**Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot**

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| P. shut, shut the door, good John! fatigu'd, I said, Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead. The Dog-star rages! nay't is past a doubt, All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out: Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand, They rave, recite, and madden round the land.  What walls can guard me, or what shade can hide? They pierce my thickets, thro' my Grot they glide; By land, by water, they renew the charge; They stop the chariot, and they board the barge. No place is sacred, not the Church is free; Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me; Then from the Mint walks forth the Man of rhyme, Happy to catch me just at Dinner-time.  Is there a Parson, much bemus'd in beer, A maudlin Poetess, a rhyming Peer, A Clerk, foredoom'd his father's soul to cross, Who pens a Stanza, when he should *engross*? Is there, who, lock'd from ink and paper, scrawls With desp'rate charcoal round his darken'd walls? All fly to **Twit'nam**, and in humble strain Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain. Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the Laws, Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause: Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope, And curses Wit, and Poetry, and Pope.  Friend to my Life! (which did not you prolong, The world had wanted many an idle song) What *Drop* or *Nostrum* can this plague remove? Or which must end me, a Fool's wrath or love? A dire dilemma! either way I'm sped, If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead. Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I! Who can't be silent, and who will not lie. To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace, And to be grave, exceeds all Pow'r of face. I sit with sad civility, I read With honest anguish, and an aching head; And drop at last, but in unwilling ears, This saving counsel, "Keep your piece nine years."  "Nine years!" cries he, who high in Drury-lane, Lull'd by soft Zephyrs thro' the broken pane, Rhymes ere he wakes, and prints before *Term* ends, Oblig'd by hunger, and request of friends: "The piece, you think, is incorrect? why, take it, I'm all submission, what you'd have it, make it."  Three things another's modest wishes bound, My Friendship, and a Prologue, and ten pound.  Pitholeon sends to me: "You know his Grace I want a Patron; ask him for a Place." "Pitholeon libell'd me," ? "but here's a letter Informs you, Sir, 't was when he knew no better. Dare you refuse him? Curll invites to dine", "He'll write a *Journal*, or he'll turn Divine."  Bless me! a packet. ? "'Tis a stranger sues, A Virgin Tragedy, an Orphan Muse." If I dislike it, "Furies, death and rage!" If I approve, "Commend it to the Stage." There (thank my stars) my whole Commission ends, The Play'rs and I are, luckily, no friends, Fir'd that the house reject him, "'Sdeath I'll print it, And shame the fools ? Your Int'rest, Sir, with Lintot!" 'Lintot, dull rogue! will think your price too much:' "Not, Sir, if you revise it, and retouch." All my demurs but double his Attacks; At last he whispers, "Do; and we go snacks." Glad of a quarrel, straight I clap the door, Sir, let me see your works and you no more.  'Tis sung, when Midas' Ears began to spring, (Midas, a sacred person and a king) His very Minister who spy'd them first, (Some say his Queen) was forc'd to speak, or burst. And is not mine, my friend, a sorer case, When ev'ry coxcomb perks them in my face? A. Good friend, forbear! you deal in dang'rous things. I'd never name Queens, Ministers, or Kings; Keep close to Ears, and those let asses prick; 'Tis nothing ? P. Nothing? if they bite and kick? Out with it, **Dunciad**! let the secret pass, That secret to each fool, that he's an Ass: The truth once told (and wherefore should we lie?) The Queen of Midas slept, and so may I.  You think this cruel? take it for a rule, No creature smarts so little as a fool. Let peals of laughter, Codrus! round thee break, Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty crack: Pit, Box, and gall'ry in convulsions hurl'd, Thou stand'st unshook amidst a bursting world. Who shames a Scribbler? break one cobweb thro', He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew: Destroy his fib or sophistry, in vain, The creature's at his dirty work again, Thron'd in the centre of his thin designs, Proud of a vast extent of flimsy lines! Whom have I hurt? has Poet yet, or Peer Lost the arch'd eye-brow, or Parnassian sneer?  \* \* \* \* \*  Does not one table Bavius still admit? Still to one Bishop Philips seem a wit? Still Sappho ? A. Hold! for God's sake ? you 'll offend, No Names! ? be calm! ? learn prudence of a friend! I too could write, and I am twice as tall; But foes like these ? P. One Flatt'rer's worse than all. Of all mad creatures, if the learn'd are right, It is the slaver kills, and not the bite. A fool quite angry is quite innocent: Alas! 'tis ten times worse when they *repent*.  