4.8: Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

Alexander Pope was born into a well-to-do Roman Catholic family. He attended Roman Catholic schools in Binfield and at Hyde Park Corner. He did not attend either Oxford or Cambridge, both of which required graduates to take an oath to the Monarch and Church of England. Around the age of twelve, he became infected with Pott's disease, which caused a permanent curvature to his spine and stunted his growth at 4 ft 6 in. He suffered lifelong pain from this debilitating disease, to which some scholars attribute the venomous sensibility of his later satires.
Pope started writing very early in his life. He self-studied classical, French, English, and Italian literature. Beginning with *Pastorals* (1709), Pope modeled his work on the classical writers of Rome, particularly Horace, Ovid, and Lucretius (99-55 BCE), and wrote in several classical genres, including satire, epic, and epistle.

He expressed his views on literary decorum in his important *An Essay on Criticism* (1711). His other poems included the verse mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock*. His use of the mock-epic suggests that older genres, like the epic, were no longer appropriate to the kind of matter with which his society now had to deal. It didn’t have epic matters, like the founding of states; it didn’t have epic heroes. So, the more appropriate form to use was the mock-epic, with an anti-hero. Pope’s mock-epic was inspired by an actual conflict between two families and took issue with the trivial and overly-materialistic concerns of upper-class society with its lack of true moral judgment or self-perspective. Its concerns focus more on form and expression than on gender issues, despite the “violation” of its female protagonist’s lock of hair. He wrote from the female point-of-view in *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717), a poem considering human agency and spiritual integrity. His poems, including the more personal *Windsor Forest*—a locale where he grew up—all are marked by wit; extraordinary artfulness; deft and agile use of the heroic couplet form; seamless union of sound and sense; adroit and apt imagery; and refined, polished, even perfect, expression. As he convincingly notes in *An Essay on Criticism*: “True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,/ As those move easiest who have learn’d to dance” (362-63).

In 1719, he settled permanently at Twickenham, a small villa on the Thames. And he devoted his life to letters, producing important multi-volume translations of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—the sales of which made him financially secure; an edition of William Shakespeare for which he wrote critical introductions; and “An Essay on Man,” which asserts his views on man’s place in the world (and on the hierarchical Great Chain of Being), particularly in relation to God.

His rich and active friendships with writers were exemplified in his joining the Scriblerus Club, whose other members included Jonathan Swift and John Gay. Pope marked his literary territory and alliances through satirical attacks on writers such as Joseph Addison (1672-1719), in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735); and Lewis Theobald (1688-1744) and Colley Cibber (1671-1757), in his two editions of *The Dunciad* (1728, 1743).

Although Romantic literature of the nineteenth century rebelled against the formal limitations and artificiality of neoclassical works, Pope’s writing was admired by Wordsworth. Pope continues to stand as one of the greatest neoclassical writers of the eighteenth century.
4.8.1: “An Essay on Criticism”

PART 1

‘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 pass’d,
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 your self 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,
Though meant each other’s aid, like man and wife.
’Tis 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 discover’d, not devis’d,
Are Nature still, but Nature methodis’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 criticise.

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 answers 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.
Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
Which, without passing through 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.
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 misshap’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 errors 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!

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Part 2

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 vice 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 surprise;
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 ev'ry 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 spite 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 such 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 through 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 different styles with different 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 dress’d.
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 tried,
Not 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 vowels tire,
While expletives their feeble aid do join,
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line,
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes.
Where'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 surprise,
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 subdued 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 through 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 applied
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;
(Though 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 authors’ 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 woeful 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 every 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 unfortified,

Twixt sense and nonsense daily change their side.

Ask them the cause; they’re wiser still, they say;

And still tomorrow’s wiser than today.

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’erspread;

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 different 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 pleased 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 envied wit, like Sol eclips’d, makes known
Th’ opposing body’s grossness, not its own.
When first that sun too powerful 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 'em 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 treacherous 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 ’tis 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:
Though 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 through 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 purgd 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,

Though 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 ruled the state, and statesmen farces writ;

Nay wits had pensions, and young Lords had wit:

The fair sat 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 learned to spare,
And Vice admired to find a flatt’rer there!
Encourag’d thus, wit’s Titans brav’d the skies,
And the press groan’d with licenc’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.

Part 3

Learn then what morals critics ought to show,
For ’tis 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, though 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.

'Tis 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 proposed 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.

'Twere well might critics still this freedom take,
But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
And stares, Tremendous! with a threatening 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 dangerous 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.
'Tis 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,
Even 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 'tis 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?
Unbias’d, or by favour or by spite;
Not dully prepossess’d, nor blindly right;
Though learn’d, well-bred; and though 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 ’twas fit,
Who conquer’d nature, should preside o’er wit.

Horace still charms with graceful negligence,
And without methods 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, though 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!)

