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The Works Of Alexander Pope Esq.

In Nine Volumes Complete. With His Last Corrections, Additions, And Improvements; As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death

Containing His Juvenile Poems - with his last corrections, additions, and improvements, as they were delivered to the editor a little before his death

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

Prologue to Mr. Addison's Tragedy

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P R O L O G U E

T O

Mr. ADDISON'S Tragedy

O F

C A T O.

TO wake the soul by tender strokes of art,
 To raise the genius, and to mend the heart;
 To make mankind, in conscious virtue bold,
 Live o'er each scene, and be what they behold:
 For this the Tragic Muse first trod the stage, 5
 Commanding tears to stream thro' ev'ry age;
 Tyrants no more their savage nature kept,
 And foes to virtue wonder'd how they wept.
 Our author shuns by vulgar springs to move
 The hero's glory, or the virgin's love; 10
 In pitying Love, we but our weakness show,
 And wild Ambition well deserves its woe.

270 PROLOGUE TO CATO.

Here tears shall flow from a more gen'rous cause,
 Such Tears as Patriots shed for dying Laws :
 He bids your breasts with ancient ardour rise, 15
 And calls forth Roman drops from British eyes,
 Virtue confess'd in human shape he draws,
 What Plato thought, and godlike Cato was :
 No common object to your fight displays,
 But what with pleasure Heav'n itself surveys, 20
 A brave man struggling in the storms of fate,
 And greatly falling with a falling state.
 While Cato gives his little Senate laws,
 What bosom beats not in his Country's cause ?
 Who sees him act, but envies ev'ry deed ? 25
 Who hears him groan, and does not wish to bleed ?
 Ev'n when proud Cæsar 'midst triumphal cars,
 The spoils of nations, and the pomp of wars,
 Ignobly vain and impotently great,
 Show'd Rome her Cato's figure drawn in state ; 30
 As her dead Father's rev'rend image past,
 The pomp was darken'd, and the day o'ercast ;

NOTES.

VER. 20. *But what with pleasure*] This alludes to a famous passage of Seneca, which Mr. Addison afterwards used as a motto to his play, when it was printed.

PROLOGUE TO CATO. 271

The Triumph ceas'd, tears gush'd from ev'ry eye ;
 The World's great Victor pass'd unheeded by ;
 Her last good man dejected Rome ador'd, 35
 And honour'd Cæsar's less than Cato's sword.

Britons, attend : be worth like this approv'd,
 And show, you have the virtue to be mov'd.
 With honest scorn the first fam'd Cato view'd
 Rome learning arts from Greece, whom she subdu'd ;
 Your scene precariously subsists too long 41
 On French translation, and Italian song.
 Dare to have sense yourselves ; assert the stage,
 Be justly warm'd with your own native rage :
 Such Plays alone should win a British ear, 45
 As Cato's self had not disdain'd to hear.

NOTES.

VER. 37. *Britons, attend*] Mr. Pope had written it *arise*, in the spirit of Poetry and Liberty ; but Mr. Addison frighten'd at so daring an expression, which, he thought, squinted at rebellion, would have it alter'd, in the spirit of Prose and Politics, to *attend*.

VER. 46. *As Cato self, etc.*] This alludes to the famous story of his going into the Theatre, and immediately coming out again.