

**The Rape of the Lock (1714)**

**By Alexander Pope**

*An Heroi-Comical Poem*

*Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos;*

*Sed juvat, hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.*

—Martial

TO MRS. ARABELLA FERMOR

Madam,

It will be in vain to deny that I have some regard for this piece, since I dedicate it to You. Yet you may bear me witness, it was intended only to divert a few young Ladies, who have good sense and good humour enough to laugh not only at their sex's little unguarded follies, but at their own. But as it was communicated with the air of a Secret, it soon found its way into the world. An imperfect copy having been offer'd to a Bookseller, you had the good-nature for my sake to consent to the publication of one more correct: This I was forc'd to, before I had executed half my design, for the Machinery was entirely wanting to compleat it.

The Machinery, Madam, is a term invented by the Critics, to signify that part which the Deities, Angels, or Dæmons are made to act in a Poem: For the ancient Poets are in one respect like many modern Ladies: let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance. These Machines I determin'd to raise on a very new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of Spirits.

I know how disagreeable it is to make use of hard words before a Lady; but't is so much the concern of a Poet to have his works understood, and particularly by your Sex, that you must give me leave to explain two or three difficult terms.

The Rosicrucians are a people I must bring you acquainted with. The best account I know of them is in a French book call'd *Le Comte de Gabalis*, which both in its title and size is so like a Novel, that many of the Fair Sex have read it for one by mistake. According to these Gentlemen, the four Elements are inhabited by Spirits, which they call Sylphs, Gnomes, Nymphs, and Salamanders. The Gnomes or Dæmons of Earth delight in mischief; but the Sylphs whose habitation is in the Air, are the best-condition'd creatures imaginable. For they say, any mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle Spirits, upon a condition very easy to all true Adepts, an inviolate preservation of Chastity.

As to the following Canto's, all the passages of them are as fabulous, as the Vision at the beginning, or the Transformation at the end; (except the loss of your Hair, which I always mention with reverence). The Human persons are as fictitious as the airy ones; and the character of Belinda, as it is now manag'd, resembles you in nothing but in Beauty.

If this Poem had as many Graces as there are in your Person, or in your Mind, yet I could never hope it should pass thro' the world half so Uncensur'd as You have done. But let its fortune be what it will, mine is happy enough, to have given me this occasion of assuring you that I am, with the truest esteem,

Madam,  
*Your most obedient, Humble Servant,*  
A. POPE

**Canto I**

WHAT dire offence from am'rous causes springs,  
 What mighty contests rise from trivial things,  
 I sing—This verse to *Caryll*, muse! is due:  
 This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:  
 Slight is the subject, but not so the praise, 5  
 If she inspire, and he approve my lays.  
 Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel  
 A well-bred Lord t' assault a gentle Belle?  
 O say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd,  
 Could make a gentle Belle reject a Lord? 10  
 In tasks so bold can little men engage,  
 And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?  
 Sol thro' white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,  
 And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day.  
 Now lapdogs give themselves the rousing shake, 15  
 And sleepless lovers just at twelve awake:  
 Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground,  
 And the press'd watch return'd a silver sound.  
 Belinda still her downy pillow prest,  
 Her guardian Sylph prolong'd the balmy rest. 20  
 'T was he had summon'd to her silent bed  
 The morning-dream that hover'd o'er her head;  
 A youth more glitt'ring than a Birthnight Beau  
 (That ev'n in slumber caus'd her cheek to glow)  
 Seem'd to her ear his winning lips to lay, 25  
 And thus in whispers said, or seem'd to say:  
 'Fairest of mortals, thou distinguish'd care  
 Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air!  
 If e'er one vision touch'd thy infant thought,

Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught— 30  
 Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,  
 The silver token, and the circled green,  
 Or virgins visited by Angel-powers,  
 With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flowers;  
 Hear and believe! thy own importance know, 35  
 Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.  
 Some secret truths, from learned pride conceal'd,  
 To maids alone and children are reveal'd:  
 What tho' no credit doubting Wits may give?  
 The fair and innocent shall still believe. 40  
 Know, then, unnumber'd Spirits round thee fly,  
 The light militia of the lower sky:  
 These, tho' unseen, are ever on the wing,  
 Hang o'er the Box, and hover round the Ring.  
 Think what an equipage thou hast in air, 45  
 And view with scorn two pages and a chair.  
 As now your own, our beings were of old,  
 And once inclosed in woman's beauteous mould;  
 Thence, by a soft transition, we repair  
 From earthly vehicles to these of air. 50  
 Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,  
 That all her vanities at once are dead;  
 Succeeding vanities she still regards,  
 And, tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.  
 Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive, 55  
 And love of Ombre, after death survive.  
 For when the Fair in all their pride expire,  
 To their first elements their souls retire.  
 The sprites of fiery termagants in flame  
 Mount up, and take a Salamander's name. 60  
 Soft yielding minds to water glide away,  
 And sip, with Nymphs, their elemental tea.

<p>The graver prude sinks downward to a Gnome                  In search of mischief still on earth to roam.                  The light coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,                  And sport and flutter in the fields of air.                  ‘Know further yet: whoever fair and chaste                  Rejects mankind, is by some Sylph embraced;                  For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease                  Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.                  What guards the purity of melting maids,                  In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,                  Safe from the treach’rous friend, the daring spark,                  The glance by day, the whisper in the dark;                  When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,                  When music softens, and when dancing fires?                  ’T is but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,                  Tho’ Honour is the word with men below.                  ‘Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,                  For life predestin’d to the Gnome’s embrace.                  These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,                  When offers are disdain’d, and love denied:                  Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,                  While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train,                  And garters, stars, and coronets appear,                  And in soft sounds, “Your Grace” salutes their ear.                  ’T is these that early taint the female soul,                  Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,                  Teach infant cheeks a bidden blush to know,                  And little hearts to flutter at a Beau.                  ‘Oft, when the world imagine women stray,                  The Sylphs thro’ mystic mazes guide their way;                  Thro’ all the giddy circle they pursue,                  And old impertinence expel by new.                  What tender maid but must a victim fall</p>	<p>65 70 75 80 85 90 95</p>	<p>To one man’s treat, but for another’s ball?                  When Florio speaks, what virgin could withstand,                  If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?                  With varying vanities, from every part,                  They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;                  Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots                  strive,                  Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.                  This erring mortals levity may call;                  Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.                  ‘Of these am I, who thy protection claim,                  A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.                  Late, as I ranged the crystal wilds of air,                  In the clear mirror of thy ruling star                  I saw, alas! some dread event impend,                  Ere to the main this morning sun descend,                  But Heav’n reveals not what, or how or where.                  Warn’d by the Sylph, O pious maid, beware!                  This to disclose is all thy guardian can:                  Beware of all, but most beware of Man!’                  He said; when, Shock, who thought she slept too                  long,                  Leap’d up, and waked his mistress with his tongue.                  ’T was then, Belinda, if report say true,                  Thy eyes first open’d on a billet-doux;                  Wounds, charms, and ardours were no sooner read,                  But all the vision vanish’d from thy head.                  And now, unveil’d, the toilet stands display’d,                  Each silver vase in mystic order laid.                  First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,                  With head uncover’d, the cosmetic powers.                  A heav’nly image in the glass appears;                  To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears.</p>	<p>100 105 110 115 120 125</p>
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Th' inferior priestess, at her altar's side,  
 Trembling begins the sacred rites of Pride.  
 Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here  
 The various off'rings of the world appear; 130  
 From each she nicely culls with curious toil,  
 And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.  
 This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,  
 And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.  
 The tortoise here and elephant unite, 135  
 Transform'd to combs, the speckled, and the white.  
 Here files of pins extend their shining rows,  
 Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux.  
 Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;  
 The Fair each moment rises in her charms, 140  
 Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,  
 And calls forth all the wonders of her face;  
 Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,  
 And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.  
 The busy Sylphs surround their darling care, 145  
 These set the head, and those divide the hair,  
 Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;  
 And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.