One dedicates in high heroic prose, And ridicules beyond a hundred foes: One from all Grubstreet will my fame defend, And more abusive, calls himself my friend. This prints my *Letters*, that expects a bribe, And others roar aloud, "Subscribe, subscribe."  There are, who to my person pay their court: I cough like *Horace*, and, tho' lean, am short, *Ammon's* great son one shoulder had too high, Such *Ovid's* nose, and "Sir! you have an Eye" ? Go on, obliging creatures, make me see All that disgrac'd my Betters, met in me. Say for my comfort, languishing in bed, "Just so immortal *Maro* held his head:" And when I die, be sure you let me know Great *Homer* died three thousand years ago.  Why did I write? what sin to me unknown Dipt me in ink, my parents', or my own? As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame, I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came. I left no calling for this idle trade, No duty broke, no father disobey'd. The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not Wife, To help me thro' this long disease, my Life, To second, **Arbuthnot**! thy Art and Care, And teach the Being you preserv'd, to bear.  But why then publish? *Granville* the polite, And knowing *Walsh*, would tell me I could write; Well-natur'd *Garth* inflam'd with early praise; And *Congreve* lov'd, and *Swift* endur'd my lays; The courtly *Talbot, Somers, Sheffield*, read; Ev'n mitred *Rochester* would nod the head, And *St. John's* self (great *Dryden's* friends before) With open arms receiv'd one Poet more. Happy my studies, when by these approv'd! Happier their author, when by these belov'd! From these the world will judge of men and books, Not from the *Burnets, Oldmixons*, and *Cookes*.  Soft were my numbers; who could take offence, While pure Description held the place of Sense? Like gentle *Fanny's* was my flow'ry theme, A painted mistress, or a purling stream. Yet then did *Gildon* draw his venal quill; ? I wish'd the man a dinner, and sat still. Yet then did *Dennis* rave in furious fret; I never answer'd, ? I was not in debt. If want provok'd, or madness made them print, I wag'd no war with *Bedlam* or the *Mint*.  Did some more sober Critic come abroad; If wrong, I smil'd; if right, I kiss'd the rod. Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence, And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense. Commas and points they set exactly right, And 'twere a sin to rob them of their mite. Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel grac'd these ribalds, From slashing *Bentley* down to pidling *Tibalds*: Each wight, who reads not, and but scans and spells, Each Word-catcher, that lives on syllables, Ev'n such small Critics some regard may claim, Preserv'd in *Milton's* or in *Shakespeare's* name. Pretty! in amber to observe the forms Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms! The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare, But wonder how the devil they got there.  Were others angry: I excus'd them too; Well might they rage, I gave them but their due. A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find; But each man's secret standard in his mind, That Casting-weight pride adds to emptiness, This, who can gratify? for who can *guess?* The Bard whom pilfer'd Pastorals renown, Who turns a Persian tale for half a Crown, Just writes to make his barrenness appear, And strains, from hard-bound brains, eight lines a year; He, who still wanting, tho' he lives on theft, Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left: And He, who now to sense, now nonsense leaning, Means not, but blunders round about a meaning: And He, whose fustian's so sublimely bad, It is not Poetry, but prose run mad: All these, my modest Satire bade *translate*, And own'd that nine such Poets made a *Tate*. How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe! And swear, not **Addison** himself was safe.  Peace to all such! but were there One whose fires True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires; Blest with each talent and each art to please, And born to write, converse, and live with ease: Should such a man, too fond to rule alone, Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne. View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes, And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise; Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer, And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer; Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike, Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike; Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend.  A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend; Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd, And so obliging, that he ne'er oblig'd; Like *Cato*, give his little Senate laws, And sit attentive to his own applause; While Wits and Templars ev'ry sentence raise, And wonder with a foolish face of praise: ? Who but must laugh, if such a man there be? Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?  