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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 V. To Mr. Addison, occasioned by his dialogues on Medals

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MORAL ESSAYS.

EPISTLE V.

To Mr. *ADDISON*.

Occasion'd by his Dialogues on MEDALS.

SEE the wild Waste of all-devouring years!
How Rome her own sad Sepulchre appears,
With nodding arches, broken temples spread!
The very Tombs now vanish'd like their dead!

NOTES.

THIS was originally written in the year 1715, when Mr. Addison intended to publish his book of medals; it was sometime before he was secretary of State; but not published till Mr. Tickell's Edition of his works; at which time the verses on Mr. Craggs, which conclude the poem, were added, viz. in 1720.

P.

EPIST. V.] As the third Epistle treated of the extremes of *Avarice* and *Profusion*; and the fourth took up one particular branch of the latter, namely, the *vanity of expence* in people of wealth and quality, and was therefore a corollary to the third; so this treats of one circumstance of that *Vanity*, as it appears in the common collectors of old coins;

Imperial wonders rais'd on Nations spoil'd, 5
 Where mix'd with Slaves the groaning Martyr toil'd:
 Huge Theatres, that now unpeopled Woods,
 Now drain'd a distant country of her Floods:
 Fanes, which admiring Gods with pride survey,
 Statues of Men, scarce less alive than they! 10
 Some felt the silent stroke of mould'ring age,
 Some hostile fury, some religious rage.
 Barbarian blindness, Christian zeal conspire,
 And Papal piety, and Gothic fire.

NOTES.

and is, therefore, a corollary to the fourth.

VER. 6. *Where mix'd with slaves the groaning Martyr toil'd*] The inattentive reader might

wonder how this circumstance came to find a place here. But let him compare it with *l* 13, 14, and he will see the Reason,

*Barbarian blindness, Christian zeal conspire,
 And papal piety, and gothic fire.*

For the *Slaves* mentioned above were of the same nation with the *Barbarians* here: and the *Christians* here, the Successors of the *Martyrs* there: Providence ordaining, that *these* should ruin what *those* were so injuriously employed in rearing: for the poet never loseth sight of his great principle.

VER. 9. *Fanes, which ad-*

miring *Gods with pride survey,*] These Gods were the then Tyrants of Rome, to whom the Empire rais'd Temples. The epithet, *admiring*, conveys a strong ridicule; that passion, in the opinion of Philosophy, always conveying the ideas of ignorance and misery:

*Nil admirari prope res est una, Numici,
 Solaque quæ possit facere & servare beatum.*

Admiration implying our ignorance of other things; *pride*, our ignorance of ourselves.

Perhaps, by its own ruins sav'd from flame, 15
 Some bury'd marble half preserves a name;
 That Name the learn'd with fierce disputes pursue,
 And give to Titus old Vespasian's due.

Ambition figh'd: She found it vain to trust
 The faithless Column and the crumbling Bust:
 Huge moles, whose shadow stretch'd from shore to
 shore, 21

Their ruins perish'd, and their place no more!
 Convinc'd, she now contracts her vast design,
 And all her Triumphs shrink into a Coin.

A narrow orb each crouded conquest keeps, 25
 Beneath her Palm here sad Judæa weeps.

Now scantier limits the proud Arch confine,
 And scarce are seen the prostrate Nile or Rhine;
 A small Euphrates thro' the piece is roll'd,
 And little Eagles wave their wings in gold. 30

NOTES.

VER. 18. *And give to Titus old Vespasian's due.*] A fine insinuation of the entire want of Taste in Antiquaries; whose ignorance of Characters misleads them, (supported only by a name) against Reason and History.

VER. 25. *A narrow Orb*

each crowded Conquest keeps,] A ridicule on the pompous title of *Orbis Romanus*, which the Romans gave to their empire.

VER. 27. — *the proud Arch*] i. e. The triumphal Arch, which was generally an enormous mass of building.

The Medal, faithful to its charge of fame,
 Thro' climes and ages bears each form and name:
 In one short view subjected to our eye
 Gods, Emp'rors, Heroes, Sages, Beauties, lie.
 With sharpen'd fight pale Antiquaries pore, 35
 Th' inscription value, but the rust adore.
 This the blue varnish, that the green endears,
 The sacred rust of twice ten hundred years!
 To gain Pescennius one employs his schemes,
 One grasps a Cecrops in ecstatic dreams. 40
 Poor Vadius, long with learned spleen devour'd,
 Can taste no pleasure since his Shield was scour'd:
 And Curio, restless by the Fair-one's side,
 Sighs for an Otho, and neglects his bride.
 Theirs is the Vanity, the Learning thine: 45
 Touch'd by thy hand, again Rome's glories shine;
 Her Gods, and god-like Heroes rise to view,
 And all her faded garlands bloom a-new.

