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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

Epistle I. Of the knowledge and characters of Men

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MORAL ESSAYS.

EPISTLE I.

T O

Sir Richard Temple, Lord Cobham.

A R G U M E N T.

Of the Knowledge and Characters of MEN.

T H A T it is not sufficient for this knowledge to consider Man in the Abstract: Books will not serve the purpose, nor yet our own Experience singly, § 1. General maxims, unless they be formed upon both, will be but notional, § 10. Some Peculiarity in every man, characteristic to himself, yet varying from himself, § 15. Difficulties arising from our own Passions, Fancies, Faculties, &c. § 31. The shortness of Life, to observe in, and the uncertainty of the Principles of action in men, to observe by, § 37, &c. Our own Principle of action often hid from ourselves, § 41. Some few Characters plain, but in general confounded, dissembled, or inconsistent, § 51. The same man utterly different in different places and seasons, § 71. Unimaginable weaknesses in the greatest, § 70, &c. Nothing constant and certain but God and Nature, § 95. No judging of

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the Motives from the actions; the same actions proceeding from contrary Motives, and the same Motives influencing contrary actions, § 100. II. Yet to form Characters, we can only take the strongest actions of a man's life, and try to make them agree: The utter uncertainty of this, from Nature itself, and from Policy, § 120. Characters given according to the rank of men of the world, § 135. And some reason for it, § 140. Education alters the Nature, or at least Character of many, § 149. Actions, Passions, Opinions, Manners, Humours, or Principles all subject to change. No judging by Nature, from § 158 to 178. III. It only remains to find (if we can) his RULING PASSION: That will certainly influence all the rest, and can reconcile the seeming or real inconsistency of all his actions, § 175. Instanced in the extraordinary character of Clodio, § 179. A caution against mistaking second qualities for first, which will destroy all possibility of the knowledge of mankind, § 210. Examples of the strength of the Ruling Passion, and its continuation to the last breath, § 222, &c.



N. Blakey inv. & del.

J. Scottin Sculp.

Boastfull & rough your first Son is a Squire;
The next a Tradesman, meek and much a Siar;
Tom struts a Soldier, open, bold and Brave;
Will sneaks a Scrivener, an exceeding Knave.

Char: of Men.

EPISTLE I.

YES, you despise the man to Books confin'd,
 Who from his study rails at human kind;
 Tho' what he learns he speaks, and may advance
 Some gen'ral maxims, or be right by chance.

COMMENTARY.

Epistle of the Knowledge and Characters of Men.] Whoever compares this with the former Editions of this poem, will observe that the order and disposition of the several parts are entirely changed and transposed, tho' with hardly the Alteration of a single Word. When the Editor, at the Author's desire, first examined this Epistle, he was surprized to find it contain a number of fine observations, without order, connexion, or dependence: but much more so, when, on an attentive review, he saw, that, if put into a different form, on an idea he then conceived, it would have all the clearness of method, and force of connected reasoning. Indeed the observations then appeared to him so jumbled and confounded in one another, as if the several parts of a regular poem had been rolled up in tickets, drawn at random, and then set down as they arose. The author appeared as much struck with the observation as the editor, and agreed to put it in the present form, which has given the poem all the justness of a true composition. The introduction of the epistle on Riches was in the same condition, and underwent the same reform.

NOTES.

Moral Essays.] The ESSAY ON MAN was intended to have been comprised in Four Books:

The *First* of which, the Author has given us under that title, in four Epistles.

The *Second* was to have consisted of the same number:

1. Of the extent and limits of human Reason. 2. Of those Arts and Sciences, and of the

parts of them, which are useful, and therefore attainable, together with those which are unuseful, and therefore unattainable. 3. Of the Nature, Ends, Use, and Application of the different Capacities of Men. 4. Of the Use of Learning, of the Science of the World, and of Wit; concluding with a Satyr against the Misapplication

The coxcomb bird, so talkative and grave, 5
 That from his cage cries Cuckold, Whore, and Knave,
 Tho' many a passenger he rightly call,
 You hold him no Philosopher at all.

COMMENTARY.

EPISTLE I.] This Epistle is divided into three principal parts or members: The first (from ν 1 to 99) treats of the difficulties in coming at the *Knowledge* and true *Characters of Men*. — The second (from ν 98 to 173) of the *wrong means* which

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of them, illustrated by Pictures, Characters, and Examples.

The *Third* Book regarded Civil Regimen, or the Science of Politics, in which the several forms of a Republic were to have been examined and explained; together with the several Modes of Religious Worship, as far forth as they affect Society; between which the Author always supposed there was the most interesting relation and closest connection; so that this part would have treated of Civil and Religious Society in their full extent.

The *Fourth* and last Book concerned private Ethics or practical Morality, considered in all the Circumstances, Orders, Professions, and Stations of human Life.

The Scheme of all this had been maturely digested, and communicated to the L. Bolingbroke, Dr. Swift, and one or two more, and was intended

for the only work of his riper Years: but was, partly thro' ill health, partly through discouragements from the depravity of the times, and partly on prudential and other considerations, interrupted, postponed, and, lastly, in a manner laid aside.

But as this was the Author's favourite Work, which more exactly reflected the Image of his strong capacious Mind, and as we can have but a very imperfect idea of it from the *disjecta membra Poetæ* that now remain, it may not be amiss to be a little more particular concerning each of these projected books.

The *FIRST*, as it treats of Man in the abstract, and considers him in general under every of his relations, becomes the foundation, and furnishes out the subjects, of the *three* following; so that

The *SECOND* BOOK takes up again the *First* and *Second*

And yet the fate of all extremes is such,
Men may be read, as well as Books, too much. 10
To observations which ourselves we make,
We grow more partial for th'Observer's sake ;

COMMENTARY.

both *Philosophers* and *Men of the World* have employed in surmounting those difficulties. And the third (from v 174 to the end) treats of the *right means*, with directions for the application of them.

VER. I. *Yes, you despise the man &c.*] The Epistle is introduced (from v 1 to 15) in observing, that the *Knowledge of Men* is neither to be gained by Books nor Experience alone, but by the joint use of both ; for that the *Maxims* of the *Philosopher* and the *Conclusions* of the *Man of the World* can, separately, but supply a vague and superficial knowledge : And often not so much ; as those *Maxims* are founded in the abstract notions of the writer ; and these *conclusions* are drawn from the uncertain

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Epistles of the *First* Book, and treats of man in his intellectual Capacity at large, as has been explained above. Of this, only a small part of the conclusion (which, as we said, was to have contained a Satire against the misapplication of Wit and Learning) may be found in the *Fourth* book of the *Dunciad*, and up and down, occasionally, in the other *three*.