What tho' my Name stood rubric on the walls Or plaister'd posts, with claps, in capitals? Or smoking forth, a hundred hawkers' load,5 On wings of winds came flying all abroad? I sought no homage from the Race that write; I kept, like Asian Monarchs, from their sight: Poems I heeded (now be-rhym'd so long) No more than thou, great George! a birth-day song. I ne'er with wits or witlings pass'd my days, To spread about the itch of verse and praise; Nor like a puppy, daggled thro' the town, To fetch and carry sing-song up and down; Nor at Rehearsals sweat, and mouth'd, and cry'd, With handkerchief and orange at my side; But sick of fops, and poetry, and prate, To Bufo left the whole Castalian state.  Proud as Apollo on his forked hill, Sat full-blown Bufo, puff'd by ev'ry quill; Fed with soft Dedication all day long. Horace and he went hand in hand in song. His Library (where busts of Poets dead And a true Pindar stood without a head,) Receiv'd of wits an undistinguish'd race, Who first his judgment ask'd, and then a place: Much they extoll'd his pictures, much his seat, And flatter'd ev'ry day, and some days eat: Till grown more frugal in his riper days, He paid some bards with port, and some with praise; To some a dry rehearsal saw assign'd, And others (harder still) he paid in kind. *Dryden* alone (what wonder?) came not nigh, *Dryden* alone escap'd this judging eye: But still the *Great* have kindness in reserve, He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve.  May some choice patron bless each gray goose quill! May ev'ry *Bavius* have his *Bufo* still! So, when a Statesman wants a day's defence, Or Envy holds a whole week's war with Sense, Or simple pride for flatt'ry makes demands, May dunce by dunce be whistled off my hands! Blest be the *Great!* for those they take away. And those they left me; for they left me Gay; Left me to see neglected Genius bloom, Neglected die, and tell it on his tomb: Of all thy blameless life the sole return My Verse, and Queenb'ry weeping o'er thy urn.  Oh let me live my own, and die so too! (To live and die is all I have to do:) Maintain a Poet's dignity and ease, And see what friends, and read what books I please; Above a Patron, tho' I condescend Sometimes to call a minister my friend. I was not born for Courts or great affairs; I pay my debts, believe, and say my pray'rs; Can sleep without a Poem in my head; Nor know, if *Dennis* be alive or dead.  Why am I ask'd what next shall see the light? Heav'ns! was I born for nothing but to write? Has Life no joys for me? or, (to be grave) Have I no friend to serve, no soul to save? "I found him close with *Swift*" ? 'Indeed? no doubt,' (Cries prating *Balbus*) 'something will come out.' 'Tis all in vain, deny it as I will. 'No, such a Genius never can lie still;' And then for mine obligingly mistakes The first Lampoon Sir *Will*, or *Bubo* makes. Poor guiltless I! and can I choose but smile, When ev'ry Coxcomb knows me by my *Style*?  Curst be the verse, how well soe'er it flow, That tends to make one worthy man my foe, Give Virtue scandal, Innocence a fear, Or from the soft-eyed Virgin steal a tear! But he who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace, Insults fall'n worth, or Beauty in distress, Who loves a Lie, lame slander helps about, Who writes a Libel, or who copies out: That Fop, whose pride affects a patron's name, Yet absent, wounds an author's honest fame: Who can *your* merit *selfishly* approve. And show the *sense* of it without the *love*; Who has the vanity to call you friend, Yet wants the honour, injur'd, to defend; Who tells whate'er you think, whate'er you say, And, if he lie not, must at least betray: Who to the *Dean*, and *silver bell* can swear, And sees at *Canons* what was never there; Who reads, but with a lust to misapply, Make Satire a Lampoon, and Fiction, Lie. A lash like mine no honest man shall dread, But all such babbling blockheads in his stead.  Let *Sporus* tremble ? A. What? that thing of silk, *Sporus*, that mere white curd of Ass's milk? Satire or sense, alas! can *Sporus* feel? Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel? P. Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings, This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings; Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys, Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys: So well-bred spaniels civilly delight In mumbling of the game they dare not bite. Eternal smiles his emptiness betray, As shallow streams run dimpling all the way. Whether in florid impotence he speaks, And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks; Or at the ear of *Eve*, familiar Toad, Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad, In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies, Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies. (His wit all see-saw, between *that* and *this*, (Now high, now low, now master up, now miss, (And he himself one vile Antithesis. Amphibious thing! that acting either part, The trifling head or the corrupted heart, Fop at the toilet, flatt'rer at the board, Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord. *Eve's* tempter thus the Rabbins have exprest, A Cherub's face, a reptile all the rest; Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust; Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.  