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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 Translations And Imitations

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

V. Of the E. of Rochester, On Silence

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V.

E. of ROCHESTER.

On SILENCE.

I.

SILENCE! coeval with Eternity;
 Thou wert, ere Nature's self began to be,
 'Twas one vast Nothing, all, and all slept fast in thee.

II.

Thine was the sway, ere heav'n was form'd, or
 earth,
 Ere fruitful Thought conceiv'd creation's birth,
 Or midwife Word gave aid, and spoke the infant
 forth.

III.

Then various elements, against thee join'd,
 In one more various animal combin'd,
 And fram'd the clam'rous race of busy Human-kind.

IV.

The tongue mov'd gently first, and speech was
 low, 10
 'Till wrangling Science taught it noise and show,
 And wicked Wit arose, thy most abusive foe.

V.

But rebel Wit deserts thee oft' in vain ;
 Lost in the maze of words he turns again, 14
 And seeks a surer state, and courts thy gentle reign.

VI.

Afflicted Sense thou kindly dost set free,
 Oppress'd with argumental tyranny,
 And routed Reason finds a safe retreat in thee.

VII.

With thee in private modest Dulness lies,
 And in thy bosom lurks in Thought's disguise ;
 Thou varnisher of Fools, and cheat of all the Wise!

VIII.

Yet thy indulgence is by both confest ;
 Folly by thee lies sleeping in the breast,
 And 'tis in thee at last that Wisdom seeks for rest.

IX.

Silence the knave's repute, the whore's good
 name, 25
 The only honour of the wishing dame ;
 Thy very want of tongue makes thee a kind of
 Fame,

X.

But could'st thou seize some tongues that now are
 free,
 How Church and State should be oblig'd to thee?
 At Senate, and at Bar, how welcome would'st thou be?

XI.

Yet speech ev'n there, submissively withdraws,
 From rights of subjects, and the poor man's cause:
 Then pompous Silence reigns, and stills the noisy
 Laws.

XII.

Past services of friends, good deeds of foes,
 What Fav'rites gain, and what the Nation owes,
 Fly the forgetful world, and in thy arms repose.

XIII.

The country wit, religion of the town,
 The courtier's learning, policy o'th' gown,
 Are best by thee exprefs'd ; and shine in thee alone.

XIV.

The parson's cant, the lawyer's sophistry,
 Lord's quibble, critic's jest ; all end in thee,
 All rest in peace at last, and sleep eternally.