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9. 11. 1874

MODEST EXCEPTIONS,

FROM THE
COURT OF PARNASSUS,

T O

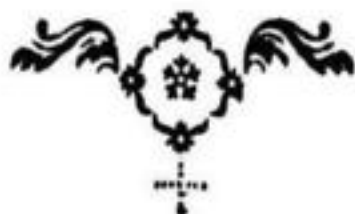
Mrs. Macaulay's

M O D E S T P L E A.

By the AUTHOR of

THE DOCTOR DISSECTED:

A P O E M.

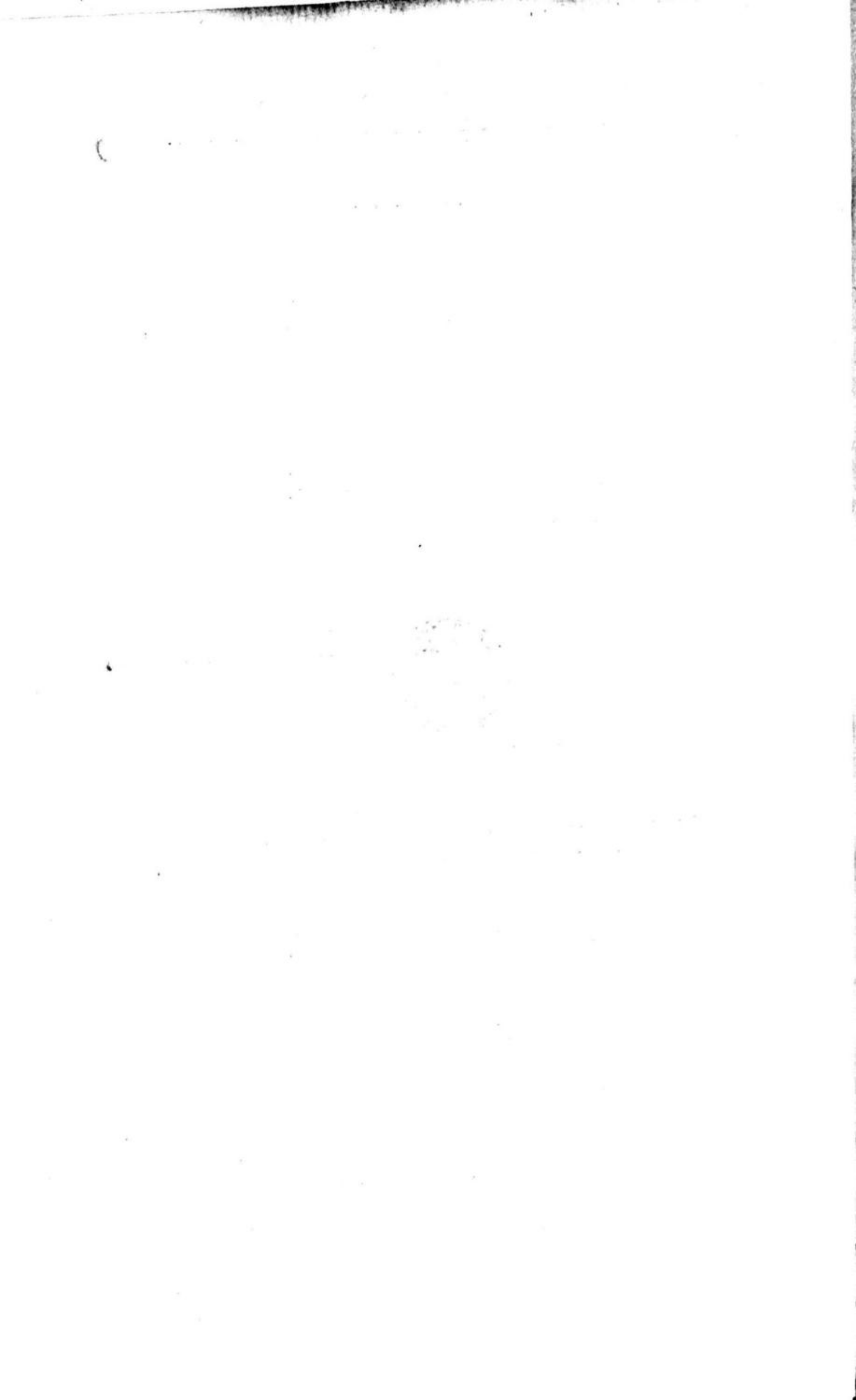


L O N D O N,

Printed for J. BEW, in Pater-Noster-Row.

M D C C L X X I V.

[Price One Shilling.]



MODEST EXCEPTIONS,

&c.

MY pen just dipt in the Pierian spring,
To climb Parnassus I am all on wing ;
Cautious and slow, the steep ascent I tread,
“ With all my imperfections on my head ;”
Rugged the path, with peril so beset,
I know not to advance, or to retreat :

Each passenger I view, with churlish frown
 (Enough to knock a bashful poet down),
 Bids me descend, the vast attempt give o'er,
 And never, never, be ambitious more.

Partial advice, I own, has little weight;
 Proceed we then, tho' 'twere Olympus' height.
 Sisters of Helicon! on you I call,
 Suffer me not, like Phaeton, to fall:
 For my success your due libations pay;
 Much, much depends on this important day,
 A day that will for ever fix my doom,—
 “ Big with the fate of Cato, and of Rome.”

Lives there a Briton bold that will engage
 A Female Patriot in this scribbling age?
 Who dares MACAULAY'S MODEST PLEA arraign?
 MACAULAY, fairest of the Patriot train!

Does any Roman spirit make reply ?—
 I am no Roman, Sirs—but yet dare I
 To single combat hold her, if she will,
 And, for my weapon,—bear a sharp crow-quill.
 If, like Æneas, I a wound sustain,
 No cure for me, alas ! in minutes twain ;
 Me Venus nor Iäpis have in care,
 Indifferent they, I ween, how matters fare ;
 Nor God, nor Goddess, will to earth descend,
 That I e'er heard,—to stand the Poet's friend.