Not Fortune's worshipper, nor fashion's fool, Not Lucre's madman, nor Ambition's tool, Not proud, nor servile; ? be one Poet's praise, That, if he pleas'd, he pleas'd by manly ways: That Flatt'ry, ev'n to Kings, he held a shame, And thought a Lie in verse or prose the same. That not in Fancy's maze he wander'd long, But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song: That not for Fame, but Virtue's better end, He stood the furious foe, the timid friend, The damning critic, half approving wit, The coxcomb hit, or fearing to be hit; Laugh'd at the loss of friends he never had, The dull, the proud, the wicked, and the mad; The distant threats of vengeance on his head, The blow unfelt, the tear he never shed; The tale reviv'd, the lie so oft o'erthrown, Th' imputed trash, and dulness not his own; The morals blacken'd when the writings scape, The libell'd person, and the pictur'd shape; Abuse, on all he lov'd, or lov'd him, spread, A friend in exile, or a father, dead; The whisper, that to greatness still too near, Perhaps, yet vibrates on his **Sov'reign's** ear: ? Welcome for thee, fair *Virtue*! all the past; For thee, fair Virtue! welcome ev'n the *last*! A. But why insult the poor, affront the great? P. A knave's a knave, to me, in ev'ry state: Alike my scorn, if he succeed or fail, *Sporus* at court, or *Japhet* in a jail A hireling scribbler, or a hireling peer, Knight of the post corrupt, or of the shire; If on a Pillory, or near a Throne, He gain his Prince's ear, or lose his own. Yet soft by nature, more a dupe than wit, *Sappho* can tell you how this man was bit; This dreaded Sat'rist *Dennis* will confess Foe to his pride, but friend to his distress: So humble, he has knock'd at *Tibbald's* door, Has drunk with *Cibber*, nay has rhym'd for *Moore*. Full ten years slander'd, did he once reply? Three thousand suns went down on *Welsted's* lie. To please a Mistress one aspers'd his life; He lash'd him not, but let her be his wife. Let *Budgel* charge low *Grubstreet* on his quill, And write whate'er he pleas'd, except his Will; Let the two *Curlls* of Town and Court, abuse His father, mother, body, soul, and muse. Yet why? that Father held it for a rule, It was a sin to call our neighbour fool: That harmless Mother thought no wife a whore: Hear this, and spare his family, *James Moore!* Unspotted names, and memorable long! If there be force in Virtue, or in Song.  Of gentle blood (part shed in Honour's cause. While yet in *Britain* Honour had applause) Each parent sprung ? A. What fortune, pray? ? P. Their own, And better got, than *Bestia's* from the throne. Born to no Pride, inheriting no Strife, Nor marrying Discord in a noble wife, Stranger to civil and religious rage, The good man walk'd innoxious thro' his age. Nor Courts he saw, no suits would ever try, Nor dar'd an Oath, nor hazarded a Lie. Un-learn'd, he knew no schoolman's subtle art, No language, but the language of the heart. By Nature honest, by Experience wise, Healthy by temp'rance, and by exercise; His life, tho' long, to sickness past unknown, His death was instant, and without a groan. O grant me, thus to live, and thus to die! Who sprung from Kings shall know less joy than I.  O Friend! may each domestic bliss be thine! Be no unpleasing Melancholy mine: Me, let the tender office long engage, To rock the cradle of reposing Age, With lenient arts extend a Mother's breath, Make Languor smile, and smooth the bed of Death, Explore the thought, explain the asking eye, And keep a while one parent from the sky! On cares like these if length of days attend, May Heav'n, to bless those days, preserve my friend, Preserve him social, cheerful, and serene, And just as rich as when he serv'd a **Queen**. A. Whether that blessing be deny'd or giv'n, Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heav'n.  **Summary of Alexander Pope's Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot**  **Introduction**              Pope was born in the year 1688, a century where there was so much confusion in the society.  People were torn between the extremes of religion, society and politics.  Pope, as a poet, wrote many satires.  Pope and his friends were fondly named as scriblerians.  Dr. Arbuthnot, Pope’s friend, was hopelessly ill.  He wrote to Pope that he should be careful while attacking others.  Pope wrote this poem as a reply in 1734.  This poem attacks Pope’s detractors and defends Pope’s character and career.  This poem could be divided into 7 parts.  **First Part (lines 1 - 68)**              The poem opens with Pope ordering John, a servant, to shut the door.  Pope is afraid of letting in the budding poets, who are like dogs.  He asks John to ties the knocker of the door.  He thinks that the mental institutions like Bedlam and Parnassus are let loose in the road.  He finds the poets with papers in their hands and fire in their eyes.  Pope is not left alone; wherever he goes he is followed by the budding poets.  They come into his house by climbing the wall and shrubs.  They get into his chariot and into his boat.  They do not even leave him pray.  