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**Canto II**

NOT with more glories, in th' ethereal plain,  
 The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,  
 Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams  
 Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.

Fair nymphs, and well-dress'd youths around her 5  
 shone,  
 But every eye was fix'd on her alone.  
 On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,  
 Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.  
 Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,  
 Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those: 10  
 Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;  
 Oft she rejects, but never once offends.  
 Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,  
 And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.  
 Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride, 15  
 Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide;  
 If to her share some female errors fall,  
 Look on her face, and you 'll forget 'em all.  
 This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,  
 Nourish'd two locks, which graceful hung behind 20  
 In equal curls, and well conspired to deck  
 With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.  
 Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,  
 And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.  
 With hairy springes we the birds betray, 25  
 Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,  
 Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,  
 And beauty draws us with a single hair.  
 Th' adventurous Baron the bright locks admired;  
 He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspired. 30  
 Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,  
 By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;  
 For when success a lover's toil attends,  
 Few ask if fraud or force attain'd his ends.  
 For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implor'd 35  
 Propitious Heav'n, and every Power ador'd,

But chiefly Love—to Love an altar built Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt. There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves, And all the trophies of his former loves; With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre, And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire. Then prostrate falls, and bags with ardent eyes Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize: The Powers gave ear, and granted half his prayer, The rest the winds dispers'd in empty air.	40	Superior by the head was Ariel placed; His purple pinions opening to the sun, He raised his azure wand, and thus begun: 'Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to your chief give ear. Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Dæmons, hear! Ye know the spheres and various tasks assign'd By laws eternal to th' aërial kind. Some in the fields of purest ether play, And bask and whiten in the blaze of day: Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high, Or roll the planets thro' the boundless sky: Some, less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night, Or suck the mists in grosser air below, Or dip their pinions in the painted bow, Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main, Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain. Others, on earth, o'er human race preside, Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide: Of these the chief the care of nations own, And guard with arms divine the British Throne. 'Our humbler province is to tend the Fair, Not a less pleasing, tho' less glorious care; To save the Powder from too rude a gale; Nor let th' imprison'd Essences exhale; To draw fresh colours from the vernal flowers; To steal from rainbows ere they drop in showers A brighter Wash; to curl their waving hairs, Assist their blushes and inspire their airs; Nay oft, in dreams invention we bestow, To change a Flounce, or add a Furbelow. 'This day black omens threat the brightest Fair, That e'er deserv'd a watchful spirit's care;	70 75 80 85 90 95 100
But now secure the painted vessel glides, The sunbeams trembling on the floating tides; While melting music steals upon the sky, And soften'd sounds along the waters die: Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play, Belinda smil'd, and all the world was gay. All but the Sylph—with careful thoughts opprest Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast. He summons straight his denizens of air; The lucid squadrons round the sails repair: Soft o'er the shrouds aërial whispers breathe That seem'd but zephyrs to the train beneath. Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold, Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold; Transparent forms too fine for mortal sight, Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light, Loose to the wind their airy garments flew, Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew, Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies, Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes, While ev'ry beam new transient colours flings, Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings. Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,	45 50 55 60 65		

Some dire disaster, or by force or slight;  
 But what, or where, the Fates have wrapt in night.  
 Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law, 105  
 Or some frail China jar receive a flaw;  
 Or stain her honour, or her new brocade,  
 Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade,  
 Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;  
 Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall. 110  
 Haste, then, ye Spirits! to your charge repair:  
 The flutt'ring fan be Zephyretta's care;  
 The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;  
 And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine;  
 Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite Lock; 115  
 Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.  
 'To fifty chosen sylphs, of special note,  
 We trust th' important charge, the petticoat;  
 Oft have we known that sev'n-fold fence to fail,  
 Tho' stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of whale: 120  
 Form a strong line about the silver bound,  
 And guard the wide circumference around.  
 'Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,  
 His post neglects, or leaves the Fair at large,  
 Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins: 125  
 Be stopp'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins,  
 Or plunged in lakes of bitter washes lie,  
 Or wedg'd whole ages in a bodkin's eye;  
 Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,  
 While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain, 130  
 Or alum styptics with contracting power  
 Shrink his thin essence like a rivell'd flower:  
 Or, as Ixion fix'd, the wretch shall feel  
 The giddy motion of the whirling mill,  
 In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow, 135

And tremble at the sea that froths below!  
 He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend;  
 Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend;  
 Some thread the mazy ringlets of her hair;  
 Some hang upon the pendants of her ear; 140  
 With beating hearts the dire event they wait,  
 Anxious, and trembling for the birth of Fate.