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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 shall 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 banished 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 uncivilis'd,
Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold,
We still defied 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.
WHAT dire Offence from am'rous Causes springs,
What mighty Quarrels rise from trivial Things,
I sing—This Verse to C—I, 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! cou'd compel
A well-bred Lord t'assault a gentle Belle?
Oh say what stranger Cause, yet unexplor'd,
Cou’d make a gentle Belle reject a Lord?
And dwells such Rage in softest Bosoms then?
And lodge such daring Souls in Little Men?
Sol thro’ white Curtains did his Beams display,
And op’d those Eyes which brighter shine than they;
Now Shock had giv’n himself the rowzing Shake,
And Nymphs prepar’d their Chocolate to take;
Thrice the wrought Slipper knock’d against the Ground,
And striking Watches the tenth Hour resound.
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'ly 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 Mold;
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 the Souls retire:
The Sprights 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 farther 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, and daring Spark,
The Glance by Day, the Whisper in the Dark;
When kind Occasion prompts their warm Desires,
When Musick 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.
Who 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.
'Tis these that early taint the Female Soul,
Instruct the Eyes of young Coquettes to roll,
Teach Infants Cheeks a bidden Blush to know,
And little Hearts to flutter at a Beau.
Oft when the World imagine Women stray,
The Sylphs thro’ mystick 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,

Beaus banish Beaus, 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,

E're to the Main this Morning's Sun descend.

But Heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:

Warn'd by thy 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,

Leapt up, and wak'd his Mistress with his Tongue.

'Twas 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'ring 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* breaths from yonder Box.
The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
Transform'd 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, while 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
Lanch'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 her smooth Iv'ry Neck.
Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains,
And mighty Hearts are held in slender Chains.
With hairy Sprindges we the Birds betray,
Slight Lines of Hair surprize the Finny prey,
Fair Tresses Man's Imperial Race insnare,
And Beauty draws us with a single Hair.

Th' Adventrous 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, e're Phaebus 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 the Sword-knot Sylvia's Hands had sown,
With Flavia's Busk that oft had rapp'd his own:
A Fan, a Garter, half a Pair of Gloves;
And all the Trophies of his former Loves.

With tender Billet-doux he lights the Pyre,
And breaths 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 Tydes,

While melting Musick 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 sate heavy on his Breast.

He summons strait his Denizens of Air;

The lucid Squadrons round the Sails repair:

Soft o’er the Shrouds Aerial Whispers breath,

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 Dies,

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 opening 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 Daemons hear!

Ye know the Spheres and various Tasks assign’d,

By Laws Eternal, to th’ Aerial Kind.

Some in the Fields of purest Aether play,

And bask and whiten in the Blaze of Day.

Some guide the Course of wandring Orbs on high,

Or roll the Planets thro’ the boundless Sky.

Some less refin’d, beneath the Moon’s pale Light

Hover, and catch the shooting Stars by 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 on the Glebe distill 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 ere 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 Furbelo.

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 sev’nfold 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 stopt in Vials, or transfixed with Pins;
Or plunged in Lakes of bitter Washes lie,
Or wedged whole Ages in a Bodkin’s Eye:
Gums and Pomatums shall his Flight restrain,
While clogged he beats his silken Wings in vain;
Or Alom-Stypticks with contracting Power
Shrink his thin Essence like a rivell’d Flower.
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 Majestick 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 a *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 Toilette cease —

Belinda now, whom Thirst of Fame invites,

Burns to encounter two adventrous Knights,
At Ombre singly to decide their Doom;
And swells her Breast with Conquests yet to come.

Strait the three Bands prepare in Arms to join,
Each Band the number of the Sacred Nine.

Soon as she spreads her Hand, th’ Aerial 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 Halberds 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, that 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 easie 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 Africk’s Sable Sons,
With like Confusion different Nations fly,
In various Habits 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_ now exerts his 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, and fiery Spirits blaze.

From silver Spouts the grateful Liquors glide,

And China’s Earth receives the smoking Tyde.

At once they gratify their Scent and Taste,

While frequent Cups prolong the rich Repast.

Strait hover round the Fair her Airy Band;

Some, as she sip’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 e’er ‘tis 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 Mind,

How soon fit Instruments of Ill they find?
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 Finger's 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 Sprights 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 Sheers, and cut the Sylph in twain,
(But Airy Substance soon unites again)

The meeting Points the sacred Hair dis sewer

From the fair Head, for ever and for ever!

Then flash’d the living Lightnings from her Eyes,

And Screams of Horror rend th’ affrighted Skies.

Not louder Shrieks by Dames to Heav’n are cast,

When Husbands or when Monkeys breath their last,

Or when rich China Vessels, fal’n from high,

In glittring 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 numerous Wax-lights in bright Order blaze,

While Nymphs take Treats, or Assignations give,

So long my Honour, Name, and Praise shall live!

What Time wou’d 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’ Imperial Tow’rs of Troy;

Steel cou’d the Works of mortal Pride confound,

And hew Triumphal Arches to the Ground.
What Wonder then, fair Nymph! thy Hairs shou’d feel

The conqu’ring Force of unresisted Steel?

CANTO IV.

BUT anxious Cares the pensive Nymph opprest,

And secret Passions labour’d in her Breast.

Not youthful Kings in Battel 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 Spright,

As ever sully’d the fair face of Light,

Down to the Central Earth, his proper Scene,

Repairs to search the gloomy Cave of Spleen.

