

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 The First of his Letters

Pope, Alexander London, 1751

IV. (On the	Emperor	Adrian's	s verses	on his	death-be	ed.
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256 LETTERS TO AND

LETTER IV. To Mr. STEELE.

Nov. 7, 1712.

I was the other day in company with five or fix men of some learning; where chancing to mention the famous verses which the Emperor Adrian spoke on his death-bed, they were all agreed that 'twas a piece of gaiety unworthy of that prince in those circumstances. I could not but differ from this opinion: methinks it was by no means a gay, but a very serious soliloquy to his soul at the point of its departure; in which sense I naturally took the verses at my first reading them, when I was very young, and before I knew what interpretation the world generally put upon them.

Animula vagula, blandula, Hospes comesque corporis, Quæ nunc abibis in loca? Pallidula, rigida, nudula, Nec (ut soles) dabis joca!

"Alas, my foul! thou pleafing companion of this body, thou fleeting thing that art now

" deferting it! whither art thou flying? to

" what unknown scene? all trembling, fear" ful,

"ful, and penfive! what now is become of thy former wit and humour? thou shalt jest

" and be gay no more."

I confess I cannot apprehend where lies the trifling in all this: 'tis the most natural and obvious reflection imaginable to a dying man: and if we consider the Emperor was a heathen, that doubt concerning the future fate of his foul will feem fo far from being the effect of want of thought, that 'twas scarce reasonable he should think otherwise; not to mention that here is a plain confession included of his belief in its immortality. The diminutive epithets of vagula, blandula, and the rest, appear not to me as expressions of levity, but rather of endearment and concern; fuch as we find in Catullus, and the authors of Hendeca-fyllabi after him, where they are used to express the utmost love and tenderness for their mistresses .-If you think me right in my notion of the last words of Adrian, be pleas'd to infert it in the Spectator; if not, to suppress it. I am, &c.

ADRIANI morientis Ad ANIMAM, TRANSLATED.

Ah fleeting Spirit! wand'ring fire,
That long hast warm'd my tender breast,
Must thou no more this frame inspire?
No more a pleasing, chearful guest?

Whither,

258 LETTERS TO AND

Whither, ah whither art thou flying!

To what dark, undifcover'd fhore?

Thou feem'st all trembling, shiv'ring, dying,

And Wit and Humour are no more!

LETTER V. Mr. STEELE to Mr. Pope.

Nov. 12, 1712.

I Have read over your Temple of Fame twice, and cannot find any thing amis, of weight enough to call a fault, but see in it a thousand thousand beauties. Mr. Addison shall see it to-morrow: after his perusal of it, I will let you know his thoughts. I desire you would let me know whether you are at leisure or not? I have a design which I shall open a month or two hence, with the assistance of the sew like yourself. If your thoughts are unengaged, I shall explain myself further. I am

Your, &cc.

LETTER VI. The Answer.

Nov. 16, 1712.

Y OU oblige me by the indulgence you have shewn to the poem I sent you, but will