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**Canto III**

CLOSE by those meads, for ever crown'd with  
 flowers,  
 Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers  
 There stands a structure of majestic frame,  
 Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.  
 Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom 5  
 Of foreign tyrants, and of nymphs at home;  
 Here, thou, great ANNA! whom three realms obey,  
 Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.  
 Hither the Heroes and the Nymphs resort, 10  
 To taste awhile the pleasures of a court;  
 In various talk th' instructive hours they past,  
 Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;  
 One speaks the glory of the British Queen,  
 And one describes a charming Indian screen; 15  
 A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;  
 At every word a reputation dies.  
 Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,  
 With singing, laughing, ogling, *and all that*.  
 Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,

<p>The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;                  The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,                  And wretches hang that jurymen may dine;                  The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,                  And the long labours of the toilet cease.                  Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,                  Burns to encounter two adventurous knights,                  At Ombre singly to decide their doom,                  And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.                  Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,                  Each band the number of the sacred Nine.                  Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aërial guard                  Descend, and sit on each important card:                  First Ariel perch'd upon a Matadore,                  Then each according to the rank they bore;                  For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,                  Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.                  Behold four Kings in majesty revered,                  With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;                  And four fair Queens, whose hands sustain a flower                  Th' expressive emblem of their softer power;                  Four Knaves, in garbs succinct, a trusty band,                  Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand                  And party-colour'd troops, a shining train,                  Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.                  The skilful nymph reviews her force with care;                  'Let Spades be trumps!' she said, and trumps they                  were.                  Now move to war her sable Matadores,                  In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.                  Spadillio first, unconquerable lord!                  Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.                  As many more Manillio forced to yield,</p>	<p>20     25    30   35   40   45   50</p>	<p>And march'd a victor from the verdant field.                  Him Basto follow'd, but his fate more hard                  Gain'd but one trump and one plebeian card.                  With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,                  The hoary Majesty of Spades appears,                  Puts forth one manly leg, to sight reveal'd;                  The rest his many colour'd robe conceal'd.                  The rebel Knave, who dares his prince engage,                  Proves the just victim of his royal rage.                  Ev'n mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew,                  And mow'd down armies in the fights of Loo,                  Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,                  Falls undistinguish'd by the victor Spade.                  Thus far both armies to Belinda yield;                  Now to the Baron Fate inclines the field.                  His warlike amazon her host invades,                  Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades.                  The Club's black tyrant first her victim died,                  Spite of his haughty mien and barb'rous pride:                  What boots the regal circle on his head,                  His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread;                  That long behind he trails his pompous robe,                  And of all monarchs only grasps the globe?                  The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace;                  Th' embroider'd King who shows but half his face,                  And his refulgent Queen, with powers combin'd,                  Of broken troops an easy conquest find.                  Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen,                  With throngs promiscuous strew the level green.                  Thus when dispers'd a routed army runs,                  Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,                  With like confusion diff'rent nations fly,                  Of various habit, and of various dye;</p>	<p>          55          60          65          70          75          80</p>
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<p>The pierced battalions disunited fall                  In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.                  The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,                  And wins (oh shameful chance!) the Queen of Hearts.                  At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,                  A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look;                  She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,                  Just in the jaws of ruin, and Codille.                  And now (as oft in some distemper'd state)                  On one nice trick depends the gen'ral fate!                  An Ace of Hearts steps forth: the King unseen                  Lurk'd in her hand, and mourn'd his captive Queen.                  He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,                  And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.                  The nymph, exulting, fills with shouts the sky;                  The walls, the woods, and long canals reply.                  Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,                  Too soon dejected, and too soon elate:                  Sudden these honours shall be snatch'd away,                  And curs'd for ever this victorious day.                  For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd,                  The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;                  On shining altars of japan they raise                  The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze:                  From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,                  While China's earth receives the smoking tide.                  At once they gratify their scent and taste,                  And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.                  Straight hover round the Fair her airy band;                  Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd,                  Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,                  Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.                  Coffee (which makes the politician wise,</p>	<p>85      90    95     100     105     110     115</p>	<p>And see thro' all things with his half-shut eyes)                  Sent up in vapors to the Baron's brain                  New stratagems, the radiant Lock to gain.                  Ah, cease, rash youth! desist ere 't is too late,                  Fear the just Gods, and think of Scylla's fate!                  Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,                  She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair!                  But when to mischief mortals bend their will,                  How soon they find fit instruments of ill!                  Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace                  A two-edg'd weapon from her shining case:                  So ladies in romance assist their knight,                  Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.                  He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends                  The little engine on his fingers' ends;                  This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,                  As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.                  Swift to the Lock a thousand sprites repair;                  A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;                  And thrice they twitch'd the diamond in her ear;                  Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.                  Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought                  The close recesses of the virgin's thought:                  As on the nosegay in her breast reclin'd,                  He watch'd th' ideas rising in her mind,                  Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her art,                  An earthly Lover lurking at her heart.                  Amazed, confused, he found his power expired,                  Resign'd to fate, and with a sigh retired.                  The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring forfex wide,                  T' inclose the Lock; now joins it, to divide.                  Ev'n then, before the fatal engine closed,                  A wretched Sylph too fondly interposed;</p>	<p>      120      125      130      135      140      145    150</p>
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Fate urged the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain  
 (But airy substance soon unites again).  
 The meeting points the sacred hair dis sever  
 From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!  
 Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes, 155  
 And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.  
 Not louder shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,  
 When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last;  
 Or when rich China vessels, fall'n from high,  
 In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie! 160  
 'Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,'  
 The Victor cried, 'the glorious prize is mine!  
 While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,  
 Or in a coach and six the British Fair,  
 As long as Atalantis shall be read, 165  
 Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,  
 While visits shall be paid on solemn days,  
 When numerous wax-lights in bright order blaze:  
 While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,  
 So long my honour, name, and praise shall live! 170  
 What Time would spare, from Steel receives its date,  
 And monuments, like men, submit to Fate!  
 Steel could the labour of the Gods destroy,  
 And strike to dust th' imperial towers of Troy;  
 Steel could the works of mortal pride confound 175  
 And hew triumphal arches to the ground.  
 What wonder, then, fair Nymph! thy hairs should feel  
 The conquering force of unresisted steel?'