Swift on his sooty Pinions flitts 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, sheltred 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 Languor 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 ev’ry side are seen

Of Bodies chang’d to various Forms by Spleen.

Here living *Teapots* 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-pye talks;

Men prove with Child, as pow’rful Fancy works,

And Maids turn’d Bottels, call aloud for Corks.

Safe past the *Gnome* thro’ this fantastick Band,

A Branch of healing *Spleenwort* in his hand.

Then thus addrest the Pow’r—Hail wayward Queen;

Who rule the Sex to Fifty from Fifteen,

Parent of Vapors and of Female Wit,

Who give th’ *Hysteric* or *Poetic* Fit,

On various Tempers act by various ways,

Make some take Physick, others scribble Plays;

Who cause the Proud their Visits to delay,

And send the Godly in a Pett, 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 Matron’s 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 wondrous 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 Gift 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 issued 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 Ecchos, 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 unrival’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?

‘Twill 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 *Hide-Park* *Circus* grow,

And Wits take Lodgings in the Sound of *Bow*;

Sooner let Earth, Air, Sea, to *Chaos* fall,

Men, Monkies, 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! 'tis 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 shou’d 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 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 mark’d the way,
Where none learn Ombre, none e’er taste Bohea!
There kept my Charms conceal’d from mortal Eye,
Like Roses that in Desarts bloom and die.
What mov’d my Mind with youthful Lords to rome?
O had I stay’d, and said my Pray’rs at home!
’Twas this, the Morning Omens did foretel;
Thrice from my trembling hand the Patch-box fell;
The tott’ring China shook without a Wind,
Nay, Poll sate 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 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 snowie Neck.
The Sister-Lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its Fellow’s Fate foresees its own;
Uncurl’d it hangs, the fatal Sheers 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 fixt the Trojan cou’d remain,
While Anna begg’d and Dido rag’d in vain.
To Arms, to Arms! the bold Thalestris cries,
And swift as Lightning to the Combate flies.
All side in Parties, and begin th’ Attack;
Fans clap, Silks russle, and tough Whalebones crack;
Heroes and Heroins Shouts confus’dly rise,
And base, 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
Clapt his glad Wings, and sate to view the Fight,
Propt on their Bodkin Spears the Sprights survey
The growing Combat, or assist the Fray.
While thro’ the Press enrag’d Thalestris flies,
And scatters Deaths around from both her Eyes,
A Beau and Witling perish’d in the Throng,
One dy’d 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 Meander’s flow’ry Margin lies
Th’ expiring Swan, and as he sings he dies.
As bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stept 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 Mens 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 indu’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 Atome just,

The pungent Grains of titillating Dust.

Sudden, with starting Tears each Eye o’erflows,

And the high Dome re-ecchoes to his Nose.

Now meet thy Fate, th’ incens’d Virago 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 gingled, 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 Heroe’s Wits are kept in pondrous 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 Courtiers Promises, and Sick Man’s Pray’rs,
The Smiles of Harlots, and the Tears of Heirs,
Cages for Gnats, and Chains to Yoak 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 Skies bespangling with dishevel’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 Musick 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’ Galilaeo’s Eyes;

And hence th’ Egregious Wizard shall foredoom

The Fate of Louis, and the Fall of Rome.

Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn the 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, your self shall die;

When those fair Suns shall sett, as sett they must,

And all those Tresses shall be laid in Dust;
This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to Fame,
And mid’st the Stars inscribe Belinda’s Name!
FINIS.

4.8.3: “Windsor-Forest”

To the Right Honourable GEORGE Lord LANSDOWN.

THY Forests, Windsor! and thy green Retreats,
At once the Monarch’s and the Muse’s Seats,
Invite my Lays. Be present, Sylvan Maids!
Unlock your Springs, and open all your Shades.
Granville commands: Your Aid O Muses bring!
What Muse for Granville can refuse to sing?
The Groves of Eden, vanish’d now so long,
Live in Description, and look green in Song:
These, were my Breast inspir’d with equal Flame,
Like them in Beauty, should be like in Fame.
Here Hills and Vales, the Woodland and the Plain,
Here Earth and Water seem to strive again,
Not Chaos-like together crush’d and bruis’d,
But as the World, harmoniously confus’d:
Where Order in Variety we see,
And where, tho’ all things differ, all agree.
Here waving Groves a checquer’d Scene display,
And part admit and part exclude the Day;
As some coy Nymph her Lover’s warm Address
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repress.

There, interspers’d in Lawns and opening Glades,

Thin Trees arise that shun each others Shades.

Here in full Light the russet Plains extend;

There wrapt in Clouds the blueish Hills ascend:

Ev’n the wild Heath displays her Purple Dies,

And ’midst the Desart fruitful Fields arise,

That crown’d with tufted Trees and springing Corn,

Like verdant Isles the sable Waste adorn.

Let India boast her Plants, nor envy we

The weeping Amber or the balmy Tree,

While by our Oaks the precious Loads are born,

And Realms commanded which those Trees adorn.

Not proud Olympus yields a nobler Sight,

Tho’ Gods assembled grace his tow’ring Height,

Than what more humble Mountains offer here,

Where, in their Blessings, all those Gods appear.