The *THIRD* Book, in like manner, reassumes the subject of the *Third* Epistle of the *First*, which treats of Man in his Social, Political, and Religious Capacity. But this part the Poet afterwards conceived might be best executed in an

EPIC POEM ; as the Action would make it more animated, and the Fable less invidious ; in which all the great Principles of true and false Governments and Religions should be chiefly delivered in feigned Examples.

The *FOURTH* and last Book pursues the subject of the *Fourth* Epistle of the *First*, and treats of *Ethics*, or practical Morality ; and would have consisted of many members ; of which the four following Epistles were detached Portions : the *two first*, on the *Characters of Men and Women*, being the *introductory* part of this concluding Book.

To written Wisdom, as another's, less :

Maxims are drawn from Notions, those from Guess.

COMMENTARY.

conjectures of the observer : But when the writer joins his *speculation* to the *experience* of the observer, his *notions* are rectified into *principles* : and when the observer regulates his *experience* on the *general principles* of the writer, his *conjectures* advance into *science*. Such is the reasoning of this introduction ; which, besides its propriety to the general subject of the Epistle, has a peculiar relation to each of its parts or members : For the *causes of the difficulty* in coming at the knowledge and characters of men, explained in the first, will shew the importance of what is here delivered, of the *joint assistance* of speculation and practice to surmount it ; and the *wrong means*, which both *philosophers* and *men of the world* have employed in overcoming those difficulties discoursed of in the second, have their source here deduced, which is seen to be a *separate* adherence of each to his own method of studying men, and a mutual contempt of the others. Lastly, the *right means* delivered in the third, will be of little use in the application, without the direction here delivered : For tho' *observation* discovered a *ruling passion*, yet, without a *philosophic* knowledge of the human mind, we may easily mistake a *secondary* and *subsidiary* passion for the *principal*, and so be never the nearer in the Knowledge of Men. But the elegant and easy *Form* of the *introduction* equals the Propriety of its *matter* ; for the epistle being addressed to a noble person, distinguished for his knowledge of the World, it opens, as it were, in the midst of a familiar converse, which lets us at once into his character ; where the poet, by affecting *only* to ridicule the useless Knowledge of Men confined to Books, and under the appearance of extolling *only* that acquired by the World, artfully insinuates how equally defective this may be, when conducted on the same narrow principle : Which is too often the case, as *men of the world* are more than ordinarily prejudiced in favour of their own observations for the sake of the

NOTES.

VER. 5. *The coxcomb bird,* | that he could only repeat some
&c.] A fine turn'd allusion to | sentences of Pythagoras, like
 what Philostratus said of Euxe- | those *coxcomb birds*, who were
 nus, the Tutor of Apollonius, | taught their *ἑσπερίη* and their

There's some Peculiar in each leaf and grain, 15
 Some unmark'd fibre, or some varying vein:
 Shall only Man be taken in the gross?
 Grant but as many sorts of Mind as Moss.
 That each from other differs, first confess;
 Next, that he varies from himself no less: 20

COMMENTARY.

observer, and, for the same reason, less indulgent to the discoveries of others.

I.

VER. 15. *There's some Peculiar &c.*] The poet enters on the First division of his subject, *the difficulties of coming at the Knowledge and true Characters of Men.* The first cause of this difficulty which he prosecutes (from v 14 to 19) is the great *diversity of Characters*, of which, to abate our wonder, and not discourage our inquiry, he only desires we would *grant* him

— *but as many sorts of Mind as Moss.*

Hereby artfully insinuating, that if Nature has varied the most worthless vegetable into above three hundred species, we need not wonder at the like diversity in the human mind: And if a variety in that vegetable has been thought of importance enough to employ the leisure of a serious enquirer, much more will the same quality in this master-piece of Nature deserve our study and attention.

VER. 19. *That each from other differs, &c.*] A second cause of this difficulty (from v 18 to 21) is *Man's inconstancy*, whereby not only one man differs from another, but each man from himself.

NOTES.

Zeὺς ἰδεως, but knew not what they signified.

VER. 10. *And yet — Men may be read, as well as Books too much, &c.*] The poet has here covertly describ'd a famous system of a *man of the world*, the celebrated *Maxims of M.*

de la Rochefoucault, which are one continued *satire* on human Nature, and hold much of the ill language of the Parrot: The *reason* of the censure, our author's system of *L. uan*' nature will explain.

L 4

Add Nature's, Custom's, Reason's, Passion's strife,
And all Opinion's colours cast on life.

Our depths who fathoms, or our shallows finds,
Quick whirls, and shifting eddies, of our minds?
On human actions reason tho' you can, 25
It may be Reason, but it is not Man:

COMMENTARY.

VER. 21. *Add Nature's, &c.*] A third cause (from v 20 to 23) is that *obscurity* thrown over the Characters of men, through the strife and contest between *nature* and *custom*, between *reason* and *appetite*, between *truth* and *opinion*. And as most men, either thro' *education*, *temperature*, or *profession*, have their Characters warp'd by *custom*, *appetite*, and *opinion*, the obscurity arising from thence is almost universal.

VER. 23. *Our depths who fathoms, &c.*] A fourth cause (from v 20 to 25) is deep *dissimulation*, and restless *caprice*, whereby the shallows of the mind are as difficult to be *found*, as the depths of it to be *fathom'd*.

VER. 25. *On human actions &c.*] A fifth cause (from v 24 to 31) is the sudden change of his *Principle of action*, either on the point of its being laid open and detected, or thro' mere inconstancy.

NOTES.

VER. 22. *And all Opinion's colours cast on life.*] The poet refers here only to the *effects*: In the *Essay on Man* he gives

both the *efficient* and the *final cause*: The First in the third Ep. v 231.

E'er Wit oblique had broke that stiddy light.

For *oblique Wit* is *Opinion*. The other, in the second Ep. v 283.

*Mean-while Opinion gilds with varying rays
These painted clouds that beautify our days, &c.*

VER. 26. *It may be Reason, but it is not Man:*] *i. e.* The Philosopher may invent a *rational hypothesis* that shall account for the appearances he

would investigate; and yet that *hypothesis* be all the while very wide of *truth* and the *nature of things*.

His Principle of action once explore,
 That instant 'tis his Principle no more.
 Like following life thro' creatures you dissect,
 You lose it in the moment you detect. 30

Yet more; the difference is as great between
 The optics seeing, as the objects seen.

All Manners take a tincture from our own;
 Or come discolour'd thro' our Passions shown.
 Or Fancy's beam enlarges, multiplies, 35
 Contracts, inverts, and gives ten thousand dyes.

Nor will Life's stream for Observation stay,
 It hurries all too fast to mark their way:

COMMENTARY.

