grace* of arguments or instructions, depends on their *conciseness*. I was unable to treat this part of my subject more in *detail*, without becoming dry and tedious; or more *poetically*, without sacrificing perspicuity to ornament, without wandring from the precision, or breaking the chain of reasoning: If any man can unite all these without diminution of any of them, I freely confess he will compass a thing above my capacity.

What is now published, is only to be considered as a *general Map* of **Man**, marking out no more than the *greater parts*, their *extent*, their *limits*, and their *connection*, and leaving the particular to be more fully delineated in the charts which are to follow. Consequently, these Epistles in their progress (if I have health and leisure to make any progress) will be less dry, and more susceptible of poetical ornament. I am here only opening the *fountains*, and clearing the passage. To deduce the *rivers*, to follow them in their course, and to observe their effects, may be a task more agreeable.

P.

Contents

Argument of Epistle I

Of the Nature and State of Man, with respect to the **Universe**.

Of Man *in the abstract*.

section	**lines**	***topic***
I	17 &c.	*That we can judge only with regard to our* own system, *being ignorant of the* relations *of systems and things.*
II	35 &c.	*That Man is not to be deemed* imperfect, *but a Being suited to his* place *and* rank *in the creation, agreeable to the* general Order *of things, and conformable to* Ends *and* Relations *to him unknown.*
III	77 &c.	*That it is partly upon his* ignorance *of* future *events, and partly upon the* hope *of a* future *state, that all his happiness in the present depends.*
IV	109 &c.	*The* pride *of aiming at more knowledge, and pretending to more Perfections, the cause of Man's error and misery. The* impiety *of putting*

		himself in the place of God, *and judging of the fitness or unfitness, perfection or imperfection, justice or injustice of his dispensations.*
V	131 &c.	*The* absurdity *of conceiting himself the* final cause *of the creation, or expecting that perfection in the* moral *world, which is not in the* natural.
VI	173 &c.	*The* unreasonableness *of his complaints against* Providence, *while on the one hand he demands the Perfections of the Angels, and on the other the bodily qualifications of the Brutes; though, to possess any of the* sensitive faculties *in a higher degree, would render him miserable.*
VII	207	*That throughout the whole visible world, an universal* order *and* gradation *in the sensual and mental faculties is observed, which causes a* subordination *of creature to creature, and of all creatures to Man. The gradations of* sense, instinct, thought, reflection, reason; *that Reason alone countervails fill the other faculties.*
VIII	233	*How much further this* order *and* subordination *of living creatures may extend, above and below us; were any part of which broken, not that part*

		only, but the whole connected creation *must be destroyed.*
IX	250	*The* extravagance, madness, *and* pride *of such a desire.*
X	281→end	*The consequence of all, the* absolute submission *due to Providence, both as to our* present *and* future state.

Contents

Epistle I

Awake, my **St. John**! leave all meaner things
To low ambition, and the pride of Kings.
Let us (since Life can little more supply
Than just to look about us and to die)
Expatiate free o'er all this scene of Man;
A mighty maze! but not without a plan;

A Wild, where weeds and
flow'rs promiscuous shoot;
Or Garden, tempting with
forbidden fruit.
Together let us beat this ample
field,
Try what the open, what the
covert yield;
The latent tracts, the giddy
heights, explore
Of all who blindly creep, or
sightless soar;
Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly
as it flies,
And catch the Manners living as
they rise;
Laugh where we must, be
candid where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God
to Man.

I

Say first, of God above, or Man
below,
What can we reason, but from
what we know?
Of Man, what see we but his
station here,
From which to reason, or to
which refer?
Thro' worlds unnumber'd tho'
the God be known,
'Tis ours to trace him only in
our own.
He, who thro' vast immensity
can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose

one universe,
Observe how system into
system runs,
What other planets circle other
suns,
What vary'd Being peoples
ev'ry star,
May tell why Heav'n has made
us as we are.
But of this frame the bearings,
and the ties,
The strong connexions, nice
dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy
pervading soul
Look'd thro'? or can a part
contain the whole?

Is the great chain, that draws
all to agree,
And drawn supports, upheld
by God, or thee?

II

Presumptuous Man! the
reason wouldst thou find,
Why form'd so weak, so little,
and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder
reason guess,
Why form'd no weaker,
blinder, and no less?
Ask of thy mother earth, why
oaks are made
Taller or stronger than the
weeds they shade?
Or ask of yonder argent fields

above,
Why **Jove's** satellites are less
than **Jove**?

Of Systems possible, if 'tis
confest
That Wisdom infinite must
form the best,
Where all must full or not
coherent be,
And all that rises, rise in due
degree;
Then, in the scale of reas'ning
life, 'tis plain,
There must be, somewhere,
such a rank as Man:
And all the question (wrangle
e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has plac'd
him wrong?

Respecting Man, whatever
wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative
to all.
In human works, tho' labour'd
on with pain,
A thousand movements
scarce one purpose gain;
In God's, one single can its
end produce;
Yet serves to second too some
other use.
So Man, who here seems
principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some
sphere unknown,

Touches some wheel, or
verges to some goal;
'Tis but a part we see, and not
a whole.

When the proud steed shall
know why Man restrains
His fiery course, or drives him
o'er the plains:
When the dull Ox, why now
he breaks the clod,
Is now a victim, and now
Ægypt's God:
Then shall Man's pride and
dulness comprehend
His actions', passions',
being's, use and end;
Why doing, suff'ring, check'd,
impell'd; and why
This hour a slave, the next a
deity.

Then say not Man's imperfect,
Heav'n in fault;
Say rather, Man's as perfect as
he ought:
His knowledge measur'd to
his state and place;
His time a moment, and a
point his space.
If to be perfect in a certain
sphere,
What matter, soon or late, or
here or there?
The blest to day is as
completely so,,

As who began a thousand
years ago.

III

Heav'n from all creatures
hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescrib'd,
their present state:
From brutes what men,
from men what spirits
know:
Or who could suffer Being
here below?
The lamb thy riot dooms to
bleed to-day,
Had he thy Reason, would
he skip and play?
Pleas'd to the last, he crops
the flow'ry food,
And licks the hand just
rais'd to shed his blood.
Oh blindness to the future!
kindly giv'n,
That each may fill the circle
mark'd by Heav'n:
Who sees with equal eye, as
God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow
fall,
Atoms or systems into ruin
hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst,
and now a world.

Hope humbly then: with
trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher

Death; and God adore.
What future bliss, he gives
not thee to know,
But gives that Hope to be
thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the
human breast:
Man never Is, but always
To be blest:
The soul, uneasy and
confin'd from home,
Rests and expatiates in a
life to come.

Lo, the poor Indian! whose
untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, or
hears him in the wind:
His soul, proud Science
never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk, or
milky way;
Yet simple Nature to his
hope has giv'n,
Behind the cloud-topt hill,
an humbler heav'n;
Some safer world in depth
of woods embrac'd,
Some happier island in the
watry waste,
Where slaves once more
their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no
Christians thirst for gold.
To Be, contents his natural
desire,
He asks no Angel's wing, no

Seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that
equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear
him company.

IV

Go, wiser thou! and, in thy
scale of sense,
Weight thy Opinion against
Providence;
Call imperfection what thou
fancy'st such,
Say, here he gives too little,
there too much:
Destroy all Creatures for thy
sport or gust,
Yet cry, If Man's unhappy,
God's unjust;
If Man alone engross not
Heav'n's high care,
Alone made perfect here,
immortal there:
Snatch from his hand the
balance and the rod,
Re-judge his justice, be the
God of God.
In Pride, in reas'ning Pride,
our error lies;
All quit their sphere, and
rush into the skies.

Pride still is aiming at the
blest abodes,
Men would be Angels,
Angels would be Gods.
Aspiring to be Gods, if

Angels fell,
Aspiring to be Angels, Men rebel:
And who but wishes to invert the laws
Of **Order**, sins against th' Eternal Cause.

V

Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine,
Earth for whose use? Pride answers, "'Tis for mine:
For me kind Nature wakes her genial Pow'r,
Suckles each herb, and spreads out ev'ry flow'r;
Annual for me, the grape, the rose renew
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;
For me, the mine a thousand treasures brings;
For me, health gushes from a thousand springs;
Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise;
My foot-stool earth, my canopy the skies."

But errs not Nature from his gracious end,
From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep
Towns to one grave, whole

nations to the deep?
"No, ('tis reply'd) the first
Almighty Cause
Acts not by partial, but by
gen'ral laws;
Th' exceptions few; some
change since all began:
And what created perfect?" —
Why then Man?
If the great end be human
Happiness,
Then Nature deviates; and
can Man do less?
As much that end a constant
course requires
Of show'rs and sun-shine, as
of Man's desires;
As much eternal springs and
cloudless skies,
As Men for ever temp'rate,
calm, and wise.
If plagues or earthquakes
break not Heav'n's design,
Why then a Borgia, or a
Catiline?
Who knows but he, whose
hand the lightning forms,
Who heaves old Ocean, and
who wings the storms;
Pours fierce Ambition in a
Caesar's mind,
Or turns young Ammon loose
to scourge mankind?
From pride, from pride, our
very reas'ning springs;
Account for moral, as for
nat'ral things:

Why charge we Heav'n in
those, in these acquit?
In both, to reason right is to
submit.

Better for Us, perhaps, it
might appear,
Were there all harmony, all
virtue here;
That never air or ocean felt
the wind;
That never passion
discompos'd the mind.
But **All** subsists by elemental
strife;
And Passions are the
elements of Life.
The gen'ral **Order**, since the
whole began,
Is kept in Nature, and is kept
in Man.

VI

What would this Man? Now
upward will he soar,
And little less than Angel,
would be more;
Now looking downwards,
just as griev'd appears
To want the strength of
bulls, the fur of bears.
Made for his use all
creatures if he call,
Say what their use, had he
the pow'rs of all?
Nature to these, without
profusion, kind,

The proper organs, proper
pow'rs assign'd;
Each seeming want
compensated of course,
Here with degrees of
swiftness, there of force;
All in exact proportion to
the state;
Nothing to add, and
nothing to abate.
Each beast, each insect,
happy in its own:
Is Heav'n unkind to Man,
and Man alone?
Shall he alone, whom
rational we call,
Be pleas'd with nothing, if
not bless'd with all?

The bliss of Man (could
Pride that blessing find)
Is not to act or think
beyond mankind;
No pow'rs of body or of soul
to share,
But what his nature and his
state can bear.
Why has not Man a
microscopic eye?
For this plain reason, Man
is not a Fly.
Say what the use, were finer
optics giv'n,
T' inspect a mite, not
comprehend the heav'n?
Or touch, if tremblingly
alive all o'er,

To smart and agonize at
every pore?
Or quick effluvia darting
thro' the brain,
Die of a rose in aromatic
pain?
If Nature thunder'd in his
op'ning ears,
And stunn'd him with the
music of the spheres,
How would he wish that
Heav'n had left him still
The whisp'ring Zephyr, and
the purling rill?
Who finds not Providence
all good and wise,
Alike in what it gives, and
what denies?

VII

Far as Creation's ample
range extends,
The scale of sensual,
mental pow'rs ascends:
Mark how it mounts, to
Man's imperial race,
From the green myriads in
the peopled grass:
What modes of sight
betwixt each wide
extreme,
The mole's dim curtain,
and the lynx's beam:
Of smell, the headlong
lioness between,
And hound sagacious on
the tainted green:

Of hearing, from the life
that fills the Flood,
To that which warbles
thro' the vernal wood:
The spider's touch, how
exquisitely fine!
Feels at each thread, and
lives along the line:
In the nice bee, what sense
so subtly true
From pois'nous herbs
extracts the healing dew?
How Instinct varies in the
grov'lling swine,
Compar'd, half-reas'ning
elephant, with thine!
'Twixt that, and Reason,
what a nice barrier,
For ever sep'rate, yet for
ever near!
Remembrance and
Reflection how ally'd;
What thin partitions Sense
from Thought divide:
And Middle natures, how
they long to join,
Yet never pass th'
insuperable line!
Without this just
gradation, could they be
Subjected, these to those,
or all to thee?
The pow'rs of all subdu'd
by thee alone,
Is not thy Reason all these
pow'rs in one?

VIII

See, thro' this air, this
ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick, and
bursting into birth.
Above, how high,
progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how
deep extend below!
Vast chain of Being!
which from God began,
Natures ethereal,
human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect,
what no eye can see,
No glass can reach; from
Infinite to thee,
From thee to Nothing. —
On superior pow'rs
Were we to press,
inferior might on ours:
Or in the full creation
leave a void,
Where, one step broken,
the great scale's
destroy'd:
From Nature's chain
whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten thousandth,
breaks the chain alike.

And, if each system in
gradation roll
Alike essential to th'
amazing Whole,
The least confusion but
in one, not all

That system only, but the
Whole must fall.
Let Earth unbalanc'd
from her orbit fly,
Planets and Suns run
lawless thro' the sky;
Let ruling Angels from
their spheres be hurl'd,
Being on Being wreck'd,
and world on world;
Heav'n's whole
foundations to their
centre nod,
And Nature tremble to
the throne of God.
All this dread **Order**
break — for whom? for
thee?
Vile worm! — Oh
Madness! Pride!
Impiety!

IX

What if the foot, ordain'd
the dust to tread,
Or hand, to toil, aspir'd to
be the head?
What if the head, the eye,
or ear repin'd
To serve mere engines to
the ruling Mind?
Just as absurd for any part
to claim
To be another, in this
gen'ral frame:
Just as absurd, to mourn
the tasks or pains,

The great directing **Mind**
of **All** ordains.

All are but parts of one
stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and
God the soul;
That, chang'd thro' all, and
yet in all the same;
Great in the earth, as in th'
ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun,
refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and
blossoms in the trees,
Lives thro' all life, extends
thro' all extent,
Spreads undivided,
operates unspent;
Breathes in our soul,
informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair
as heart:
As full, as perfect, in vile
Man that mourns,
As the rapt Seraph that
adores and burns:
To him no high, no low, no
great, no small;
He fills, he bounds,
connects, and equals all.

X Cease then, nor **Order**
Imperfection name:
Our proper bliss depends on
what we blame.

Know thy own point: This kind, this due degree
Of blindness, weakness, Heav'n bestows on thee.
Submit. — In this, or any other sphere,
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:
Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow'r,
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;
All Discord, Harmony not understood;
All partial Evil, universal Good:
And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
One truth is clear,
Whatever Is, Is Right.

Contents

Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot

Advertisement to the first publication of this *Epistle*

This paper is a sort of bill of complaint, begun many years since, and drawn up by snatches, as the several occasions offered. I had no thoughts of publishing it, till it pleased some Persons of Rank and Fortune (the Authors of *Verses to the Imitator of Horace*, and of an *Epistle to a Doctor of Divinity from a Nobleman at Hampton Court*) to attack, in a very extraordinary manner, not only my Writings (of which, being public, the Public is judge), but my P*erson, Morals*, and *Family*, whereof, to those who know me not, a truer information may be requisite. Being divided between the necessity to say something of *myself*, and my own laziness to undertake so awkward a task, I thought it the shortest way to put the last hand to this Epistle. If it have any thing pleasing, it will be that by which I am most desirous to please, the *Truth* and the *Sentiment*; and if any thing offensive, it will be only to those I am least sorry to offend, *the vicious* or *the ungenerous*.

Many will know their own pictures in it, there being not a circumstance but what is true; but I have, for the most part, spared their *Names*, and they may escape being laughed at, if they please.

I would have some of them know, it was owing to the request of the learned and candid Friend to whom it is inscribed, that I make not as free use of theirs as they have done of mine. However, I shall have this advantage, and honour, on my side, that whereas, by their proceeding, any abuse may be directed at any man, no injury can possibly be done by mine, since a nameless character can never be found out, but by its *truth*

and *likeness*.

P.

Contents

Epistle to Dr Arnuthnot

P. shut, shut the door, good John! fatigu'd, I said,
Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.
The Dog-star rages! nay't is past a doubt,
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:
Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,
They rave, recite, and madden round the land.

What walls can guard me, or what shade can hide?
They pierce my thickets, thro' my Grot they glide;
By land, by water, they renew the charge;
They stop the chariot, and they board the barge.
No place is sacred, not the Church is free;
Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me;
Then from the Mint walks forth the Man of rhyme,
Happy to catch me just at Dinner-time.

Is there a Parson, much bemus'd in beer,
A maudlin Poetess, a rhyming Peer,
A Clerk, foredoom'd his father's soul to cross,
Who pens a Stanza, when he should *engross*?
Is there, who, lock'd from ink and paper, scrawls
With desp'rate charcoal round his darken'd walls?
All fly to **Twit'nam**, and in humble strain

Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.
Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the Laws,
Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause:
Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,
And curses Wit, and Poetry, and Pope.

Friend to my Life! (which did not you prolong,
The world had wanted many an idle song)
What *Drop* or *Nostrum* can this plague remove?
Or which must end me, a Fool's wrath or love?
A dire dilemma! either way I'm sped,
If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.
Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I!
Who can't be silent, and who will not lie.
To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace,
And to be grave, exceeds all Pow'r of face.
I sit with sad civility, I read
With honest anguish, and an aching head;
And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,
This saving counsel, "Keep your piece nine years."

"Nine years!" cries he, who high in Drury-lane,
Lull'd by soft Zephyrs thro' the broken pane,
Rhymes ere he wakes, and prints before *Term* ends,
Oblig'd by hunger, and request of friends:
"The piece, you think, is incorrect? why, take it,
I'm all submission, what you'd have it, make it."

Three things another's modest wishes bound,
My Friendship, and a Prologue, and ten pound.

Pitholeon sends to me: "You know his Grace
I want a Patron; ask him for a Place."
"Pitholeon libell'd me," — "but here's a letter
Informs you, Sir, 't was when he knew no better.
Dare you refuse him? Curll invites to dine",
"He'll write a *Journal*, or he'll turn Divine."

Bless me! a packet. — "'Tis a stranger sues,
A Virgin Tragedy, an Orphan Muse."
If I dislike it, "Furies, death and rage!"
If I approve, "Commend it to the Stage."
There (thank my stars) my whole Commission ends,
The Play'rs and I are, luckily, no friends,
Fir'd that the house reject him, "'Sdeath I'll print it,
And shame the fools — Your Int'rest, Sir, with Lintot!"
'Lintot, dull rogue! will think your price too much:'
"Not, Sir, if you revise it, and retouch."
All my demurs but double his Attacks;
At last he whispers, "Do; and we go snacks."
Glad of a quarrel, straight I clap the door,
Sir, let me see your works and you no more.

'Tis sung, when Midas' Ears began to spring,
(Midas, a sacred person and a king)
His very Minister who spy'd them first,
(Some say his Queen) was forc'd to speak, or burst.
And is not mine, my friend, a sorer case,
When ev'ry coxcomb perks them in my face?
A. Good friend, forbear! you deal in dang'rous things.
I'd never name Queens, Ministers, or Kings;
Keep close to Ears, and those let asses prick;
'Tis nothing — P. Nothing? if they bite and kick?
Out with it, **Dunciad**! let the secret pass,
That secret to each fool, that he's an Ass:
The truth once told (and wherefore should we lie?)
The Queen of Midas slept, and so may I.

You think this cruel? take it for a rule,
No creature smarts so little as a fool.
Let peals of laughter, Codrus! round thee break,
Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty crack:
Pit, Box, and gall'ry in convulsions hurl'd,
Thou stand'st unshook amidst a bursting world.

Who shames a Scribbler? break one cobweb thro',
He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew:
Destroy his fib or sophistry, in vain,
The creature's at his dirty work again,
Thron'd in the centre of his thin designs,
Proud of a vast extent of flimsy lines!
Whom have I hurt? has Poet yet, or Peer
Lost the arch'd eye-brow, or Parnassian sneer?

* * * * *

Does not one table Bavius still admit?
Still to one Bishop Philips seem a wit?
Still Sappho — A. Hold! for God's sake — you 'll offend,
No Names! — be calm! — learn prudence of a friend!
I too could write, and I am twice as tall;
But foes like these — P. One Flatt'rer's worse than all.
Of all mad creatures, if the learn'd are right,
It is the slaver kills, and not the bite.
A fool quite angry is quite innocent:
Alas! 'tis ten times worse when they *repent*.

One dedicates in high heroic prose,
And ridicules beyond a hundred foes:
One from all Grubstreet will my fame defend,
And more abusive, calls himself my friend.
This prints my *Letters*, that expects a bribe,
And others roar aloud, "Subscribe, subscribe."

There are, who to my person pay their court:
I cough like *Horace*, and, tho' lean, am short,
Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high,
Such *Ovid's* nose, and "Sir! you have an Eye" —
Go on, obliging creatures, make me see
All that disgrac'd my Betters, met in me.
Say for my comfort, languishing in bed,
"Just so immortal *Maro* held his head:"

And when I die, be sure you let me know
Great *Homer* died three thousand years ago.

