

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ALLEN, LORD BATHURST.

Alexander Pope

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EPISTLE III.

Of the use of Riches. That the true use of Riches is known to few, most falling into one of the Extremes, Avarice or Profusion.

Who shall decide, when Doctors disagree,
And soundest Casuists doubt like you and me?
You hold the Word, from Jove to Momus I giv'n,
That man was made the standing jest of heav'n,
And Gold but sent to keep the fools in play,
For half to heap, and half to throw away.
But I, who think more highly of our kind,
(And surely Heav'n and I are of a mind)
Opine, that Nature, as in duty bound,
Deep hid the shining mischief under ground:
But when, by Man's audacious labour won,
Flam'd forth this rival to its sire, the Sun,
Then, in plain prose, were made two sorts of men,
To squander some, and some to hide agen.
Like Doctors thus, when much dispute has past,
We find our Tenets just the same at last.
Both fairly owning, Riches in effect
No grace of Heav'n, or token of th'Elect;
Giv'n to the Fool, the mad, the vain, the evil.
To Ward, to Waters, Chartres, and the Devil.
What Nature wants, commodious Gold bestows,
'Tis thus we eat the bread another sows:
But how unequal it bestows, observe,
'Tis thus we riot, while who sow it starve.
What Nature wants (a phrase I much distrust)
Extends to Luxury, extends to Lust;
And if we count among the needs of life
Another's Toil, why not another's Wife?
Useful, we grant, it serves what life requires,
But dreadful too, the dark Assassin hires:
Trade it may help, Society extend;
But lures the Pyrate, and corrupts the Friend:

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It raises armies in a Nation's aid,
But bribes a Senate, and the land's betray'd.
Oh! that such bulky Bribes as all might see
Still, as of old, encumber'd Villainy!
In vain may Heroes fight, and Patriots rave,
If secret Gold saps on from knave to knave.
Could France or Rome divert our brave designs,
With all their brandies, or with all their wines?
What could they more than knights and squires confound,
Or water all the Quorum ten miles round?
A Statesman's slumbers how this speech would spoil!
Sir, Spain has sent a thousand jars of oyl;
Huge bales of British cloth blockade the door;
A hundred Oxon at your Levee roar.
Poor Avarice one torment more would find,
Nor could Profusion squander all, in kind.
Astride his cheese Sir Morgan might we meet,
And Worldly crying coals from street to street,
(Whom with a wig so wild, and mien so maz'd,
Pity mistakes for some poor Tradesman craz'd.)
Had Colepeper's whole wealth been hops and hogs
Could he himself have sent it to the dogs?
His Grace will game: to White's a Bull be led,
With spurning heels, and with a butting head;
To White's be carry'd, as to ancient Games,
Fair Coursers, Vases, and alluring Dames.
Shall then Uxorio, if the stakes he sweep,
Bear home six whores, and make his Lady weep?
Or soft Adonis, so perfum'd and fine,
Drive to St. James's a whole herd of Swine?
Oh filthy check on all industrious skill,
To spoil the Nation's last great Trade Quadrille!
Once, we confess, beneath the Patriot's cloak,
From the crack'd bagg the dropping Guinea spoke,
And gingling down the back stairs, told the crew,
Old Cato is as great a rogue as you.
Blest Paper-credit! that advanc'd so high,
Now lends Corruption lighter wings to fly!
Gold, imp'd with this, can compass hardest things,
Can pocket States, or fetch or carry Kings;
A single leaf can waft an Army o'er,
Or ship off Senates to some distant shore;
A leaf like Sybil's, scatters to and fro
Our fates and fortunes as the winds shall blow;
Pregnant with thousands flits the scrap unseen,
And silent sells a King, or buys a Queen.
Since then, my Lord, on such a World we fall,
What say you? 'Say? Why take it, Gold and all.'
What Riches give us, let us first enquire;
Meat, fire, and cloaths. What more? meat, cloaths, and fire
Is this too little? wou'd you more than live?

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Alas! 'tis more than Turner finds they give.
Alas 'tis more than (all his Visions past)
Unhappy Wharton, waking, found at last!
What can they give? to dying Hopkins Heirs?
To Chartres Vigour, Japhet Nose and ears?
Can they in gems bid pallid Hippia glow,
In Fulvia's buckle ease the throbs below,
Or heal, old Narses, thy obscener ail,
With all th'embroid'ry plaister'd at thy tail?
They might, (were Harpax not too wise to spend)
Give Harpax self the blessing of a Friend;
Or find some Doctor that would save the life
Of wretched Shylock, spite of Shylock's Wife;
But thousands die, without or this or that,
Die, and endow a College, or a Cat:
To some indeed heav'n grants the happier fate
T'enrich a bastard, or a son they hate.