See Pan with Flocks, with Fruits Pomona crown’d,

Here blushing Flora paints th’ enamel’d Ground,

Here Ceres’ Gifts in waving Prospect stand,

And nodding tempt the joyful Reaper’s Hand,

Rich Industry sits smiling on the Plains,

And Peace and Plenty tell, a STUART reigns.

Not thus the Land appear’d in Ages past,

A dreary Desart and a gloomy Waste,
To Savage Beasts and Savage Laws a Prey,
And Kings more furious and severe than they:
Who claim'd the Skies, dispeopled Air and Floods,
The lonely Lords of empty Wilds and Woods.
Cities laid waste, they storm'd the Dens and Caves
(For wiser Brutes were backward to be Slaves)
What could be free, when lawless Beasts obey'd,
And ev'n the Elements a Tyrant sway'd?
In vain kind Seasons swell'd the teeming Grain,
Soft Show'rs distill'd, and Suns grew warm in vain;
The Swain with Tears to Beasts his Labour yields,
And famish'd dies amidst his ripen'd Fields.
No wonder Savages or Subjects slain
Were equal Crimes in a Despotick Reign;
Both doom'd alike for sportive Tyrants bled,
But Subjects starv'd while Savages were fed.

Proud Nimrod first the bloody Chace began,
A mighty Hunter, and his Prey was Man.

Our haughty Norman boasts that barb'rous Name,
And makes his trembling Slaves the Royal Game.
The Fields are ravish'd from th' industrious Swains,
From Men their Cities, and from Gods their Fanes:
The levell'd Towns with Weeds lie cover'd o'er,
The hollow Winds thro' naked Temples roar;
Round broken Columns clasping Ivy twin'd;
O'er Heaps of Ruins stalk'd the stately Hind;
The Fox obscene to gaping Tombs retires,
And Wolves with Howling fill the sacred Quires.
Aw'd by his Nobles, by his Commons curst,
Th' Oppressor rul'd Tyrannick where he durst,
Stretch'd o'er the Poor, and Church, his Iron Rod,
And treats alike his Vassals and his God.
Whom ev'n the Saxon spar'd, and bloody Dane,
The wanton Victims of his Sport remain.
But see the Man who spacious Regions gave
A Waste for Beasts, himself deny'd a Grave!
Stretch'd on the Lawn his second Hope survey,
At once the Chaser and at once the Prey.
Lo Rufus, tugging at the deadly Dart,
Bleeds in the Forest, like a wounded Hart.
Succeeding Monarchs heard the Subjects Cries,
Nor saw displeas'd the peaceful Cottage rise.
Then gath'ring Flocks on unknown Mountains fed,
O'er sandy Wilds were yellow Harvests spread,
The Forests wonder'd at th' unusual Grain,
And secret Transports touch'd the conscious Swain.
Fair Liberty, Britannia's Goddess, rears
Her cheerful Head, and leads the golden Years.
Ye vig'rous Swains! while Youth ferments your Blood,
And purer Spirits swell the sprightly Flood,
Now range the Hills, the thickest Woods beset,
Wind the shrill Horn, or spread the waving Net.
When milder Autumn Summer’s Heat succeeds,
And in the new-shorn Field the Partridge feeds,
Before his Lord the ready Spaniel bounds,
Panting with Hope, he tries the furrow’d Grounds,
But when the tainted Gales the Game betray,
Couch’d close he lyes, and meditates the Prey;
Secure they trust th’ unfaithful Field, beset,
Till hov’ring o’er ’em sweeps the swelling Net.
Thus (if small Things we may with great compare)
When Albion sends her eager Sons to War,
Pleas’d, in the Gen’ral’s Sight, the Host lye down
Sudden, before some unsuspecting Town,
The Young, the Old, one Instant makes our Prize,
And high in Air Britannia’s Standard flies.
See! from the Brake the whirring Pheasant springs,
And mounts exulting on triumphant Wings;
Short is his Joy! he feels the fiery Wound,
Flutters in Blood, and panting beats the Ground.
Ah! what avail his glossie, varying Dyes,
His Purple Crest, and Scarlet-circled Eyes,
The vivid Green his shining Plumes unfold;
His painted Wings, and Breast that flames with Gold?
Nor yet, when moist Arcturus clouds the Sky,
The Woods and Fields their pleasing Toils deny.

To Plains with well-breath'd Beagles we repair,

And trace the Mazes of the circling Hare.

(Beasts, taught by us, their Fellow Beasts pursue,

And learn of Man each other to undo.)

With slaught'ring Guns th' unweary'd Fowler roves,

When Frosts have whiten'd all the naked Groves;

Where Doves in Flocks the leafless Trees o'ershade,

And lonely Woodcocks haunt the watry Glade.

He lifts the Tube, and levels with his Eye;

Strait a short Thunder breaks the frozen Sky.

Oft, as in Airy Rings they skim the Heath,

The clam'rous Plovers feel the Leaden Death:

Oft as the mounting Larks their Notes prepare,

They fall, and leave their little Lives in Air.