Why did I write? what sin to me unknown
Dipt me in ink, my parents', or my own?
As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.
I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke, no father disobey'd.
The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not Wife,
To help me thro' this long disease, my Life,
To second, **Arbuthnot**! thy Art and Care,
And teach the Being you preserv'd, to bear.

But why then publish? *Granville* the polite,
And knowing *Walsh*, would tell me I could write;
Well-natur'd *Garth* inflam'd with early praise;
And *Congreve* lov'd, and *Swift* endur'd my lays;
The courtly *Talbot, Somers, Sheffield*, read;
Ev'n mitred *Rochester* would nod the head,
And *St. John's* self (great *Dryden's* friends before)
With open arms receiv'd one Poet more.
Happy my studies, when by these approv'd!
Happier their author, when by these belov'd!
From these the world will judge of men and books,
Not from the *Burnets, Oldmixons*, and *Cookes*.

Soft were my numbers; who could take offence,
While pure Description held the place of Sense?
Like gentle *Fanny's* was my flow'ry theme,
A painted mistress, or a purling stream.
Yet then did *Gildon* draw his venal quill; —
I wish'd the man a dinner, and sat still.
Yet then did *Dennis* rave in furious fret;
I never answer'd, — I was not in debt.
If want provok'd, or madness made them print,
I wag'd no war with *Bedlam* or the *Mint*.

Did some more sober Critic come abroad;
If wrong, I smil'd; if right, I kiss'd the rod.
Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence,
And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.
Commas and points they set exactly right,
And 'twere a sin to rob them of their mite.
Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel grac'd these ribalds,
From slashing *Bentley* down to pidling *Tibalds*:
Each wight, who reads not, and but scans and spells,
Each Word-catcher, that lives on syllables,
Ev'n such small Critics some regard may claim,
Preserv'd in *Milton's* or in *Shakespeare's* name.
Pretty! in amber to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms!
The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there.

Were others angry: I excus'd them too;
Well might they rage, I gave them but their due.
A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find;
But each man's secret standard in his mind,
That Casting-weight pride adds to emptiness,
This, who can gratify? for who can *guess?*
The Bard whom pilfer'd Pastorals renown,
Who turns a Persian tale for half a Crown,
Just writes to make his barrenness appear,
And strains, from hard-bound brains, eight lines a year;
He, who still wanting, tho' he lives on theft,
Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left:
And He, who now to sense, now nonsense leaning,
Means not, but blunders round about a meaning:
And He, whose fustian's so sublimely bad,
It is not Poetry, but prose run mad:
All these, my modest Satire bade *translate*,
And own'd that nine such Poets made a *Tate*.
How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe!

And swear, not **Addison** himself was safe.

Peace to all such! but were there One whose fires
True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires;
Blest with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne.
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend.

A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend;
Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd,
And so obliging, that he ne'er oblig'd;
Like *Cato*, give his little Senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While Wits and Templars ev'ry sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise: —
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?

What tho' my Name stood rubric on the walls
Or plaister'd posts, with claps, in capitals?
Or smoking forth, a hundred hawkers' load,5
On wings of winds came flying all abroad?
I sought no homage from the Race that write;
I kept, like Asian Monarchs, from their sight:
Poems I heeded (now be-rhym'd so long)
No more than thou, great George! a birth-day song.
I ne'er with wits or witlings pass'd my days,
To spread about the itch of verse and praise;
Nor like a puppy, daggled thro' the town,

To fetch and carry sing-song up and down;
Nor at Rehearsals sweat, and mouth'd, and cry'd,
With handkerchief and orange at my side;
But sick of fops, and poetry, and prate,
To Bufo left the whole Castalian state.

Proud as Apollo on his forked hill,
Sat full-blown Bufo, puff'd by ev'ry quill;
Fed with soft Dedication all day long.
Horace and he went hand in hand in song.
His Library (where busts of Poets dead
And a true Pindar stood without a head,)
Receiv'd of wits an undistinguish'd race,
Who first his judgment ask'd, and then a place:
Much they extoll'd his pictures, much his seat,
And flatter'd ev'ry day, and some days eat:
Till grown more frugal in his riper days,
He paid some bards with port, and some with praise;
To some a dry rehearsal saw assign'd,
And others (harder still) he paid in kind.
Dryden alone (what wonder?) came not nigh,
Dryden alone escap'd this judging eye:
But still the *Great* have kindness in reserve,
He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve.

May some choice patron bless each gray goose quill!
May ev'ry *Bavius* have his *Bufo* still!
So, when a Statesman wants a day's defence,
Or Envy holds a whole week's war with Sense,
Or simple pride for flatt'ry makes demands,
May dunce by dunce be whistled off my hands!
Blest be the *Great!* for those they take away.
And those they left me; for they left me Gay;
Left me to see neglected Genius bloom,
Neglected die, and tell it on his tomb:
Of all thy blameless life the sole return
My Verse, and Queenb'ry weeping o'er thy urn.

Oh let me live my own, and die so too!
(To live and die is all I have to do:)
Maintain a Poet's dignity and ease,
And see what friends, and read what books I please;
Above a Patron, tho' I condescend
Sometimes to call a minister my friend.
I was not born for Courts or great affairs;
I pay my debts, believe, and say my pray'rs;
Can sleep without a Poem in my head;
Nor know, if *Dennis* be alive or dead.

Why am I ask'd what next shall see the light?
Heav'ns! was I born for nothing but to write?
Has Life no joys for me? or, (to be grave)
Have I no friend to serve, no soul to save?
"I found him close with *Swift*" — 'Indeed? no doubt,'
(Cries prating *Balbus*) 'something will come out.'
'Tis all in vain, deny it as I will.
'No, such a Genius never can lie still;'
And then for mine obligingly mistakes
The first Lampoon Sir *Will*, or *Bubo* makes.
Poor guiltless I! and can I choose but smile,
When ev'ry Coxcomb knows me by my *Style*?

Curst be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe,
Give Virtue scandal, Innocence a fear,
Or from the soft-eyed Virgin steal a tear!
But he who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace,
Insults fall'n worth, or Beauty in distress,
Who loves a Lie, lame slander helps about,
Who writes a Libel, or who copies out:
That Fop, whose pride affects a patron's name,
Yet absent, wounds an author's honest fame:
Who can *your* merit *selfishly* approve.
And show the *sense* of it without the *love*;

Who has the vanity to call you friend,
Yet wants the honour, injur'd, to defend;
Who tells whate'er you think, whate'er you say,
And, if he lie not, must at least betray:
Who to the *Dean*, and *silver bell* can swear,
And sees at *Canons* what was never there;
Who reads, but with a lust to misapply,
Make Satire a Lampoon, and Fiction, Lie.
A lash like mine no honest man shall dread,
But all such babbling blockheads in his stead.

Let *Sporus* tremble — A. What? that thing of silk,
Sporus, that mere white curd of Ass's milk?
Satire or sense, alas! can *Sporus* feel?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
P. Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;
Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys:
So well-bred spaniels civilly delight
In mumbling of the game they dare not bite.
Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
As shallow streams run dimpling all the way.
Whether in florid impotence he speaks,
And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks;
Or at the ear of *Eve*, familiar Toad,
Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad,
In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,
Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies.
(His wit all see-saw, between *that* and *this*,
(Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,
(And he himself one vile Antithesis.
Amphibious thing! that acting either part,
The trifling head or the corrupted heart,
Fop at the toilet, flatt'rer at the board,
Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord.
Eve's tempter thus the Rabbins have exprest,

A Cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;
Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust;
Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.

Not Fortune's worshipper, nor fashion's fool,
Not Lucre's madman, nor Ambition's tool,
Not proud, nor servile; — be one Poet's praise,
That, if he pleas'd, he pleas'd by manly ways:
That Flatt'ry, ev'n to Kings, he held a shame,
And thought a Lie in verse or prose the same.
That not in Fancy's maze he wander'd long,
But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song:
That not for Fame, but Virtue's better end,
He stood the furious foe, the timid friend,
The damning critic, half approving wit,
The coxcomb hit, or fearing to be hit;
Laugh'd at the loss of friends he never had,
The dull, the proud, the wicked, and the mad;
The distant threats of vengeance on his head,
The blow unfelt, the tear he never shed;
The tale reviv'd, the lie so oft o'erthrown,
Th' imputed trash, and dulness not his own;
The morals blacken'd when the writings scape,
The libell'd person, and the pictur'd shape;
Abuse, on all he lov'd, or lov'd him, spread,
A friend in exile, or a father, dead;
The whisper, that to greatness still too near,
Perhaps, yet vibrates on his **Sov'reign's** ear: —
Welcome for thee, fair *Virtue*! all the past;
For thee, fair Virtue! welcome ev'n the *last*!
A. But why insult the poor, affront the great?
P. A knave's a knave, to me, in ev'ry state:
Alike my scorn, if he succeed or fail,
Sporus at court, or *Japhet* in a jail
A hireling scribbler, or a hireling peer,
Knight of the post corrupt, or of the shire;
If on a Pillory, or near a Throne,

He gain his Prince's ear, or lose his own.
Yet soft by nature, more a dupe than wit,
Sappho can tell you how this man was bit;
This dreaded Sat'rist *Dennis* will confess
Foe to his pride, but friend to his distress:
So humble, he has knock'd at *Tibbald's* door,
Has drunk with *Cibber*, nay has rhym'd for *Moore*.
Full ten years slander'd, did he once reply?
Three thousand suns went down on *Welsted's* lie.
To please a Mistress one aspers'd his life;
He lash'd him not, but let her be his wife.
Let *Budgel* charge low *Grubstreet* on his quill,
And write whate'er he pleas'd, except his Will;
Let the two *Curlls* of Town and Court, abuse
His father, mother, body, soul, and muse.
Yet why? that Father held it for a rule,
It was a sin to call our neighbour fool:
That harmless Mother thought no wife a whore:
Hear this, and spare his family, *James Moore!*
Unspotted names, and memorable long!
If there be force in Virtue, or in Song.

Of gentle blood (part shed in Honour's cause.
While yet in *Britain* Honour had applause)
Each parent sprung — A. What fortune, pray? — P. Their own,
And better got, than *Bestia's* from the throne.
Born to no Pride, inheriting no Strife,
Nor marrying Discord in a noble wife,
Stranger to civil and religious rage,
The good man walk'd innoxious thro' his age.
Nor Courts he saw, no suits would ever try,
Nor dar'd an Oath, nor hazarded a Lie.
Un-learn'd, he knew no schoolman's subtle art,
No language, but the language of the heart.
By Nature honest, by Experience wise,
Healthy by temp'rance, and by exercise;
His life, tho' long, to sickness past unknown,

His death was instant, and without a groan.
O grant me, thus to live, and thus to die!
Who sprung from Kings shall know less joy than I.

O Friend! may each domestic bliss be thine!
Be no unpleasing Melancholy mine:
Me, let the tender office long engage,
To rock the cradle of reposing Age,
With lenient arts extend a Mother's breath,
Make Languor smile, and smooth the bed of Death,
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
And keep a while one parent from the sky!
On cares like these if length of days attend,
May Heav'n, to bless those days, preserve my friend,
Preserve him social, cheerful, and serene,
And just as rich as when he serv'd a **Queen**.
A. Whether that blessing be deny'd or giv'n,
Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heav'n.

Contents

Ode on Solitude

Happy the man whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air,
In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

Blest, who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,
Together mixt; sweet recreation;
And Innocence, which most does please
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown,
Thus unlamented let me die,
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

Contents

The Descent of Dullness

from *The Dunciad*, Book IV.

In vain, in vain — the all-composing Hour
Resistless falls: the Muse obeys the Pow'r.
She comes! she comes! the sable Throne behold
Of *Night* primæval and of *Chaos* old!
Before her, *Fancy's* gilded clouds decay,
And all its varying Rain-bows die away.
Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.
As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
The sick'ning stars fade off th' ethereal plain;
As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand opprest,
Clos'd one by one to everlasting rest;
Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
Art after *Art* goes out, and all is Night.
See skulking *Truth* to her old cavern fled,
Mountains of Casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
Physic of *Metaphysic* begs defence,
And *Metaphysic* calls for aid on *Sense*!
See *Mystery* to *Mathematics* fly!
In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
And unawares *Morality* expires.
For *public* Flame, nor *private*, dares to shine;
Nor *human* Spark is left, nor Glimpse *divine*!

Lo! thy dread Empire, **Chaos**! is restor'd;
Light dies before thy uncreating word;
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,
And universal Darkness buries All.

Contents

Epitaph on Gay

In Westminster Abbey, 1732

Of Manners gentle, of Affections mild;
In Wit, a Man; Simplicity, a Child:
With native Humour temp'ring virtuous Rage,
Form'd to delight at once and lash the age:
Above Temptation, in a low Estate,
And uncorrupted, ev'n among the Great:
A safe Companion, and an easy Friend,
Unblam'd thro' Life, lamented in thy End.
These are Thy Honours! not that here thy Bust
Is mix'd with Heroes, or with Kings thy dust;
But that the Worthy and the Good shall say,
Striking their pensive bosoms — *Here* lies **Gay**.

Contents

Notes on *The Rape of the Lock*

Introduction

In 1711 Pope, who had just published his *Essay on Criticism*, was looking about for new worlds to conquer. A fortunate chance threw in his way a subject exactly suited to his tastes and powers. He seized upon it, dashed off his first sketch in less than a fortnight, and published it anonymously in a *Miscellany* issued by Lintot in 1712. But the theme had taken firm root in his mind. Dissatisfied with his first treatment of it, he determined, against the advice of the best critic of the day, to recast the work, and lift it from a mere society *jeu d'esprit* into an elaborate mock-heroic poem. He did so and won a complete success. Even yet, however, he was not completely satisfied and from time to time he added a touch to his work until he finally produced the finished picture which we know as *The Rape of the Lock*. As it stands, it is an almost flawless masterpiece, a brilliant picture and light-hearted mockery of the gay society of Queen Anne's day, on the whole the most satisfactory creation of Pope's genius, and, perhaps, the best example of the mock-heroic in any literature.

The occasion which gave rise to *The Rape of the Lock* has been so often related that it requires only a brief restatement. Among the Catholic families of Queen Anne's day, who formed a little society of their own, Miss Arabella Fermor was a reigning belle. In a youthful frolic which overstepped the bounds of propriety Lord Petre, a young nobleman of her acquaintance, cut off a lock of her hair. The lady was offended, the two families took up the quarrel, a lasting estrangement, possibly even a duel, was threatened. At this juncture a common friend of the two

families, a Mr. Caryll, nephew of a well-known Jacobite exile for whom he is sometimes mistaken, suggested to Pope "to write a poem to make a jest of it," and so kill the quarrel with laughter. Pope consented, wrote his first draft of *The Rape of the Lock*, and passed it about in manuscript. Pope says himself that it had its effect in the two families; certainly nothing more is heard of the feud. How Miss Fermor received the poem is a little uncertain. Pope complains in a letter written some months after the poem had appeared in print that "the celebrated lady is offended." According to Johnson she liked the verses well enough to show them to her friends, and a niece of hers said years afterward that Mr. Pope's praise had made her aunt "very troublesome and conceited." It is not improbable that Belinda was both flattered and offended. Delighted with the praise of her beauty she may none the less have felt called upon to play the part of the offended lady when the poem got about and the ribald wits of the day began to read into it double meanings which reflected upon her reputation. To soothe her ruffled feelings Pope dedicated the second edition of the poem to her in a delightful letter in which he thanked her for having permitted the publication of the first edition to forestall an imperfect copy offered to a bookseller, declared that the character of Belinda resembled her in nothing but in beauty, and affirmed that he could never hope that his poem should pass through the world half so uncensured as she had done. It would seem that the modern critics who have undertaken to champion Miss Fermor against what they are pleased to term the revolting behavior of the poet are fighting a needless battle. A pretty girl who would long since have been forgotten sat as an unconscious model to a great poet; he made her the central figure in a brilliant picture and rendered her name immortal. That is the whole story, and when carping critics begin to search the poem for the improprieties of conduct to which they say Pope alluded, one has but to answer in Pope's own words.

> If to her share some female errors fall,
> Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.

Pope's statement in the dedication that he had been forced into publishing the first draft of the poem before his design of enlarging it was half executed is probably to be taken, like many of his statements, with a sufficient grain of salt. Pope had a curious habit of protesting that he was forced into publishing his letters, poems, and other trifles, merely to forestall the appearance of unauthorized editions. It is more likely that it was the undoubted success of *The Rape of the Lock* in its first form which gave him the idea of working up the sketch into a complete mock-heroic poem.

Examples of such a poem were familiar enough to Pope. Not to go back to the pseudo-Homeric mock epic which relates the battle of the frogs and mice, Vida in Italy and Boileau in France, with both of whom Pope, as the *Essay on Criticism* shows, was well acquainted, had done work of this kind. Vida's description of the game of chess in his *Scacchia Ludus* certainly gave him the model for the game of ombre in the third canto of *The Rape of the Lock*; Boileau's *Lutrin* probably suggested to him the idea of using the mock-heroic for the purposes of satire.

Now it was a dogma of the critical creed of the day, which Pope devoutly accepted, that every epic must have a well-recognized "machinery." Machinery, as he kindly explained to Miss Fermor, was a "term invented by the critics to signify that part which the deities, angels, or demons are made to act in a poem," in short for the whole supernatural element. Such machinery was quite wanting in the first draft of the Rape; it must be supplied if the poem was to be a true epic, even of the comic kind. And the machinery must be of a nature which would lend itself to the light satiric tone of the poem. What was it to be? The employment of what we may call Christian machinery, the angels and devils of Tasso and Milton, was, of course, out of the question. The employment of the classic machinery was almost as impossible. It would have been hard for such an admirer of the classics as Pope to have taken the deities of Olympus otherwise than seriously. And even if he had been able to treat them humorously, the humor would have been a form of burlesque quite

at variance with what he had set out to accomplish. For Pope's purpose, springing naturally from the occasion which set him to writing the *Rape*, was not to burlesque what was naturally lofty by exhibiting it in a degraded light, but to show the true littleness of the trivial by treating it in a grandiose and mock-heroic fashion, to make the quarrel over the stolen lock ridiculous by raising it to the plane of the epic contest before the walls of Troy.

In his perplexity a happy thought, little less in fact than an inspiration of genius, came to Pope. He had been reading a book by a clever French abbé treating in a satiric fashion of the doctrines of the so-called Rosicrucians, in particular of their ideas of elemental spirits and the influence of these spirits upon human affairs. Here was the machinery he was looking for made to his hand. There would be no burlesque in introducing the Rosicrucian sylphs and gnomes into a mock-heroic poem, for few people, certainly not the author of the *Comte de Gabalis*, took them seriously. Yet the widespread popularity of this book, to say nothing of the existence of certain Rosicrucian societies, had rendered their names familiar to the society for which Pope wrote. He had but to weave them into the action of his poem, and the brilliant little sketch of society was transformed into a true mock-epic.

The manner in which this interweaving was accomplished is one of the most satisfactory evidences of Pope's artistic genius. He was proud of it himself. "The making the machinery, and what was published before, hit so well together, is," he told Spencer, "I think, one of the greatest proofs of judgment of anything I ever did." And he might well be proud. Macaulay, in a well-known passage, has pointed out how seldom in the history of literature such a recasting of a poem has been successfully accomplished. But Pope's revision of *The Rape of the Lock* was so successful that the original form was practically done away with. No one reads it now but professed students of the literature of Queen Anne's time. And so artfully has the new matter been woven into the old that if the recasting of *The Rape of the Lock* were not a commonplace even in

school histories of English literature, not one reader in a hundred would suspect that the original sketch had been revised and enlarged to more than twice its length. It would be an interesting task for the student to compare the two forms printed in this edition, to note exactly what has been added, and the reasons for its addition, and to mark how Pope has smoothed the junctures and blended the old and the new. Nothing that he could do would admit him more intimately to the secrets of Pope's mastery of his art.

A word must be said in closing as to the merits of *The Rape of the Lock* and its position in English literature. In the first place it is an inimitable picture of one phase, at least, of the life of the time, of the gay, witty, heartless society of Queen Anne's day. Slowly recovering from the licentious excesses of the Restoration, society at this time was perhaps unmoral rather than immoral. It was quite without ideals, unless indeed the conventions of "good form" may be dignified by that name. It lacked the brilliant enthusiasm of Elizabethan times as well as the religious earnestness of the Puritans and the devotion to patriotic and social ideals which marked a later age. Nothing, perhaps, is more characteristic of the age than its attitude toward women. It affected indeed a tone of high-flown adoration which thinly veiled a cynical contempt. It styled woman a goddess and really regarded her as little better than a doll. The passion of love had fallen from the high estate it once possessed and become the mere relaxation of the idle moments of a man of fashion.