 Oh ! to have liv'd in Virgil's halcyon days !
 (The very thought inspires my feeble lays)
 A patron, like Augustus, to have found !
 My steps I then had trod on hallow'd ground,
 And on the Ides, the Calends, slept secure,
 Nor fear'd that hydra,—Critical Reviewer.

E'en as it is, to KATE I give no quarter,
 No Roman, Grecian,—but a Briton's daughter,
 Who from a stock as fair my lineage boast
 As aw the MACS, I wis, on Scottish coast.

MACAULAY humble, modest in her PLEA;
 How comes she, then, to be attack'd by me?
 Obvious the reason, think but for a minute,
 She writes, I read,—that's all the diff'rence in it;
 And diff'rence great enough to hungry bard,
 Who books at price reduc'd can ill afford;
 Nay, since the truth will out, at first, or last,
 To purchase Homer—he a week must fast.
 With wife Sir Edward Coke I've nought to do,
 Nor with that “ worse than Goth, fam'd Cicero:”
 Peace to his manes; hard, alas! his doom;
 I weep the patriot, and the friend of Rome,

But,

But, like most women, little understand

“ Of moral fitness, and the law o’ th’ land.”

There is a motto I have somewhere read,

Which for my ignorance excuse will plead ;

Quote it I may without or fear or shame,

’Tis this,—“ Ne futor ultra crepidam.”

LOCKE, BACON, NEWTON, speculators those

On sciences adapted best to prose :

BACON, a Chancellor corrupt we’re told,—

Chancellors now—are made of other mould ;

Nor is it likely, clients all agree,

To bribe a council with a double fee :

Corruption,—horrid phrase! now obsolete,—

Courtiers can hardly spell it when they see’t,

“ Ideas Philosophical, it seems,

“ That great man wrote, which pleas’d not royal James ;”

Vain Monarch he as ever fill'd a throne,
 Partial to no man's "lumber"—but his own.