In genial Spring, beneath the quiv'ring Shade

Where cooling Vapours breathe along the Mead,

The patient Fisher takes his silent Stand

Intent, his Angle trembling in his Hand;

With Looks unmov'd, he hopes the Scaly Breed,

And eyes the dancing Cork and bending Reed.

Our plenteous Streams a various Race supply;

The bright-ey'd Perch with Fins of Tyrian Dye,

The silver Eel, in shining Volumes roll'd,

The yellow Carp, in Scales bedrop'd with Gold,
Swift Trouts, diversify'd with Crimson Stains,
And Pykes, the Tyrants of the watry Plains.

Now Cancer glows with Phoebus' fiery Car;
The Youth rush eager to the Sylvan War;

Swarm o'er the Lawns, the Forest Walks surround,
Rowze the fleet Hart, and chear the opening Hound.

Th' impatient Courser pants in ev'ry Vein,
And pawing, seems to beat the distant Plain,
Hills, Vales, and Floods appear already crost,
And ere he starts, a thousand Steps are lost.

See! the bold Youth strain up the threatening Steep,
Rush thro' the Thickets, down the Vallies sweep,
Hang o'er their Courser's Heads with eager Speed,
And Earth rolls back beneath the flying Steed.

Let old Arcadia boast her spacious Plain,
Th' Immortal Huntress, and her Virgin Train;

Nor envy Windsor! since thy Shades have seen
As bright a Goddess, and as chast a Queen;
Whose Care, like hers, protects the Sylvan Reign,
The Earth's fair Light, and Empress of the Main.

Here, as old Bards have sung, Diana stray'd
Bath'd in the Springs, or sought the cooling Shade;
Here arm'd with Silver Bows, in early Dawn,
Her buskin'd Virgins trac'd the Dewy Lawn.

Above the rest a rural Nymph was fam'd,
Thy Offspring, *Thames!* the fair *Lodona* nam’d,

(*Lodona’s Fate, in long Oblivion cast,*

The Muse shall sing, and what she sings shall last)

Scarce could the Goddess from her Nymph be known,

But by the Crescent and the golden Zone,

She scorn’d the Praise of Beauty, and the Care;

A Belt her Waste, a Fillet binds her Hair,

A painted Quiver on her Shoulder sounds,

And with her Dart the flying Deer she wounds.

It chanc’d, as eager of the Chace the Maid

Beyond the Forest’s verdant Limits stray’d,

*Pan* saw and lov’d, and furious with Desire

Pursu’d her Flight; her Flight increas’d his Fire.

Not half so swift the trembling Doves can fly,

When the fierce Eagle cleaves the liquid Sky;

Not half so swiftly the fierce Eagle moves,

When thro’ the Clouds he drives the trembling Doves;

As from the God with fearful Speed she flew,

As did the God with equal Speed pursue.

Now fainting, sinking, pale, the Nymph appears;

Now close behind his sounding Steps she hears;

And now his Shadow reach’d her as she run,

(His Shadow lengthen’d by the setting Sun)

And now his shorter Breath with sultry Air

Pants on her Neck, and fans her parting Hair.
In vain on Father Thames she calls for Aid,
Nor could Diana help her injur’d Maid.

Faint, breathless, thus she pray’d, nor pray’d in vain;

“Ah Cynthia! ah—tho’ banish’d from thy Train,

“Let me, O let me, to the Shades repair,

“My native Shades—there weep, and murmur there.

She said, and melting as in Tears she lay,

In a soft, silver Stream dissolv’d away.

The silver Stream her Virgin Coldness keeps,
For ever murmurs, and for ever weeps;

Still bears the * Name the hapless Virgin bore,
And bathes the Forest where she rang’d before.

In her chast Current oft the Goddess laves,
And with Celestial Tears augments the Waves.

Oft in her Glass the musing Shepherd spies

The headlong Mountains and the downward Skies,

The watry Landskip of the pendant Woods,

And absent Trees that tremble in the Floods;

In the clear azure Gleam the Flocks are seen,

And floating Forests paint the Waves with Green.

Thro’ the fair Scene rowl slow the lingring Streams,

Then foaming pour along, and rush into the Thames.

Thou too, great Father of the British Floods!

With joyful Pride survey’st our lofty Woods,

Where tow’ring Oaks their spreading Honours rear,
And future Navies on thy Banks appear.