In the comedies of Congreve, for example, a lover even if honestly in love thinks it as incumbent upon him to make light of his passion before his friends as to exaggerate it in all the forms of affected compliment before his mistress.

In *The Rape of the Lock* Pope has caught and fixed forever the atmosphere of this age. It is not the mere outward form and circumstance, the manners and customs, the patching, powdering, ogling, gambling, of the day that he has reproduced, though his account

of these would alone suffice to secure the poem immortality as a contribution to the history of society. The essential spirit of the age breathes from every line. No great English poem is at once so brilliant and so empty, so artistic, and yet so devoid of the ideals on which all high art rests. It is incorrect, I think, to consider Pope in *The Rape of the Lock* as the satirist of his age. He was indeed clever enough to perceive its follies, and witty enough to make sport of them, but it is much to be doubted whether he was wise enough at this time to raise his eyes to anything better. In the social satires of Pope's great admirer, Byron, we are at no loss to perceive the ideal of personal liberty which the poet opposes to the conventions he tears to shreds. Is it possible to discover in *The Rape of the Lock* any substitute for Belinda's fancies and the Baron's freaks? The speech of Clarissa which Pope inserted as an afterthought to point the moral of the poem recommends Belinda to trust to merit rather than to charms. But "merit" is explicitly identified with good humor, a very amiable quality, but hardly of the highest rank among the moral virtues. And the avowed end and purpose of "merit" is merely to preserve what beauty gains, the flattering attentions of the other sex, — surely the lowest ideal ever set before womankind. The truth is, I think, that *The Rape of the Lock* represents Pope's attitude toward the social life of his time in the period of his brilliant youth. He was at once dazzled, amused, and delighted by the gay world in which he found himself. The apples of pleasure had not yet turned to ashes on his lips, and it is the poet's sympathy with the world he paints which gives to the poem the air, most characteristic of the age itself, of easy, idle, unthinking gayety. We would not have it otherwise. There are sermons and satires in abundance in English literature, but there is only one *Rape of the Lock*.

The form of the poem is in perfect correspondence with its spirit. There is an immense advance over the *Essay on Criticism* in ease, polish, and balance of matter and manner. And it is not merely in matters of detail that the supremacy of the latter poem is apparent. *The Rape of the Lock* is remarkable among all Pope's longer poems as the one complete and

perfect whole. It is no mosaic of brilliant epigrams, but an organic creation. It is impossible to detach any one of its witty paragraphs and read it with the same pleasure it arouses when read in its proper connection. Thalestris' call to arms and Clarissa's moral reproof are integral parts of the poem. And as a result, perhaps, of its essential unity *The Rape of the Lock* bears witness to the presence of a power in Pope that we should hardly have suspected from his other works, the power of dramatic characterization. Elsewhere he has shown himself a master of brilliant portraiture, but Belinda, the Baron, and Thalestris are something more than portraits. They are living people, acting and speaking with admirable consistency. Even the little sketch of Sir Plume is instinct with life.

Finally *The Rape of the Lock*, in its limitations and defects, no less than in its excellencies, represents a whole period of English poetry, the period which reaches with but few exceptions from Dryden to Wordsworth. The creed which dominated poetic composition during this period is discussed in the introduction to the *Essay on Criticism*, and is admirably illustrated in that poem itself. Its repression of individuality, its insistence upon the necessity of following in the footsteps of the classic poets, and of checking the outbursts of imagination by the rules of common sense, simply incapacitated the poets of the period from producing works of the highest order. And its insistence upon man as he appeared in the conventional, urban society of the day as the one true theme of poetry, its belief that the end of poetry was to instruct and improve either by positive teaching or by negative satire, still further limited its field. One must remember in attempting an estimate of *The Rape of the Lock* that it was composed with an undoubting acceptance of this creed and within all these narrowing limitations. And when this is borne in mind, it is hardly too much to say that the poem attains the highest point possible. In its treatment of the supernatural it is as original as a poem could be at that day. The brilliancy of its picture of contemporary society could not be heightened by a single stroke. Its satire is swift and keen, but never ill natured. And the personality of

Pope himself shines through every line. Johnson advised authors who wished to attain a perfect style to give their days and nights to a study of Addison. With equal justice one might advise students who wish to catch the spirit of our so-called Augustan age, and to realize at once the limitations and possibilities of its poetry, to devote themselves to the study of *The Rape of the Lock*.

line	reference	meaning
Dedication	Mrs. Arabella	the title of Mrs. was still given in Pope's time to unmarried ladies as soon as they were old enough to enter society.
	the Rosicrucian doctrine	the first mention of the Rosicrucians is in a book published in Germany in 1614, inviting all scholars to join the ranks of a secret society said to have been founded two centuries before by a certain Christian Rosenkreuz who had mastered the hidden wisdom of the East. It seems probable that this book was an elaborate hoax, but it was taken seriously at the time, and the seventeenth century saw the formation of numerous groups of "Brothers of the Rosy Cross." They dabbled in alchemy,

		spiritualism, and magic, and mingled modern science with superstitions handed down from ancient times. Pope probably knew nothing more of them than what he had read in *Le Comte de Gabalis*. This was the work of a French abbé, de Montfaucon Villars (1635-1673), who was well known in his day both as a preacher and a man of letters. It is really a satire upon the fashionable mystical studies, but treats in a tone of pretended seriousness of secret sciences, of elemental spirits, and of their intercourse with men. It was translated into English in 1680 and again in 1714.
Canto I		
1-2		Pope opens his mock-epic with the usual epic formula, the statement of the subject. Compare the first lines of the *Iliad*, the *Æneid*, and *Paradise Lost*. In l. 7 he goes on to call upon the "goddess," i.e. the muse, to relate the cause of the

		rape. This, too, is an epic formula. Compare *Æneid*, I, 8, and *Paradise Lost*, I, 27-33.
3	Caryl	see Introduction. In accordance with his wish his name was not printed in the editions of the poem that came out in Pope's lifetime, appearing there only as C — — or C — — l.
4	Belinda	a name used by Pope to denote Miss Fermor, the heroine of *The Rape of the Lock*
12		This line is almost a translation of a line in the *Æneid* (I, 11), where Virgil asks if it be possible that such fierce passions (as Juno's) should exist in the minds of gods.
13	Sol	a good instance of the fondness which Pope shared with most poets of his time for giving classical names to objects of nature. This trick was supposed to adorn and elevate poetic diction. Try to find other instances of this in *The Rape of the Lock*.

		Why is the sun's ray called "tim'rous"?
16		It was an old convention that lovers were so troubled by their passion that they could not sleep. In the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (ll. 97-98), Chaucer says of the young squire: So hote he lovede, that by nightertale He sleep namore than dooth a nightingale. Pope, of course, is laughing at the easy-going lovers of his day who in spite of their troubles sleep very comfortably till noon.
17		The lady on awaking rang a little hand-bell that stood on a table by her bed to call her maid. Then as the maid did not appear at once she tapped impatiently on the floor with the heel of her slipper. The watch in the next line was a repeater.

19		All the rest of this canto was added in the second edition of the poem. See pp. 84-86. Pope did not notice that he describes Belinda as waking in I. 14 and still asleep and dreaming in II. 19-116.
20	guardian Sylph	compare ll. 67-78
23	a Birth-night Beau	a fine gentleman in his best clothes, such as he would wear at a ball on the occasion of a royal birthday.
30		The nurse would have told Belinda the old tales of fairies who danced by moonlight on rings in the greensward, and dropped silver coins into the shoes of tidy little maids. The priest, on the other hand, would have repeated to her the legend of St. Cecilia and her guardian angel who once appeared in bodily form to her husband holding two rose garlands gathered in Paradise, or of St. Dorothea, who sent an angel messenger with a basket of heavenly fruits and flowers

		to convert the pagan Theophilus.
42	militia	used here in the general sense of "soldiery."
44	the box	in the theater.
	the ring	the drive in Hyde Park, where the ladies of society took the air.
46	a chair	a sedan chair in which ladies used to be carried about. Why is Belinda told to scorn it?
50		What is the meaning of "vehicles" in this line?
56	Ombre	the fashionable game of cards in Pope's day. See his account of a game in Canto III and the notes on that passage.
57-67		See *Introduction*

69-70		Compare *Paradise Lost*, I, 423-431.
79		conscious of their face: proud of their beauty.
81	These	the gnomes who urge the vain beauties to disdain all offers of love and play the part of prudes.
85	garters, stars, and coronets	the garter is the badge of the Knights of the Garter, an order founded by Edward III, to which only noble princes and noblemen of the highest rank were admitted. "Stars" are the jeweled decorations worn by members of other noble orders. "Coronets" are the inferior crowns worn by princes and nobles, not by sovereigns.
86	"Your Grace"	the title bestowed in England on a duchess — The idea in this passage, ll. 83-86, is that the gnomes fill the girls' minds with hopes of a splendid marriage and so induce them to "deny love."

94	impertinence	purposeless flirtation.
97-98	Florio ... Damon	poetic names for fine gentlemen; no special individuals are meant.
100		Why is a woman's heart called a "toy-shop"?
101	Sword-knots	tassels worn at the hilts of swords. In Pope's day every gentleman carried a sword, and these sword-knots were often very gay.
105	who thy protection claim	what is the exact meaning of his phrase?
108	thy ruling Star	the star that controls thy destinies, a reference to the old belief in astrology.
115	Shock	Belinda's pet dog. His name would seem to show that he was a rough-haired terrier.

118		Does this line mean that Belinda had never seen a billet-doux before?
119	Wounds, Charms, and Ardors	the usual language of a love-letter at this time.
124	the Cosmetic pow'rs	the deities that preside over a lady's toilet. Note the playful satire with which Pope describes Belinda's toilet as if it were a religious ceremony. Who is "th' inferior priestess" in l. 127?
131	nicely	carefully.
134	Arabia	famous for its perfumes.
145	set the head	arrange the head-dress.
147	Betty	Belinda's maid.

Canto II		
4	Launch'd	embarked
25	springes	snares
26	the finny prey	a characteristic instance of Pope's preference or circumlocution to a direct phrase.
35-36		A regular formula in classical epics. In Virgil (XI, 794-795) Phœbus grants part of the prayer of Arruns; the other part he scatters to the light winds.
38	vast French Romances	these romances were the customary reading of society in Pope's day when there were as yet no English novels. Some of them were of enormous length. Addison found several of them in a typical lady's library, great folio volumes, finely bound in gilt (*Spectator*, 37).

58	All but the Sylph	so in Homer (1-25), while all the rest of the army is sleeping Agamemnon is disturbed by fear of the doom impending over the Greeks at the hands of Hector.
60	Waft	wave, or flutter.
70	Superior by the head	so in Homer (*Iliad*, III, 225-227) Ajax is described as towering over the other Greeks by head and shoulders.
73	sylphids	a feminine form of "sylphs."
74		This formal opening of Ariel's address to his followers is a parody of a passage in *Paradise Lost*, V, 600-601.
75	spheres	either "worlds" or in a more general sense "regions."
79		What are the "wandering orbs," and how do they differ from planets in l. 80?

97	a wash	a lotion for the complexion.
105		Diana, the virgin huntress, was in a peculiar sense the goddess of chastity.
106	China jar	the taste for collecting old china was comparatively new in England at this time. It had been introduced from Holland by Queen Anne's sister, Queen Mary, and was eagerly caught up by fashionable society.
113	The drops	the diamond earrings.
118	the Petticoat	the huge hoop skirt which had recently become fashionable. Addison, in a humorous paper in the *Tatler* (No. 116), describes one as about twenty-four yards in circumference.
128	bodkin	a large needle.
133	rivel'd	an obsolete raiment of "obrivelled."

133	Ixion	according to classical mythology Ixion was punished for his sins by being bound forever upon a whirling wheel.
134	Mill	the mill in which cakes of chocolate were ground up preparatory to making the beverage.
138	orb in orb	in concentric circles.
139	thrid	a variant form of "thread."

Canto III		
3	a structure	Hampton Court, a palace on the Thames, a few miles above London. It was begun by Wolsey, and much enlarged by William III. Queen Anne visited it occasionally, and cabinet meetings were sometimes held there. Pope insinuates (l. 6) that the statesmen who met in these councils were as interested in the conquest of English ladies as of foreign enemies.
8		Tea was still in Queen Anne's day a luxury confined to the rich. It cost, in 1710, from twelve to twenty-eight shillings per pound.
9	The heroes and the nymphs	the boating party which started for Hampton Court in Canto II.
17		Snuff-taking had just become fashionable at this time. The practice is said to date from 1702, when an English admiral

		brought back fifty tons of snuff found on board some Spanish ships which he had captured in Vigo Bay. In the *Spectator* for August 8, 1711, a mock advertisement is inserted professing to teach "the exercise of the snuff-box according to the most fashionable airs and motions," and in the number for April 4, 1712, Steele protests against "an impertinent custom the fine women have lately fallen into of taking snuff."
22	dine	the usual dinner hour in Queen Anne's reign was about 3 P.M. Fashionable people dined at 4, or later. This allowed the fashionable lady who rose at noon time to do a little shopping and perform "the long labours of the toilet."
26	two ... Knights	one of these was the baron, see l. 66.
27	Ombre	a game of cards invented in Spain. It takes its name from the Spanish phrase originally used by the player who declared trumps: "Yo soy l'hombre," *i. e.*

I am the man. It could be played by three, five, or nine players, but the usual number was three as here. Each of these received nine cards, and one of them named the trump and thus became the "ombre," who played against the two others. If either of the ombre's opponents took more tricks than the ombre, it was "codille" (l. 92). This meant that the opponent took the stake and the ombre had to replace it for the next hand.

A peculiar feature of ombre is the rank, or value, of the cards. The three best cards were called "matadores," a Spanish word meaning "killers." The first of these matadores was "Spadillio," the ace of spades; the third was "Basto," the ace of clubs. The second, "Manillio," varied according to the suit. If a black suit were declared, Maniilio was the two of trumps; if a red suit, Manillio was the seven of trumps. It is worth noting also that the red aces were inferior to the face cards of their suits except when a red suit was trump.

A brief analysis of the game played on this occasion will

		clear up the passage and leave the reader free to admire the ingenuity with which Pope has described the contest in terms of epic poetry. Belinda declares spades trumps and so becomes the "ombre." She leads one after the other the three matadores; and takes three tricks. She then leads the next highest card, the king of spades, and wins a fourth trick. Being out of trumps she now leads the king of clubs; but the baron, who has actually held more spades than Belinda, trumps it with the queen of spades. All the trumps are now exhausted and the baron's long suit of diamonds is established. He takes the sixth, seventh, and eighth tricks with the king, queen, and knave of diamonds, respectively. Everything now depends on the last trick, since Belinda and the baron each have taken four. The baron leads the ace of hearts and Belinda takes it with the king, thus escaping "codille" and winning the stake.
30	the sacred nine	the nine Muses.

41	succint	tucked up.
54	one Plebeian card	one of Belinda's opponents is now out of trumps and discards a low card on her lead.
61	Pam	a term applied to the knave of clubs which was always the highest card in Lu, another popular game of that day.
74	the globe	the jeweled ball which forms one of the regalia of a monarch. The aspect of playing cards has changed not a little since Pope's day, but the globe is still to be seen on the king of clubs.
79	Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts	these are the losing cards played by Belinda and the third player on the baron's winning diamonds.
99		Pope's old enemy, Dennis, objected to the impropriety of Belinda's filling the sky with exulting shouts, and some modern critics have been foolish enough to echo his objection. The whole scene is a

		masterpiece of the mock-heroic. The game is a battle, the cards are warriors, and Belinda's exclamations of pleasure at winning are in the same fashion magnified into the cheers of a victorious army.
100	long canals	the canals which run through the splendid gardens of Hampton Court, laid out by William III in the Dutch fashion.
106	The berries crackle	it would seem from this phrase that coffee was at that time roasted as well as ground in the drawing-room. In a letter written shortly after the date of this poem Pope describes Swift as roasting coffee "with his own hands in an engine made for that purpose." Coffee had been introduced into England about the middle of the seventeenth century. In 1657 a barber who had opened one of the first coffeehouses in London was indicted for "making and selling a sort of liquor called coffee, as a great nuisance and prejudice of the neighborhood." In Pope's time there were nearly three

		thousand coffee-houses in London.
	The mill	the coffee-mill.
107	Altars of Japan	japanned stands for the lamps.
117-118		The parenthesis in these lines contains a hit at the would-be omniscient politicians who haunted the coffee-houses of Queen Anne's day, and who professed their ability to see through all problems of state with their eyes half-shut. Pope jestingly attributes their wisdom to the inspiring power of coffee.
122	Scylla	the daughter of King Nisus in Grecian legends. Nisus had a purple hair and so long as it was untouched he was unconquerable. Scylla fell in love with one of his enemies and pulled out the hair while Nisus slept. For this crime she was turned into a bird. The story is told in full in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. VIII.

127	Clarissa	it does not appear that Pope had any individual lady in mind. We do not know, at least, that any lady instigated or aided Lord Petre to cut off the lock.
144	An earthly Lover	we know nothing of any love affair of Miss Fermor's. Pope mentions the "earthly lover" here to account for Ariel's desertion of Belinda, for he could only protect her so long as she "rejected mankind"; compare Canto I, ll. 67-68.
147	Forfex	a Latin word meaning scissors.
152		Pope borrowed this idea from Milton, who represents the wound inflicted on Satan, by the Archangel Michael as healing immediately: Th' ethereal substance closed Not long divisible. *Paradise Lost*, VI, 330-331.
165	Atalantis	*The New Atalantis*, a four-volume "cornucopia of scandal"

		involving almost every public character of the day, was published by a Mrs. Manley in 1709. It was very widely read. The Spectator found it, along with a key which revealed the identities of its characters, in the lady's library already mentioned (*Spectator*, No. 37).
166	the small pillow	a richly decorated pillow which fashionable ladies used to prop them up in bed when they received morning visits from gentlemen. Addison gives an account of such a visit in the *Spectator*, No. 45.
167	solemn days	days of marriage or mourning, on which at this time formal calls were paid.
173	the labour of the gods	the walls of Troy built by Apollo and Neptune for King Laomedon.
178	unresisted	irresistible.

Canto IV		
8	Cynthia	a fanciful name for any fashionable lady. No individual is meant.
	manteau	a loose upper garment for women.
16	Spleen	the word is used here as a personification of melancholy, or low spirits. It was not an uncommon affectation in England at this time. A letter to the *Spectator*, No. 53, calls it "the distemper of the great and the polite."
17	the Gnome	Umbriel, who in accordance with his nature now proceeds to stir up trouble. Compare Canto I, ll. 63-64.
20		The bitter east wind which put every one into a bad humor was supposed to be one of the main causes of the spleen.

23	She	the goddess of the spleen. Compare l. 79.
84	Megrim	headache.
29	store	a large supply.
38	night-dress	the modern dressing-gown. The line means that whenever a fashionable beauty bought a new dressing-gown she pretended to be ill in order to show her new possession to sympathetic friends who called on her.
40	phantoms	these are the visions, dreadful or delightful, of the disordered imagination produced by spleen.
43	snakes on rolling spires	like the serpent which Milton describes in *Paradise Lost*, IX, 501-502, "erect amidst his circling spires."
46	angels in machines	angels coming to help their votaries. The word "machine" here has an old-fashioned

		technical sense. It was first used to describe the apparatus by which a god was let down upon the stage of the Greek theater. Since a god was only introduced at a critical moment to help the distressed hero, the phrase, "deus ex machina," came to mean a god who rendered aid. Pope transfers it here to angels.
47	throngs	Pope now describes the mad fancies of people so affected by spleen as to imagine themselves transformed to inanimate objects.
51	pipkin	a little jar. Homer (*Iliad*, XVIII, 373-377) tells how Vulcan had made twenty wonderful tripods on living wheels that moved from place to place of their own accord.
52		Pope in a note to this poem says that a lady of his time actually imagined herself to be a goose-pie.
56	A branch	so Æneas bore a magic branch to protect him when he

		descended to the infernal regions (*Æneid*, VI, 136-143).
	Spleenwort	a sort of fern which was once supposed to be a remedy against the spleen.
58	the sex	women.
59	vapours	a form of spleen to which women were supposed to be peculiarly liable, something like our modern hysteria. It seems to have taken its name from the fogs of England which were thought to cause it.
65	a nymph	Belinda, who had always been so light-hearted that she had never been a victim of the spleen.
89	Citron-waters	a liqueur made by distilling brandy with the rind of citrons. It was a fashionable drink for ladies at this time.
71		Made men suspicious of their wives.

