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A Collection Of Poems In Six Volumes. By Several Hands

Dodsley, Robert

London, 1758

An Epistle to a Lady.

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From the cant of fanaticks, the jargon of ſchools,
The cenſures of wiſemen, and praiſes of fools:
From criticks who never read Latin or Greek,
And pedants, who boaſt they read both all the week:
From borrowing wit, to repay it like BUDGEL,
Or lending, like POPE, to be paid by a cudgel:
If ever thou didſt, or wilt ever befriend me,
From theſe, and ſuch evils, APOLLO, defend me,
And let me be rather but honeſt with no-wit,
Than a noiſy nonſenſical half-witted poet.

An EPISTLE to a LADY.

WHEN the heart akes with anguiſh, pines with grief,
And heav'n and you alike deny relief;
When ev'n the flatt'rer Hope is no where found,
'Tis hard to feel the ſmart, and not lament the wound.
Permit me then to ſigh one laſt adieu,
Nor ſcorn a ſorrow friendſhip owes to you:
A friendſhip, modeſty might well return;
A ſorrow, cruelty itſelf might mourn.
Think how the miſer, pierc'd with inward pain,
Looks down with horror on the troubled main,
Or wildly roams along the rocky coaſt,
T' explore his treaſures in the tempeſt loſt;

Hates his own ſafety, chides the waves that roll'd
Himſelf aſhore, but ſunk his dearer gold.
Like him afflicted, penſive, and forlorn,
I look on life and all its pomp with ſcorn.
You was the ſweetner of each buſy ſcene;
You gave the joy without, the pain within.
Pleaſure and you were both ſo near ally'd,
That when I loſt the one, the other dy'd;
Pain too has laviſh'd all her killing ſtore;
Nor can ſhe add, nor I can ſuffer more.

In vain I view'd you with as chaſte a fire,
As angels mingle, or as ſaints admire;
By reaſon prompted, paſſion had no part,
A virtuous ardour that refin'd the heart.
In vain I ſought a friendſhip free from fault,
Where ſex and beauty were alike forgot:
A friendſhip by the nobleſt union join'd,
The female ſoftneſs, and the manly mind.
Courage to conquer evils, or endure;
Sweetneſs to ſooth the pain, and ſmiles to cure.
Scandal, a buſy fiend, in Truth's diſguiſe,
Like Fame all cover'd o'er with ears and eyes,
Learns the fond tale, and ſpreads it as ſhe flies.
Nor ſpreads alone, but alters, adds, defames,
Affects to pity, tho' her duty blames.
Feigns not to credit all ſhe ſees or hears,
But hopes the evil only in her fears.

Pretends to weigh the fact in even ſcale,
And wiſh, at leaſt, that juſtice may prevail.
Inſinuates, diſſembles, lyes, betrays,
Plays the whole hypocrite ſuch various ways,
That Innocence itſelf muſt ſuffer wrong,
And Honour bleed the prey of Slander's tongue.
Such is my fate, ſo grievous my diſtreſs,
Condemn'd to ſuffer, but deny'd redreſs :
Too fond of joy, too ſenſible of pain,
To part with all that's dear, and not complain :
Too delicate to injure what I love,
To aſk the pity fame will ne'er approve.
What more remains, then, but to drop my claim,
And by my conduct juſtify my flame ?
Burſt the dear bands that to my heart-ſtrings join,
And ſacrifice my peace to purchaſe thine ?
As the fond mother, who delirious eyes
Her dying babe, will ſcarce believe it dies :
But ſtrains it ſtill with tranſport in her arms,
Dwells on its lips and numbers o'er its charms ;
Pleads that it ſlumbers, and expects, in vain,
To ſee the little cherub live again :
So my torn heart muſt all the ſorrows prove
That torture conſtancy, or ſadden love :
Yet fondly follow your dear image ſtill,
Fancy I hear you ſpeak, I ſee you ſmile :
Doat on a phantom, idolize the name,
And wiſh the ſhade and ſubſtance were the ſame.

Alas !

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