Not Neptune’s self from all his Floods receives
A wealthier Tribute, than to thine he gives.
No Seas so rich, so full no Streams appear,
No Lake so gentle, and no Spring so clear.
Not fabled Po more swells the Poets Lays,
While thro’ the Skies his shining Current strays,
Than thine, which visits Windsor’s fam’d Abodes,
To grace the Mansion of our earthly Gods.
Nor all his Stars a brighter Lustre show,
Than the fair Nymphs that gild thy Shore below:
Here Jove himself, subdu’d by Beauty still,
Might change Olympus for a nobler Hill.
Happy the Man whom this bright Court approves,
His Sov’reign favours, and his Country loves;
Happy next him who to these Shades retires,
Whom Nature charms, and whom the Muse inspires,
Whom humbler Joys of home-felt Quiet please,
Successive Study, Exercise and Ease.
He gathers Health from Herbs the Forest yields,
And of their fragrant Physick spoils the Fields:
With Chymic Art exalts the Min’ral Pow’rs,
And draws the Aromatick Souls of Flow’rs.
Now marks the Course of rolling Orbs on high;
O’er figur’d Worlds now travels with his Eye.
Of ancient Writ unlocks the learned Store,
Consults the Dead, and lives past Ages o’er.
Or wandring thoughtful in the silent Wood,
Attends the Duties of the Wise and Good,
T’ observe a Mean, be to himself a Friend,
To follow Nature, and regard his End.
Or looks on Heav’n with more than mortal Eyes,
Bids his free Soul expatiate in the Skies,
Amidst her Kindred Stars familiar roam,
Survey the Region, and confess her Home!
Such was the Life great Scipio once admir’d,
Thus Atticus, and Trumbal thus retir’d
Ye sacred Nine! that all my Soul possess,
Whose Raptures fire me, and whose Visions bless,
Bear me, oh bear me to sequester’d Scenes
Of Bow’ry Mazes and surrounding Greens;
To Thames’s Banks which fragrant Breezes fill,
Or where ye Muses sport on Cooper’s Hill.
(On Cooper’s Hill eternal Wreaths shall grow,
While lasts the Mountain, or while Thames shall flow)
I seem thro’ consecrated Walks to rove,
And hear soft Musick dye along the Grove;
Led by the Sound I roam from Shade to Shade,
By God-like Poets Venerable made:
Here his first Lays Majestick Denham sung;
There the last Numbers flow’d from Cowley’s Tongue.

O early lost! what Tears the River shed

When the sad Pomp along his Banks was led?

His drooping Swans on ev’ry Note expire,

And on his Willows hung each Muse’s Lyre.

Since Fate relentless stop’d their Heav’nly Voice,

No more the Forests ring, or Groves rejoice;

Who now shall charm the Shades where Cowley strung

His living Harp, and lofty Denham sung?

But hark! the Groves rejoice, the Forest rings!

Are these reviv’d? or is it Granville sings?

‘Tis yours, my Lord, to bless our soft Retreats,

And call the Muses to their ancient Seats,

To paint anew the flow’ry Sylvan Scenes,

To crown the Forests with Immortal Greens,

Make Windsor Hills in lofty Numbers rise,

And lift her Turrets nearer to the Skies;

To sing those Honours you deserve to wear,

And add new Lustre to her Silver Star.

Here noble Surrey felt the sacred Rage,

Surrey, the Granville of a former Age:

Matchless his Pen, victorious was his Lance;

Bold in the Lists, and graceful in the Dance:

In the same Shades the Cupids tun’d his Lyre,

To the same Notes, of Love, and soft Desire:
Fair *Geraldine*, bright Object of his Vow,
Then fill'd the Groves, as heav'nly *Myra* now.
Oh wou'dst thou sing what Heroes *Windsor* bore,
What Kings first breath'd upon her winding Shore,
Or raise old Warriors whose ador'd Remains
In weeping Vaults her hallow'd Earth contains!
With *Edward’s* Acts adorn the shining Page,
Stretch his long Triumphs down thro’ ev’ry Age,
Draw Kings enchain’d; and *Cressi’s* glorious Field,
The Lillies blazing on the Regal Shield.
Then, from her Roofs when *Verrio’s* Colours fall,
And leave inanimate the naked Wall;
Still in thy Song shou’d vanquish’d *France* appear,
And bleed for ever under *Britain’s* Spear.
Let softer Strains Ill-fated *Henry* mourn,
And Palms Eternal flourish round his Urn.
Here o’er the Martyr-King the Marble weeps,
And fast beside him, once-fear’d *Edward* sleeps:
Whom not th’ extended *Albion* could contain,
From old *Belerium* to the *German* Main,
The Grave unites; where ev’n the Great find Rest,
And blended lie th’ Oppressor and th’ Opprest!
Make sacred *Charles’s* Tomb for ever known,
(Obscure the Place, and uninscrib’d the Stone)
Oh Fact accurst! What Tears has *Albion* shed,
Heav'n's! what new Wounds, and how her old have bled?
She saw her Sons with purple Deaths expire,
Her sacred Domes involv'd in rolling Fire.
A dreadful Series of Intestine Wars,
In glorious Triumphs, and dishonest Scars.
At length great ANNA said—Let Discord cease!
She said, the World obey'd, and all was Peace!
In that blest Moment, from his Oozy Bed
Old Father Thames advanc'd his rev'rend Head.
His Tresses dropt with Dews, and o'er the Stream
His shining Horns diffus'd a golden Gleam:
Grav'd on his Urn appear'd the Moon, that guides
His swelling Waters, and alternate Tydes;
The figur'd Streams in Waves of Silver roll'd,
And on their Banks Augusta rose in Gold.
Around his Throne the Sea-born Brothers stood,
That swell with Tributary Urns his Flood.
First the fam'd Authors of his ancient Name,
The winding Isis, and the fruitful Tame:
The Kennet swift, for silver Eels renown'd;
The Loddon slow, with verdant Alders crown'd:
Cole, whose clear Streams his flow'ry Islands lave;
And chalky Wey, that rolls a milky Wave:
The blue, transparent Vandalis appears;
The gulphy Lee his sedgy Tresses rears:
And sullen Mole, that hides his diving Flood;
And silent Darent, stain’d with Danish Blood.
High in the midst, upon his Urn reclin’d,
(His Sea-green Mantle waving with the Wind)
The God appear’d; he turn’d his azure Eyes
Where Windsor-Domes and pompous Turrets rise,
Then bow’d and spoke; the Winds forget to roar,
And the hush’d Waves glide softly to the Shore.
Hail Sacred Peace! hail long-expected Days,
Which Thames’s Glory to the Stars shall raise!
Tho’ Tyber’s Streams immortal Rome behold,
Tho’ foaming Hermus swells with Tydes of Gold,
From Heav’n it self tho’ sev’nfold Nilus flows,
And Harvests on a hundred Realms bestows;
These now no more shall be the Muse’s Themes,
Lost in my Fame, as in the Sea their Streams.
Let Volga’s Banks with Iron Squadrons shine,
And Groves of Lances glitter on the Rhine,
Let barb’rous Ganges arm a servile Train;
Be mine the Blessings of a peaceful Reign.
No more my Sons shall dye with British Blood
Red Iber’s Sands, or Ister’s foaming Flood;
Safe on my Shore each unmolested Swain
Shall tend the Flocks, or reap the bearded Grain;
The shady Empire shall retain no Trace
Of War or Blood, but in the Sylvan Chace,
The Trumpets sleep, while cheerful Horns are blown,
And Arms employ’d on Birds and Beasts alone.

