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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 Moral Essays

**Pope, Alexander**

**London, 1751**

Part III. The History of Satire.

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## P A R T III.

**T**HRO' Ages thus hath SATIRE keenly shin'd,  
The Friend to Truth, to Virtue, and Man-  
kind :

Yet the bright flame from Virtue ne'er had sprung,  
And Man was guilty ere the Poet sung. 360

*This* Muse in silence joy'd each better Age,  
Till glowing crimes had wak'd her into rage.  
Truth saw her honest spleen with new delight,  
And bade her wing her shafts, and urge their flight.  
First on the Sons of *Greece* she prov'd her art, 365  
And *Sparta* felt the fierce IAMBICK dart<sup>a</sup>.  
To LATIUM next, avenging SATIRE flew:  
The flaming faulchion rough LUCILIUS<sup>b</sup> drew;  
With dauntless warmth in Virtue's cause engag'd,  
And conscious Villains trembled as he rag'd. 370

## NOTES.

<sup>a</sup> Archilocum proprio rabies armavit Iambo. HOR.

<sup>b</sup> Ense velut stricto quoties Lucilius ardens  
Infremuit, rubet auditor cui frigida mens est  
Criminibus, tacita sudant præcordia culpa. JUV. S. i.



ESSAY ON SATIRE. xxiii

Then sportive HORACE<sup>c</sup> caught the gen'rous fire;  
 For SATIRE's bow resign'd the sounding lyre:  
 Each arrow polish'd in his hand was seen,  
 And, as it grew more polish'd, grew more keen.  
 His art, conceal'd in study'd negligence, 375  
 Politely fly, cajol'd the foes of sense:  
 He seem'd to sport and trifle with the dart,  
 But while he sported, drove it to the heart.

In graver strains majestick PERSIUS wrote,  
 Big with a ripe exuberance of thought: 380  
 Greatly sedate, contemn'd a Tyrant's reign,  
 And lash'd corruption with a calm disdain.

More ardent eloquence, and boundless rage,  
 In flame bold JUVENAL's exalted page,  
 His mighty numbers aw'd corrupted *Rome*, 385  
 And swept audacious Greatness to its doom;  
 The headlong torrent thund'ring from on high,  
 Rent the proud rock that lately brav'd the sky.

NOTES.

<sup>c</sup> Omne vaser vitium ridenti Flaccus amico  
 Tangit, et admissus circum præcordia ludit,  
 Callidus excusso populum suspendere naso. PERS. S. i.

b 4



But lo! the fatal Victor of Mankind,  
Swoln *Luxury*!—pale *Ruin* stalks behind! 390  
As countless Insects from the north-east pour,  
To blast the Spring, and ravage ev'ry flow'r:  
So barb'rous Millions spread contagious death:  
The sick'ning Laurel wither'd at their breath.  
Deep Superstition's night the skies o'erhung, 395  
Beneath whose baleful dews the Poppy sprung.  
No longer Genius woo'd the Nine to love,  
But Dulness nodded in the Muse's grove:  
Wit, Spirit, Freedom, were the sole offence,  
Nor aught was held so dangerous as Sense. 400

At length, again fair Science shot her ray,  
Dawn'd in the skies, and spoke returning day.  
Now, SATIRE, triumph o'er thy flying foe,  
Now load thy quiver, string thy slacken'd bow!  
'Tis done—See, great ERASMUS breaks the spell,  
And wounds triumphant Folly in her Cell! 406  
(In vain the solemn Cowl surrounds her face,  
Vain all her bigot cant, her sour grimace)  
With shame compell'd her leaden throne to quit,  
And own the force of Reason urg'd by Wit. 410



'Twas then plain *DONNE* in honest vengeance rose,  
His Wit harmonious, tho' his Rhyme was prose :  
He 'midst an Age of Puns and Pedants wrote  
With genuine sense, and *Roman* strength of thought.

Yet scarce had *SATIRE* well relum'd her flame,  
(With grief the Muse records her Country's shame)  
Ere *Britain* saw the foul revolt commence,  
And treach'rous Wit began her war with Sense.

Then rose a shameless mercenary train,  
Whom latest Time shall view with just disdain:  
A race fantastick, in whose gaudy line      421

Untutor'd thought, and tinsel beauty shine ;  
Wit's shatter'd Mirror lies in fragments bright,  
Reflects not Nature, but confounds the sight.  
Dry Morals the Court-Poet blush'd to sing :      425

'Twas all his praise to say, "*the oddest thing.*"  
Proud for a jest obscene, a Patron's nod,  
To martyr Virtue, or blaspheme his God.

Ill-fated *DRYDEN*! who unmov'd can see      429  
Th' extremes of wit and meanness join'd in Thee!



xxvi      ESSAY ON SATIRE.