Perhaps you think the Poor might have their part?
Bond damns the poor, and hates them from his heart:
The grave Sir Gilbert holds it for a rule,
That 'every man in want is knave or fool:'
'God cannot love (says Blunt, with lifted eyes)
The wretch he starves', and piously denies:
But the good Bishop with a meeker air,
Admits, and leaves them, Providence's care.

Yet, to be just to these poor men of pelf,
Each does but hate his Neighbour as himself:
Damn'd to the Mines, an equal fate betides
The slave that digs it, and the slave that hides.
Who suffer thus, meer charity should own
Must act on motives pow'rful tho' unknown:
Some War, some Plague, some Famine they foresee,
Some Revelation, hid from you and me.
Why Shylock wants a meal, the cause is found,
He thinks a loaf will rise to fifty pound.
What made Directors cheat in South-sea year?
To live on ven'son when it sold so dear.
Ask you why Phryne the whole Auction buys?
Phryne foresees a General Excise,
Why she and Sapho raise that monstrous sum?
Alas! they fear a Man will cost a plum.

Wise Peter sees the World's respect for Gold,
And therefore hopes this Nation may be sold:
Glorious Ambition! Peter, swell thy store,
And be what Rome's great, Didius was before.

The Crown of Poland, venal twice an age,
To just three millions stinted modest Gage.

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But nobler scenes Maria's dreams unfold,
Hereditary Realms, and worlds of gold.
Congenial souls! whose life one Av'rice joins,
And one fate buries in th'Asturian Mines.

Much injur'd Blunt! why bears he Britain's hate?
A Wizard told him in these words our fate.
'At length, Corruption, like a gen'ral flood,
(So long by watchful Ministers withstood)
Shall deluge all; and Av'rice creeping on
Spread like a low-born mist, and blot the Sun:
Statesman and Patriot ply alike the stocks;
Peeress and Butler share alike the Box;
And Judges job, and Bishops bite the town,
And mighty Dukes pack cards for half a crown:
See Britain sunk in Lucre's sordid charms,
And France reveng'd of Anne's and Edward's Arms!
No gay Court-badge, great Scriv'ner! fir'd thy brain,
Nor Lordly Luxury, nor City Gain:
No, 'twas thy righteous end, asham'd to see
Senates degen'rate, Patriots disagree,
And nobly wishing Party-rage to cease,
To buy both sides, and give thy Country peace.

'All this is madness,' cries a sober Sage:
But who, my friend, has reason in his Rage?
'The ruling Passion, be it what it will,
The ruling Passion conquers reason still.'
Less mad the wildest whimsey we can frame,
Than ev'n that passion, if it has no aim;
For tho' such motives folly you may call,
The folly's greater to have none at all.

Hear then the truth: 'Tis Heav'n each Passion sends,
And diff'rent men directs to diff'rent ends.
Extremes in Nature equal good produce,
Extremes in Man concur to gen'ral use.'
Ask we what makes one keep, and one bestow?
That Pow'r who bids the Ocean ebb and flow,
Bids seed-time, harvest, equal course maintain,
Thro' reconcil'd extremes of drought and rain,
Builds Life on death, on Change duration founds,
And gives th'eternal wheels to know their rounds.

Riches, like Insects, when conceal'd they lie,
Wait but for wings, and in their season, fly.
Who sees pale Mammon pine amidst his store,
Sees but a backward Steward for the poor;
This year a Reservoir, to keep and spare,
The next, a Fountain spouting thro' his Heir,
In lavish streams to quench a Country's thirst,

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And men, and dogs, shall drink him till they burst.

Old Cotta sham'd his Fortune, and his Birth,
Yet was not Cotta void of wit, or worth:
What tho' (the use of barb'rous spits forgot)
His kitchen vy'd in coolness with his Grot?
His court with nettles, moat with cresses stor'd,
With soups unbought, and sallads, blest his board.
If Cotta liv'd on pulse, it was no more
Than Bramins, Saints, and Sages did before;
To cram the rich, was prodigal expence,
And who would take the poor from Providence?
Like some lone Chartreuse stands the good old hall,
Silence without, and fasts within the wall;
No rafter'd roofs with dance and tabor sound;
No noontide-bell invites the country round;
Tenants with sights the smoakless towr's survey,
And turn th'unwilling Steed another way:
Benighted wanderers, the forest o'er,
Curse the sav'd candle, and unopening door;
While the gaunt mastiff, growling at the gate,
Affrights the beggar whom he longs to eat.