Behold! th’ ascending Villa’s on my Side
Project long Shadows o’er the Chrystal Tyde.
Behold! Augusta’s glitt’ring Spires increase,
And Temples rise, the beauteous Works of Peace.

I see, I see where two fair Cities bend
Their ample Bow, a new White-Hall ascend!
There mighty Nations shall inquire their Doom,
The World’s great Oracle in Times to come;
There Kings shall sue, and suppliant States be seen
Once more to bend before a British QUEEN.

Thy Trees, fair Windsor! now shall leave their Woods,
And half thy Forests rush into my Floods,
Bear Britain’s Thunder, and her Cross display,
To the bright Regions of the rising Day;
Tempt Icy Seas, where scarce the Waters roll,
Where clearer Flames glow round the frozen Pole;
Or under Southern Skies exalt their Sails,
Led by new Stars, and born by spicy Gales!

For me the Balm shall bleed, and Amber flow,
The Coral redden, and the Ruby glow,
The Pearly Shell its lucid Globe infold,
And Phoebus warm the ripening Ore to Gold.
The Time shall come, when free as Seas or Wind
Unbounded Thames shall flow for all Mankind,
Whole Nations enter with each swelling Tyde,
And Oceans join whom they did first divide;
Earth’s distant Ends our Glory shall behold,
And the new World launch forth to seek the Old.
Then Ships of uncouth Form shall stem the Tyde,
And Feather’d People crowd my wealthy Side,
While naked Youth and painted Chiefs admire
Our Speech, our Colour, and our strange Attire!
Oh stretch thy Reign, fair Peace! from Shore to Shore,
Till Conquest cease, and Slav’ry be no more:
Till the freed Indians in their native Groves
Reap their own Fruits, and woo their Sable Loves,
Peru once more a Race of Kings behold,
And other Mexico’s be roof’d with Gold.
Exil’d by Thee from Earth to deepest Hell,
In Brazen Bonds shall barb’rous Discord dwell:
Gigantick Pride, pale Terror, gloomy Care,
And mad Ambition, shall attend her there.
There purple Vengeance bath’d in Gore retires,
Her Weapons blunted, and extinct her Fires:
There hateful Envy her own Snakes shall feel,
And Persecution mourn her broken Wheel:
There Faction roars, Rebellion bites her Chain,
And gasping Furies thirst for Blood in vain.

Here cease thy Flight, nor with unhallow’d Lays

Touch the fair Fame of Albion’s Golden Days.

The Thoughts of Gods let Granville’s Verse recite,

And bring the Scenes of opening Fate to Light.

My humble Muse, in unambitious Strains,

Paints the green Forests and the flow’ry Plains,

Where Peace descending bids her Olives spring,

And scatters Blessings from her Dove-like Wing.

Ev’n I more sweetly pass my careless Days,

Pleas’d in the silent Shade with empty Praise;

Enough for me, that to the listning Swains

First in these Fields I sung the Sylvan Strains.

FINIS.

4.8.4: From “An Essay on Man”

To H. St. John Lord Bolingbroke.

The Design.

Having proposed to write some pieces of 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 wandering 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.

ARGUMENT OF EPISTLE I.