Flames that could mount, and gain their kindred  
    skies,

Low-creeping in the putrid sink of vice :

A Muse whom Wisdom woo'd, but woo'd in vain,  
The Pimp of Pow'r, the Prostitute to Gain : 434

Wreaths, that should deck fair Virtue's form alone,  
To Strumpets, Traitors, Tyrants, vilely thrown :

Unrival'd Parts, the scorn of honest fame;

And Genius rise, a Monument of shame!

More happy *France* : immortal BOILEAU there  
Supported Genius with a Sage's care : 440

Him with her love propitious SATIRE blest,

And breath'd her airs divine into his breast :

Fancy and Sense to form his line conspire,

And faultless Judgment guides the purest Fire.

But see, at length, the *British* Genius smile, 445

And show'r her bounties o'er her favour'd Isle :

Behold for POPE she twines the laurel crown,

And centers ev'ry Poet's pow'r in *one* :

Each *Roman's* force adorns his various page ;

Gay smiles, collected strength, and manly rage.



Despairing Guilt and Dulness loath the fight, 451  
 As Spectres vanish at approaching light:  
 In this clear Mirror with delight we view  
 Each image justly fine, and boldly true:  
 Here Vice, drag'd forth by Truth's supreme decree,  
 Beholds and hates her own deformity: 456  
 While self-seen Virtue in the faithful line  
 With modest joy surveys her form divine.  
 But oh, what thoughts, what numbers shall I find,  
 But faintly to express the Poet's mind! 460  
 Who yonder Star's effulgence can display,  
 Unless he dip his pencil in the ray?  
 Who paint a God, unless the God inspire?  
 What catch the Lightning, but the speed of fire?  
 So, mighty POPE, to make thy Genius known,  
 All pow'r is weak, all numbers—but thy own. 466  
 Each Muse for thee with kind contention strove,  
 For thee the Graces left th' IDALIAN grove;  
 With watchful fondness o'er thy cradle hung,  
 Attun'd thy voice, and form'd thy infant tongue.  
 Next, to her Bard majestic Wisdom came; 471  
 The Bard enraptur'd caught the heav'nly flame:  
 With Taste superior scorn'd the venal tribe,  
 Whom fear can sway, or guilty Greatness bribe;



## xxviii    E S S A Y O N S A T I R E.

At Fancy's call who rear the wanton fail, 475  
 Sport with the stream, and trifle in the gale :  
 Sublimer views *thy* daring Spirit bound ;  
 Thy mighty Voyage was Creation's round ;  
 Intent new Worlds of Wisdom to explore,  
 And bless Mankind with Virtue's sacred store ;  
 A nobler joy than Wit can give, impart ; 481  
 And pour a moral transport o'er the heart.  
 Fantastic Wit shoots momentary fires,  
 And, like a Meteor, while we gaze, expires :  
 Wit kindled by the sulph'rous breath of Vice, 485  
 Like the blue lightning, while it shines, destroys :  
 But Genius, fir'd by Truth's eternal ray,  
 Burns clear and constant, like the source of day :  
 Like this, its beam prolifick and refin'd  
 Feeds, warms, inspirits, and exalts the mind ; 490  
 Mildly dispels each wint'ry Passion's gloom,  
 And opens all the Virtues into bloom.  
 This Praise, immortal POPE, to thee be giv'n :  
 Thy Genius was indeed a *Gift* from Heav'n.  
 Hail, Bard unequal'd, in whose deathless line 495  
 Reason and Wit with strength collected shine ;  
 Where matchless Wit but wins the second praise,  
 Lost, nobly lost, in Truth's superior blaze.



Did FRIENDSHIP e'er mislead thy wand'ring Muse?  
 That Friendship sure may plead the *great* excuse:  
 That sacred Friendship which inspir'd thy Song,  
*Fair* in defect, and *amiably* wrong.  
 Error like this ev'n Truth can scarce reprove;  
 'Tis almost Virtue when it flows from Love.

Ye deathless Names, ye Sons of endless praise,  
 By Virtue crown'd with never-fading bays! 506  
 Say, shall an artless Muse, if you inspire,  
 Light her pale lamp at your immortal fire?  
 Or if, O WARBURTON, inspir'd by You,  
 The daring Muse a nobler path pursue, 510  
 By You inspir'd, on trembling pinion soar,  
 The sacred founts of social bliss explore,  
 In her bold numbers chain the Tyrant's rage,  
 And bid *her Country's Glory* fire her page:  
 If such her fate, do thou, fair *Truth*, descend, 515  
 And watchful guard her in an honest end:  
 Kindly severe, instruct her equal line  
 To court no Friend, nor own a Foe but *thine*.  
 But if her giddy eye should vainly quit  
 Thy sacred paths, to run the maze of wit; 520



## xxx ESSAY ON SATIRE.

If her apostate heart should e'er incline  
 To offer incense at Corruption's shrine;  
 Urge, urge thy pow'r, the black attempt confound,  
 And dash the smoaking Censer to the ground.  
 Thus aw'd to fear, instructed Bards may see, 525  
 That Guilt is doom'd to sink in Infamy.