VER. 31. *Yet more; the difference &c.*] Hitherto the poet hath spoken of the causes of difficulty arising from the *obscurity of the Object*; he now comes to those which proceed from *defects in the Observer*. The First of which, and a sixth cause of difficulty, he shews (from 30 to 37) is the *perverse manners, affections, and imagination* of the observer, whereby the Characters of others are rarely seen either in their true *light, complexion, or proportion*.

VER. 37. *Nor will Life's stream for Observation &c.*] The

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VER. 29. *Like following life thro' creatures you dissect, — You lose it in the moment you detect.*] This Simile is extremely beautiful. To shew the difficulty of discovering the operations of the heart in a *moral sense*, he illustrates it by another attempt still more difficult, the discovery of its operations in a *natural*: For the

seat of animal life being in the *heart*, our endeavours of tracing it thither must necessarily drive it from thence.

VER. 33. *All Manners take a tincture from our own; — Or come discolour'd thro' our Passions shown.*] These two lines are remarkable for the exactness and propriety of expression. The word *tincture*,

In vain sedate reflections we wou'd make,
 When half our knowledge we must snatch, not take.
 Oft, in the Passions' wild rotation tost, 41
 Our spring of action to ourselves is lost:
 Tir'd, not determin'd, to the last we yield,
 And what comes then is master of the field.

COMMENTARY.

Second of these, and seventh cause of difficulty (from ψ 36 to 41) is the *shortness of human life*, which will not suffer the observer to select and weigh out his knowledge, but just to snatch it as it rolls rapidly by him down the current of Time.

VER. 41. *Oft, in the Passions' &c.*] We come now to the eighth and last cause, which very properly concludes the account, as, in a sort, it sums up all the difficulties in one (from ψ 40 to 51) namely, that very often the *man himself is ignorant of his own motive of action*; the cause of which ignorance our author has admirably explain'd: When the mind (says he) is now quite tired out by the long conflict of opposite motives, it withdraws its attention, and suffers the *will* to be seized upon by the first that afterwards obtrudes itself, without taking notice what that motive is. This is finely illustrated by what he supposes the general cause of dreams; where the fancy, just let loose, possesses itself of the *last image* which it meets with on the confines between sleep and waking, and on that erects all its visionary operation; yet this image is, with great difficulty, recollected; and never, but when some accident happens to interrupt our first slumbers: Then (which proves the truth of the hypothesis) we are sometimes able to trace the workings of the Fancy backwards, from image to image, in a chain, till we come to that from whence they all arose.

NOTES,

which implies a weak colour given by degrees, well describes the influence of the <i>Manners</i> ; and the word <i>dis-</i>	<i>colour</i> , which implies a quicker change and by a deeper dye, denotes as well the operation of the <i>Passions</i> .
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As the last image of that troubled heap, 45
 When Sense subsides, and Fancy sports in sleep,
 (Tho' past the recollection of the thought)
 Becomes the stuff of which our dream is wrought:
 Something as dim to our internal view,
 Is thus, perhaps, the cause of most we do, 50
 True, some are open, and to all men known;
 Others so very close, they're hid from none;
 (So Darkness strikes the sense no less than Light)
 Thus gracious CHANDOS is belov'd at sight;
 And ev'ry child hates Shylock, tho' his soul 55
 Still sits at squat, and peeps not from its hole.

COMMENTARY.

VER. 51. *True, some are open, &c.*] But now in answer to all this, an *objector*, as the author shews (from v 50 to 61) may say, "That these difficulties seem to be aggravated: For many Characters are so plainly marked, that no man can mistake them: And not so only in the more *open* and *frank*, but in the very *closest* and most *recluse* likewise." Of each of which the objector gives an instance, whereby it appears, that the forbidding closeness and concealed hypocrisy in the one, are as conspicuous to all mankind, as the gracious openness and frank

NOTES.

VER. 56. — *peeps not from its hole.*] Which shews that this grave person was content with his present situation; as finding but small satisfaction in what a famous poet reckons one of the great advantages of old age,

*The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
 Lets in new light from chinks that time has made.* SCRIBL.

At half mankind when gen'rous Manly raves,
 All know 'tis Virtue, for he thinks them knaves :
 When universal homage Umbra pays,
 All see 'tis Vice, and itch of vulgar praise. 60
 When Flatt'ry glares, all hate it in a Queen,
 While one there is who charms us with his Spleen.
 But these plain Characters we rarely find ;
 Tho' strong the bent, yet quick the turns of mind :
 Or puzzling Contraries confound the whole ; 65
 Or Affectations quite reverse the foul.

COMMENTARY.

plain-dealing of the other.—The Reader sees this objection is more particularly level'd at the doctrine of *vs* 23.

Our depths who fathoms, and our shallows finds?

for it here endeavours to prove, that both are equally explorable.

VER. 63. *But these plain Characters &c.*] To this objection, therefore, our author replies (from *vs* 60 to 67) that indeed the fact may be true in the instances given, but that such *plain characters* are extremely rare: And for the truth of this, he not only appeals to experience, but explains the causes of it: 1. The First of which is, the *vivacity of the Imagination*; for that when the bias of the Passions is enough determin'd to mark out the Character, yet then, as the vigour of the Fancy generally rises in proportion to the strength of the Appetites, the one no sooner directs the bias, than the other reverses it,

Tho' strong the bent, yet quick the turns of mind.

2. A Second cause is the *contrariety of Appetites*, which drawing several ways, as *Avarice and Luxury, Ambition and Indolence, &c.* they must needs make the same Character inconsistent to itself, and consequently inexplicable to the observer,

Or puzzling Contraries confound the whole.

VER. 66. *Or Affectations &c.*] 3. A Third cause is *Affectation*,

The Dull, flat Falshood serves, for policy;
 And in the Cunning, Truth itself's a lye:
 Unthought-of Frailties cheat us in the Wise;
 The Fool lies hid in inconsistencies. 70

See the same man, in vigour, in the gout;
 Alone, in company; in place, or out;
 Early at Bus'ness, and at Hazard late;
 Mad at a Fox-chace, wise at a Debate;
 Drunk at a Borough, civil at a Ball; 75
 Friendly at Hackney, faithless at Whitehall.

Catius is ever moral, ever grave,
 Thinks who endures a knave, is next a knave,
 Save just at dinner—then prefers, no doubt,
 A Rogue with Ven'son to a Saint without. 80

COMMENTARY.

that aspires to qualities, which neither *nature* nor *education* has given us, and which, consequently, neither *art* nor *use* will ever render graceful or becoming. On this account it is, he well observes, that *Affectation reverses the soul*; other *natural passions* may indeed turn it from that bias which the *ruling one* has given it; but the *affected passions* distort all its faculties, and cramp all its operations; so that it acts with the same constraint that a tumbler walks upon his hands.

VER. 69. *Unthought-of frailties &c.*] 4. A Fourth cause lies in the *Inequalities in the human mind*, which expose the *wise* to unexpected frailties, and conduct the *weak* to as unlooked for wisdom.