82	Ulysses	Homer (*Odyssey*, X, 1-25) tells how Æolus, the god of the winds, gave Ulysses a wallet of oxhide in which all the winds that might oppose his journey homeward were closely bound up.
89	Thalestris	the name of a warlike queen of the Amazons. Pope uses it here for a friend of Belinda's, who excites her to revenge herself for the rape of her lock. It is said that this friend was a certain Mrs. Morley.
102	loads of lead	curl papers used to be fastened with strips of lead.
105	Honour	female reputation.
109	toast	a slang term in Pope's day for a reigning beauty whose health was regularly drunk by her admirers. Steele (*Tatler*, No. 24) says that the term had its rise from an accident that happened at Bath in the reign of Charles II. A famous beauty was bathing there in public, and one of her admirers filled a

glass with the water in which she stood and drank her health.

> "There was in the place," says Steele "a gay fellow, half-fuddled, who offered to jump in, and swore though he liked not the liquor, he would have the Toast. He was opposed in his resolution; yet this whim gave foundation to the present honor which is done to the lady we mention in our liquors, who has ever since been called a **Toast**."

To understand the point of the story one must know that it was an old custom to put a bit of toast in hot drinks.

In this line in the poem Thalestris insinuates that if Belinda submits tamely to the rape of the lock, her position as a toast will be forfeited.

113-116		Thalestris supposes that the baron will have the lock set in a ring under a bit of crystal. Old-fashioned hair-rings of this kind are still to be seen.
117	Hyde-park Circus	the Ring of Canto I, l. 44. Grass was not likely to grow there so long as it remained the fashionable place to drive.
118	in the sound of Bow	within hearing of the bells of the church of St. Mary le Bow in Cheapside. So far back as Ben Jonson's time (*Eastward Ho*, I, ii, 36) it was the mark of the unfashionable middle-class citizen to live in this quarter. A "wit" in Queen Anne's day would have scorned to lodge there.
121	Sir Plume	this was Sir George Brown, brother of Mrs. Morley (Thalestris). He was not unnaturally offended at the picture drawn of him in this poem. Pope told a friend many years later that "nobody was angry but Sir George Brown,

		and he was a good deal so, and for a long time. He could not bear that Sir Plume should talk nothing but nonsense."
124	a clouded cane	a cane of polished wood with cloudlike markings. In the *Tatler*, Mr. Bickerstaff sits in judgment on canes, and takes away a cane, "curiously clouded, with a transparent amber head, and a blue ribband to hang upon his wrist," from a young gentleman as a piece of idle foppery. There are some amusing remarks on the "conduct" of canes in the same essay.
133		The baron's oath is a parody of the oath of Achilles (*Iliad*, I, 234).
142		The breaking of the bottle of sorrows, etc., is the cause of Belinda's change of mood from wrath as in l. 93 to tears, 143-144.

155	the gilt Chariot	the painted and gilded coach in which ladies took the air in London.
156	Bohea	tea, the name comes from a range of hills in China where a certain kind of tea was grown.
162	the patch-box	the box which held the little bits of black sticking-plaster with which ladies used to adorn their faces. According to Addison (*Spectator*, No. 81), ladies even went so far in this fad as to patch on one side of the face or the other, according to their politics.
Canto V		
5	the Trojan	Æneas, who left Carthage in spite of the wrath of Dido and the entreaties of her sister Anna.
7-36		Pope inserted these lines in a late revision in 1717, in order, as he said, to open more clearly the moral of the poem. The

		speech of Clarissa is a parody of a famous speech by Sarpedon in the *Iliad*, XII, 310-328.
14		At this time the gentlemen always sat in the side boxes of the theater; the ladies in the front boxes.
20		As vaccination had not yet been introduced, small-pox was at this time a terribly dreaded scourge.
23		In the *Spectator*, No. 23, there is inserted a mock advertisement, professing to teach the whole art of ogling, the church ogle, the playhouse ogle, a flying ogle fit for the ring, etc.
24		Painting the face was a common practice of the belles of this time. *The Spectator*, No. 41, contains a bitter attack on the painted ladies whom it calls the "Picts."

37	virago	a fierce, masculine woman, here used for Thalestris.
45		In the *Iliad* (Bk. XX) the gods are represented as taking sides for the Greeks and Trojans and fighting among themselves. Pallas opposes Ares, or Mars; and Hermes, Latona.
48	Olympus	the hill on whose summit the gods were supposed to dwell, often used for heaven itself.
50	Neptune	used here for the sea over which Neptune presided.
53	a sconce's height	the top of an ornamental bracket for holding candles.
61		Explain the metaphor in this line.
64		The quotation is from a song in an opera called *Camilla*.
65		The Mæander is a river in Asia Minor. Ovid (*Heroides*, VII, 1-

		2) represents the swan as singing his death-song on its banks.
68		Chloe: a fanciful name. No real person is meant.
71		The figure of Jove weighing the issue of a battle in his scales is found in the *Iliad*, VIII, 69-73. Milton imitated it in *Paradise Lost*, IX, 996-1004. When the men's wits mounted it showed that they were lighter, less important, than the lady's hair, and so were destined to lose the battle.
89-96		This pedigree of Belinda's bodkin is a parody of Homer's account of Agamemnon's scepter (*Iliad*, II, 100-108).
105-106		In Shakespeare's play Othello fiercely demands to see a handkerchief which he has given his wife, and takes her inability to show it to him as a proof of her infidelity.

113		the lunar sphere: it was an old superstition that everything lost on earth went to the moon. An Italian poet, Ariosto, uses this notion in a poem with which Pope was familiar (*Orlando Furioso*, Canto XXXIV), and from which he borrowed some of his ideas for the cave of Spleen.
122		Why does Pope include "tomes of casuistry" in this collection?
125		There was a legend that Romulus never died, but had been caught up to the skies in a storm. Proculus, a Roman senator, said that Romulus had descended from heaven and spoken to him and then ascended again (Livy, I, 16).
129	Berenice's Locks	: Berenice was an Egyptian queen who dedicated a lock of hair for her husband's safe return from war. It was said afterward to have become a constellation, and a Greek poet wrote some verses on the marvel.

132		Why were the Sylphs pleased?
133	the Mall	the upper side of St. James's park in London, a favorite place at this time for promenades.
136	Rosamonda's lake	a pond near one of the gates of St. James's park, a favorite rendezvous for lovers.
137	Partridge	an almanac maker of Pope's day who was given to prophesying future events. Shortly before this poem was written Swift had issued a mock almanac foretelling that Partridge would die on a certain day. When that day came Swift got out a pamphlet giving a full account of Partridge's death. In spite of the poor man's protests, Swift and his friends kept on insisting that he was dead. He was still living, however, when Pope wrote this poem. Why does Pope call him "th' egregious wizard"?
138	Galileo's eyes	the telescope, first used by the Italian astronomer Galileo.

140		Louis XIV of France, the great enemy of England at this time.
	Rome	here used to denote the Roman Catholic Church.
143	the shining sphere	an allusion to the old notion that all the stars were set in one sphere in the sky. Belinda's lost lock, now a star, is said to add a new light to this sphere.
147		What are the "fair suns"?

Contents

Notes on *An Essay on Criticism*

Introduction

The *Essay on Criticism* was the first really important work that Pope gave to the world. He had been composing verses from early boyhood, and had actually published a set of *Pastorals* which had attracted some attention. He was already known to the literary set of London coffeehouses as a young man of keen wit and high promise, but to the reading public at large he was as yet an unknown quantity. With the appearance of the *Essay*, Pope not only sprang at once into the full light of publicity, but seized almost undisputed that position as the first of living English poets which he was to retain unchallenged till his death. Even after his death down to the Romantic revival, in fact, Pope's supremacy was an article of critical faith, and this supremacy was in no small measure founded upon the acknowledged merits of the *Essay on Criticism*. Johnson, the last great representative of Pope's own school of thought in matters literary, held that the poet had never excelled this early work and gave it as his deliberate opinion that if Pope had written nothing else, the *Essay* would have placed him among the first poets and the first critics. The *Essay on Criticism* is hardly an epoch-making poem, but it certainly "made" Alexander Pope.

The poem was published anonymously in the spring of 1711, when Pope was twenty-three years old. There has been considerable dispute as to the date of its composition; but the facts seem to be that it was begun in 1707 and finished in 1709 when Pope had it printed, not for publication, but for purposes of further correction. As it stands, therefore, it represents a work planned at the close of Pope's precocious youth, and

executed and polished in the first flush of his manhood. And it is quite fair to say that considering the age of its author the *Essay on Criticism* is one of the most remarkable works in English.

Not that there is anything particularly original about the *Essay*. On the contrary, it is one of the most conventional of all Pope's works. It has nothing of the lively fancy of *The Rape of the Lock*, little or nothing of the personal note which stamps the later satires and epistles as so peculiarly Pope's own. Apart from its brilliant epigrammatic expression the *Essay on Criticism* might have been written by almost any man of letters in Queen Anne's day who took the trouble to think a little about the laws of literature, and who thought about those laws strictly in accordance with the accepted conventions of his time. Pope is not in the least to be blamed for this lack of originality. Profound original criticism is perhaps the very last thing to be expected of a brilliant boy, and Pope was little more when he planned this work. But boy as he was, he had already accomplished an immense amount of desultory reading, not only in literature proper, but in literary criticism as well. He told Spence in later years that in his youth he had gone through all the best critics, naming especially Quintilian, Rapin, and Bossu. A mere cursory reading of the Essay shows that he had also studied Horace, Vida, and Boileau. Before he began to write he had, so he told Spence, "digested all the matter of the poem into prose." In other words, then, the *Essay on Criticism* is at once the result of Pope's early studies, the embodiment of the received literary doctrines of his age, and, as a consecutive study of his poems shows, the programme in accordance with which, making due allowance for certain exceptions and inconsistencies, he evolved the main body of his work.

It would, however, be a mistake to treat, as did Pope's first editor, the *Essay on Criticism* as a methodical, elaborate, and systematic treatise. Pope, indeed, was flattered to have a scholar of such recognized authority as Warburton to interpret his works, and permitted him to print a commentary upon the *Essay*, which is quite as long and infinitely

duller than the original. But the true nature of the poem is indicated by its title. It is not an *Art of Poetry* such as Boileau composed, but an *Essay*. And by the word "essay," Pope meant exactly what Bacon did, — a tentative sketch, a series of detached thoughts upon a subject, not a complete study or a methodical treatise. All that we know of Pope's method of study, habit of thought, and practice of composition goes to support this opinion. He read widely but desultorily; thought swiftly and brilliantly, but illogically and inconsistently; and composed in minute sections, on the backs of letters and scraps of waste paper, fragments which he afterward united, rather than blended, to make a complete poem, a mosaic, rather than a picture.

Yet the *Essay* is by no means the "collection of independent maxims tied together by the printer, but having no natural order," which De Quincey pronounced it to be. It falls naturally into three parts. The first deals with the rules derived by classic critics from the practice of great poets, and ever since of binding force both in the composition and in the criticism of poetry. The second analyzes with admirable sagacity the causes of faulty criticism as pride, imperfect learning, prejudice, and so on. The third part discusses the qualities which a true critic should possess, good taste, learning, modesty, frankness, and tact, and concludes with a brief sketch of the history of criticism from Aristotle to Walsh. This is the general outline of the poem, sufficient, I think, to show that it is not a mere bundle of poetic formulæ. But within these broad limits the thought of the poem wanders freely, and is quite rambling, inconsistent, and illogical enough to show that Pope is not formulating an exact and definitely determined system of thought.

Such indeed was, I fancy, hardly his purpose. It was rather to give clear, vivid, and convincing expression to certain ideas which were at that time generally accepted as orthodox in the realm of literary criticism. No better expression of these ideas can be found anywhere than in the *Essay* itself, but a brief statement in simple prose of some of the most important may serve as a guide to the young student of the essay.

In the first place, the ultimate source alike of poetry and criticism is a certain intuitive faculty, common to all men, though more highly developed in some than others, called Reason, or, sometimes, Good Sense. The first rule for the budding poet or critic is "Follow Nature." This, by the way, sounds rather modern, and might be accepted by any romantic poet. But by "Nature" was meant not at all the natural impulses of the individual, but those rules founded upon the natural and common reason of mankind which the ancient critics had extracted and codified from the practice of the ancient poets. Pope says explicitly "to follow nature is to follow them;" and he praises Virgil for turning aside from his own original conceptions to imitate Homer, for:

> Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.

Certain exceptions to these rules were, indeed, allowable, — severer critics than Pope, by the way, absolutely denied this, — but only to the ancient poets. The moderns must not dare to make use of them, or at the very best moderns must only venture upon such exceptions to the rules as classic precedents would justify. Inasmuch as all these rules were discovered and illustrated in ancient times, it followed logically that the great breach with antiquity, which is called the Middle Ages, was a period of hopeless and unredeemed barbarism, incapable of bringing forth any good thing. The light of literature began to dawn again with the revival of learning at the Renaissance, but the great poets of the Renaissance, Spenser and Shakespeare, for example, were "irregular," that is, they trusted too much to their individual powers and did not accept with sufficient humility the orthodox rules of poetry. This dogma, by the way, is hardly touched upon in the *Essay*, but is elaborated with great emphasis in Pope's later utterance on the principles of literature, the well-known *Epistle to Augustus*. Finally with the establishment of the reign of Reason in France under Louis XIV, and in England a little later, the full day had come, and literary sins of omission and commission that might be winked at in such an untutored genius as

Shakespeare were now unpardonable. This last dogma explains the fact that in the brief sketch of the history of criticism which concludes the *Essay*, Pope does not condescend to name an English poet or critic prior to the reign of Charles II.

It would be beside the purpose to discuss these ideas to-day or to attempt an elaborate refutation of their claims to acceptance. Time has done its work upon them, and the literary creed of the wits of Queen Anne's day is as antiquated as their periwigs and knee-breeches. Except for purposes of historical investigation it is quite absurd to take the *Essay on Criticism* seriously.

And yet it has even for us of to-day a real value. Our age absolutely lacks a standard of literary criticism; and of all standards the one least likely to be accepted is that of Pope and his fellow-believers. Individual taste reigns supreme in this democratic age, and one man's judgment is as good as, perhaps a little better than, another's. But even this democratic and individual age may profit by turning back for a time to consider some of the general truths, as valid to-day as ever, to which Pope gave such inimitable expression, or to study the outlines of that noble picture of the true critic which St. Beuve declared every professed critic should frame and hang up in his study. An age which seems at times upon the point of throwing classical studies overboard as useless lumber might do far worse than listen to the eloquent tribute which the poet pays to the great writers of antiquity. And finally nothing could be more salutary for an age in which literature itself has caught something of the taint of the prevailing commercialism than to bathe itself again in that spirit of sincere and disinterested love of letters which breathes throughout the *Essay* and which, in spite of all his errors, and jealousies, and petty vices, was the master-passion of Alexander Pope.

line	reference	meaning
6	censure	the word has here its original meaning of "judge," not its modern "judge severely" or "blame."
8		Because each foolish poem provokes a host of foolish commentators and critics.
15-16		This assertion that only a good writer can be a fair critic is not to be accepted without reservation.
17	wit	The word "wit" has a number of different meanings in this poem, and the student should be careful to discriminate between them. It means 1. mind, intellect, l. 61; 2. learning, culture, l 727; 3. imagination, genius, l. 82; 4. the power to discover amusing analogies, or the apt expression of such an analogy, ll. 449, 297; 5. a man possessed of wit in its various significations, l. 45; this last form usually occurs in the plural, ll. 104, 539.

26	the maze of schools	the labyrinth of conflicting systems of thought, especially of criticism.
21	coxcombs ... fools	what is the difference in meaning between these words in this passage?
30-31		In this couplet Pope hits off the spiteful envy of conceited critics toward successful writers. If the critic can write himself, he hates the author as a rival; if he cannot, he entertains against him the deep grudge an incapable man so often cherishes toward an effective worker.
34	Mævius	a poetaster whose name has been handed down by Virgil and Horace. His name, like that of his associate, Bavius, has become a by-word for a wretched scribbler.
	Apollo	here thought of as the god of poetry. The true poet was inspired by Apollo; but a poetaster like Mævius wrote without inspiration, as it were, in spite of the god.
40-43		Pope here compares "half-learned" critics to the animals which old writers reported were bred from the

		Nile mud. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, Lepidus says, "Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your sun; so is your crocodile." Pope thinks of these animals as in the unformed stage, part "kindled into life, part a lump of mud." So these critics are unfinished things for which no proper name can be found. "Equivocal generation" is the old term used to denote spontaneous generation of this sort. Pope applies it here to critics without proper training who spring spontaneously from the mire of ignorance.
44	tell	count
45		The idea is that a vain wit's tongue could out-talk a hundred ordinary men's.
53	pretending wit	presuming, or ambitious mind.
56-58	memory ... understanding imagination	This is the old threefold division of the human mind. Pope means that where one of these faculties is above the average in any individual, another of them is sure to fall below. Is this always the case?

63	peculiar arts	special branches of knowledge.
73		In what sense can nature be called the source, the end, and the test of art?
76	th' informing soul	explanation
80-81		What two meanings are attached to "wit" in this couplet?
84	'Tis more	it is more important.
	the Muse's steed	Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek mythology, was supposed to be the horse of the Muses and came to be considered a symbol of poetic genius.
86	gen'rous	high-bred.
88		What is the difference between "discovered" and "devised"?
94	Parnassus' top	the Muses were supposed to dwell on the top of Parnassus, a mountain in Greece. Great poets are here thought

		of as having climbed the mountain to dwell with the Muses.
96		What is (cf. text) "the immortal prize"?
99	She	i. e. learned Greece, especially Greek criticism, which obtained the rules of poetry from the practice of great poets, and, as it were, systematized their inspiration.
104	following wits	later scholars.
105		What is meant by "the mistress" and "the maid" in this line?
109	Doctor's bills	prescriptions.
112		These are the prosy commentators on great poets, whose dreary notes often disgust readers with the original.
120	fable	a plot.
123		What is the difference between "cavil" and "criticise"?

129	the Mantuan Muse	the poetry of Virgil, which Pope thinks the best commentary on Homer. In what sense is this to be understood?
130	Maro	Virgil, whose full name was Publius Vergilius Maro, Pope here praises Virgil's well-known imitation of Homer. Since "nature and Homer were the same," a young poet like Virgil could do nothing better than copy Homer.
138	the Stagirite	Aristotle, a native of Stagyra, was the first and one of the greatest of literary critics. His "rules" were drawn from the practice of great poets, and so, according to Pope, to imitate Homer was to obey the "ancient rules."
141		There are some beauties in poetry which cannot be explained by criticism.
142	happiness	used here to express the peculiar charm of spontaneous poetic expression as contrasted with "care," 'i.e.' the art of revising and improving, which can be taught.

152	vulgar bounds	the limitations imposed upon ordinary writers.
157	out of ... rise	surpass the ordinary scenes of nature.
159	Great wits	poets of real genius.
160	faults	here used in the sense of irregularities, exceptions to the rules of poetry. When these are justified by the poet's genius, true critics do not presume to correct them. In many editions this couplet comes after l. 151. This was Pope's first arrangement, but he later shifted it to its present position.
162	As Kings	the Stuart kings claimed the right to "dispense with laws," that is, to set them aside in special instances. In 1686 eleven out of twelve English judges decided in a test case that "it is a privilege inseparably connected with the sovereignty of the king to dispense with penal laws, and that according to his own judgment." The English people very naturally felt that such a privilege opened the door to absolute monarchy, and after the fall of James II, Parliament declared in 1689 that "the pretended power of

		suspending of laws ... without the consent of Parliament, is illegal."
164	its End	the purpose of every law of poetry, namely, to please the reader. This purpose must not be "transgressed," 'i.e.' forgotten by those who wish to make exceptions to these laws.
166	their precedent	the example of classic poets.
179	stratagems ... error	things in the classic poets which to carping critics seem faults are often clever devices to make a deeper impression on the reader.
180	Homer nods	Horace in his *Art of Poetry* used this figure to imply that even the greatest poet sometimes made mistakes. Pope very neatly suggests that it may be the critic rather than the poet who is asleep.
181	each ancient Altar	used here to denote the works of the great classic writers. The whole passage down to l. 200 is a noble outburst of enthusiasm for the poets whom Pope had read so eagerly in early youth.

186	consenting Pæans	unanimous hymns of praise.
194	must ... found	are not destined to be discovered till some future time.
196		Who is "the last, the meanest of your sons"?
203	bias	mental bent, or inclination.
208		This line is based upon physiological theories which are now obsolete. According to these wind or air supplied the lack of blood or of animal spirits in imperfectly constituted bodies. To such bodies Pope compares those ill-regulated minds where a deficiency of learning and natural ability is supplied by self-conceit.
216	The Pierian spring	the spring of the Muses, who were called Pierides in Greek mythology. It is used here as a symbol for learning, particularly for the study of literature.