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

Of Man in the abstract. I. That we can judge only with regard to our own system, being ignorant of the relations of systems and things, v.17, etc. II. 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, v.35, etc. III. That it is partly upon his ignorance of future events, and partly upon the hope of future state, that all his happiness in the present depends, v.77, etc. IV. The pride of aiming at more knowledge, and pretending to more Perfection, 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.109, etc. V. The absurdity of conceiving himself the final cause of the Creation, or expecting that perfection in the moral world, which is not in the natural, v.131, etc. VI. 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, v.173, etc. VII. That throughout the whole visible world, an universal order and gradation in the sensual and mental faculties is observed, which cause is a subordination of creature to creature, and of all creatures to Man. The gradations of sense, instinct, thought, reflection, reason; that Reason alone countervails all the other faculties, v.207. VIII. 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, v.233. IX. The extravagance, madness, and pride of such a desire, v.250. X. The consequence of all, the absolute submission due to Providence, both as to our present and future state, v.281, etc., to the end.

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 flowers 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?
Through worlds unnumbered though the God be known,
'Tis ours to trace Him only in our own.
He, who through vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What varied being peoples every star,
May tell why Heaven has made us as we are.
But of this frame, the bearings, and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Looked through? 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 formed so weak, so little, and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why formed 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 reasoning 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 placed him wrong?
Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative to all.

In human works, though laboured 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 Egypt’s god:

Then shall man’s pride and dulness comprehend

His actions’, passions’, being’s, use and end;

Why doing, suffering, checked, impelled; and why

This hour a slave, the next a deity.

Then say not man’s imperfect, Heaven in fault;

Say rather man’s as perfect as he ought:

His knowledge measured 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. Heaven from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescribed, 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?
Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food,
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.
Oh, blindness to the future! kindly given,
That each may fill the circle, marked by Heaven:
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,
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 confined from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.
Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutored 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 given,
Behind the cloud-topped hill, an humbler heaven;
Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
Some happier island in the watery 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,
Weigh thy opinion against providence;
Call imperfection what thou fanciest 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 Heaven’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 reasoning 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 the Eternal Cause.

V. Ask for what end the heavenly bodies shine,
Earth for whose use? Pride answers, "'Tis for mine:
For me kind Nature wakes her genial power,
Suckles each herb, and spreads out every flower;
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 footstool earth, my canopy the skies."
But errs not Nature from this 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 replied) the first Almighty Cause
Acts not by partial, but by general laws;
The 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 showers and sunshine, as of man’s desires;
As much eternal springs and cloudless skies,
As men for ever temperate, calm, and wise.

If plagues or earthquakes break not Heaven’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 Cæsar’s mind,
Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?

From pride, from pride, our very reasoning springs;
Account for moral, as for natural things:
Why charge we heaven 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 discomposed the mind.

But all subsists by elemental strife;
And passions are the elements of life.
The general 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 grieved 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 powers of all?
Nature to these, without profusion, kind,
The proper organs, proper powers assigned;
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 Heaven unkind to man, and man alone?
Shall he alone, whom rational we call,
Be pleased with nothing, if not blessed with all?
The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find)
Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
No powers 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 given,
To inspect a mite, not comprehend the heaven?
Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o’er,
To smart and agonize at every pore?
Or quick effluvia darting through the brain,
Die of a rose in aromatic pain?
If Nature thundered in his opening ears,
And stunned him with the music of the spheres,
How would he wish that Heaven had left him still
The whispering 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 powers 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 through 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 poisonous herbs extracts the healing dew?
How instinct varies in the grovelling swine,
Compared, half-reasoning elephant, with thine!
'Twixt that, and reason, what a nice barrier,
For ever separate, yet for ever near!
Remembrance and reflection how allayed;
What thin partitions sense from thought divide:
And middle natures, how they long to join,
Yet never passed the insuperable line!
Without this just gradation, could they be
Subjected, these to those, or all to thee?
The powers of all subdued by thee alone,
Is not thy reason all these powers in one?
VIII. See, through 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 powers
Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
Or in the full creation leave a void,
Where, one step broken, the great scale’s destroyed:
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 the amazing whole,
The least confusion but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole must fall.
Let earth unbalanced from her orbit fly,
Planets and suns run lawless through the sky;
Let ruling angels from their spheres be hurled,
Being on being wrecked, and world on world;
Heaven'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, ordained the dust to tread,
Or hand, to toil, aspired to be the head?
What if the head, the eye, or ear repined
To serve mere engines to the ruling mind?
Just as absurd for any part to claim
To be another, in this general 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, changed through all, and yet in all the same;
Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives through all life, extends through 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, Heaven 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 Power,
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.

4.8.5: Reading and Review Questions

1. How and to what effect does Pope draw attention to his own artistry? What is his attitude towards his readers? What is his attitude towards himself as a poet? How does this attitude compare with Spenser’s or Milton’s of themselves as Poets? How do you know?

2. What's the effect, if any, of Pope’s deploying his artistry for clear, often didactic, moral purposes? How does this use of art compare to Spenser’s or Sydney’s?

3. How varied and diverse is Pope’s poetic style, especially considering his use of the heroic couplet? How suited is the heroic couplet to Pope’s imagery, voice, subject-matter, and themes? Why?

4. Like Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Pope reverses perspectives by maximizing the minimal (and vice versa) in *The Rape of the Lock*. To what end, if any, does he put these perspectives?
5. How does Pope depict love, and to what effect? Consider *The Rape of the Lock* and *Eloisa and Abelard*. What is his overall attitude towards emotions? How do we know?