VER. 71. *See the same man, &c.*] Of all these Four causes he here gives examples: 1. Of the *vivacity of the Imagination* (from *ÿ 71 to 77*) — 2. Of the *contrariety of Appetites* (from *ÿ 76 to 81*) — 3. Of *Affectation* (from *ÿ 80 to 87*) — and 4. Of the *Inequalities of the human mind* (from *ÿ 86 to 95*.)

Who would not praise Patritio's high desert,
 His hand unstain'd, his uncorrupted heart,
 His comprehensive head! all Int'rests weigh'd,
 All Europe fav'd, yet Britain not betray'd.
 He thanks you not, his pride is in Picquette, 85
 New-market-fame, and judgment at a Bett.

What made (say Montagne, or more sage Charron!)
 Otho a warrior, Cromwell a buffoon?
 A perjur'd Prince a leaden Saint revere,
 A godless Regent tremble at a Star? 90

VARIATIONS.

After \S 86. in the former Editions,

Triumphant leaders, at an army's head,
 Hemm'd round with glories, pilfer cloth or bread;
 As meanly plunder as they bravely fought,
 Now save a People, and now save a groat.

NOTES.

VER. 81. *Patritio*] Lord
 G—n.

VER. 87. — *say Montagne,*
or more sage Charron!] Charron
 was an admirer of Montagne;
 had contracted a strict friend-
 ship with him; and has trans-
 ferred an infinite number of
 his thoughts into his famous
 book *De la Sageffe*; but his
 moderating every-where the
 extravagant Pyrrhonism of his
 friend, is the reason why the
 poet calls him *more sage Char-*
rion.

VER. 89. *A perjur'd Prince*]
 Louis XI. of France, wore in
 his Hat a leaden image of the
 Virgin Mary, which when he
 swore by, he feared to break
 his oath. P.

VER. 90. *A godless Regent*
tremble at a Star?] Philip
 Duke of Orleans, Regent of
 France in the minority of
 Louis XV. superstitious in ju-
 dicial astrology, tho' an unbe-
 liever in all religion. The
 same has been observed of
 many other *Politicians.* The

The throne a Bigot keep, a Genius quit,
 Faithless thro' Piety, and dup'd thro' Wit?
 Europe a Woman, Child, or Dotard rule,
 And just her wisest monarch made a fool?

NOTES.

Italians, in general, are not more noted for their refined *Politics* than for their attachment to the dotages of *Astrology*. It may be worth while to enquire into the cause of so singular a phenomenon, as it may probably do honour to Religion. These men observing (and none have equal opportunities of so doing) how perpetually public events fall out besides their expectation, and contrary to the best-laid schemes of worldly policy, cannot but confess that human affairs are ordered by some power extrinsecal. To acknowledge a God and his

Providence would be next to introducing a morality destructive of that public system which they think necessary for the government of the world. They have recourse therefore to that absurd scheme of Power which rules by no other law than *Fate* or *Destiny*. The consideration of this perhaps was the reason that the poet, to keep up decorum, and to preserve the distinction between a *Patriot* and a *Politician*, makes the former rely on *Providence* for the public safety, in the concluding words of the Epistle,

*Such in those moments as in all the past,
 O save my Country, Heav'n! shall be your last.*

VER. 91. *The throne a Bigot keep, a Genius quit,*] Philip V. of Spain, who, after renouncing the throne for Religion, resumed it to gratify his Queen; and Victor Amadeus II. King of Sardinia, who resigned the crown, and trying to reassume it, was im-

prisoned till his death. P.

VER. 93. *Europe a Woman, Child, and Dotard rule,—And just her ablest monarch made a fool?*] The Czarina, the King of France, the Pope, and the abovementioned King of Sardinia.

Know, GOD and NATURE only are the same :
 In Man, the judgment shoots at flying game, 96
 A bird of passage! gone as soon as found,
 Now in the Moon perhaps, now under ground.
 In vain the Sage, with retrospective eye,
 Would from th'apparent What conclude the Why,

COMMENTARY.

VER. 95. *Know, God and Nature &c.*] Having thus proved what he had proposed, the *premisses* naturally lead him into a moral reflexion, with which he concludes his *first part*, namely, that constancy is to be expected in no human Character whatsoever, but to be found only in God and his Laws: That as to Man, he is not only perpetually shifting and varying, even while *within the verge* of his own nature; but is frequently flying out into each extreme both *above* and *below* it: Now associating in good earnest with Brutes; and now again affecting the imaginary conversation of Angels [See *Essay on Man*, Ep. ii. v. 8.]

*A bird of passage! gone as soon as found,
 Now in the Moon perhaps, now under ground.*

II.

VER. 99. *In vain the Sage, &c.*] The author having shewn the difficulties in coming to the Knowledge and true Characters of men, enters now upon the *second division* of his Poem, which is *of the wrong means that both Philosophers and Men of the world*

NOTES.

VER. 95. *Know, God and Nature &c.*] By *Nature* is not here meant any imaginary substitute of God, called a *Plastic nature*; but his *moral laws*: And this observation was inserted with great propriety and discretion, in the conclusion of a long detail of the various characters of men: For, from this circumstance, *Montagne* and others have been bold enough to insinuate, that morality is founded more in custom and fashion than in the nature of things. The speaking therefore of a moral law of God as having all the constancy and durability of his Essence, had an high expediency in this place.

Infer the Motive from the Deed, and shew, 101
 That what we chanc'd was what we meant to do.
 Behold! If Fortune or a Mistress frowns,
 Some plunge in bus'ness, others shave their crowns:
 To ease the Soul of one oppressive weight, 105
 This quits an Empire, that embroils a State:
 The same adust complexion has impell'd
 Charles to the Convent, Philip to the Field.

COMMENTARY.

have employed in surmounting those difficulties. He had, in the Introduction, spoken of the absurd conduct of both, in despising the assistance of each other: He now justifies his censure by an examination of their peculiar doctrines; and, to take them in their own way, considers them, as they would be considered, *separately.* And *first,* of the *Philosopher,* whose principal mistake is in supposing that *Actions best decipher the Motive of the actor.* This he confutes (from ψ 98 to 109) by shewing that *different Actions* proceed often from the *same motive*; whether of *accident,* as disappointed views; or of *temperature,* as an adust complexion; which he thus illustrates,

Behold! If Fortune or a Mistress frowns, &c.

In judging therefore of *Motives* by *Actions,* the *Philosopher* must needs be frequently misled; because the passion or appetite, which, when impelling to *Action,* we call the *Motive,* may be equally gratified in the pursuit of quite different measures.

NOTES.