222	the lengths behind	the great spaces of learning that lie behind the first objects of our study.
225-232		This fine simile is one of the best expressions in English verse of the modesty of the true scholar, due to his realization of the boundless extent of knowledge. It was such a feeling that led Sir Isaac Newton to say after all his wonderful discoveries, "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary whilst the great ocean of truth lay all the time undiscovered before me."
224	peculiar parts	individual parts.
248	ev'n thine, O Rome	there are so many splendid churches in Rome that an inhabitant of this city would be less inclined than a stranger to wonder at the perfect

		proportions of any of them. But there are two, at least, the Pantheon and St. Peter's, which might justly evoke the admiration even of a Roman. It was probably of one of these that Pope was thinking.
265		What is the difference between "principles" and "notions" in this line?

265	La Mancha's Knight	Don Quixote. The anecdote that follows is not taken from Cervantes' novel, but from a continuation of it by an author calling himself Avellanada. The story is that Don Quixote once fell in with a scholar who had written a play about a persecuted queen of Bohemia. Her innocence in the original story was established by a combat in the lists, but this the poet proposed to omit as contrary to the rules of Aristotle. The Don, although professing great respect for Aristotle, insisted that the combat was the best part of the story and must be acted, even if a special theater had to be built for the purpose, or the play given in the open fields. Pope quotes this anecdote to show how some critics in spite of their professed acceptance of general rules are so prejudiced in favor of a minor point as to judge a whole work of art from one standpoint only.
270	Dennis	John Dennis, a playwright and critic of Pope's time. Pope and he were engaged in frequent quarrels, but this first reference to him in Pope's works is distinctly complimentary. The line probably refers to some remarks by Dennis on the Grecian stage in his *Impartial Critic*, a pamphlet published in 1693.

273	nice	discriminating; in l. 286 the meaning is "over-scrupulous, finicky."
276	unities	according to the laws of dramatic composition generally accepted in Pope's day, a play must observe the unities of subject, place, and time. That is, it must have one main theme, not a number of diverse stories, for its plot; all the scenes must be laid in one place, or as nearly so as possible; and the action must be begun and finished within the space of twenty-four hours.
286	curious	fastidious, over-particular.
288	by a love to parts	by too diligent attention to particular parts of a work of art, which hinders them from forming a true judgment of the work as a whole.
289	conceit	an uncommon or fantastic expression of thought. "Conceits" had been much sought after by the poets who wrote in the first half of the seventeenth century.
297	True Wit	here opposed to the "conceit" of which Pope has been speaking. It is

		defined as a natural idea expressed in fit words.
299	whose truth ... find	of whose truth we find ourselves at once convinced.
308	take upon content	take for granted.
311-317		Show how Pope uses the simile of the "prismatic glass" to distinguish between "false eloquence" and "true expression."
319	decent	becoming
328	Fungoso	a character in Ben Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour*. He is the son of a miserly farmer, and tries hard, though all in vain, to imitate the dress and manners of a fine gentleman.
329	These sparks	these would-be dandies.
337	Numbers	rhythm, meter.

341	haunt Parnassus	read poetry. — ear:' note that in Pope's day this word rhymed with "repair" and "there."
344	these	critics who care for the meter only in poetry insist on the proper number of syllables in a line, no matter what sort of sound or sense results. For instance, they do not object to a series of "open vowels," *i. e.* hiatuses caused by the juxtaposition of such words as "tho" and "oft," "the" and "ear." Line 345 is composed especially to show how feeble a rhythm results from such a succession of "open vowels." They do not object to bolstering up a line with "expletives," such as "do" in l. 346, nor to using ten "low words," *i.e.* short, monosyllabic words to make up a line.
347		With this line Pope passes unconsciously from speaking of bad critics to denouncing some of the errors of bad poets, who keep on using hackneyed phrases and worn-out metrical devices.
356	Alexandrine	a line of six iambic feet, such as l. 357, written especially to illustrate this form. Why does Pope use the adjective "needless" here?

361	Denham's strength ... Waller's sweetness	Waller and Denham were poets of the century before Pope; they are almost forgotten to-day, but were extravagantly admired in his time. Waller began and Denham continued the fashion of writing in "closed" heroic couplets, *i.e.* in verses where the sense is for the most part contained within one couplet and does not run over into the next as had been the fashion in earlier verse. Dryden said that "the excellence and dignity of rhyme were never fully known till Mr. Waller taught it," and the same critic spoke of Denham's poetry as "majestic and correct."
370	Ajax	one of the heroes of the *Iliad*. He is represented more than once as hurling huge stones at his enemies. Note that Pope has endeavored in this and the following line to convey the sense of effort and struggle. What means does he employ? Do you think he succeeds?
372	Camilla	a heroine who appears in the latter part of the *Æneid* fighting against the Trojan invaders of Italy. Virgil says that she was so swift of foot that she might have run over a field of wheat without breaking the stalks, or across the sea without wetting her feet. Pope attempts in l. 373 to reproduce in the

		sound and movement of his verse the sense of swift flight.
374	Timotheus	a Greek poet and singer who was said to have played and sung before Alexander the Great. The reference in this passage is to Dryden's famous poem, *Alexander's Feast*.
376	the son of Libyan Jove	Alexander the Great, who boasted that he was the son of Jupiter. The famous oracle of Jupiter Ammon situated in the Libyan desert was visited by Alexander, who was said to have learned there the secret of his parentage.
383	Dryden	this fine compliment is paid to a poet whom Pope was proud to acknowledge as his master. "I learned versification wholly from Dryden's works," he once said. Pope's admiration for Dryden dated from early youth, and while still a boy he induced a friend to take him to see the old poet in his favorite coffee-house.
391	admire	not used in our modern sense, but in its original meaning, "to wonder at." According to Pope, it is only fools who are lost in wonder at the beauties

		of a poem; wise men "approve," *i.e.* test and pronounce them good.
396-7		Pope acknowledged that in these lines he was alluding to the uncharitable belief of his fellow-Catholics that all outside the fold of the Catholic church were sure to be damned.
400	sublimes	purifies
404	each	each age.
415	joins with Quality	takes sides with "the quality," *i.e.* people of rank.
429		Are so clever that they refuse to accept the common and true belief, and so forfeit their salvation.
441	sentences	the reference is to a mediaeval treatise on Theology, by Peter Lombard, called the *Book of Sentences*. It was long used as a university text-book.
444	Scotists and Thomists	mediæval scholars, followers respectively of Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas. A long dispute

		raged between their disciples. In this couplet Pope points out that the dispute is now forgotten, and the books of the old disputants lie covered with cobwebs in Duck-lane, a street in London where second-hand books were sold in Pope's day. He calls the cobwebs "kindred," because the arguments of Thomists and Scotists were as fine spun as a spider's web.
449		"The latest fashionable folly is the test, or the proof, of a quick, up-to-date wit." In other words, to be generally accepted an author must accept the current fashion, foolish though it may be.
457		This was especially true in Pope's day when literature was so closely connected with politics that an author's work was praised or blamed not upon its merits, but according to his, and the critic's, politics.
459	Parsons, Critics, Beaus	Dryden, the head of English letters in the generation before Pope, had been bitterly assailed on various charges by parsons, like Jeremy Collier, critics like Milbourn, and fine gentlemen like the Duke of Buckingham. But his works remained when the jests that

		were made against them were forgotten.
463		Sir Richard Blackmore, a famous doctor in Dryden's day, was also a very dull and voluminous writer. He attacked Dryden in a poem called *A Satire against Wit*. Luke Milbourn was a clergyman of the same period, who abused Dryden's translation of Virgil.
465	Zoilus	a Greek critic who attacked Homer.
481		The English language and the public taste had changed very rapidly during the century preceding Pope. He imagined that these changes would continue so that no poet's reputation would last longer than a man's life, "bare threescore," and Dryden's poetry would come to be as hard to understand and as little read as Chaucer's at that time. It is worth noting that both Dryden and Pope rewrote parts of Chaucer in modern English.
506-7		Explain why "wit" is feared by wicked men and shunned by the virtuous, hated by fools, and "undone" or ruined by knaves.

521	sacred	accursed, like the Latin *sacer*.
527	spleen	bad temper.
534	the fat age	the reign of Charles II, as ll. 536-537 show, when literature became notoriously licentious.
538	Jilts ... statesmen	loose women like Lady Castlemaine and the Duchess of Portsmouth had great influence on the politics of Charles II's time, and statesmen of that day like Buckingham and Etheredge wrote comedies.
541	mask	it was not uncommon in Restoration times for ladies to wear a mask in public, especially at the theater. Here the word is used to denote the woman who wore a mask.
544	a Foreign reign	the reign of William III, a Dutchman. Pope, as a Tory and a Catholic, hated the memory of William, and here asserts, rather unfairly, that his age was marked by an increase of heresy and infidelity.

545	Socinus	the name of two famous heretics, uncle and nephew, of the sixteenth century, who denied the divinity of Christ.
549		Pope insinuates here that the clergy under William III hated an absolute monarch so much that they even encouraged their hearers to question the absolute power of God.
551	admir'd	see note to l. 391.
552	Wit's Titans	wits who defied heaven as the old Titans did the gods. The reference is to a group of freethinkers who came into prominence in King William's reign.
556	scandalously nice	so over-particular as to find cause for scandal where none exists.
557	mistake an author into vice	mistakenly read into an author vicious ideas which are not really to be found in his work.
575		Things that men really do not know must be brought forward modestly as

		if they had only been forgotten for a time.
577	that only	good-breeding alone
585	Appius	a nickname for John Dennis, taken from his tragedy, *Appius and Virginia*, which appeared two years before the *Essay on Criticism*. Lines 585-587 hit off some of the personal characteristics of this hot-tempered critic. "Tremendous" was a favorite word with Dennis.
588	tax	blame, find fault with.
591		In Pope's time noblemen could take degrees at the English universities without passing the regular examinations.
617		Dryden's *Fables* published in 1700 represented the very best narrative poetry of the greatest poet of his day. D'Urfey's *Tales*, on the other hand, published in 1704 and 1706, were collections of dull and obscene doggerel by a wretched poet.

618	with him	according to "the bookful blockhead."
619	Garth	a well-known doctor of the day, who wrote a much admired mock-heroic poem called *The Dispensary*. His enemies asserted that he was not really the author of the poem.
623		Such foolish critics are just as ready to pour out their opinions on a man in St. Paul's cathedral as in the bookseller's shops in the square around the church, which is called St. Paul's churchyard.
632	proud to know	proud of his knowledge.
636	humanly	an old form for "humanely."
642	love to praise	a love of praising men.
648	Mæonian Star	Homer. Mæonia, or Lydia, was a district in Asia which was said to have been the birthplace of Homer.

652	conquered Nature	Aristotle was a master of all the knowledge of nature extant in his day.
653	Horace	the famous Latin poet whose *Ars Poetica* was one of Pope's models for the *Essay on Criticism*.
662	fle'me	phlegm, according to old ideas of physiology, one of the four "humours" or fluids which composed the body. Where it abounded it made men dull and heavy, or as we still say "phlegmatic."
663-4		A rather confused couplet. It means, "Horace suffers as much by the misquotations critics make from his work as by the bad translations that wits make of them."
665	Dionysius	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a famous Greek critic. Pope's manner of reference to him seems to show that he had never read his works.

667	Petronius	a courtier and man of letters of the time of Nero. Only a few lines of his remaining work contain any criticism.
669	Quintilian's work	the *Institutiones Oratoriæ* of Quintilianus, a famous Latin critic of the first century A.D.
675	Longinus	a Greek critic of the third century A.D., who composed a famous work called *A Treatise on the Sublime*. It is a work showing high imagination as well as careful reasoning, and hence Pope speaks of the author as inspired by the Nine, *i. e.* the Muses.
692		The willful hatred of the monks for the works of classical antiquity tended to complete that destruction of old books which the Goths began when they sacked the Roman cities. Many ancient writings were erased, for example, in order to get parchment for monkish chronicles and commentaries.
693	Erasmus	perhaps the greatest scholar of the Renaissance. Pope calls him the "glory of the priesthood" on account of his being a monk of such extraordinary learning, and "the

		shame" of his order, because he was so abused by monks in his lifetime. Is this a good antithesis?
697	Leo's golden days	the pontificate of Leo X (1513-1521). Leo himself was a generous patron of art and learning. He paid particular attention to sacred music (l. 703), and engaged Raphael to decorate the Vatican with frescoes. Vida (l. 704) was an Italian poet of his time, who became famous by the excellence of his Latin verse. One of his poems was on the art of poetry, and it is to this that Pope refers in l. 706.
707-8		Cremona was the birthplace of Vida; Mantua, of Virgil.
709		The allusion is to the sack of Rome by the Constable Bourbon's army in 1527. This marked the end of the golden age of arts in Italy.
714	Boileau	a French poet and critic (1636-1711). His *L'Art Poetique* is founded on Horace's *Ars Poetica*.
723	the Muse	*i. e.* the genius, of John Sheffield (1649-1720), Duke of Buckingham (not to be confounded with Dryden's

		enemy). Line 724 is quoted from his *Essay on Poetry*.
725	Roscommon	Wentworth Dillon (1633-1684), Earl of Roscommon, author of a translation of the *Ars Poetica* and of *An Essay on Translated Verse*.
729	Walsh	a commonplace poet (1663-1708), but apparently a good critic. Dryden, in fact, called him the best critic in the nation. He was an early friend and judicious adviser of Pope himself, who showed him much of his early work, including the first draft of this very poem. Pope was sincerely attached to him, and this tribute to his dead friend is marked by deep and genuine feeling.
738	short excursions	such as this *Essay on Criticism* instead of longer and more ambitious poems which Pope planned and in part executed in his boyhood. There is no reason to believe with Mr. Elwin that this passage proves that Pope formed the design of the poem after the death of Walsh.

Contents

Notes on *An Essay on Man, Epistle I*

Introduction

The *Essay on Man* is the longest and in some ways the most important work of the third period of Pope's career. It corresponds closely to his early work, the *Essay on Criticism*. Like the earlier work, the *Essay on Man* is a didactic poem, written primarily to diffuse and popularize certain ideas of the poet. As in the earlier work these ideas are by no means original with Pope, but were the common property of a school of thinkers in his day. As in the *Essay on Criticism*, Pope here attempts to show that these ideas have their origin in nature and are consistent with the common sense of man. And finally the merit of the later work, even more than of the earlier, is due to the force and brilliancy of detached passages rather than to any coherent, consistent, and well-balanced system which it presents.

The close of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth was marked by a change of ground in the sphere of religious controversy. The old debates between the Catholic and Protestant churches gradually died out as these two branches of Western Christianity settled down in quiet possession of the territory they still occupy. In their place arose a vigorous controversy on the first principles of religion in general, on the nature of God, the origin of evil, the place of man in the universe, and the respective merits of optimism and pessimism as philosophic theories. The controversialists as a rule either rejected or neglected the dogmas of revealed religion and based their arguments upon real or supposed facts of history, physical nature, and the mental processes and moral characteristics of man. In this controversy the two parties at times

were curiously mingled. Orthodox clergymen used arguments which justified a strong suspicion of their orthodoxy; and avowed freethinkers bitterly disclaimed the imputation of atheism and wrote in terms that might be easily adopted by a devout believer.

Into this controversy Pope was led by his deepening intimacy with Bolingbroke, who had returned from France in 1725 and settled at his country place within a few miles of Twickenham. During his long exile Bolingbroke had amused himself with the study of moral philosophy and natural religion, and in his frequent intercourse with Pope he poured out his new-found opinions with all the fluency, vigor, and polish which made him so famous among the orators and talkers of the day. Bolingbroke's views were for that time distinctly heterodox, and, if logically developed, led to complete agnosticism. But he seems to have avoided a complete statement of his ideas to Pope, possibly for fear of shocking or frightening the sensitive little poet who still remained a professed Catholic. Pope, however, was very far from being a strict Catholic, and indeed prided himself on the breadth and liberality of his opinions. He was, therefore, at once fascinated and stimulated by the eloquent conversation of Bolingbroke, and resolved to write a philosophical poem in which to embody the ideas they held in common. Bolingbroke approved of the idea, and went so far as to furnish the poet with seven or eight sheets of notes "to direct the plan in general and to supply matter for particular epistles." Lord Bathurst, who knew both Pope and Bolingbroke, went so far as to say in later years that the *Essay* was originally composed by Bolingbroke in prose and that Pope only put it into verse. But this is undoubtedly an exaggeration of what Pope himself frankly acknowledged, that the poem was composed under the influence of Bolingbroke, that in the main it reflected his opinions, and that Bolingbroke had assisted him in the general plan and in numerous details. Very properly, therefore, the poem is addressed to Bolingbroke and begins and closes with a direct address to the poet's "guide, philosopher, and friend."

In substance the *Essay on Man* is a discussion of the moral order of the world. Its purpose is "to vindicate the ways of God to man," and it may therefore be regarded as an attempt to confute the skeptics who argued from the existence of evil in the world and the wretchedness of man's existence to the impossibility of belief in an all-good and all-wise God. It attempts to do this, not by an appeal to revelation or the doctrines of Christianity, but simply on the basis of a common-sense interpretation of the facts of existence.

A brief outline of the poem will show the general tenor of Pope's argument.

The first epistle deals with the nature and state of man with respect to the universe. It insists on the limitations of man's knowledge, and the consequent absurdity of his presuming to murmur against God. It teaches that the universe was not made for man, but that man with all his apparent imperfections is exactly fitted to the place which he occupies in the universe. In the physical universe all things work together for good, although certain aspects of nature seem evil to man, and likewise in the moral universe all things, even man's passions and crimes conduce to the general good of the whole. Finally it urges calm submission and acquiescence in what is hard to understand, since "one truth is clear, — whatever is, is right."

The second epistle deals with the nature of man as an individual. It begins by urging men to abandon vain questionings of God's providence and to take up the consideration of their own natures, for "the proper study of mankind is man." Pope points out that the two cardinal principles of man's nature are self-love and reason, the first an impelling, the second a regulating power. The aim of both these principles is pleasure, by which Pope means happiness, which he takes for the highest good. Each man is dominated by a master passion, and it is the proper function of reason to control this passion for good and to make it bear fruit in virtue. No man is wholly virtuous or vicious, and

Heaven uses the mingled qualities of men to bind them together in mutual interdependence, and makes the various passions and imperfections of mankind serve the general good. And the final conclusion is that "though man's a fool, yet God is wise."

The third epistle treats of the nature of man with respect to society. All creatures, Pope asserts, are bound together and live not for themselves alone, but man is preeminently a social being. The first state of man was the state of nature when he lived in innocent ignorance with his fellow-creatures. Obeying the voice of nature, man learned to copy and improve upon the instincts of the animals, to build, to plow, to spin, to unite in societies like those of ants and bees. The first form of government was patriarchal; then monarchies arose in which virtue, "in arms or arts," made one man ruler over many. In either case the origin of true government as of true religion was love. Gradually force crept in and uniting with superstition gave rise to tyranny and false religions. Poets and patriots, however, restored the ancient faith and taught power's due use by showing the necessity of harmony in the state. Pope concludes by asserting the folly of contention for forms of government or modes of faith. The common end of government as of religion is the general good. It may be noticed in passing that Pope's account of the evolution of society bears even less relation to historical facts than does his account of the development of literature in the *Essay on Criticism*.

The last epistle discusses the nature of happiness, "our being's end and aim." Happiness is attainable by all men who think right and mean well. It consists not in individual, but in mutual pleasure. It does not consist in external things, mere gifts of fortune, but in health, peace, and competence. Virtuous men are, indeed, subject to calamities of nature; but God cannot be expected to suspend the operation of general laws to spare the virtuous. Objectors who would construct a system in which all virtuous men are blest, are challenged to define the virtuous and to specify what is meant by blessings. Honors, nobility, fame, superior talents, often merely serve to make their possessors unhappy. Virtue

alone is happiness, and virtue consists in a recognition of the laws of Providence, and in love for one's fellow-man.

Even this brief outline will show, I think, some of the inconsistencies and omissions of Pope's train of thought. A careful examination of his arguments in detail would be wholly out of place here. The reader who wishes to pursue the subject further may consult Warburton's elaborate vindication of Pope's argument, and Elwin's equally prosy refutation, or better still the admirable summary by Leslie Stephen in the chapter on this poem in his life of Pope (*English Men of Letters*). No one is now likely to turn to the writer of the early eighteenth century for a system of the universe, least of all to a writer so incapable of exact or systematic thinking as Alexander Pope. If the *Essay on Man* has any claim to be read to-day, it must be as a piece of literature pure and simple. For philosophy and poetry combined, Browning and Tennyson lie nearer to our age and mode of thought than Pope.