LOCKE fortunately liv'd in better times,
 When Prince and people were exempt from crimes :
 No factious spirits then, no party-rage ;
 That, surely, must have been the Golden Age ;
 Golden to him it was,—he gain'd a goodly heritage.]

NEWTON, philosopher of glorious fame,
 That ev'ry star cou'd number by its name !
 When with his second self, his works, I stray,
 Heav'n to explore, and find the solar way,
 Wrapt in amazement, I that Pow'r revere,
 That cou'd exalt him to his proper sphere ;
 From Heav'n he came, a star of form divine,
 To Heav'n return'd,—in brightest magnitude to shine.

“ POPE,

“ POPE an œconomist” I shall allow,

And at his shrine with all due def’rence bow :

“ Few bards, like him, it is a truth confes’d,

“ With happy independence” now are blest ;

But then, the fact, the honest fact, to tell,—

Few are the bards that have deserv’d so well.

“ With fordid Booksellers” I seldom treat,

No Patriot I, nor puffer for the State ;

“ They, if in favour with the Goddess fickle,

“ With fellow-cits for privilege may stickle,

“ To eat, to drink, to sleep,”—perchance, to dream ;

No law was ever made to *bar* such claim :

And, should their wisdoms be dispos’d to fight,

May calmly go to cuffs,—for Copy-Right ;

Nay, farther, “ if estates they have to leave,”

“ They to their kindred such estates may give.”

Haply endow'd with gift of second sight,
 Authors, I plain discern, for profit write,
 Absurd it were this maxim to deny,—
 Cravings of Nature we must all supply :
 Historiographers, Patriots,—now forlorn !
 To skeletons by midnight study worn,
 Translators, Plagiarists, in these our days,
 Live not, I ween, on pittance scant of praise ;
 E'en laurel'd WHITEHEAD, tho' of bards the worst,
 Had he no cheese,—wou'd, mutt'ring, eat his crust.
 Ask, of their friends, before we farther go,
 If Fame is all that Authors seek below ?
 To answer this, they will at once reply,
 Vast is their Merit, and their Modesty ;
 Yet, on an av'rage, tho' the tax be greater
 Than any one impos'd by legislature,

Ample amends in an address they gain,
 Or panegyric in a high-flown strain,
 For which they on Apician fare, at least,
 At their expence, thro' gratitude, shou'd feast;
 Since Bookfellers themselves will often dine
 On ven'son, turtle, and a bacon-chine.
 These facts are certain as that now I write,
 The found of which—creates an appetite.

“ Why, wretched Author, why to market stray,
 “ When thou, the wherewithal, hast not to pay?
 “ Thy literary merit will not buy,
 “ A steak of beef, or mutton, for a pie;
 “ Butchers and bakers they have flinty hearts,”
 And callous are to all poetic arts;
 Nor will an epigram, or satire, sell,
 In open market,—for a joint of veal;

“ The very brewer,” for your brightest thought,
Will not of porter give a single draught :

“ Alas ! their letter’d ignorance we find,

“ Excuse enough for cheating all mankind.”

To scenes of horror if my muse wou’d stray,
And to a spunging-house direct her way,

Wou’d she attend, “ to this last scene of glory,

“ The pale philosopher from Attic story,

(“ Who, self-denying,” one with truth might say,

Not sumptuously had fared ev’ry day)

“ She there the caitiff officer might view,

“ Exacting, to a farthing, all his due,”

Nor, as the Patriot writes, “ of his extortion,

“ Wou’d he a tittle ’bate,” for her diversion. :

“ Those, those are evils *I* can soar above,

“ Yet flights of fancy,” ’tis confess’d, I love.

Wou'd I a friend relieve with evils prest,
The mode I shou'd adopt, to me seem'd best.