BUT anxious cares the pensive nymph opprest,  
 And secret passions labour'd in her breast.  
 Not youthful kings in battle seiz'd alive,  
 Not scornful virgins who their charms survive, 5  
 Not ardent lovers robb'd of all their bliss,  
 Not ancient ladies when refused a kiss,  
 Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,  
 Not Cynthia when her mantua's pinn'd awry,  
 E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,  
 As thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd hair. 10  
 For, that sad moment, when the Sylphs withdrew,  
 And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,  
 Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite  
 As ever sullied the fair face of light, 15  
 Down to the central earth, his proper scene,  
 Repair'd to search the gloomy cave of Spleen.  
 Swift on his sooty pinions flits the Gnome,  
 And in a vapour reach'd the dismal dome.  
 No cheerful breeze this sullen region knows,  
 The dreaded East is all the wind that blows. 20  
 Here in a grotto shelter'd close from air,  
 And screen'd in shades from day's detested glare,  
 She sighs for ever on her pensive bed,  
 Pain at her side, and Megrim at her head.  
 Two handmaids wait the throne; alike in place, 25  
 But diff'ring far in figure and in face.  
 Here stood Ill-nature, like an ancient maid,  
 Her wrinkled form in black and white array'd!  
 With store of prayers for mornings, nights, and noons,  
 Her hand is fill'd, her bosom with lampoons. 30  
 There Affectation, with a sickly mien,  
 Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,