Even regarded as a piece of literature the *Essay on Man* cannot, I think, claim the highest place among Pope's works. It obtained, indeed, a success at home and abroad such as was achieved by no other English poem until the appearance of *Childe Harold*. It was translated into French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Polish, and Latin. It was imitated by Wieland, praised by Voltaire, and quoted by Kant. But this success was due in part to the accuracy with which it reflected ideas which were the common property of its age, in part to the extraordinary vigor and finish of its epigrams, which made it one of the most quotable of English poems. But as a whole the Essay is not a great poem. The poet is evidently struggling with a subject that is too weighty for him, and at times he staggers and sinks beneath his burden. The second and third books in particular are, it must be confessed, with the exception of one or two fine outbursts, little better than dull, and dullness is not a quality one is accustomed to associate with Pope. The *Essay on Man* lacks the bright humor and imaginative artistry of *The Rape of the Lock,* and the lively portraiture, vigorous satire, and strong personal note of the *Moral*

Epistles and *Imitations of Horace*. Pope is at his best when he is dealing with a concrete world of men and women as they lived and moved in the London of his day; he is at his worst when he is attempting to seize and render abstract ideas.

Yet the *Essay on Man* is a very remarkable work. In the first place, it shows Pope's wonderful power of expression. No one can read the poem for the first time without meeting on page after page phrases and epigrams which have become part of the common currency of our language. Pope's "precision and firmness of touch," to quote the apt statement of Leslie Stephen, "enables him to get the greatest possible meaning into a narrow compass. He uses only one epithet, but it is the right one." Even when the thought is commonplace enough, the felicity of the expression gives it a new and effective force. And there are whole passages where Pope rises high above the mere coining of epigrams. As I have tried to show in my notes he composed by separate paragraphs, and when he chances upon a topic that appeals to his imagination or touches his heart, we get an outburst of poetry that shines in splendid contrast to the prosaic plainness of its surroundings. Such, for example, are the noble verses that tell of the immanence of God in his creation at the close of the first epistle, or the magnificent invective against tyranny and superstition in the third (ll. 241-268).

Finally the *Essay on Man* is of interest in what it tells us of Pope himself. Mr. Elwin's idea that in the *Essay on Man* Pope, "partly the dupe, partly the accomplice of Bolingbroke," was attempting craftily to undermine the foundations of religion, is a notion curiously compounded of critical blindness and theological rancor. In spite of all its incoherencies and futilities the *Essay* is an honest attempt to express Pope's opinions, borrowed in part, of course, from his admired friend, but in part the current notions of his age, on some of the greatest questions that have perplexed the mind of man. And Pope's attitude toward the questions is that of the best minds of his day, at once religious, independent, and sincere. He acknowledges the omnipotence and benevolence of God,

confesses the limitations and imperfections of human knowledge, teaches humility in the presence of unanswerable problems, urges submission to Divine Providence, extols virtue as the true source of happiness, and love of man as an essential of virtue. If we study the *Essay on Man* as the reasoned argument of a philosopher, we shall turn from it with something like contempt; if we read it as the expression of a poet's sentiments, we shall, I think, leave it with an admiration warmer than before for a character that has been so much abused and so little understood as that of Pope.

line	reference	meaning
The Design		
2	Bacon's expression	in the dedication of his *Essays* (1625) to Buckingham, Bacon speaks of them as the most popular of his writings, "for that, as it seems, they come home to men's business and bosoms."
11	anatomy	dissection

Epistle I		
1	St. John	Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, Pope's "guide, philosopher, and friend," under whose influence the *Essay on Man* was composed.
5	expatiate	range, wander.
6		Pope says that this line alludes to the subject of this first Epistle, "the state of man here and hereafter, disposed by Providence, though to him unknown." The next two lines allude to the main topics of the three remaining epistles, "the constitution of the human mind ... the temptations of misapplied self-love, and the wrong pursuits of power, pleasure, and false happiness."
9	beat ... field	the metaphor is drawn from hunting. Note how it is elaborated in the following lines.
12	blindly creep ... sightless	the first are the ignorant and indifferent; those who "sightless

	soar	soar" are the presumptuous who reason blindly about things too high for human knowledge.
15	candid	lenient, free from harsh judgments.
16		An adaptation of a well-known line of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, l, 26.
17-23		Pope lays down as the basis of his system that all argument about man or God must be based upon what we know of man's present life, and of God's workings in this world of ours.
29	this frame	the universe. Compare *Hamlet*, II, ii, 310, "this goodly frame, the earth."
30	nice dependencies	subtle inter-relations.
31	Gradations just	exact shades of difference.
32	a part	the mind of man, which is but a part of the whole universe.

33	the great chain	according to Homer, Jove, the supreme God, sustained the whole creation by a golden chain. Milton also makes use of this idea of the visible universe as linked to heaven in a golden chain, *Paradise Lost*, II, 1004-1006, and 1051-1052.
41	yonder argent fields	the sky spangled with silvery stars. The phrase is borrowed from Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III, 460.
42	Jove	the planet Jupiter.
	satellites	Pope preserves here the Latin pronunciation, four syllables, with the accent on the antepenult.
43-40		Pope here takes it for granted that our universe, inasmuch as it is the work of God's infinite wisdom, must be the best system possible. If this be granted, he says, it is plain that man must have a place somewhere in this system, and the only question is whether "God has placed him wrong."
45		Every grade in creation must be complete, so as to join with that

		which is beneath and with that which is above it or there would be a lack of coherency, a break, somewhere in the system.
47	reas'ning life	conscious mental life.
51-60		Pope argues here that since man is a part of the best possible system, whatever seems wrong in him must be right when considered in relation to the whole order of the universe. It is only our ignorance of this order which keeps us from realizing this fact.
55	one single	the word "movement" is understood after "single."
61-8		Pope here illustrates his preceding argument by analogy. We can know no more of God's purpose in the ordering of our lives than the animals can know of our ordering of theirs.
64	Ægypt's God	One of the gods of the Egyptians was the sacred bull, Apis.

68	a deity	worshiped as a god, like the Egyptian kings and Roman emperors.
69-76		Pope now goes on to argue that on the basis of what has been proved we ought not to regard man as an imperfect being, but rather as one who is perfectly adapted to his place in the universe. His knowledge, for example, is measured by the brief time he has to live and the brief space he can survey.
69	fault	pronounced in Pope's day as rhyming with "ought."
73-6		These lines are really out of place. They first appeared after l. 98; then Pope struck them out altogether. Just before his death he put them into their present place on the advice of Warburton, who probably approved of them because of their reference to a future state of bliss. It is plain that they interfere with the regular argument of the poem.
79		This line is grammatically dependent upon "hides," l. 77.

81	riot	used here in the sense of "luxurious life." The lamb is slain to provide for some feast.
86	Heav'n	*i. e.* God. Hence the relative "who" in the next line.
92-8		Pope urges man to comfort himself with hope, seeing that he cannot know the future.
93	What future bliss	the words "shall be" are to be understood after this phrase.
96		Point out the exact meaning of this familiar line.
97	from home	away from its true home, the life to come. This line represents one of the alterations which Warburton induced Pope to make. The poet first wrote "confined at home," thus representing this life as the home of the soul. His friend led him to make the change in order to express more clearly his belief in the soul's immortality.

89		Show how "rests" and "expatiates" in this line contrast with "uneasy" and "confined" in l. 97.
99-112		In this famous passage Pope shows how the belief in immortality is found even among the most ignorant tribes. This is to Pope an argument that the soul must be immortal, since only Nature, or God working through Nature, could have implanted this conception in the Indian's mind.
102	the solar walk	the sun's path in the heavens.
	the milky way	some old philosophers held that the souls of good men went thither after death.
...		Pope means that the ignorant Indian had no conception of a heaven reserved for the just such as Greek sages and Christian believers have. All he believes in is "an humbler heaven," where he shall be free from the evils of this life. Line 108 has special reference to the tortures inflicted upon the natives of Mexico and Peru by the avaricious Spanish conquerors.

109-10		He is contented with a future existence, without asking for the glories of the Christian's heaven.
111	equal sky	impartial heaven, for the heaven of the Indians was open to all men, good or bad.
113-30		In this passage Pope blames those civilized men who, though they should be wiser than the Indian, murmur against the decrees of God. The imperative verbs "weigh," "call," "say," etc., are used satirically.
113	scale of sense	the scale, or means of judgment, which our senses give us.
117	gust	the pleasure of taste.
120		The murmurers are dissatisfied that man is not at once perfect in his present state and destined to immortality, although such gifts have been given to no other creature.

123	reas'ning pride	the pride of the intellect which assumes to condemn God's providence.

131-172		In this passage Pope imagines a dialogue between one of the proud murmurers he has described and himself. His opponent insists that the world was made primarily for man's enjoyment (ll. 132-140). Pope asks whether nature does not seem to swerve from this end of promoting human happiness in times of pestilence, earthquake, and tempest (ll. 141-144). The other answers that these are only rare exceptions to the general laws, due perhaps to some change in nature since the world began (ll. 145-148). Pope replies by asking why there should not be exceptions in the moral as well as in the physical world; may not great villains be compared to terrible catastrophes in nature (ll. 148-156)? He goes on to say that no one but God can answer this question, that our human reasoning springs from pride, and that the true course of reasoning is simply to submit (ll. 156-164). He then suggests that "passions," by which he means vices, are as necessary a part of the moral order as storms of the physical world (ll. 165-172).
142	livid deaths	pestilence

143-4		Pope was perhaps thinking of a terrible earthquake and flood that had caused great loss of life in Chili the year before this poem appeared.
150	then Nature deviates	Nature departs from her regular order on such occasions as these catastrophes.
151	that end	human happiness, as in l. 149.
156		Cæsar Borgia, the wicked son of Pope Alexander VI, and Catiline are mentioned here as portents in the moral world parallel to plagues and earthquakes in the physical.
160	young Ammon	Alexander the Great. See note on *Essay on Criticism*, l. 376.
163		Why do we accuse God for permitting wickedness when we do not blame Him for permitting evil in the natural world?
166	there	in nature

	here	in man
173-206		In this section Pope reproves those who are dissatisfied with man's faculties. He points out that all animals, man included, have powers suited to their position in the world (ll. 179-188), and asserts that if man had keener senses than he now has, he would be exposed to evils from which he now is free (ll. 193-203).
176	to want	to lack
177		Paraphrase this line in prose.
181	compensated	accented on the antepenult.
183	the state	the place which the creature occupies in the natural world.
195	finer optics	keener power of sight.
197	touch	a noun, subject of "were given," understood from l. 195.

199	quick effluvia	pungent odors. The construction is very condensed here; "effluvia" may be regarded like "touch" as a subject of "were given" (l. 195); but one would expect rather a phrase to denote a keener sense of smell than man now possesses.
202	music of the spheres	it was an old belief that the stars and planets uttered musical notes as they moved along their courses. These notes made up the "harmony of the spheres." Shakespeare ('Merchant of Venice', V, 64-5) says that our senses are too dull to hear it. Pope, following a passage in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, suggests that this music is too loud for human senses.
207-232		Pope now goes on to show how in the animal world there is an exact gradation of the faculties of sense and of the powers of instinct. Man alone is endowed with reason which is more than equivalent to all these powers and makes him lord over all animals.
212		The mole is almost blind; the lynx was supposed to be the most keen-sighted of animals.

213-4		The lion was supposed by Pope to hunt by sight alone as the dog by scent. What does he mean by "the tainted green"?
215-6		Fishes are almost deaf, while birds are very quick of hearing.
219	nice	keenly discriminating.
	healing dew	healthful honey.
221-222		The power of instinct which is barely perceptible in the pig amounts almost to the power of reason in the elephant.
223	barrier	pronounced like the French 'barrière', as a word of two syllables with the accent on the last.
226	Sense ... Thought	sensation and reason.

227	middle natures	intermediate natures, which long to unite with those above or below them. The exact sense is not very clear.
233-58		In this passage Pope insists that the chain of being stretches unbroken from God through man to the lowest created forms. If any link in this chain were broken, as would happen if men possessed higher faculties than are now assigned them, the whole universe would be thrown into confusion. This is another answer to those who complain of the imperfections of man's nature.
234	quick	living. Pope does not discriminate between organic and inorganic matter.
240	glass	microscope
242-44		Inferior beings might then press upon us. If they did not, a fatal gap would be left by our ascent in the scale.

247	each system	Pope imagines the universe to be composed of an infinite number of systems like ours. Since each of these is essential to the orderly arrangement of the universe, any disorder such as he has imagined would have infinitely destructive consequences. These are described in ll. 251-257.
267-80		In these lines Pope speaks of God as the soul of the world in an outburst of really exalted enthusiasm that is rare enough in his work.
269	that	a relative pronoun referring to "soul," l. 268.
270	th' ethereal frame	the heavens
276	as perfect in a hair as heart	this has been called "a vile antithesis," on the ground that there is no reason why hair and heart should be contrasted. But Pope may have had in mind the saying of Christ. "the very hairs of your head are all numbered." The hairs are spoken of here as the least important part of the body; the heart, on the other hand, has always been thought of as the most

		important organ. There is, therefore, a real antithesis between the two.
278	Seraph ... burns	the seraphim according to old commentators are on fire with the love of God.
280	equals all	makes all things equal. This does not seem consistent with the idea of the gradations of existence which Pope has been preaching throughout this Epistle. Possibly it means that all things high and low are filled alike with the divine spirit and in this sense all things are equal. But one must not expect to find exact and consistent philosophy in the *Essay on Man*.
281-94		Here Pope sums up the argument of this Epistle, urging man to recognize his ignorance, to be content with his seeming imperfections, and to realize that "whatever is, is right."
282	our proper bliss	our happiness as men.

283	point	appointed place in the universe.
286	Secure	sure.
289		Hobbes, an English philosopher with whose work Pope was, no doubt, acquainted, says, "Nature is the art whereby God governs the world."

Contents

An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot

Introduction

Next to *The Rape of the Lock*, I think, the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* is the most interesting and the most important of Pope's poems — the most important since it shows the master poet of the age employing his ripened powers in the field most suitable for their display, that of personal satire, the most interesting, because, unlike his former satiric poem the *Dunciad*, it is not mere invective, but gives us, as no other poem of Pope's can be said to do, a portrait of the poet himself.

Like most of Pope's poems, the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* owes its existence to an objective cause. This was the poet's wish to justify himself against a series of savage attacks, which had recently been directed against him. If Pope had expected by the publication of the *Dunciad* to crush the herd of scribblers who had been for years abusing him, he must have been woefully disappointed. On the contrary, the roar of insult and calumny rose louder than ever, and new voices were added to the chorus. In the year 1733 two enemies entered the field against Pope such as he had never yet had to encounter — enemies of high social position, of acknowledged wit, and of a certain, though as the sequel proved quite inadequate, talent for satire. These were Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Lord John Hervey.

Lady Mary had been for years acknowledged as one of the wittiest, most learned, and most beautiful women of her day. Pope seems to have met her in 1715 and at once joined the train of her admirers. When she accompanied her husband on his embassy to Constantinople in the

following year, the poet entered into a long correspondence with her, protesting in the most elaborate fashion his undying devotion. On her return he induced her to settle with her husband at Twickenham. Here he continued his attentions, half real, half in the affected gallantry of the day, until, to quote the lady's own words to her daughter many years after,

> "at some ill-chosen time when she least expected what romancers call a declaration, he made such passionate love to her, as, in spite of her utmost endeavours to be angry and look grave, provoked an immoderate fit of laughter,"

and, she added, from that moment Pope became her implacable enemy. Certainly by the time Pope began to write the *Dunciad* he was so far estranged from his old friend that he permitted himself in that poem a scoffing allusion to a scandal in which she had recently become involved. The lady answered, or the poet thought that she did, with an anonymous pamphlet, *A Pop upon Pope*, describing a castigation, wholly imaginary, said to have been inflicted upon the poet as a proper reward for his satire. After this, of course, all hope of a reconciliation was at an end, and in his satires and epistles Pope repeatedly introduced Lady Mary under various titles in the most offensive fashion. In his first *Imitation of Horace*, published in February, 1733, he referred in the most unpardonable manner to a certain Sappho, and the dangers attendant upon any acquaintance with her. Lady Mary was foolish enough to apply the lines to herself and to send a common friend to remonstrate with Pope. He coolly replied that he was surprised that Lady Mary should feel hurt, since the lines could only apply to certain women, naming four notorious scribblers, whose lives were as immoral as their works. Such an answer was by no means calculated to turn away the lady's wrath, and for an ally in the campaign of anonymous abuse that she now planned she sought out her friend Lord Hervey. John Hervey, called by courtesy Lord Hervey, the second son of the Earl of Bristol, was one of the most prominent figures at the court of George II. He had been made vice-

chamberlain of the royal household in 1730, and was the intimate friend and confidential adviser of Queen Caroline. Clever, affable, unprincipled, and cynical, he was a perfect type of the Georgian courtier to whom loyalty, patriotism, honesty, and honor were so many synonyms for folly. He was effeminate in habits and appearance, but notoriously licentious; he affected to scoff at learning but made some pretense to literature, and had written
Four Epistles after the Manner of Ovid, and numerous political pamphlets. Pope, who had some slight personal acquaintance with him, disliked his political connections and probably despised his verses, and in the *Imitation* already mentioned had alluded to him under the title of Lord Fanny as capable of turning out a thousand lines of verse a day. This was sufficient cause, if cause were needed, to induce Hervey to join Lady Mary in her warfare against Pope.

The first blow was struck in an anonymous poem, probably the combined work of the two allies, called *Verses addressed to the Imitator of Horace*, which appeared in March, 1733, and it was followed up in August by an *Epistle from a Nobleman to a Doctor of Divinity*, which also appeared anonymously, but was well known to be the work of Lord Hervey. In these poems Pope was abused in the most unmeasured terms. His work was styled a mere collection of libels; he had no invention except in defamation; he was a mere pretender to genius. His morals were not left unimpeached; he was charged with selling other men's work printed in his name, — a gross distortion of his employing assistants in the translation of the *Odyssey*, — he was ungrateful, unjust, a foe to human kind, an enemy like the devil to all that have being. The noble authors, probably well aware how they could give the most pain, proceeded to attack his family and his distorted person. His parents were obscure and vulgar people; and he himself a wretched outcast:

> with the emblem of [his] crooked mind
> Marked on [his] back like Cain by God's own hand.

And to cap the climax, as soon as these shameful libels were in print, Lord Hervey bustled off to show them to the Queen and to laugh with her over the fine way in which he had put down the bitter little poet.

In order to understand and appreciate Pope's reception of these attacks, we must recall to ourselves the position in which he lived. He was a Catholic, and I have already (Introduction) called attention to the precarious, tenure by which the Catholics of his time held their goods, their persons, their very lives, in security. He was the intimate of Bolingbroke, of all men living the most detested by the court, and his noble friends were almost without exception the avowed enemies of the court party. Pope had good reason to fear that the malice of his enemies might not be content to stop with abusive doggerel. But he was not in the least intimidated. On the contrary, he broke out in a fine flame of wrath against Lord Hervey, whom he evidently considered the chief offender, challenged his enemy to disavow the *Epistle*, and on his declining to do so, proceeded to make what he called "a proper reply" in a prose *Letter to a Noble Lord*. This masterly piece of satire was passed about from hand to hand, but never printed. We are told that Sir Robert Walpole, who found Hervey a convenient tool in court intrigues, bribed Pope not to print it by securing a good position in France for one of the priests who had watched over the poet's youth. If this story be true, and we have Horace Walpole's authority for it, we may well imagine that the entry of the bribe, like that of Uncle Toby's oath, was blotted out by a tear from the books of the Recording Angel.

But Pope was by no means disposed to let the attacks go without an answer of some kind, and the particular form which his answer took seems to have been suggested by a letter from Arbuthnot.

> "I make it my last request," wrote his beloved physician, now sinking fast under the diseases that brought him to the grave, "that you continue that noble disdain and abhorrence of vice, which you seem so naturally endued with, but still

> with a due regard to your own safety; and study more to reform than to chastise, though the one often cannot be effected without the other."
>
> "I took very kindly your advice," Pope replied, "... and it has worked so much upon me considering the time and state you gave it in, that I determined to address to you one of my epistles written by piecemeal many years, and which I have now made haste to put together; wherein the question is stated, what were, and are my motives of writing, the objections to them, and my answers."

In other words, the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* which we see that Pope was working over at the date of this letter, August 25, 1734, was, in the old-fashioned phrase, his *Apologia*, his defense of his life and work.

As usual, Pope's account of his work cannot be taken literally. A comparison of dates shows that the *Epistle* instead of having been "written by piecemeal many years" is essentially the work of one impulse, the desire to vindicate his character, his parents, and his work from the aspersions cast upon them by Lord Hervey and Lady Mary. The exceptions to this statement are two, or possibly three, passages which we know to have been written earlier and worked into the poem with infinite art.

