

**THE PURSUITS OF
LITERATURE: A SATIRICAL
POEM IN FOUR DIALOGUES;
WITH NOTES; PART III**

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The Pursuits of Literature: A Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues; With Notes; Part III by Thomas James Mathias

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THOMAS JAMES MATHIAS

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THE

PURSUIITS OF LITERATURE;

A

SATIRICAL POEM

IN DIALOGUE.

WITH NOTES:

Ἐλαγχάζει δ' ἀρ' οἴσται ἀπ' ὀμῶν χροσμενοιο,
Αὐτὴ κινηθεντος ἢ δ' οἷε Νουκτι ποικως.
Ἐξείτ' ἐπιείτ' ἀπαγευθε νεως, μετα δ' ἰον ἔθηκε,
Δειπν δε κλαγγη γινετ' ἀργυροιο βιοιο.
Ουρτας μεν πρωτον ἐκώχρατο, κικι ΚΤΝΑΣ ἀργυρ,
Αὐταρ ἐπειτ' ΑΤΤΟΙΣΙ βελος εχχευικος αφιεις
Βαλλ' κικι δε πυραι νεκωλυ κικιαντο θαρμικαι.

Hom. II. 1.

PART THE THIRD.

THE THIRD EDITION REVISED.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. BECKET, No. 91, PALL MALL.

1797.

MD

ADVERTISEMENT
TO THE THIRD PART(a)
OF THE
PURSUITS OF LITERATURE.

Ταυτα παιθ' ὑπερ Ὑμων, ὑπερ τῆς Ἀληθείας, ὑπερ τῆς
ἑμετέρας Πολιτείας, καὶ τῶν Νομῶν, καὶ τῆς Σωτηρίας, καὶ
τῆς Εὐσεβείας, καὶ τῆς Δόξης, καὶ τῆς Ἐλευθερίας, ὑπερ τῶν
κοινῆ πᾶσι Συμφεροντῶν, ΑΚΡΙΒΟΛΟΓΟΥΜΑΙ ΚΑΙ
ΔΙΕΞΕΡΧΟΜΑΙ.*

I PRESENT the Third Part of this Poem to the public, at the same time that I offer the Second: though I had intended to delay it. But some subjects are of an importance serious and urgent, not to be deferred. Wherever the freedom of the press exists, (and WITH US may that freedom be perpetual!) I must assert *that*, LITERATURE, *well or ill conducted, IS THE GREAT ENGINE by which, I am fully persuaded, all civilized states must ultimately be supported or overthrown.*

It is not enough to say, a book is bulky or voluminous, and therefore can have no effect upon the mass of the people, because that opinion is not true. Such a book can not only be abridged and dispersed abroad, but a man like

a 2

Thomas

(a) First printed in MAY 1796.

* Demosthenes.

Thomas Paine, with a rude and wicked and daring manner of thinking, and with vulgar but impressive language, may blend the substance of the opinions with his own, and in a short popular tract make them familiar and intelligible to every apprehension. Thus are men *fooled* out of their understanding, *fooled* out of their security, and *fooled* out of their happiness: and when they have lost every blessing *beyond recovery*, they look round at each other in a stupid despair, clashing their chains and unable to shake them off, and ask, " *How* has all this been brought about?"

I am no enemy to the liberty of discussion, and the toleration of opinions; I am for NO literary proscription. But I think it is plainly our *interest*, as well as our duty, (*while we yet may*) to strive to support THAT CONSTITUTION IN CHURCH AND STATE, which has hitherto been able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance, or rather the pre-eminence, among all those who have been strengthened by policy, or sanctified by revelation. What I would contend for also, is this; that among all who are worthy to be called scholars or legislators, criticism, observation and watchfulness are peculiarly necessary; that men may hear of their common danger, and be admonished to put a few plain questions to themselves; " *WHAT* are we going to resign or give up, *and why*? *WHAT* are we going to adopt, *and wherefore*?" I repeat it, NOW, in this our day, while the bitterness of *political death* is passing upon almost every other nation in Europe. When we are opening the *avenues* to Reform and to the consequent inevitable dissolution of our own government, is it possible that we can forget for a moment the tremendous Republic? Over every

every state, and island, and promontory in Europe she sits tyrant or arbitress.

Ἀναγασαί 'ΟΙΟΣ ΕΦΕΔΡΟΣ

Ουρεὸς ἀξ' ἰσχυρῶν ἀνακτῶν ἔχει, ὅσ' ἂν ἴσ' ἴσται
ΒΥΣΣΟΘΕΝ ἀξερυεῖς ! *

From every other state, but England, the sceptre has fallen by the arms, or the principles, or the treachery of France. What she can effect by war and invasion, that she most readily and most willingly accomplishes. But she has other means, not less terrible nor less certain. *The subterranean wind* of this fierce democracy has force enough to overthrow or to transport hills and rocks torn from *Pelorus*; (a) and by this explosion they too often have perished. In the agony of these reflections language will labour, and the images of nature and all her elements in conflict and convulsion will present themselves.

When indeed I consider this great, powerful, and yet opulent kingdom, with all its bearings and dependencies, I know not which to reprobate most, the folly or the wickedness of its internal enemies, and of the desperate French faction in the heart of its metropolis. When I think on these things, and at the same time reflect,

* Callim. Hymn. ad Delum. 125.