VER. 107. *The same adust complexion has impell'd --- Charles to the Convent, Philip to the Field.*] The atrabilaire complexion of Philip II. is well known, but not so well that he derived it from his father

Charles V. whose health, the historians of his life tell us, was frequently disorder'd by bilious fevers. But what the author meant principally to observe here was, that this humour made both these princes act

Not always Actions shew the man: we find
 Who does a kindness, is not therefore kind; 110
 Perhaps Prosperity becalm'd his breast,
 Perhaps the Wind just shifted from the east:
 Not therefore humble he who seeks retreat,
 Pride guides his steps, and bids him shun the great:
 Who combats bravely is not therefore brave, 115
 He dreads a death-bed like the meanest slave:

COMMENTARY.

VER. 109. *Not always Actions shew the man: &c.*] The Philosopher's second mistake is, that *Actions decipher the Character of the actor*. This too, the author confutes (from v 108 to 135) and, as in correcting the foregoing mistake, he proved, that *different Actions often proceed from the same Motive*; so here he proves, that *the same Action often proceeds from different Motives*; thus a *kind Action*, he observes, as commonly arises from the accidents of prosperity or fine weather, as from a natural disposition to humanity; a *modest Action*, as well from pride, as humility; a *brave Action*, as easily from habit or fashion, as magnanimity; and a *prudent Action* as often from vanity, as wisdom. Now the *Character* being really determined by the *Motives*, and various, nay contrary *Motives* producing the same *Action*, the *Action* can never decipher the *Character of the actor*. But further (continues the poet) if we attend to what has been said, we shall discover another circumstance in the case, that will not only make it extremely difficult, but absolutely impracticable to decipher the *Character* by the *Action*; and that is, the *discordancy of Action* in the same *Character*; a necessary consequence of the two principles proved above, that *different Actions proceed from the same Motive*, and that *the same Action proceeds from different Motives*.

NOTES.

contrary to their Character; |
 Charles, who was an active |
 man, when he retired into a |
 Convent; Philip, who was a
 man of the Closet, when he
 gave the battle of St. Quintin.

Who reasons wisely is not therefore wise,
His pride in Reas'ning, not in Acting lies.

But grant that Actions best discover man; 119
Take the most strong, and sort them as you can.

The few that glare each character must mark,
You balance not the many in the dark.

What will you do with such as disagree?

Suppress them, or miscall them Policy?

Must then at once (the character to save) 125

The plain rough Hero turn a crafty Knave?

COMMENTARY.

VER. 119. *But grant that Actions &c.*] If you will judge of man by his *Actions*, you are not to select such only as you like, or can manage, you must fairly take all you find: But, when you have got these together, they will prove so very discordant that no consistent Character can possibly be made out of them. What is then to be done? Will you *suppress* all those you cannot reconcile to the few capital Actions which you chuse for the foundation of your Character? But this the laws of truth will not permit. Will you then miscall them? and say they were not the natural workings of the man, but the disguises of the politician? But what will you get by that, but reversing the best known Character, and making the owner of it the direct opposite of himself? And this (says our author) the reasoning and philosophic historian has been always ready to do with the *Actions* of great men; of which he gives two famous instances in the life of Cæsar. The conclusion, from the whole, is, that *Actions do not shew the Man.*

NOTES.

VER. 117. *Who reasons wisely &c.*] By *reasoning* is not here meant *speculating*; but deliberating and resolving in public counsels; for this instance is given as *one*, of a variety of *actions*.

Alas! in truth the man but chang'd his mind,
 Perhaps was sick, in love, or had not din'd.
 Ask why from Britain Cæsar would retreat?
 Cæsar himself might whisper he was beat. 130
 Why risk the world's great empire for a Punk?
 Cæsar perhaps might answer he was drunk.
 But, sage historians! 'tis your task to prove
 One action Conduct; one, heroic Love.

VARIATIONS.

VER. 129. in the former Editions,

Ask why from Britain Cæsar made retreat?
 Cæsar himself would tell you he was beat.
 The mighty Czar what mov'd to wed a Punk?
 The mighty Czar would tell you he was drunk.

Alter'd as above, because Cæsar wrote his Commentaries of this war, and does *not* tell you he was beat. As Cæsar too afforded an instance of both cases, it was thought better to make him the single Example.

NOTES.

VER. 130. *Cæsar himself might whisper he was beat.* Cæsar wrote his *Commentaries*, in imitation of the Greek Generals, for the entertainment of the world: But had his friend asked him, in his ear, the reason of his sudden retreat from Britain, after so many signal victories, we have cause to suspect, even from his own public relation of that matter, that he would have *whisper'd he was beat.*

world's great empire for a Punk?] After the battle of Pharsalia, Cæsar pursued his enemy to Alexandria, where being infatuated with the charms of Cleopatra, instead of pushing his advantages, and dispersing the relicks of the Pharsalian quarrel, having narrowly escaped the violence of an enraged people, he brought upon himself an unnecessary war, at a time his arms were most wanted elsewhere.

VER. 131. *Why risque the*

'Tis from high Life high Characters are drawn ;
 A Saint in Crape is twice a Saint in Lawn ; 136
 A Judge is just, a Chanc'lor juster still ;
 A Gownman, learn'd ; a Bishop, what you will ;
 Wife, if a Minister ; but, if a King,
 More wise, more learn'd, more just, more ev'ry thing.
 Court-virtues bear, like Gems, the highest rate, 141
 Born where Heav'n's influence scarce can penetrate :
 In life's low vale, the foil the Virtues like,
 They please as beauties, here as wonders strike.

COMMENTARY.

VER. 135. [*'Tis from high Life, &c.*] The poet having done with the *Philosopher*, now turns to the *Man of the world* ; whose first mistake is in supposing men's true *Characters may be known by their station*. This, tho' a mere mob-opinion, is the opinion in fashion, and cherished by the Mob of all ranks ; therefore, tho' beneath the poet's reasoning, he thought it deserving of his ridicule ; and the strongest was what he gives (from v 134 to 141) a naked exposition of the fact ; to which he has subjoined (from v 140 to 149) an ironical apology, that, as Virtue is cultivated with infinitely more labour in Courts than in

NOTES.

VER. 141. *Court-virtues bear, like Gems, &c.*] This whole reflexion, and the similitude brought to support it, have a great delicacy of ridicule.—A man dispos'd to cavil would fancy the similitude not exact ; for that the principal reason of our preferring the

Gem is for its durability. But does he not see it is equally for its rarity ; and that when once a Court-virtue rises and comes in the way of such a lover of it as our poet, it seldom sets again, but bids fair for being immortal ?

Tho' the same Sun with all-diffusive rays 145
 Blush in the Rose, and in the Di'mond blaze,
 We prize the stronger effort of his pow'r,
 And justly set the Gem above the Flow'r.