The first of these is the famous portrait of Addison as Atticus. I have already spoken of the reasons that led to Pope's breach with Addison (Introduction); and there is good reason to believe that this portrait sprang directly from Pope's bitter feeling toward the elder writer for his preference of Tickell's translation. The lines were certainly written in Addison's lifetime, though we may be permitted to doubt whether Pope really did send them to him, as he once asserted. They did not appear in print, however, till four years after Addison's death, when they were printed apparently without Pope's consent in a volume of miscellanies. It

is interesting to note that in this form the full name "Addison" appeared in the last line. Some time later Pope acknowledged the verses and printed them with a few changes in his *Miscellany* of 1727, substituting the more decorous "A — -n" for the "Addison" of the first text. Finally he worked over the passage again and inserted it, for a purpose that will be shown later, in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*.

It is not worth while to discuss here the justice or injustice of this famous portrait. In fact, the question hardly deserves to be raised. The passage is admittedly a satire, and a satire makes no claim to be a just and final sentence. Admitting, as we must, that Pope was in the wrong in his quarrel with Addison, we may well admit that he has not done him full justice. But we must equally admit that the picture is drawn with wonderful skill, that praise and blame are deftly mingled, and that the satire is all the more severe because of its frank admission of the great man's merits. And it must also be said that Pope has hit off some of the faults of Addison's character, — his coldness, his self-complacency, his quiet sneer, his indulgence of flattering fools — in a way that none of his biographers have done. That Pope was not blind to Addison's chief merit as an author is fully shown by a passage in a later poem, less well known than the portrait of Atticus, but well worth quotation. After speaking of the licentiousness of literature in Restoration days, he goes on to say:

> In our own (excuse some courtly stains)
> No whiter page than Addison's remains,
> He from the taste obscene reclaims our youth,
> And sets the passions on the side of truth,
> Forms the soft bosom with the gentlest art,
> And pours each human virtue in the heart.
>
> *Epistle to Augustus, II*. 215-220.

If Pope was unjust to Addison the man, he at least made amends to Addison the moralist.

The second passage that may have had an independent existence before the *Epistle* was conceived is the portrait of Bufo, ll. 229-247. There is reason to believe that this attack was first aimed at Bubb Doddington, a courtier of Hervey's class, though hardly of so finished a type, to whom Pope alludes as Bubo in l. 278. When Pope was working on the *Epistle*, however, he saw an opportunity to vindicate his own independence of patronage by a satiric portrait of the great Mæcenas of his younger days, Lord Halifax, who had ventured some foolish criticisms on Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, and seems to have expected that the poet should dedicate the great work to him in return for an offer of a pension which he made and Pope declined. There is no reason to believe that Pope cherished any very bitter resentment toward Halifax. On the contrary, in a poem published some years after the *Epistle* he boasted of his friendship with Halifax, naming him outright, and adding in a note that the noble lord was no less distinguished by his love of letters than his abilities in Parliament.

The third passage, a tender reference to his mother's age and weakness, was written at least as early as 1731, — Mrs. Pope died in 1733, — and was incorporated in the *Epistle* to round it off with a picture of the poet absorbed in his filial duties at the very time that Hervey and Lady Mary were heaping abuse upon him, as a monster devoid of all good qualities. And now having discussed the various insertions in the *Epistle*, let us look for a moment at the poem as a whole, and see what is the nature of Pope's defense of himself and of his reply to his enemies.

It is cast in the form of a dialogue between the poet himself and Arbuthnot. Pope begins by complaining of the misfortunes which his reputation as a successful man of letters has brought upon him. He is a mark for all the starving scribblers of the town who besiege him for advice, recommendations, and hard cash. Is it not enough to make a man write *Dunciads*? Arbuthnot warns him against the danger of making foes (ll. 101- 104), but Pope replies that his flatterers are even

more intolerable than his open enemies. And with a little outburst of impatience, such as we may well imagine him to have indulged in during his later years, he cries:

> Why did I write? What sin to me unknown
> Dipt me in ink, my parents' or my own?

and begins with l. 125 his poetical autobiography. He tells of his first childish efforts, of poetry taken up "to help me thro' this long disease my life," and then goes on to speak of the noble and famous friends who had praised his early work and urged him to try his fortune in the open field of letters. He speaks of his first poems, the *Pastorals* and *Windsor Forest*, harmless as Hervey's own verses, and tells how even then critics like Dennis fell foul of him. Rival authors hated him, too, especially such pilfering bards as Philips. This he could endure, but the coldness and even jealousy of such a man as Addison — and here appears the famous portrait of Atticus — was another matter, serious enough to draw tears from all lovers of mankind.

Passing on (l. 213) to the days of his great success when his *Homer* was the talk of the town, he asserts his ignorance of all the arts of puffery and his independence of mutual admiration societies. He left those who wished a patron to the tender mercies of Halifax, who fed fat on flattery and repaid his flatterers merely with a good word or a seat at his table. After all, the poet could afford to lose the society of Bufo's toadies while such a friend as Gay was left him (l. 254).

After an eloquent expression of his wish for independence (ll. 261-270), he goes on to speak of the babbling friends who insist that he is always meditating some new satire, and persist in recognizing some wretched poetaster's lampoon as his. And so by a natural transition Pope comes to speak of his own satiric poems and their aims. He says, and rightly, that he has never attacked virtue or innocence. He reserves his lash for those who trample on their neighbors and insult "fallen worth," for cold or

treacherous friends, liars, and babbling blockheads. Let Sporus (Hervey) tremble (l. 303). Arbuthnot interposes herewith an ejaculation of contemptuous pity; is it really worth the poet's while to castigate such a slight thing as Hervey, that "mere white curd"? But Pope has suffered too much from Hervey's insolence to stay his hand, and he now proceeds to lay on the lash with equal fury and precision, drawing blood at every stroke, until we seem to see the wretched fop writhing and shrieking beneath the whip. And then with a magnificent transition he goes on (ll. 332-337) to draw a portrait of himself. Here, he says in effect, is the real man that Sporus has so maligned. The portrait is idealized, of course; one could hardly expect a poet speaking in his own defense in reply to venomous attacks to dissect his own character with the stern impartiality of the critics of the succeeding century, but it is in all essentials a portrait at once impressive and true.

Arbuthnot again interrupts (l. 358) to ask why he spares neither the poor nor the great in his satire, and Pope replies that he hates knaves in every rank of life. Yet by nature, he insists, he is of an easy temper, more readily deceived than angered, and in a long catalogue of instances he illustrates his own patience and good nature (ll. 366-385). It must be frankly confessed that these lines do not ring true. Pope might in the heat of argument convince himself that he was humble and slow to wrath, but he has never succeeded in convincing his readers.

With l. 382 Pope turns to the defense of his family, which, as we have seen, his enemies had abused as base and obscure. He draws a noble picture of his dead father, "by nature honest, by experience wise" simple, modest, and temperate, and passes to the description of himself watching over the last years of his old mother, his sole care to

> Explore the thought, explain the asking eye
> And keep a while one parent from the sky.

If the length of days which Heaven has promised those who honor father and mother fall to his lot, may Heaven preserve him such a friend as Arbuthnot to bless those days. And Arbuthnot closes the dialogue with a word which is meant, I think, to sum up the whole discussion and to pronounce the verdict that Pope's life had been good and honorable.

> Whether that blessing[1] be deny'd or giv'n,
> Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heav'n.

It seems hardly necessary to point out the merits of so patent a masterpiece as the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. In order to enjoy it to the full, indeed, one must know something of the life of the author, of the circumstances under which it was written, and, in general, of the social and political life of the time. But even without this special knowledge no reader can fail to appreciate the marvelous ease, fluency, and poignancy of this admirable satire. There is nothing like it in our language except Pope's other satires, and of all his satires it is, by common consent, easily the first. It surpasses the satiric poetry of Dryden in pungency and depth of feeling as easily as it does that of Byron in polish and artistic restraint. Its range of tone is remarkable. At times it reads like glorified conversation, as in the opening lines; at times it flames and quivers with emotion, as in the assault on Hervey, or in the defense of his parents. Even in the limited field of satiric portraiture there is a wide difference between the manner in which Pope has drawn the portrait of Atticus and that of Sporus. The latter is a masterpiece of pure invective; no allowances are made, no lights relieve the darkness of the shadows, the portrait is frankly inhuman. It is the product of an unrestrained outburst of bitter passion. The portrait of Atticus, on the other hand, was, as we know, the work of years. It is the product not of an outburst of fury, but of a slowly growing and intense dislike, which, while recognizing the merits of its object, fastened with peculiar power upon his faults and weaknesses. The studious restraint which controls the satirist's hand makes it only the more effective. We know well enough that the portrait is not a fair one, but we are forced to remind ourselves of this at every

step to avoid the spell which Pope's apparent impartiality casts over our judgments. The whole passage reads not so much like the heated plea of an advocate as the measured summing-up of a judge, and the last couplet falls on our ears with the inevitability of a final sentence. But the peculiar merit of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* consists neither in the ease and polish of its style, nor in the vigor and effectiveness of its satire, but in the insight it gives us into the heart and mind of the poet himself. It presents an ideal picture of Pope, the man and the author, of his life, his friendships, his love of his parents, his literary relationships and aims. And it is quite futile to object, as some critics have done, that this picture is not exactly in accordance with the known facts of Pope's life. No great man can be tried and judged on the mere record of his acts. We must know the circumstances that shaped these, and the motives that inspired them. A man's ideals, if genuinely held and honestly followed, are perhaps even more valuable contributions to our final estimate of the man himself than all he did or left undone.

> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

And in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* we recognize in Pope ideals of independence, of devotion to his art, of simple living, of loyal friendship, and of filial piety which shine in splendid contrast with the gross, servile, and cynically immoral tone of the age and society in which he lived.

Footnote 1: *i. e.* the blessing of Arbuthnot's future companionship, for which Pope (l. 413) had just prayed.
return to footnote mark

line	reference	meaning
Advertisement		Dr. John Arbuthnot, one of Pope's most intimate friends, had been physician to Queen Anne, and was a man of letters as well as a doctor. Arbuthnot, Pope, and Swift had combined to get out a volume of Miscellanies in 1737. His health was failing rapidly at this time, and he died a month or so after the appearance of this *Epistle*.
Epistle		
1	John	John Searle, Pope's faithful servant.
4	Bedlam	a lunatic asylum in London in Pope's day. Notice how Pope mentions, in the same breath, Bedlam and Parnassus, the hill of the Muses which poets might well be supposed to haunt.

8	thickets	the groves surrounding Pope's villa.
	Grot.	see Introduction [grotto]
10	the chariot	the coach in which Pope drove.
	the barge	the boat in which Pope was rowed upon the Thames.
13	the Mint	a district in London where debtors were free from arrest. As they could not be arrested anywhere on Sunday, Pope represents them as taking that day to inflict their visits on him.
15	parson	probably a certain Eusden, who had some pretensions to letters, but who ruined himself by drink.
17	clerk	a law clerk.
18	engross	write legal papers.

19-20		An imaginary portrait of a mad poet who keeps on writing verses even in his cell in Bedlam. Pope may have been thinking of Lee, a dramatist of Dryden's day who was confined for a time in this asylum.
23	Arthur	Arthur Moore, a member of Parliament for some years and well known in London society. His "giddy son," James Moore, who took the name of Moore Smythe, dabbled in letters and was a bitter enemy of Pope.
25	Cornus	Robert Lord Walpole, whose wife deserted him in 1734. Horace Walpole speaks of her as half mad.
31	sped	done for.
40		Pope's counsel to delay the publication of the works read to him is borrowed from Horace: "nonumque prematur in annum" '(*Ars Poetica,* 388).'

41	Drury-land	like Grub Street, a haunt of poor authors at this time.
43	before Term ends	before the season is over; that is, as soon as the poem is written.
48	a Prologue	for a play. Of course a prologue by the famous Mr. Pope would be of great value to a poor and unknown dramatist.
49	Pitholeon	the name of a foolish poet mentioned by Horace. Pope uses it here for his enemy Welsted, mentioned in l. 373. — 'his Grace:' the title given a Duke in Great Britain. The Duke here referred to is said to be the Duke of Argyle, one of the most influential of the great Whig lords.

53	Curll	a notorious publisher of the day, and an enemy of Pope. The implication is that if Pope will not grant Pitholeon's request, the latter will accept Curll's invitation and concoct a new libel against the poet.
60		Pope was one of the few men of letters of his day who had not written a play, and he was at this time on bad terms with certain actors.
62		Bernard Lintot, the publisher of Pope's translation of Homer.
66	go snacks	share the profits. Pope represents the unknown dramatist as trying to bribe him to give a favorable report of the play.
69	Midas	an old legend tells us that Midas was presented with a pair of ass's ears by an angry god whose music he had slighted. His barber, or, Chaucer says, his queen, discovered the change which

		Midas had tried to conceal, and unable to keep the secret whispered it to the reeds in the river, who straightway spread the news abroad.
75		With this line Arbuthnot is supposed to take up the conversation. This is indicated here and elsewhere by the letter A.
79	*Dunciad*	see Introduction
85	Codrus	a name borrowed from Juvenal to denote a foolish poet. Pope uses it here for some conceited dramatist who thinks none the less of himself because his tragedy is rejected with shouts of laughter.
96		Explain the exact meaning of this line.
97	Bavius	a stock name for a bad poet. See note on *Essay on Criticism*, l. 34.

98	Philips	Ambrose Philips, author among other things of a set of *Pastorals* that appeared in the same volume with Pope, 1709. Pope and he soon became bitter enemies. He was patronized by a Bishop Boulter.
99	Sappho	Here as elsewhere Pope uses the name of the Greek poetess for his enemy, Lady Mary Wortley Montague.
109	Grubstreet	a wretched street in London, inhabited in Pope's day by hack writers, most of whom were his enemies.
111	Curll	(see note to l. 53) had printed a number of Pope's letters without the poet's consent some years before this poem was written.
113-32		Pope here describes the flatterers who were foolish enough to pay him personal compliments. They compare him to Horace who was short like Pope, though fat, and who seems to have suffered

		from colds; also to Alexander, one of whose shoulders was higher than the other, and to Ovid, whose other name, Naso, might indicate that long noses were a characteristic feature of his family. Pope really had large and beautiful eyes. Maro, l. 122, is Virgil.
123		With this line Pope begins an account of his life as a poet. For his precocity, see Introduction.
129	ease	amuse, entertain.
	'friend, not Wife:'	the reference is, perhaps, to Martha Blount, Pope's friend, and may have been meant as a contradiction of his reported secret marriage to her.
132	to bear	to endure the pains and troubles of an invalid's life.
133	Granville	George Granville, Lord Lansdowne, a poet and patron of letters to whom

		Pope had dedicated his *Windsor Forest*.
134	Walsh	see note on *Essay on Criticism*, l. 729.
135	Garth	Sir Samuel Garth, like Arbuthnot, a doctor, a man of letters, and an early friend of Pope.
137		Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury; John, Lord Somers; and John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham; all leading statesmen and patrons of literature in Queen Anne's day.
138	Rochester	Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, an intimate friend of Pope.
139	St. John	Bolingbroke. For Pope's relations with him, see introduction to the *Essay on Man*, p. 116.
143		Gilbert Burnet and John Oldmixon had written

		historical works from the Whig point of view. Roger Cooke, a now forgotten writer, had published a *Detection of the Court and State of England*. Pope in a note on this line calls them all three authors of secret and scandalous history.
146		The reference is to Pope's early descriptive poems, the *Pastorals* and *Windsor Forest*.
147	gentle Fanny's	a sneer at Lord Hervey's verses. See the introduction to this poem.
149	Gildon	a critic of the time who had repeatedly attacked Pope. The poet told Spence that he had heard Addison gave Gildon ten pounds to slander him.
151	Dennis	see note on *Essay on Criticism*. l. 270.

156	kiss'd the rod	Pope was sensible enough to profit by the criticisms even of his enemies. He corrected several passages in the *Essay on Criticism* which Dennis had properly found fault with.
162	Bentley	the most famous scholar of Pope's day. Pope disliked him because of his criticism of the poet's translation of the *Iliad*, "good verses, but not Homer." The epithet "slashing" refers to Bentley's edition of *Paradise Lost* in which he altered and corrected the poet's text to suit his own ideas.
	Tibbalds	Lewis Theobald (pronounced Tibbald), a scholar who had attacked Pope's edition of Shakespeare. Pope calls him "piddling" because of his scrupulous attention to details.
177	the Bard	Philips, see note on l. 98. Pope claimed that Philips's *Pastorals* were plagiarized from Spenser, and other poets. Philips, also,

		translated some *Persian Tales* for the low figure of half a crown apiece.
187	bade translate	suggested that they translate other men's work, since they could write nothing valuable of their own.
188	Tate	a poetaster of the generation before Pope. He is remembered as the part author of a doggerel version of the Psalms.
191-212		For a discussion of this famous passage, see introduction to the *Epistle*.
196	the Turk	it was formerly the practice for a Turkish monarch when succeeding to the throne to have all his brothers murdered so as to do away with possible rivals.
199	faint praise	Addison was hearty enough when he cared to praise his friends. Pope is thinking of the coldness with which Addison treated his

		Pastorals as compared to those of Philips.
206	oblig'd	note the old-fashioned pronunciation to rhyme with "besieged."
207	Cato	an unmistakable allusion to Addison's tragedy in which the famous Roman appears laying down the law to the remnants of the Senate.
209	Templars	students of law at the "Temple" in London who prided themselves on their good taste in literature. A body of them came on purpose to applaud 'Cato' on the first night.
	raise	exalt, praise.
211-2	laugh ... weep	explain the reason for these actions.
	Atticus	Addison's name was given in the first version of this passage. Then it was changed to "A — -n." Addison had

		been mentioned in the *Spectator* (No. 150) under the name of Atticus as "in every way one of the greatest geniuses the age has produced."
213	rubric on the walls	Lintot, Pope's old publisher, used to stick up the titles of new books in red letters on the walls of his shop.
214	with claps	with clap-bills, posters.
215	smoking	hot from the press.
220	George	George II, king of England at this time. His indifference to literature was notorious.
228	Bufo	the picture of a proud but grudging patron of letters which follows was first meant for Bubb Doddington, a courtier and patron of letters at the time the poem was written. In order to connect it more closely with the time of which he was writing, Pope added ll. 243-246, which pointed to Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax.

		Halifax was himself a poet and affected to be a great patron of poetry, but his enemies accused him of only giving his clients "good words and good dinners." Pope tells an amusing story of Montague's comments on his translation of the *Iliad* (Spence, *Anecdotes*, p. 134). But Halifax subscribed for ten copies of the translation, so that Pope, at least, could not complain of his lack of generosity.
	Castalian state	the kingdom of poets
232		His name was coupled with that of Horace as a poet and critic.
234	Pindar without a head	some headless statue which Bufo insisted was a genuine classic figure of Pindar, the famous Greek lyric poet.
237	his seat	his country seat.

242	paid in kind	What does this phrase mean?
243		Dryden died in 1700. He had been poor and obliged to work hard for a living in his last years, but hardly had to starve. Halifax offered to pay the expenses of his funeral and contribute five hundred pounds for a monument, and Pope not unreasonably suggests that some of this bounty might have been bestowed on Dryden in his lifetime.
249		When a politician wants a writer to put in a day's work in defending him. Walpole, for example, who cared nothing for poetry, spent large sums in retaining writers to defend him in the journals and pamphlets of the day.
254		John Gay, the author of some very entertaining verses, was an intimate friend of Pope. On account of some supposed satirical allusions his opera *Polly* was refused a

		license, and when his friends, the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry (see l. 260) solicited subscriptions for it in the palace, they were driven from the court. Gay died in 1732, and Pope wrote an epitaph for his tomb in Westminster Abbey. It is to this that he alludes in l. 258.
274	Balbus	Balbus is said to mean the Earl of Kinnoul, at one time an acquaintance of Pope and Swift.
278		Sir William Yonge, a Whig politician whom Pope disliked. He seems to have written occasional verses. Bubo is Bubo Doddington (see note on l 230).
297-8		In the Fourth Moral Essay, published in 1731 as an *Epistle to the Earl of Burlington*, Pope had given a satirical description of a nobleman's house and grounds, adorned and laid out at vast expense, but in bad taste. Certain features of this description were taken from Canons, the splendid

		country place of the Duke of Chandos, and the duke was at once identified by a scandal-loving public with the Timon of the poem. In the description Pope speaks of the silver bell which calls worshipers to Timon's chapel, and of the soft Dean preaching there "who never mentions Hell to ears polite." In this passage of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* he is protesting against the people who swore that they could identify the bell and the Dean as belonging to the chapel at Canons.
303	Sporus	a favorite of Nero, used here for Lord Hervey. See introduction to this poem.
304	ass's milk	Hervey was obliged by bad health to keep a strict diet, and a cup of ass's milk was his daily drink.
308	painted child	Hervey was accustomed to paint his face like a woman.
317-9		Pope is thinking of Milton's striking description of Satan

		"squat like a toad" by the ear of the sleeping Eve (*Paradise Lost*, IV, 800). In this passage "Eve" refers to Queen Caroline with whom Hervey was on intimate terms. It is said that he used to have a seat in the queen's hunting chaise "where he sat close behind her perched at her ear".
322	now master up, now miss	Pope borrowed this telling phrase from a pamphlet against Hervey written by Pulteney, a political opponent, in which the former is called "a pretty little master-miss."
326	the board	the Council board where Hervey sat as member of the Privy Council.
328-9		An allusion to the old pictures of the serpent in Eden with a snake's body and a woman's, or angel's, face.
330	parts	talents, natural gifts.