Not so his Son; he mark'd this oversight,
And then mistook reverse of wrong for right;
For what to shun will no great knowledge need,
But what to follow, is a task indeed.
Whole slaughter'd hecatombs, and floods of wine,
Fill the capacious Squire, and deep Divine.
Yet no mean motive this profusion draws,
His Oxen perish in his Country's cause:
'Tis George and Liberty that crowns the cup,
And Zeal for that great House which eats him up.
The woods recede around the naked seat,
The Sylvans groan –no matter – for the Fleet.
Next goes his wool, to clothe our valiant bands,
Last, for his Country's love, he sells his lands.
To town he comes, compleats the nation's hope,
And heads the bold Train-bands, and burns a Pope.
And shall not Britain now reward his toils?
(Britain, that pays her Patriots with her Spoils?)
In vain at Court the Bankrupt pleads his cause,
His thankless country leaves him to her Laws.

The Sense to value riches, with the Art
T'enjoy them, and the Virtue to impart,
Not meanly, nor ambitiously persu'd
Not sunk by sloth, nor rais'd by servitude;
To balance Fortune by a just expence,
Join with Oeconomy, Magnificence,
With splendor, charity, with plenty, health;

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Oh teach us, Bathurst! yet unspoild by wealth!
That secret rare, between th'extremes to move
Of mad Good–nature, and of mean Self–love.

To Want, or Worth, well–weigh'd, be bounty giv'n,
And ease, or emulate, the care of Heav'n.
Whose measure full o'erflows on human race,
Mends fortune's fault, and justifies her grace.
Wealth in the gross is death, but life diffus'd,
As Poison heals, in just proportion us'd:
In heaps, like Ambergrise, a stink it lies,
But well dispers'd, is Incence to the skies.
Who starves by Nobles, or with Nobles eats?
The Wretch that trusts them, and the Rogue that cheats.
Is there a Lord, who knows a chearful noon
Without a Fidler, Flatt'rer, or Buffoon?
Whose table, Wit, or modest Merit share,
Un–elbow'd by a Gamester, Pimp, or Play'r?
Who copies Yours, or Oxford's better part,
To ease th'oppress'd, and raise the sinking heart?
Where–e'er he shines, oh Fortune gild the scene,
And Angels guard him in the Golden Mean!
There, English Bounty yet a while may stand,
And Honour linger, e're it leaves the land.

But all our praises why should Lords engross?
Rise honest Muse! and sing the Man of Ross:
Pleas'd Vaga echoes thro' her winding bounds,
And rapid Severn hoarse applause resounds.
Who hung with woods yon mountain's sultry brow?
From the dry rock who bade the waters flow?
Not to the skies in useless columns tost,
Or in proud falls magnificently lost,
But clear and artless, pouring thro' the plain
Health to the sick, and solace to the swain.
Whose cause–way parts the vale with shady rows?
Whose seats the weary Traveller repose?
Who taught that heav'n directed Spire to rise?
The Man of Ross, each lispng babe replies.
Behold the Market–place with poor o'erspread!
The Man of Ross divides the weekly bread:
He feeds yon Alms–house, neat, but void of state,
Where Age and Want sit smiling at the gate:
Him portion'd maids, apprentic'd orphans blest,
The young who labour, and the old who rest.
Is any sick? the Man of Ross relieves,
Prescribes, attends, the med'cine makes, and gives.
Is there a variance? enter but his door,
Balk'd are the Courts, and contest is no more.
Despairing Quacks with curses fled the place,
And vile Attornies, now an useless race.

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'Thrice happy man! enabled to persue
What all so wish, but want the pow'r to do.
Oh say, what sums that gen'rous hand supply?
What mines, to swell that boundless charity?
Of debts and taxes, wife and children clear,
This man possest – five hundred pounds a year,
Blush Grandeur, blush! proud Courts withdraw your blaze!
Ye little Stars! hide your diminished rays.
'And what? no monument, inscription, stone?
His race, his form, his name almost unknown?'
Who builds a Church to God, and not to Fame,
Will never mark the marble with his name:
Go search it there where to be born and die,
Of rich and poor makes all the history;
Enough, that Virtue fill'd the space between;
Prov'd, by the Ends of Being, to have been.
When Hopkins dies, a thousand lights attend
The wretch, who living sav'd a candle's end:
Should'ring God's alter a vile image stands,
Belies his features, nay extends his hands,
That live-long wig which Gorgon's self might own,
Eternal buckle takes in Parian stone.
Behold what blessings Wealth to life can lend!
And see, what comfort it affords our end.