NOTES.

VER. 35. *With sharpen'd fight pale Antiquaries pore,*]
Microscopic glasses, invented
 by philosophers to discover the
 beauties in the minuter works
 of nature, ridiculously applied
 by Antiquaries, to detect the
 cheats of counterfeit medals.

VER. 37. *This the blue var-*
nish, that the green endears]
 i. e. This a collector of silver;
 That, of brass coins.

VER. 41. *Poor Vadius]* See
 his history, and that of his
 Shield, in the *Memoirs of Scrib-*
lerus.

Nor blush, these studies thy regard engage;
 These pleas'd the Fathers of poetic rage; 50
 The verse and sculpture bore an equal part,
 And Art reflected images to Art.

Oh when shall Britain, conscious of her claim,
 Stand emulous of Greek and Roman fame?
 In living medals see her wars enroll'd, 55
 And vanquish'd realms supply recording gold?
 Here, rising bold, the Patriot's honest face;
 There Warriors frowning in historic brass:
 Then future ages with delight shall see
 How Plato's, Bacon's, Newton's looks agree; 60

NOTES.

VER. 49. *Nor blush, these Studies thy regard engage;*] A senseless affectation which some writers of eminence have betrayed; who when fortune, or their talents have raised them to a condition to do without those arts, for which only they gained our esteem, have pretended to think letters below their Character. This false shame M. Voltaire has very well, and with proper indignation, exposed in his account of Mr. Congreve: "He had one Defect, which
 " was, his entertaining too
 " mean an Idea of his first
 " Profession, (that of a Writer) tho' 'twas to this he

" ow'd his Fame and Fortune. He spoke of his Works
 " as of Trifles that were beneath
 " him; and hinted to me in
 " our first Conversation, that
 " I should visit him upon no
 " other Foot than that of a
 " Gentleman, who led a Life
 " of plainness and simplicity.
 " I answer'd, that, had he been
 " so unfortunate as to be a
 " mere Gentleman, I should
 " never have come to see him;
 " and I was very much disgusted at so unseasonable a piece
 " of vanity. *Letters concerning the English Nation*, xix.

VER. 53. *Oh when shall Britain, &c.*] A compliment to one of Mr. Addison's papers in

Or in fair series laurell'd Bards be shown,
 A Virgil there, and here an Addison.
 Then shall thy CRAGGS (and let me call him mine)
 On the cast ore, another Pollio, shine;
 With aspect open, shall erect his head, 65
 And round the orb in lasting notes be read,
 " Statesman, yet friend to Truth! of soul sincere,
 " In action faithful, and in honour clear;
 " Who broke no promise, serv'd no private end,
 " Who gain'd no title, and who lost no friend;
 " Ennobled by himself, by all approv'd,
 " And prais'd, unenvy'd, by the Muse he lov'd.

NOTES.

the Spectator on this subject.

VER. 67. "*Statesman, yet friend to truth, &c.*] It should be remembered that this poem was written to be printed before Mr. Addison's *discourse on Medals*, in which there is the following censure of long legends upon coins: "The first
 " fault I find with a modern
 " legend is its diffusiveness.
 " You have sometimes the
 " whole side of a medal over-
 " run with it. One would
 " fancy the Author had a De-
 " sign of being Ciceronian—
 " but it is not only the tedi-
 " ousness of these inscriptions

" that I find fault with; sup-
 " posing them of a moderate
 " length, why must they be in
 " verse? We should be sur-
 " prized to see the title of a
 " serious book in rhyme.—
 Dial. iii.

VER. ult. *And prais'd un-
 envy'd by the Muse he lov'd.*] It was not likely that men acting in so different spheres as were those of Mr. Craggs and Mr. Pope, should have their friendship disturbed by Envy. We must suppose then that some circumstances in the friendship of Mr. Pope and Mr. Addison are hinted at in this place.

F I N I S.

Or in fairer lands be shown,
A Virgin there, and here an Adulteress,
Then shall the Orators (and let me call them mine)
On the east ore, another fellow, shine;
With aspect open, shall end his head,
And round the orb in lasting rows be read:
"Succumbant, yet friend to Truth! of justice clear;
"In action faithful, and in honour clear;
"Who broke no promise, lov'd no private end;
"Who said no lies, and who lov'd no friend;
"Emul'd by himself, by all approv'd;
"And grail'd, unenvy'd, by the whole below."

THE END

the author of this Essay
was of the University of
Oxford, and was a
member of the Society
of Christ Church, where
he was bred to the
Profession of the Law,
and afterwards was
called to the Bar, and
practised some time
there, but he was
not long in the
Profession, for he
was of a very
delicate constitution,
and he was
obliged to leave
the Bar, and to
return to his
Country, where he
lived some time,
and then he died.