338-9		An allusion to Pope's abandoning the imaginative topics to his early poems, as the *Pastorals* and *The Rape of the Lock*, and turning to didactic verse as in the *Essay on Man*, and the *Moral Epistles*.
347		An allusion to a story circulated, in an abusive pamphlet called *A Pop upon Pope*, that the poet had been whipped for his satire and that he had cried like a child.
349		Dull and scandalous poems printed under Pope's name, or attributed to him by his enemies.
351	the pictur'd shape	Pope was especially hurt by the caricatures which exaggerated his personal deformity.
353	a friend is exile	probably Bishop Atterbury, then in exile for his Jacobite opinions.

354-5		Another reference to Hervey who was suspected of poisoning the mind of the King against Pope.
361	Japhet	Japhet Crooke, a notorious forger of the time. He died in prison in 1734, after having had his nose slit and ears cropped for his crimes; see below, l. 365.
363	Knight of the post	a slang term for a professional witness ready to, swear to anything for money. A knight of the shire, on the other hand, is the representative of a county in the House of Commons.
367	bit	tricked, taken in, a piece of Queen Anne slang. The allusion is probably to the way in which Lady Mary Wortley Montague allowed Pope to make love to her and then laughed at him.
369	friend to his distress	in 1733, when old Dennis was in great poverty, a play was performed for his benefit, for

		which Pope obligingly wrote a prologue.
371		Colley Gibber, actor and poet laureate. Pope speaks as if it were an act of condescension for him to have drunk with Gibber."
	Moore	James Moore Smythe (see note on l. 23), whom Pope used to meet at the house of the Blounts. He wrote a comedy, *The Rival Modes*, in which he introduced six lines that Pope had written. Pope apparently had given him leave to do so, and then retracted his permission. But Moore used them without the permission and an undignified quarrel arose as to the true authorship of the passage.
373	Welsted	a hack writer of the day, had falsely charged Pope with being responsible for the death of the lady who is celebrated in Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*.

374-5		There is an allusion here that has never been fully explained. Possibly the passage refers to Teresa Blount whom Pope suspected of having circulated slanderous reports concerning his relations with her sister.
376-7		Suffered Budgell to attribute to his (Pope's) pen the slanderous gossip of the *Grub Street Journal*, — a paper to which Pope did, as a matter of fact, contribute — and let him (Budgell) write anything he pleased except his (Pope's) will. Budgell, a distant cousin of Addison's, fell into bad habits after his friend's death. He was strongly suspected of having forged a will by which Dr. Tindal of Oxford left him a considerable sum of money. He finally drowned himself in the Thames.
378	the two Curlls	Curll, the bookseller, and Lord Hervey whom Pope here couples with him because of Hervey's vulgar abuse of Pope's personal

		deformities and obscure parentage.
380	yet why	Why should they abuse Pope's inoffensive parents? Compare the following lines.
383		Moore's own mother was suspected of loose conduct.
386-8	Of gentle blood ... each parent	Pope asserted, perhaps incorrectly, that his father belonged to a gentleman's family, the head of which was the Earl of Downe. His mother was the daughter of a Yorkshire gentleman, who lost two sons in the service of Charles I (cf. l. 386).
389	Bestia	probably the elder Horace Walpole, who was in receipt of a handsome pension.
391		An allusion to Addison's unhappy marriage with the Countess of Warwick.

393	the good man	Pope's father, who as a devout Roman Catholic refused to take the oath of allegiance (cf. l. 395), or risk the equivocations sanctioned by the "schoolmen," *i.e.* the Catholic casuists of the day (l. 398).
404	friend	Arbuthnot, to whom the epistle is addressed.
405-11		The first draft of these appeared in a letter to Aaron Hill, September 3, 1731, where Pope speaks of having sent them "the other day to a particular friend," perhaps the poet Thomson. Mrs. Pope, who was very old and feeble, was of course alive when they were first written, but died more than a year before the passage appeared in its revised form in this *Epistle*.
412		An allusion to the promise contained in the fifth commandment.

415	served a Queen	Arbuthnot had been Queen Anne's doctor, but was driven out of his rooms in the palace after her death.
416	that blessing	long life for Arbuthnot. It was, in fact, denied, for he died a month or so after the appearance of the *Epistle*.

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Notes on *An Ode on Solitude*

Pope says that this delightful little poem was written at the early age of twelve. It first appeared in a letter to his friend, Henry Cromwell, dated July 17, 1709. There are several variations between this first form and that in which it was finally published, and it is probable that Pope thought enough of his boyish production to subject it to repeated revision. Its spirit is characteristic of a side of Pope's nature that is often forgotten. He was, indeed, the poet of the society of his day, urban, cultured, and pleasure-loving; but to the end of his days he retained a love for the quiet charm of country life which he had come to feel in his boyhood at Binfield, and for which he early withdrew from the whirl and dissipations of London to the groves and the grotto of his villa at Twickenham.

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Notes on *The Descent of Dullness*

In the fourth book of the *Dunciad*, Pope abandons the satire on the pretenders to literary fame which had run through the earlier books, and flies at higher game. He represents the Goddess Dullness as "coming in her majesty to destroy Order and Science, and to substitute the Kingdom of the Dull upon earth." He attacks the pedantry and formalism of university education in his day, the dissipation and false taste of the traveled gentry, the foolish pretensions to learning of collectors and virtuosi, and the daringly irreverent speculations of freethinkers and infidels. At the close of the book he represents the Goddess as dismissing her worshipers with a speech which she concludes with "a yawn of extraordinary virtue." Under its influence "all nature nods," and pulpits, colleges, and Parliament succumb. The poem closes with the magnificent description of the descent of Dullness and her final conquest of art, philosophy, and religion. It is said that Pope himself admired these lines so much that he could not repeat them without his voice faltering with emotion. "And well it might, sir," said Dr. Johnson when this anecdote was repeated to him, "for they are noble lines." And Thackeray in his lecture on Pope in *The English Humorists* says:

> "In these astonishing lines Pope reaches, I think, to the very greatest height which his sublime art has attained, and shows himself the equal of all poets of all times. It is the brightest ardor, the loftiest assertion of truth, the most generous wisdom, illustrated by the noblest poetic figure, and spoken in words the aptest, grandest, and most harmonious."

Notes on *The Epitaph on Gay*

John Gay, the idlest, best-natured, and best-loved man of letters of his day, was the special friend of Pope. His early work, *The Shepherd's Week*, was planned as a parody on the *Pastorals* of Pope's rival, Ambrose Philips, and Pope assisted him in the composition of his luckless farce, *Three Hours after Marriage*. When Gay's opera *Polly* was forbidden by the licenser, and Gay's patrons, the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, were driven from court for soliciting subscriptions for him, Pope warmly espoused his cause. Gay died in 1732 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Pope's epitaph for his tomb was first published in the quarto edition of Pope's works in 1735 — Johnson, in his discussion of Pope's epitaphs (*Lives of the Poets*), devotes a couple of pages of somewhat captious criticism to these lines; but they have at least the virtue of simplicity and sincerity, and are at once an admirable portrait of the man and a lasting tribute to the poet Gay.

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Appendix

The Rape of the Lock: First Edition

Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos
Sed juvat, hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.

Mart.

Canto I

What dire offence from
am'rous causes springs,
What mighty quarrels rise
from trivial things,
I sing — This verse to C — l,
Muse! is due:
This, ev'n Belinda may
vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not
so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve
my lays.

Say what strange motive,
goddess! could compel
A well-bred lord t' assault a
gentle belle?
O say what stranger cause, yet
unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle
reject a lord?
And dwells such rage in
softest bosoms then,
And lodge such daring souls
in little men?

Sol through white curtains
did his beams display,
And ope'd those eyes which
brighter shine than they,
Shock just had giv'n himself
the rousing shake,
And nymphs prepared their
chocolate to take;
Thrice the wrought slipper
knocked against the ground,
And striking watches the
tenth hour resound.
Belinda rose, and midst
attending dames,
Launched on the bosom of
the silver Thames:
A train of well-dressed youths
around her shone,
And ev'ry eye was fixed on
her alone:
On her white breast a
sparkling cross she wore
Which Jews might kiss and
infidels adore.

Her lively looks a sprightly
mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as
unfixed as those:
Favours to none, to all she
smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never
once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the
gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine
on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and
sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles
had faults to hide:
If to her share some female
errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll
forgive 'em all.

This nymph, to the
destruction of mankind,
Nourished two locks, which
graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well
conspired to deck
With shining ringlets her
smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his
slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in
slender chains.
With hairy springes we the
birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise
the finny prey,

Fair tresses man's imperial
race insnare,
And beauty draws us with a
single hair.

Th' adventurous baron the
bright locks admired;
He saw, he wished, and to the
prize aspired.
Resolved to win, he meditates
the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud
betray;
For when success a lover's toil
attends,
Few ask if fraud or force
attained his ends.

For this, ere Phoebus rose, he
had implored
Propitious heav'n, and every
pow'r adored,
But chiefly Love — to Love an
altar built,
Of twelve vast French
romances, neatly gilt.
There lay the sword-knot
Sylvia's hands had sewn
With Flavia's busk that oft
had wrapped his own:
A fan, a garter, half a pair of
gloves,
And all the trophies of his
former loves.
With tender billets-doux he
lights the pire,
And breathes three am'rous

sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs
with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long
possess the prize:
The pow'rs gave ear, and
granted half his pray'r,
The rest the winds dispersed
in empty air.

Close by those meads, for
ever crowned with flow'rs,
Where Thames with pride
surveys his rising tow'rs,
There stands a structure of
majestic frame,
Which from the neighb'ring
Hampton takes its name.
Here Britain's statesmen oft
the fall foredoom
Of foreign tyrants, and of
nymphs at home;
Here thou, great Anna! whom
three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take
— and sometimes tea.

Hither our nymphs and
heroes did resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures
of a court;
In various talk the cheerful
hours they passed,
Of who was bit, or who
capotted last;
This speaks the glory of the
British queen,

And that describes a
charming Indian screen;
A third interprets motions,
looks, and eyes;
At ev'ry word a reputation
dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each
pause of chat,
With singing, laughing,
ogling, and all that.

Now when, declining from
the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his
burning ray;
When hungry judges soon the
sentence sign,
And wretches hang that
jurymen may dine;
When merchants from th'
Exchange return in peace,
And the long labours of the
toilet cease,
The board's with cups and
spoons, alternate, crowned,
The berries crackle, and the
mill turns round;
On shining altars of Japan
they raise
The silver lamp, and fiery
spirits blaze:
From silver spouts the
grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives
the smoking tide.
At once they gratify their
smell and taste,

While frequent cups prolong
the rich repast.
Coffee (which makes the
politician wise,
And see through all things
with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the
baron's brain
New stratagems, the radiant
lock to gain.
Ah cease, rash youth! desist
ere't is too late,
Fear the just gods, and think
of Scylla's fate!
Changed to a bird, and sent to
flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus'
injured hair!

But when to mischief mortals
bend their mind,
How soon fit instruments of
ill they find!
Just then, Clarissa drew with
tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from
her shining case:
So ladies, in romance, assist
their knight,
Present the spear, and arm
him for the fight;
He takes the gift with
rev'rence, and extends
The little engine on his
fingers' ends;
This just behind Belinda's
neck he spread,

As o'er the fragrant steams
she bends her head.
He first expands the glitt'ring
forfex wide
T' enclose the lock; then joins
it, to divide;
One fatal stroke the sacred
hair does sever
From the fair head, for ever,
and for ever!

The living fires come flashing
from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend
th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks by dames
to heav'n are cast,
When husbands die, or
lapdogs breathe their last;
Or when rich china vessels,
fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust and painted
fragments lie!

"Let wreaths of triumph now
my temples twine,"
The victor cried, "the glorious
prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or
birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the
British fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be
read,
Or the small pillow grace a
lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on

solemn days,
When num'rous wax-lights in
bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or
assignations give,
So long my honour, name,
and praise shall live!"

What time would spare, from
steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men,
submit to fate!
Steel did the labour of the
gods destroy,
And strike to dust th' aspiring
tow'rs of Troy;
Steel could the works of
mortal pride confound,
And hew triumphal arches to
the ground.
What wonder then, fair
nymph! thy hairs should feel
The conqu'ring force of
unresisted steel?

Canto II

But anxious cares the pensive
nymph oppressed,
And secret passions laboured
in her breast.
Not youthful kings in battle
seized alive,
Not scornful virgins who their
charms survive,
Not ardent lover robbed of all
his bliss,
Not ancient lady when
refused a kiss,
Not tyrants fierce that
unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her
manteau's pinned awry,
E'er felt such rage,
resentment, and despair,
As thou, sad virgin! for thy
ravished hair.

While her racked soul repose
and peace requires,
The fierce Thalestris fans the
rising fires.
"O wretched maid!" she
spread her hands, and cried,
(And Hampton's echoes,
"Wretched maid!" replied)
"Was it for this you took such
constant care
Combs, bodkins, leads,
pomatums to prepare?
For this your locks in paper
durance bound?

For this with tort'ring irons wreathed around?
Oh had the youth been but content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!
Gods! shall the ravisher display this hair,
While the fops envy, and the ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose unrivalled shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all, our sex resign.
Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded toast,
And all your honour in a whisper lost!
How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend?
'T will then be infamy to seem your friend!
And shall this prize, th' inestimable prize,
Exposed through crystal to the gazing eyes,
And heightened by the diamond's circling rays,
On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?
Sooner shall grass in Hyde Park Circus grow,
And wits take lodgings in the

sound of Bow;
Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,
Men, monkeys, lapdogs, parrots, perish all!"

She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,
And bids her beau demand the precious hairs:
Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane,
With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face,
He first the snuff-box opened, then the case,
And thus broke out — "My lord, why, what the devil!
Zounds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!
Plague on't! 't is past a jest — nay, prithee, pox!
Give her the hair." — He spoke, and rapped his box.

"It grieves me much," replied the peer again,
"Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain:
But by this lock, this sacred lock, I swear,
(Which never more shall join its parted hair;
Which never more its honours shall renew,

Clipped from the lovely head
where once it grew)
That, while my nostrils draw
the vital air,
This hand, which won it, shall
for ever wear."
He spoke, and speaking, in
proud triumph spread
The long-contended honours
of her head.

But see! the nymph in
sorrow's pomp appears,
Her eyes half-languishing,
half drowned in tears;
Now livid pale her cheeks,
now glowing red
On her heaved bosom hung
her drooping head,
Which with a sigh she raised,
and thus she said:
"For ever cursed be this
detested day,
Which snatched my best, my
fav'rite curl away;
Happy! ah ten times happy
had I been,
If Hampton Court these eyes
had never seen!
Yet am not I the first
mistaken maid,
By love of courts to num'rous
ills betrayed.
O had I rather unadmired
remained
In some lone isle, or distant
northern land,

Where the gilt chariot never
marked the way,
Where none learn ombre,
none e'er taste bohea!
There kept my charms
concealed from mortal eye,
Like roses, that in deserts
bloom and die.
What moved my mind with
youthful lords to roam?
O had I stayed, and said my
pray'rs at home!
'Twas this the morning omens
did foretell,
Thrice from my trembling
hand the patchbox fell;
The tott'ring china shook
without a wind,
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock
was most unkind!
See the poor remnants of this
slighted hair!
My hands shall rend what
ev'n thy own did spare:
This in two sable ringlets
taught to break,
Once gave new beauties to the
snowy neck;
The sister-lock now sits
uncouth, alone,
And in its fellow's fate
foresees its own;
Uncurled it hangs, the fatal
shears demands,
And tempts once more thy
sacrilegious hands."

She said: the pitying audience melt in tears;
But fate and Jove had stopped the baron's ears.
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails?
Not half so fixed the Trojan could remain,
While Anna begged and Dido raged in vain.
"To arms, to arms!" the bold Thalestris cries,
And swift as lightning to the combat flies.
All side in parties, and begin th' attack;
Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;
Heroes' and heroines' shouts confus'dly rise,
And bass and treble voices strike the skies;
No common weapons in their hands are found,
Like gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.

So when bold Homer makes the gods engage,
And heav'nly breasts with human passions rage,
'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms,
And all Olympus rings with loud alarms;

Jove's thunder roars, heav'n
trembles all around,
Blue Neptune storms, the
bellowing deeps resound:
Earth shakes her nodding
tow'rs, the ground gives way,
And the pale ghosts start at
the flash of day!

While through the press
enraged Thalestris flies,
And scatters death around
from both her eyes,
A beau and witling perished
in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and
one in song.
"O cruel nymph; a living
death I bear,"
Cried Dapperwit, and sunk
beside his chair.
A mournful glance Sir
Fopling upwards cast,
"Those eyes are made so
killing" — was his last.
Thus on Mæander's flow'ry
margin lies
Th' expiring swan, and as he
sings he dies.

As bold Sir Plume had drawn
Clarissa down,
Chloe stepped in, and killed
him with a frown;
She smiled to see the doughty
hero slain,
But at her smile the beau

revived again.

Now Jove suspends his
golden scales in air,
Weighs the men's wits against
the lady's hair;
The doubtful beam long nods
from side to side;
At length the wits mount up,
the hairs subside.

See fierce Belinda on the
baron flies,
With more than usual
lightning in her eyes:
Nor feared the chief th'
unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on
his foe to die.
But this bold lord, with manly
strength endued,
She with one finger and a
thumb subdued:
Just where the breath of life
his nostrils drew,
A charge of snuff the wily
virgin threw;
Sudden, with starting tears
each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes
to his nose.

"Now meet thy fate," th'
incensed virago cried,
And drew a deadly bodkin
from her side.

"Boast not my fall," he said,
"insulting foe!
Thou by some other shalt be
laid as low;
Nor think to die dejects my
lofty mind;
All that I dread is leaving you
behind!
Rather than so, ah let me still
survive,
And still burn on, in Cupid's
flames, alive."

"Restore the lock!" she cries;
and all around
"Restore the lock!" the
vaulted roofs rebound.
Not fierce Othello in so loud a
strain
Roared for the handkerchief
that caused his pain.
But see how oft ambitious
aims are crossed,
And chiefs contend till all the
prize is lost!
The lock, obtained with guilt,
and kept with pain,
In ev'ry place is sought, but
sought in vain:
With such a prize no mortal
must be blessed,
So heav'n decrees! with
heav'n who can contest?
Some thought it mounted to
the lunar sphere,
Since all that man e'er lost is
treasured there.

There heroes' wits are kept in
pond'rous vases,
And beaux' in snuff-boxes
and tweezer-cases.
There broken vows, and
death-bed alms are found,
And lovers' hearts with ends
of ribbon bound,
The courtier's promises, and
sick man's pray'rs,
The smiles of harlots, and the
tears of heirs,
Cages for gnats, and chains to
yoke a flea,
Dried butterflies, and tomes
of casuistry.

But trust the muse — she saw
it upward rise,
Though marked by none but
quick poetic eyes:
(Thus Rome's great founder
to the heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confessed
in view)
A sudden star, it shot through
liquid air,
And drew behind a radiant
trail of hair.
Not Berenice's locks first rose
so bright,
The skies bespangling with
dishevelled light.
(This the beau monde shall
from the Mall survey,
(As through the moonlight
shade they nightly stray,

(And hail with music its
propitious ray;
This Partridge soon shall view
in cloudless skies,
When next he looks through
Galileo's eyes;
And hence th' egregious
wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall
of Rome.

Then cease, bright nymph! to
mourn thy ravished hair,
Which adds new glory to the
shining sphere!
Not all the tresses that fair
head can boast,
Shall draw such envy as the
lock you lost.
For after all the murders of
your eye,
When, after millions slain,
yourself shall die;
When those fair suns shall
set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be
laid in dust,
This lock the muse shall
consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe
Belinda's name.

end of text

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE RAPE OF THE LOCK, AND OTHER POEMS ***

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