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**Canto IV**

<p>Practis'd to lisp, and hang the head aside,          Faints into airs, and languishes with pride;          On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,          Wrapt in a gown for sickness and for show.          The fair ones feel such maladies as these,          When each new night-dress gives a new disease.          A constant vapour o'er the palace flies          Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise;          Dreadful as hermits' dreams in haunted shades,          Or bright as visions of expiring maids:          Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires,          Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires;          Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,          And crystal domes, and angels in machines.          Unnumber'd throngs on ev'ry side are seen,          Of bodies changed to various forms by Spleen.          Here living Teapots stand, one arm held out,          One bent; the handle this, and that the spout:          A Pipkin there, like Homer's Tripod walks;          Here sighs a Jar, and there a Goose-pie talks;          Men prove with child, as powerful fancy works,          And maids turn'd bottles call aloud for corks.          Safe pass'd the Gnome thro' this fantastic band,          A branch of healing spleenwort in his hand.          Then thus address'd the Power—'Hail, wayward          Queen!          Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen:          Parent of Vapours and of female wit,          Who give th' hysteric or poetic fit,          On various tempers act by various ways,          Make some take physic, others scribble plays;          Who cause the proud their visits to delay,          And send the godly in a pet to pray.</p>	<p>35 40 45 50 55 60</p>	<p>A nymph there is that all your power disdains,          And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.          But oh! if e'er thy Gnome could spoil a grace,          Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,          Like citron-waters matrons' cheeks inflame,          Or change complexions at a losing game;          If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,          Or ruffled petticoats, or tumbled beds,          Or caused suspicion when no soul was rude,          Or discomposed the head-dress of a prude,          Or e'er to costive lapdog gave disease,          Which not the tears of brightest eyes could ease,          Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin;          That single act gives half the world the spleen.'          The Goddess, with a discontented air,          Seems to reject him tho' she grants his prayer.          A wondrous Bag with both her hands she binds,          Like that where once Ulysses held the winds;          There she collects the force of female lungs,          Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.          A Vial next she fills with fainting fears,          Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.          The Gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,          Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.          Sunk in Thalestris' arms the nymph he found,          Her eyes dejected, and her hair unbound.          Full o'er their heads the swelling Bag he rent,          And all the Furies issued at the vent.          Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,          And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.          'O wretched maid!' she spread her hands, and cried          (While Hampton's echoes, 'Wretched maid!' replied),          Was it for this you took such constant care</p>	<p>65 70 75 80 85 90 95</p>
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The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?  
 For this your locks in paper durance bound?  
 For this with torturing irons wreathed around? 100  
 For this with fillets strain'd your tender head,  
 And bravely bore the double loads of lead?  
 Gods! shall the ravisher display your hair,  
 While the fops envy, and the ladies stare!  
 Honour forbid! at whose unrivall'd shrine 105  
 Ease, Pleasure, Virtue, all, our sex resign.  
 Methinks already I your tears survey,  
 Already hear the horrid things they say,  
 Already see you a degraded toast,  
 And all your honour in a whisper lost! 110  
 How shall I, then, your hapless fame defend?  
 'T will then be infamy to seem your friend!  
 And shall this prize, th' inestimable prize,  
 Exposed thro' crystal to the gazing eyes,  
 And heighten'd by the diamond's circling rays, 115  
 On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?  
 Sooner shall grass in Hyde Park Circus grow,  
 And Wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow;  
 Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,  
 Men, monkeys, lapdogs, parrots, perish all!' 120  
 She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,  
 And bids her beau demand the precious hairs  
 (Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,  
 And the nice conduct of a clouded cane):  
 With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face, 125  
 He first the snuff-box open'd, then the case,  
 And thus broke out—'My lord, why, what the devil!  
 Z—ds! damn the Lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!  
 Plague on 't! 't is past a jest—nay, prithee, pox!  
 Give her the hair.'—He spoke, and rapp'd his box. 130