In the worst Inn's worst room, with mat half-hung
The floors of plaister, and the walls of dung.
On once a flockbed, but repair'd with straw,
With tape-ty'd curtains never meant to draw,
The George and Garter dangling from that bed
Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
Great Villers lies – alas! how chang'd from him,
That life of pleasure, and that soul of whim!
Gallant and gay, in Cliveden's proud alcove,
The bow'r of wanton Shrewsbury and love;
Or just as gay, at Council, in a ring
Of mimick'd Statesmen, and their merry King.
No Wit to flatter, left of all his store!
No Fool to laugh at, which he valued more.
There, victor of his health, of fortune, friends,
And fame, this lord of useless thousands ends.

His Grace's fate sage Cutler could foresee,
And well (he thought) advis'd him, 'Live like me.'
As well his Grace reply'd, 'Like you, Sir John?
That I can do, when all I have is gone.'
Resolve me, Reason, which of these is worse,
Want with a full, or with an empty purse?
Thy life more wretched, Cutler, was confess'd,
Arise and tell me, was thy death more bless'd?
Cutler saw tenants break, and houses fall,

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For very want; he could not build a wall.
His only daughter in a stranger's pow'r,
For very want; he could not pay a dow'r.
A few grey hairs his rev'rend temples crown'd,
For very want, he sold them for two pound.
What ev'n deny'd a cordial at his end,
Banish'd the doctor, and expell'd the friend?
What but a want, which you perhaps think mad
Yet numbers feel, the want of what he had.
Cutler and Brutus, dying both exclaim,
'Virtue! and Wealth! what are ye but a name?'
Say, for such worth are other worlds prepar'd?
Or are they both, in this, their own reward?
A knotty point! to which we now proceed.
But you are tir'd – I'll tell a tale. 'Agreed.'
Where London's Column pointing at the skies,
Like a tall bully, lifts the head and lyes;
There dwelt a Citizen of sober fame,
A plain good man, and Balaam was his name.
Religious, punctal, frugal, and so forth;
His word would pass for more than he was worth.
One solid dish his week-day meal affords,
An added pudding solemniz'd the Lord's,
Constant at Church, and Change; his gains were sure,
His givings rare, save farthings to the poor.

The Dev'l was piqu'd, such saintship to behold,
And long'd to tempt him like good Job of old:
But Satan now is wiser than of yore,
And tempts by making rich, not making poor.
Rouz'd by the Prince of Air, the whirlwinds sweep
The surge, and plunge, his Father in the deep;
Then full against his Cornish lands they roar,
And two rich ship-wrecks blest the lucky shore.

Sir Balaam now, he lives like other folks.
He takes his chirping pint, he cracks his jokes:
'Live like your self,' was soon my Lady's word;
And lo! two puddings smoak'd upon the board.

Asleep and naked as an Indian lay,
An honest Factor stole a Gem away:
He pledg'd it to the knight; the knight had wit,
So kept the Diamond, and the rogue was bit.
Some Scruple rose, but thus he eas'd his thought,
'I'll now give six-pence where I gave a groat,
Where once I went to church, I'll now go twice –
And am so clear too of all other vice.'

The Tempter saw his time? the work he ply'd;
Stocks and Subscriptions pour on ev'ry side,

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Till all the Daemon makes his full descent
In one abundant show'r of Cent. per Cent,
Sinks deep within him, and possesses whole,
Then dubs Director, and secures his soul.

Behold Sir Balaam, now a man of spirit,
Ascribes his gettings to his parts and merit;
What late he call'd a Blessing, now was Wit,
And God's good Providence, a lucky Hit.
Things change their titles, as our manners turn:
His Compting-house imploy'd the Sunday-morn;
Seldom at Church, (twas such a busy life)
But duly sent his family and Wife.
There (so the Dev'l ordain'd) one Christmas-tide
My good old Lady catch'd a cold, and dy'd.

A Nymph of Quality admires our Knight;
He marries, bows at Court, and grows polite:
Leaves the dull cits, and joins (to please the fair)
The well-bred cuckolds in St. James's Air:
First, for his Son a gay Commission buys,
Who drinks, whores, fights, and in a duel dies.
His Daughter flaunts a Viscount's tawdry wife,
She bears a Coronet and pox for life.
In Britain's Senate he a seat obtains,
And one more Pensioner St. Stephen gains.
My Lady falls to Play: so bad her chance,
He must repair it; takes a bribe from France;
The House impeach him, Conningsby harangues,
The Court forsake him, and Sir Balaam hangs:
Wife, son, and daughter, Satan are thy own;
His wealth, yet dearer, forfeit to the Crown;
The Devil and the King divide the prize,
And sad Sir Balaam curses God and dies.