'Tis Education forms the common mind,
 Just as the Twig is bent, the Tree's inclin'd. 150
 Boastful and rough, your first son is a 'Squire;
 The next a Tradesman, meek, and much a lyar;

COMMENTARY.

Cottages, it is but just to set an infinitely higher value on it; which, says he with much pleasantry, is most agreeable to all the fashionable ways of estimation. For why do the connoisseurs prefer the lively colour in a Gem before that in a Flower, but for its extreme rarity and difficulty of production?

VER. 149. 'Tis Education forms, &c.] This *second* mistake of the *Man of the world* is more serious; it is, that *Characters are best judged of by the general Manners*. This the poet confutes in a lively enumeration of examples (from v 148 to 158) which shew, that how similar or different soever the *Manners* be by *Nature*, yet they are all new model'd by *Education* and *Profession*; where each man invariably receives that exotic form which the mould he falls into, is fitted to imprint. The *natural Character* therefore can never be judged of by these *fictitious Manners*.

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VER. 152. *The next a Tradesman, meek, and much a lyar;*]
 "The only glory of a Tradesman (says Hobbes) is to grow excessively rich by the wisdom of buying and selling." A pursuit very wide of all *vain-glory*; so that if he

be given to *lying*, it is certainly on a more substantial motive, and will therefore rather deserve the name, which this philosopher gives it, of *wisdom*; it being indeed the *wisdom of this world*, by which all things in it are governed. SCRIBL.

Tom struts a Soldier, open, bold, and brave;
 Will sneaks a Scriv'ner, an exceeding knave: 154
 Is he a Churchman? then he's fond of pow'r: }
 A Quaker? fly: A Presbyterian? sow'r: }
 A smart Free-thinker? all things in an hour. }

Ask men's Opinions: Scots now shall tell
 How Trade increases, and the World goes well;
 Strike off his Pension, by the setting sun, 160
 And Britain, if not Europe, is undone.

That gay Free-thinker, a fine talker once,
 What turns him now a stupid silent dunce?
 Some God, or Spirit he has lately found;
 Or chanc'd to meet a Minister that frown'd. 165

Judge we by Nature? Habit can efface,
 Int'rest o'ercome, or Policy take place:

COMMENTARY.

VER. 158. *Ask mens Opinions: &c.*] The third mistake is in judging of mens characters by their *Opinions and turn of thinking*. But these, the poet shews by two examples (from v 157 to 166.) are generally swayed by *Interest*, both in the *affairs of Life and Speculation*.

VER. 166. *Judge we by Nature? &c.*] The poet having

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VER. 164, 165. *Some God, or Spirit he has lately found, Or chanc'd to meet a Minister that frown'd.*] Disasters the most unlooked for, as they were what the Free-thinker's *Specu-*

lations and Practice were principally directed to avoid.—The poet here alludes to the ancient classical opinion, that the sudden vision of a God was supposed to strike the irreverend

By Actions? those Uncertainty divides :
 By Passions? these Diffimulation hides :
 Opinions? they still take a wider range: 170
 Find, if you can, in what you cannot change.

Manners with Fortunes, Humours turn with
 Climes,
 Tenets with Books, and Principles with Times.

COMMENTARY.

gone through the *mistakes* both of the *Philosopher* and *Man of the world*, separately, turns now to *both*; and (from ν 165 to 174) jointly addresses them in a *recapitulation* of his reasoning against *both*: He shews, that if we pretend to develope the *Character* by the *natural disposition in general*, we shall find it extremely difficult, because this is often *effaced* by *Habit*, *overswayed* by *Interest*, and *suspended* by *Policy*.—If by *Actions*, their contrariety will leave us in utter doubt and uncertainty.—If by *Passions*, we shall be perpetually misled by the mask of *Diffimulation*.—If by *Opinions*, all these concur together to perplex the enquiry. Shew us, then, says he, in the whole range of your *Philosophy* and *Experience*, the thing we can be *certain* of: For (to sum up all in a word)

Manners with Fortunes, Humours turn with Climes,
 Tenets with Books, and Principles with Times.

We must seek therefore some other road to the point we aim at.

NOTES.

observer speechless. He has only a little extended the conceit, and supposed, that the terrors of a *Court-God* might have the like effect on a very devoted worshipper. SCRIBL.

VER. 172, 173. *Manners with Fortunes, Humours turn with Climes, Tenets with Books, and Principles with Times.*]

The poet had hitherto reckon'd up the several *simple* causes that hinder our knowledge of the natural characters of men. In these two fine lines he describes the *complicated* causes. *Humours* bear the same relation to *Manners*, that *Principles* do to *Tenets*; that is, the former are *modes* of the latter;

Search then the RULING PASSION: There, alone,
 The Wild are constant, and the Cunning known;
 The Fool consistent, and the False sincere; 176
 Priests, Princes, Women, no dissemblers here.
 This clue once found, unravels all the rest,
 The prospect clears, and Wharton stands confest.
 Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our days, 180
 Whose ruling Passion was the Lust of Praise:
 Born with whate'er could win it from the Wise,
 Women and Fools must like him or he dies;

COMMENTARY.

VER. 174. *Search then the Ruling Passion: &c.*] And now we enter on the *third* and last part; which treats of the *right means* of surmounting the difficulties in coming to the *Knowledge and Characters of Men*: This the poet shews, is by *investigating the RULING PASSION*; of whose origin and nature we may find an exact account in the second Ep. of the *Essay on Man*. This *Principle* he rightly observes (from ν 173 to 180) is the clue that must guide us thro' all the intricacies in the ways of men: To convince us of which, he applies it (from ν 179 to 210) to the most wild and inconsistent Character that ever was; which (when drawn out at length, in a spirit of poetry as rare as the character itself) we see, this *Principle* unravels, and renders throughout of one plain consistent thread.

NOTES.

our *Manners* are warped from nature by our *Fortunes* or *Stations*; our *Tenets*, by our *Books* or *Professions*; and then each drawn still more oblique, into *humour* and *political principles*, by the temperature of the *climate*, and the constitution of

the *government*.

VER. 174. *Search then the Ruling Passion:*] See *Essay on Man*, Ep. ii. ν 133. & seq.

VER. 181. *the Lust of Praise:*] This very well expresses the *grossness* of his appetite for it; where the *strength*

Tho' wond'ring Senates hung on all he spoke,
 The Club must hail him master of the joke. 185
 Shall parts so various aim at nothing new?
 He'll shine a Tully and a Wilmot too.
 Then turns repentant, and his God adores
 With the same spirit that he drinks and whores;
 Enough if all around him but admire, 190
 And now the Punk applaud, and now the Fryer.
 Thus with each gift of nature and of art,
 And wanting nothing but an honest heart;
 Grown all to all, from no one vice exempt;
 And most contemptible, to shun contempt; 195
 His Passion still, to covet gen'ral praise,
 His Life, to forfeit it a thousand ways;
 A constant Bounty which no friend has made;
 An angel Tongue, which no man can persuade;
 A Fool, with more of Wit than half mankind, 200
 Too rash for Thought, for Action too refin'd:

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of the Passion had destroyed all the delicacy of the Sensation.