'It grieves me much,' replied the Peer again,  
 'Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain:  
 But by this Lock, this sacred Lock, I swear  
 (Which never more shall join its parted hair;  
 Which never more its honours shall renew, 135  
 Clipp'd from the lovely head where late it grew),  
 That, while my nostrils draw the vital air,  
 This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear.'  
 He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread  
 The long-contended honours of her head. 140  
 But Umbriel, hateful Gnome, forbears not so;  
 He breaks the Vial whence the sorrows flow.  
 Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears,  
 Her eyes half-languishing, half drown'd in tears;  
 On her heav'd bosom hung her drooping head, 145  
 Which with a sigh she rais'd, and thus she said:  
 'For ever curs'd be this detested day,  
 Which snatch'd my best, my fav'rite curl away!  
 Happy! ah, ten times happy had I been,  
 If Hampton Court these eyes had never seen! 150  
 Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,  
 By love of courts to numerous ills betray'd.  
 O had I rather unadmired remain'd  
 In some lone isle, or distant northern land;  
 Where the gilt chariot never marks the way, 155  
 Where none learn Ombre, none e'er taste Bohea!  
 There kept my charms conceal'd from mortal eye,  
 Like roses, that in deserts bloom and die.  
 What mov'd my mind with youthful lords to roam?  
 O had I stay'd, and said my prayers at home; 160  
 'T was this the morning omens seem'd to tell,  
 Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell;  
 The tott'ring china shook without a wind;

Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind!  
 A Sylph, too, warn'd me of the threats of fate, 165  
 In mystic visions, now believ'd too late!  
 See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs!  
 My hands shall rend what ev'n thy rapine spares.  
 These, in two sable ringlets taught to break,  
 Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck; 170  
 The sister-lock now sits uncouth alone,  
 And in its fellow's fate foresees its own;  
 Uncurl'd it hangs, the fatal shears demands,  
 And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands.  
 O hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize 175  
 Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!

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**Canto V**

SHE said: the pitying audience melt in tears;  
 But Fate and Jove had stopp'd the Baron's ears.  
 In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,  
 For who can move when fair Belinda fails?  
 Not half so fix'd the Trojan could remain, 5  
 While Anna begg'd and Dido raged in vain.  
 Then grave Clarissa graceful waved her fan;  
 Silence ensued, and thus the nymph began:  
 'Say, why are beauties prais'd and honour'd most,  
 The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast? 10  
 Why deck'd with all that land and sea afford,  
 Why angels call'd, and angel-like ador'd?  
 Why round our coaches crowd the white-glov'd beaux?  
 Why bows the side-box from its inmost rows?  
 How vain are all these glories, all our pains, 15  
 Unless Good Sense preserve what Beauty gains;

That men may say when we the front-box grace,  
 "Behold the first in virtue as in face!"  
 Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day,  
 Charm'd the smallpox, or chased old age away; 20  
 Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce,  
 Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?  
 To patch, nay, ogle, might become a saint,  
 Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.  
 But since, alas! frail beauty must decay, 25  
 Curl'd or uncurl'd, since locks will turn to gray;  
 Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,  
 And she who scorns a man must die a maid;  
 What then remains, but well our power to use,  
 And keep good humour still whate'er we lose? 30  
 And trust me, dear, good humour can prevail,  
 When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.  
 Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;  
 Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul.'  
 So spoke the dame, but no applause ensued; 35  
 Belinda frown'd, Thalestris call'd her prude.  
 'To arms, to arms!' the fierce virago cries,  
 And swift as lightning to the combat flies.  
 All side in parties, and begin th' attack;  
 Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whale-bones crack; 40  
 Heroes' and heroines' shouts confusedly rise,  
 And bass and treble voices strike the skies.  
 No common weapons in their hands are found,  
 Like Gods they fight nor dread a mortal wound.  
 So when bold Homer makes the Gods engage, 45  
 And heav'nly breasts with human passions rage;  
 'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms;  
 And all Olympus rings with loud alarms;  
 Jove's thunder roars, Heav'n trembles all around,  
 Blue Neptune storms, the bell'wing deeps resound: 50  
 Earth shakes her nodding towers, the ground gives way,  
 And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!