Everyone blames Pope in some way or the other.  All people come to Twitnam, Pope’s house, to scold him.  Pope finally addresses Dr. Arbuthnot as “friend of my life”.  Pope finds his friend’s illness and the troublesome poets as a plague.  Pope is confused on what to do and what not to do.  If he appreciated their poetry they overflow with more poems, if he says something negative about their poetry, they feel hurt.  Pope gives the advice of Horace to the new poets.  He asks them to wait for nine years before publishing a poem.  The writers are unable to accept this advice.  They ask Pope to make some corrections in their poem.  They also try to bribe him.  Some poets blackmail him.  **Second Part (lines 69 - 124)**              The second part of the poem talks about the dangers of being popular.  Pope elaborates on the comparison of Midas.  He ridicules the poetasters by using Midas image, which ultimately represents unreliability.  Pope scolds a few poets like Colley, Harley, Bavius, Bishop Philips and Sappho.  At this point Arbuthnot warns Pope not to use names in his poem.  He advises Pope to be prudent.  Arbuthnot ridicules Pope that he is twice as tall as Pope but he never uses any names.  Pope is angry again.  He is willing to be honest.  He claims that he would not be called as cruel when he calls a fool as a fool.  He then talks about how a few dramatists approach him to recommend scripts, which are rejected by the theatres and production companies.  They all try to flatter Pope.  Some say that Pope’s nose is like Ovid’s and they compare Pope with Hercules and Alexander the Great.  Pope does not listen to such flattery.  He calls himself as an ordinary man.  **Third Part (lines 125 - 146)**              This part talks about Pope’s life as a writer.  He starts explaining why he writes.  He says that he wrote not out of any compulsion.  He found it hard to learn numbers but it is not hard for him to write poetry.  Nobody asked him to write poetry but he did it by himself.  He writes because his friends like Swift, Granville, Congreve and others enjoyed reading his poetry.  He did not write poem for his personal reasons like loving his wife.  Arbuthnot asks why Pope publishes his works.  Pope says that because his friends enjoyed reading his poetry.  They praised his works.  Even Dryden encourages Pope to write and publish poems so Pope published them.  **Fourth Part (lines 147 - 260)**              Part IV of this poem discusses about why Pope attacks other poets through his satire.  Pope says that he does not care a little for those who find fault with him.  He calls them as donkeys and fools.  He sometimes tried to be friendly with them.  He tried to take them out for a dinner.  In spite of all these some cheap critics criticizes him.  Pope says that if their criticism is correct he would readily accept it.  Pope satirizes **Ambrose Philips**.  Ambrose is a plagiarist.  He copies works from Greek literature and earns money.  If he attempts to be original, he will not cross eight lines a year.  Pope then criticizes **Addison**.  Addison, according to Pope, is a genius.  He is a good writer.  His defect is that he wants to dominate the literary world.  He thinks that he is the greatest of all writers.  Pope calls Addison a coward, because Addison attacks many writers but he fears being attacked by them.  **Lord Halifax** is attacked next.  Lord Halifax loves being flattered.  He helps the poetasters who flatter him.  **Fifth Part (lines 261 - 304)**              This part describes Pope’s current attitude towards life and career.  Pope asks the poetasters to let him leave live in a peaceful manner.  He says that he lives in debt.  He is someone normal who prays to god regularly.  He says that only liars will fear his satire and attacks.  A man of good intention and honest behavior need not fear him.  **Sixth Part (lines 305 - 333)**              In this part, Pope attacks **Lord Hervey** in the name Sporus.  When Arbuthnot hears the name Sporus, he starts scolding him.  Sporus is a man who drinks the milk of a donkey.  He is capable only of killing a butterfly with his wheels.  He is such a senseless person that he is not able to distinguish satire and other kinds of poem.  If Pope is a paragon of independent judgment, Hervey is a man who will say anything to please the people at court and in government. He values glamour, sensual pleasure, and social climbing. Hervey was also homosexual. Hervey is not only a man-woman but an animal-demon, a shape-changer, like Satan  **Seventh Part (lines 334 - 419)**              Part 7 is Pope’s final draft of his self-portrait, summing up the virtues he wants Arbuthnot to believe he has.  Pope says that he has never been a worshipper of fortune.  He is bold and courageous.  He has never flattered anyone for selfish reasons.  He attacks his enemies and critics.  He claims that he was brought up well by his parents.  His parents are peace loving.  They are good citizens of England.  They led a happy domestic life.  Pope also wants to live a similar life.  He concludes the poem by praying that Arbuthnot should lead a happy, peaceful and prosperous life. |