VER. 187. John Wilmot, E. of Rochester, famous for his Wit and Extravagancies in the time of Charles the Second. P.

VER. 189. *With the same spirit*] Spirit, for principle, not

passion.

VER. 200. *A Fool, with more of Wit*] Folly, joined with much *Wit*, produces that behaviour which we call *Aburdity*; and this *Aburdity* the poet has here admirably described in the words,

Too rash for Thought, for Action too refin'd:

A Tyrant to the wife his heart approves;
 A Rebel to the very king he loves;
 He dies, sad out-cast of each church and state,
 And, harder still! flagitious, yet not great. 205
 Ask you why Wharton broke thro' ev'ry rule?
 'Twas all for fear the Knaves should call him Fool.

Nature well known, no prodigies remain,
 Comets are regular, and Wharton plain.

VARIATIONS.

In the former Editions, *vs* 208.

Nature well known, no *Miracles* remain.

Alter'd, as above, for very obvious reasons.

NOTES.

by which we are made to understand, that the person described gave a loose to his *Fancy* when he should have used his *Judgment*; and pursued his *Speculations* when he should have trusted to his *Experience*.

VER. 205. *And, harder still, flagitious, yet not great.*) To arrive at what the world calls *Greatness*, a man must either hide and conceal his vices, or he must openly and stedily

practise them, in the pursuit and attainment of one important end. This unhappy Nobleman did neither.

VER. 207. *'Twas all for fear &c.*] To understand this, we must observe, that the *Lust of general praise* made the person, whose Character is here so admirable drawn, both *extravagant* and *flagitious*; his *Madness* was to please the Fools,

Women and Fools must like him, or he dies.

And his *Crimes* to avoid the censure of the Knaves,

'Twas all for fear the Knaves should call him Fool.

Prudence and *Honesty* being the two qualities that Fools and Knaves are most interested,

and consequently most industrious, to misrepresent.

VER. 209. *Comets are regu-*

Yet, in this search, the wisest may mistake, 210
 If second qualities for first they take.
 When Catiline by rapine swell'd his store ;
 When Cæsar made a noble dame a whore ;
 In this the Lust, in that the Avarice 214
 Were means, not ends ; Ambition was the vice.

COMMENTARY.

VER. 210. *Yet, in this search, &c.*] But here (from v 209 to 222) he gives one very necessary caution, that, in developing the *Ruling Passion*, we must be careful not to mistake a *subsidiary* passion for the *principal* ; which, without great attention, we may be very liable to do ; as the *subsidiary*, acting in support of the *principal*, has frequently all its *vigour* and much of its *perseverance* : This error has misled several both of the ancient and modern historians ; as when they supposed *Lust* and *Luxury* to be Characteristics of *Cæsar* and *Lucullus* ; whereas, in truth, the *Ruling Passion* of both was *Ambition* ; which is so certain, that, at whatsoever different time of the Republic these men had lived, their *Ambition*, as the *Ruling Passion*, had been the

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lar, and Wharton plain.] This illustration has an exquisite beauty, arising from the exactness of the analogy : For, as the appearance of irregularity, in a Comet's motion, is occasioned by the greatness of the *force* which pushes it round a very eccentric orb ; so it is the *violence* of the *Ruling Passion*, that, impatient for its object, in the impetuosity of its course towards it, is frequently hurried to an immense distance from it, which occasions all that

puzzling inconsistency of conduct we observe in it.

VER. 213. — *a noble Dame a whore,*] The sister of Cato, and mother of Brutus.

VER. 215. *Ambition was the vice.*] *Pride, Vanity, and Ambition* are such bordering and neighbourly vices, and hold so much in common, that we generally find them going together, and therefore, as generally mistake them for one another. This does not a little contribute to our confounding

That very Cæsar, born in Scipio's days,
 Had aim'd, like him, by Chastity at praise.
 Lucullus, when Frugality could charm,
 Had roasted turnips in the Sabin farm.
 In vain th' observer eyes the builder's toil, 220
 But quite mistakes the scaffold for the pile.
 In this one Passion man can strength enjoy,
 As Fits give vigour, just when they destroy.

COMMENTARY.

fame; but a different time had changed their *subsidiary* ones of *Lust* and *Luxury*, into their very opposites of *Chastity* and *Frugality*. 'Tis in vain therefore, says our author, for the observer of human nature to fix his attention on the *Workman*, if he all the while mistakes the *Scaffold* for the *Building*.

VER. 222. *In this one Passion &c.*] But now it may be objected to our philosophic poet, that he has indeed shewn *the true means* of coming to *the Knowledge and Characters of men* by a *Principle* certain and infallible, when found, yet, by his own account, of so difficult investigation, that its *Counterfeit*, and it is always attended with one, may be easily mistaken for it. To

NOTES.

Characters; for they are, in reality, very different and distinct; so much so, that 'tis remarkable, the three greatest men in Rome, and contemporaries, possessed each of these separately, without the least mixture of the other two: The men I mean were Cæsar, Cato, and Cicero: For Cæsar had *Ambition* without either vanity or pride; Cato had *Pride* without ambition or vanity; and

Cicero had *Vanity* without pride or ambition.

VER. 223. *As Fits give vigour, just when they destroy.*] The similitude is extremely apposite; as most of the instances he has afterwards given of the vigorous exertion of the *Ruling Passion* in the last moments, are from such who had hastened their death by an immoderate indulgence of *that Passion*.

Time, that on all things lays his lenient hand,
 Yet tames not this; it sticks to our last sand. 225
 Consistent in our follies and our sins,
 Here honest Nature ends as she begins.

Old Politicians chew on wisdom past,
 And totter on in bus'ness to the last;
 As weak, as earnest; and as gravely out, 230
 As sober Lanesb'row dancing in the gout.

Behold a rev'rend sire, whom want of grace
 Has made the father of a nameless race,

C O M M E N T A R Y.

remove this difficulty, therefore, and consequently the objection that arises from it, the poet has given (from ν 221 to 228) one certain and infallible criterion of the *Ruling Passion*, which is this, that all the *other* passions, in the course of time, change and wear away; while *this* is ever constant and vigorous; and still going on from strength to strength, to the very moment of its demolishing the miserable machine that it has now at length overworked. Of this great truth, the poet (from ν 227 to the end) gives various instances in all the principal *Ruling Passions* of our nature, as they are to be found in the *Man of Business*, the *Man of Pleasure*, the *Epicure*, the *Parcimonious*, the *Toast*, the

N O T E S.