(a) "L'alpestro monte, ond' è tronco Peloro."

Dant. Purg. C. 14.

Whence Milton took his famous words. P. L. b. 1. 232.

† "Animo vidit, ingenio complexus est, eloquentiâ illuminavit," are the words of Paterculus concerning Cicero. How natural to transfer them to EDMUND BURKE ! (1796.)

fect, that the eyes of a whole nation were *originally* opened by ONE MAN, and the systems of internal destruction and of irreversible misery, which awaited us, were *displayed*† and *confounded* by HIS powers, I pardon and forget his eccentricities, and even his partiality for the Romish faith and its professors, and the heat and violence which too frequently and too fatally attend upon the uncontrolled Genius of EDMUND BURKE. Sometimes indeed, (it is when my heart burns within me) I pour out my thoughts by myself in contemplation of MY COUNTRY, which I love with ardour unabated, and of *its* GREAT CITIZEN, whom I approach with reverence, in the words of the poet ;

Quæ cum magna modis multis miranda videtur
Gentibus humanis Regio, visendaque fertur,
Rebus opima bonis, multa munita virum vi,
NIL tamen HOC habuisse VIRO PRÆCLARIUS in se,
Nec sanctum magis et mirum carumque videtur. †

But still on such a subject, of such a man, and at such a time, I would speak with precision and admire with circumspection. Let us call to mind for a moment the few years just past and the transactions, the traces of which are felt and visible. I would pass over them rapidly, but I could wish the view to be impressive. We have been delivered from a state of much *internal* terror and impending anarchy, and from the confusion of a new political chaos, where all was brute and disorderly. Our constitution, our liberties and our *rights*, (I fear not to name *the word*, we have and enjoy them all, RIGHTS public and private) all these have been preserved and confirmed,

† Lucret. L. I. v. 728,

firmed. Every rank in society, the peasant, the lawyer, the mechanic, the farmer, the tradesman, the private gentleman, have all felt and acknowledged and obeyed the paramount call of their country. Peace is within our walls, and it is their work. In the higher orders of the state and in the Sovereign we have seen a gracious behaviour, a common interest, an equal exertion, and a regular, defined, limited power. Of such a conduct security is the natural production; it blossoms into fruit. But with this, though man might be happy, he will not always or indeed long be satisfied. He will reach at perfection absolute and unqualified. He forgets, that *theoretical perfection in government and practical oppression* are closely allied. He will be more than man, and he becomes less. In the year 1788 and 89, the visionary prospect from the shore of France opened on the eyes of our modern Reformers. England looked upon these Reformers, and the government neglected them. Societies, in the very face of an insulted legislature, boldly multiplied, and magnified, and consolidated each other. Theory was alluring, and practice seemed *practicable*. All grew up in silence. There was no public apprehension among the well-affected, no distrust. We laughed at metaphysical distinctions, and idle terms of scholastic art, and revolutionary dinners, and republican toasts. It was an hour of general and of unaccountable indifference. The great chain of posts and a species of telegraphic communication had been established unperceived. The English revolution in 1688 was held up to seeming approbation and reverence, but in reality to secret or rather to open contempt; and the Revolution of France in 1788, was the Revolution they intended to realize and to celebrate. The Reformers strove to buy golden opinions of their

fellow citizens, and to wear them in the newest gloss. The external decoration deceived the eye. The painted sepulchre was prepared and whited *without*, the vault and receptacle of all our ancient liberties, and rights, and securities, and properties, and common comforts. Still we beheld all this, but went our way and forgot what manner of men these Reformers were. At this very hour, when the public mind was darkened that it could not discern, when in every quarter of the heaven appeared vapour and mist and cloud and exhalation;

*La piova maladetta, freddâ, e greve,
(Regola e qualità (estrana e) nuova)
Grandine grossa, e acqua tinta, e neve,
Per l'atr tenebroso si riversa ; (a)*

at this very hour the morning horizon began suddenly to redder. It was the dawn. Then indeed, "First IN HIS EAST the glorious lamp was seen, Regent of Day!" This luminary was EDMUND BURKE. Light broke upon them all. The features of misrule and malignity, of tyranny and of oppression, the fabled spectres and hostile powers figured by poets and orators, were realized in the spirits of turbulence, dissatisfaction, sedition, rebellion, and democracy. But they were seen to be dispersed. The rays of the orb were direct, collected, and concentrated; they had power to illuminate and to consume. But the course of this orb, though marked, was short. It is set: never to return.—†

ΕΥΔΕΙΣ!—ἀλλ' οὐ Σεις λελασμένοι εσμεν, ΑΧΙΛΛΕΥ!
Οὐ μὲν Σὺ ζῶντος ἀκίδεις, ἴδε θανόντος. (b)

But I must proceed :

I confess, that I am not such a desperate lover of what is brought to me for abstract political truth, as never to make an enquiry into the character of the proposers of it,
their

(a) Dante Inf. C. 6. From what other Poet, ancient or modern, could I draw forth such expressions?

† (August 1797.)

β) Hom. Il. 23. v. 69.