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A Collection Of Poems In Six Volumes. By Several Hands

Dodsley, Robert

London, 1758

An Epistle from S.J.Esq; in the Country, to the Right Hon. the Lord
Lovelace in Town.

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And lightning-beams flash from his glowing eyes.

Ev'n now he scorns the prey the desarts yield,
Ev'n now (as hope the future scene supplies)

He shakes the terrors of his heav'n-form'd shield,
And braves th' indignant flood, and thunders o'er the field.



AN EPISTLE from S. J. Esq; in the
COUNTRY, to the Right Hon. the Lord
LOVELACE in TOWN.

Written in the Year, 1735.

IN days, my Lord, when mother Time,
Tho' now grown old, was in her prime,
When SATURN first began to rule,
And JOVE was hardly come from school,
How happy was a country life!
How free from wickedness and strife!
Then each man liv'd upon his farm,
And thought and did no mortal harm;
On mossy banks fair virgins slept,
As harmless as the flocks they kept;
Then love was all they had to do,
And nymphs were chaste, and swains were true.
But now, whatever poets write,
'Tis sure the case is alter'd quite,

Virtue



Virtue no more in rural plains,
 Or innocence, or peace remains ;
 But vice is in the cottage found,
 And country girls are oft unbound ;
 Fierce party rage each village fires,
 With wars of justices and 'squires ;
 Attorneys, for a barley straw,
 Whole ages hamper folks in law ;
 And ev'ry neighbour's in a flame
 About their rates, or tythes, or game :
 Some quarrel for their hares and pigeons,
 And some for diff'rence in religions :
 Some hold their parson the best preacher,
 The tinker some a better teacher ;
 These to the Church they fight for, strangers,
 Have faith in nothing but her dangers ;
 While those, a more believing people,
 Can swallow all things——but a steeple.
 But I, my Lord, who, as you know,
 Care little how these matters go,
 And equally detest the strife
 And usual joys of country life,
 Have by good fortune little share
 Of its diversions, or its care ;
 For seldom I with 'squires unite,
 Who hunt all day, and drink all night ;
 Nor reckon wonderful inviting,
 A quarter-sessions, or cock-fighting ;



But then no farm I occupy,
 With sheep to rot and cows to dye :
 Nor rage I much, or much despair,
 Tho' in my hedge I find a snare ;
 Nor view I, with due admiration,
 All the high honours here in fashion ;
 The great commissions of the quorum,
 Terrors to all who come before 'em ;
 Militia scarlet, edg'd with gold,
 Or the white staff high-sheriffs hold ;
 The representative's careffing,
 The judge's bow, the bishop's blessing,
 Nor can I for my soul delight
 In the dull feast of neighb'ring knight,
 Who, if you send three days before,
 In white gloves meets you at the door,
 With superfluity of breeding
 First makes you sick, and then with feeding.
 Or if with ceremony cloy'd,
 You wou'd next time such plagues avoid,
 And visit without previous notice,
 JOHN, JOHN, a coach !—I can't think who 'tis,
 My lady cries, who spies your coach,
 Ere you the avenue approach ;
 Lord, how unlucky !—washing-day !
 And all the men are in the hay !
 Entrance to gain is something hard,
 The dogs all bark, the gates are barr'd ;



The yard's with lines of linen cross'd,
 The hall-door's lock'd, the key is lost :
 These difficulties all o'ercome,
 We reach at length the drawing-room,
 Then there's such trampling over-head,
 Madam you'd swear was brought to bed ;
 Miss in a hurry bursts the lock,
 To get clean sleeves to hide her smock ;
 The servants run, the pewter clatters,
 My lady dresses, calls, and chatters ;
 The cook-maid raves for want of butter,
 Pigs squeak, fowls scream, and green geese flutter.
 Now after three hours tedious waiting,
 On all our neighbours faults debating,
 And having nine times view'd the garden,
 In which there's nothing worth a farthing,
 In comes my lady, and the pudden :
 You will excuse, sir,—on a sudden—
 Then, that we may have four and four,
 The bacon, fowls, and colly-flow'r
 Their ancient unity divide,
 The top one graces, one each side ;
 And by and by the second course
 Comes lagging like a distanc'd horse :
 A salver then to church and king,
 The butler sweats, the glasses ring ;
 The cloth remov'd, the toasts go round,
 Bawdy and politicks abound ;

And

And as the knight more tipsy waxes,
 We damn all ministers and taxes.
 At last the ruddy fun quite sunk,
 The coachman tolerably drunk,
 Whirling o'er hillocks, ruts, and stones,
 Enough to dislocate one's bones,
 We home return, a wond'rous token
 Of heaven's kind care, with limbs unbroken.
 Afflict us not, ye Gods, tho' sinners,
 With many days like this, or dinners!

But if civilities thus tease me,
 Nor business, nor diversions please me,
 You'll ask, my Lord, how time I spend?
 I answer, with a book, or friend:
 The circulating hours dividing,
 'Twixt reading, walking, eating, riding;
 But books are still my highest joy,
 These earliest please, and latest cloy.
 Sometimes o'er distant climes I stray,
 By guides experienc'd taught the way;
 The wonders of each region view,
 From frozen LAPLAND to PERU;
 Bound o'er rough seas, and mountains bare,
 Yet ne'er forsake my elbow chair.
 Sometimes some fam'd historian's pen
 Recals past ages back agen,
 Where all I see, through every page,
 Is but how men with senseless rage



Each other rob, destroy, and burn,
 To serve a priest's, or statesman's turn ;
 Tho' loaded with a diff'rent aim,
 Yet always asses much the fame.
 Sometimes I view with much delight,
 Divines their holy game-cocks fight ;
 Here faith and works at variance set,
 Strive hard who shall the victory get ;
 Presbytery and episcopacy
 There fight so long, it would amaze ye :
 Here free-will holds a fierce dispute
 With reprobation absolute ;
 There sense kicks transubstantiation,
 And reason pecks at revelation.
 With learned NEWTON now I fly
 O'er all the rolling orbs on high,
 Visit new worlds, and for a minute
 This old one scorn, and all that's in it :
 And now with labouring BOYLE I trace
 Nature through ev'ry winding maze,
 The latent qualities admire
 Of vapours, water, air, and fire :
 With pleasing admiration see
 Matter's surprizing subtlety ;
 As how the smallest lamp displays,
 For miles around, its scatter'd rays ;
 Or how (the case still more t' explain)
^a A fart, that weighs not half a grain,

^a See *Boyle's Experiments*.

The atmosphere will oft perfume
 Of a whole spacious drawing-room.
 Sometimes I pass a whole long day
 In happy indolence away,
 In fondly meditating o'er
 Past pleasures, and in hoping more :
 Or wander through the fields and woods,
 And gardens bath'd in circling floods,
 There blooming flow'rs with rapture view,
 And sparkling gems of morning dew,
 Whence in my mind ideas rise
 Of CÆLIA's cheeks, and CHLOE's eyes.

'Tis thus, my Lord, I, free from strife,
 Spend an inglorious country life ;
 These are the joys I still pursue,
 When absent from the town and you :
 Thus pass long summer suns away,
 Busily idle, calmly gay ;
 Nor great, nor mean, nor rich, nor poor,
 Not having much, or wishing more ;
 Except that you, when weary grown
 Of all the follies of the town,
 And seeing, in all publick places,
 The same vain fops and painted faces,
 Wou'd sometimes kindly condescend
 To visit a dull country friend :
 Here you'll be ever sure to meet
 A hearty welcome, tho' no treat,