VER. 227. *Here honest Nature ends as she begins.*] Human nature is here humourously called *honest*, as the impulse of the *ruling passion* (which she gives and cherishes) makes her more and more impatient of disguise.

VER. 231. *Lanesb'row.*] An

ancient Nobleman, who continued this practice long after his legs were disabled by the gout. Upon the death of Prince George of Denmark, he demanded an audience of the Queen, to advise her to preserve her health and dispel her grief by *Dancing*. P.

Shov'd from the wall perhaps, or rudely prefs'd
 By his own son, that passes by unblefs'd: 235
 Still to his wench he crawls on knocking knees,
 And envies ev'ry sparrow that he sees.

A salmon's belly, Helluo, was thy fate;
 The doctor call'd, declares all help too late:
 "Mercy! cries Helluo, mercy on my soul! 240
 "Is there no hope?—Alas!—then bring the jowl."

The frugal Crone, whom praying priests attend,
 Still tries to save the hallow'd taper's end,
 Collects her breath, as ebbing life retires,
 For one puff more, and in that puff expires. 245

"Odious! in woollen! 'twould a Saint provoke,
 (Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke)
 "No, let a charming Chintz, and Bruffels lace
 "Wrap my cold limbs, and shade my lifeless face:

COMMENTARY.

Courtier, the *Miser*, and the *Patriot*; which last instance the poet has had the art, under the appearance of Satire, to turn into the noblest Compliment on the person to whom the Epistle is addressed.

NOTES.

VER. 247. — *the last words that poor Narcissa spoke*] This story, as well as the others, is founded on fact, tho' the author had the goodness not to mention the names. Several attribute this in particular to a very celebrated Actress, who, in detestation of the thought of being buried in woollen, gave these her last orders with her dying breath. P.

‘ One would not, sure, be frightful when one’s dead—

“ And — Betty — give this Cheek a little Red.”

The Courtier smooth, who forty years had shin’d
An humble servant to all human kind,
Just brought out this, when scarce his tongue could
stir,

“ If — where I’m going — I could serve you, Sir?

“ I give and I devise (old Euclio said, 256
And sigh’d) “ my lands and tenements to Ned.

Your money, Sir; “ My money, Sir, what all?

“ Why, — if I must — (then wept) I give it Paul.

The Manor, Sir? — “ The Manor! hold, he cry’d,

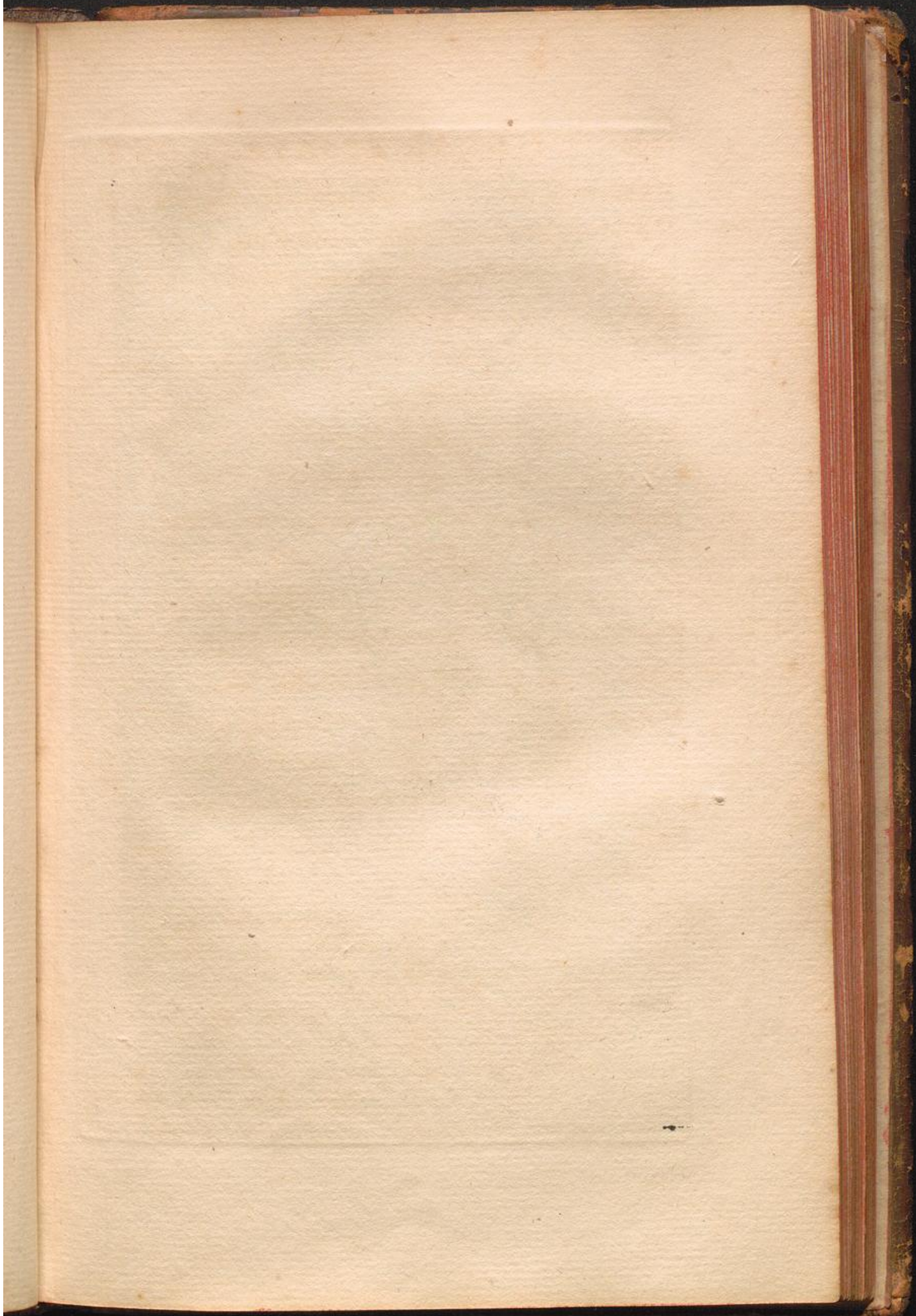
“ Not that, — I cannot part with that” — and dy’d.

And you! brave COBHAM, to the latest breath
Shall feel your ruling passion strong in death:

Such in those moments as in all the past,

“ Oh, save my Country, Heav’n!” shall be your last.







N. Blakely inv. & del.

G. Scottin sculp.

In Men, we various ruling Passions find,
In Women, two almost divide the Kind;
Those only fix'd, they first or last obey,
The Love of Pleasure, and the Love of Sway.

Char: of Women.