“ An empty stomach,” I with her agree,

“ Is to the spleen a mortal enemy.”

We of Britannia's isle, that seat of folly!
Are justly stil'd the slaves to melancholy;
No air salubr'ous doth our clime exhale,
But nauseous vapours breathe in ev'ry gale:
Sorely oppress'd by weight of atmosphere,
Infane her wayward children oft appear;
Their lives with pistol, sword, or poison, end,
And to the gloomy region straight descend.
Fatal we know, to fowl, disease nam'd pip,
To Britons still more fatal—is the hyp.

There are, who, if a compliment they pay,
Are sure to do it in an aukward way.—

SHAKESPEARE, great Bard, that character sublime,
(Whom to describe wou'd far surpass my rhyme)

“ If to improve mankind he wrote a strain,

“ It secondary was to view of gain ;

“ Gain his first object,” no ambitious thought

Cou'd e'er possess a man not worth a groat ;

To please a barb'rous audience was his aim,

Nor did he ever court the Goddess Fame :

“ SHAKESPEARE,—of ribaldry the very sink,

“ Who horses well cou'd manage, and a link :”

Yet this great man immortal will remain,

Tho' e'en an host of MACS against him join.

“ If to what PLINY writes we credit give,

“ His was the age when Authors well did live ;

“ Learning then flourish'd, Rome no barren soil,

“ And frequent legacies repaid their toil.”

That custom rare in Britain cou'd we reach,
(" More honour'd in th' observance than the breach,")
Genius, tho' drooping, wou'd its head erect,—
Greater the pow'r of gold than men suspect.

A nation civiliz'd, I once was told,
The English were;—assertion vague and bold:
In Gothic barbarism they now, by Styx,
Equal, 'tis said, their ancestors, the Picts.

" When did an Englishman, I fain wou'd know,

" From service done his country affluent grow?

" When to ingenious friends bequest made he,

" In time of need, of a rich legacy?

" No; on a blockhead reason must despise,

" Fiftieth of kin,—he lavishes the prize.

" Base leaven they, of the corruptest kind,

" With selfishness so tainted is their mind,"

That not a virtuous man, alas! not One,

To save the city,—can be hit upon.

Since ill such sentiments with mine agree,

I must refer you to the MODEST PLEA:

And when I speak as council in this cause

You shall behold a very diff'rent clause.

Oh! Patriot, Patriot, thou thy day hast had,

What aileth thee? and wherefore art thou sad?

Thy soul-republican, thy restless sprite,

A tyrant makes thee in thine own despite.

From JOHNSON, say, what mighty ills do flow,

That thou with him, alas! wilt pluck a crow?

From thee did that "Coloffus" e'er purloin,

Or at thy merit vast in thought repine?

Didst thou from him correction undergo?

If not, Oh! Patriot, wherefore then his foe?

He has a pension, that you can't deny ;

He has,—and so wou'd gladly you and I.

MILTON!—Oh! here I cou'd my theme exalt,
 And with MACAULAY quickly be in alt,
 Had not that MILTON used his rebel pen
 To serve the greatest, yet the worst of men,
 Who dar'd imbrue his hands in royal blood,
 Dark was the deed,—yet feign'd to serve his God.
 In this foul cause I raptures ill can feign,
 Or tune my lyre to such inglor'ous strain ;
 My unimpassion'd soul, from faction free,
 Rejoices at the name of Monarchy ;
 Yet MILTON's excellence I ne'er can rate,
 His own great works—must praise him in the gate,
 To sum up all, in manner short and plain,
 “ Sooner shall Birnham-Wood reach Dunfinane,”

The Frith of Forth the Medway sooner join,
From filth to cleanliness the Scots incline,
Corn shall on Alpine mountains sooner grow,
Lambs sooner bleat, and the Scotch thistle blow,
Than KATE MACAULAY's breast with loyal zeal shall glow.]

STELLA.

F I N I S.