<p>Triumphant Umbriel, on a sponce's height,                  Clapp'd his glad wings, and sat to view the fight:                  Propp'd on their bodkin-spears, the sprites survey                  The growing combat, or assist the fray.                  While thro' the press enraged Thalestris flies,                  And scatters death around from both her eyes,                  A Beau and Witling perish'd in the throng,                  One died in metaphor, and one in song:                  'O cruel Nymph! a living death I bear,'                  Cried Dapperwit, and sunk beside his chair.                  A mournful glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,                  'Those eyes are made so killing'—was his last.                  Thus on Mæander's flowery margin lies                  Th' expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.                  When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,                  Chloe stepp'd in, and kill'd him with a frown;                  She smiled to see the doughty hero slain,                  But, at her smile, the beau revived again.                  Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,                  Weighs the men's wits against the lady's hair;                  The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;                  At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.                  See fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,                  With more than usual lightning in her eyes;                  Nor fear'd the chief th' unequal fight to try,                  Who sought no more than on his foe to die.                  But this bold lord, with manly strength endued,                  She with one finger and a thumb subdued:                  Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,                  A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;                  The Gnomes direct, to every atom just,                  The pungent grains of titillating dust.                  Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,                  And the high dome reëchoes to his nose.                  'Now meet thy fate,' incens'd Belinda cried,                  And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.</p>	<p>55 60 65 70 75 80 85</p>	<p>(The same, his ancient personage to deck,                  Her great-great-grandsire wore about his neck,                  In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,                  Form'd a vast buckle for his widow's gown:                  Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,                  The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew;                  Then in a bodkin graced her mother's hairs,                  Which long she wore and now Belinda wears.)                  'Boast not my fall,' he cried, 'insulting foe!                  Thou by some other shalt be laid as low;                  Nor think to die dejects my lofty mind:                  All that I dread is leaving you behind!                  Rather than so, ah, let me still survive,                  And burn in Cupid's flames—but burn alive.'                  'Restore the Lock!' she cries; and all around                  'Restore the Lock!' the vaulted roofs rebound.                  Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain                  Roar'd for the handkerchief that caus'd his pain.                  But see how oft ambitious aims are cross'd,                  And chiefs contend till all the prize is lost!                  The lock, obtain'd with guilt, and kept with pain,                  In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain:                  With such a prize no mortal must be blest.                  So Heav'n decrees! with Heav'n who can contest?                  Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere,                  Since all things lost on earth are treasured there.                  There heroes' wits are kept in pond'rous vases,                  And beaux' in snuffboxes and tweezer-cases.                  There broken vows, and deathbed alms are found,                  And lovers' hearts with ends of riband bound,                  The courtier's promises, and sick man's prayers,                  The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs,                  Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,                  Dried butterflies, and tomes of casuistry.                  But trust the Muse—she saw it upward rise,                  Tho' mark'd by none but quick poetic eyes</p>	<p>90 95 100 105 110 115 120</p>
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(So Rome's great founder to the heav'ns withdrew,                   125  
To Proculus alone confess'd in view):  
A sudden star, it shot thro' liquid air,  
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.  
Not Berenice's locks first rose so bright,  
The heav'ns bespangling with dishevell'd light.                   130  
The Sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,  
And pleas'd pursue its progress thro' the skies.  
    This the beau monde shall from the Mall survey,  
And hail with music its propitious ray;  
This the blest lover shall for Venus take,                   135  
And send up vows from Rosamonda's lake;  
This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,  
When next he looks thro' Galileo's eyes;  
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom  
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.                   140  
    Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn thy ravish'd hair,  
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!  
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast  
Shall draw such envy as the Lock you lost.  
For after all the murders of your eye,                   145  
When, after millions slain, yourself shall die;  
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,  
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,  
This Lock the Muse shall consecrate to fame,  
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.                   150