

### *Noblemen Turned Critics*

I OFFER to the contemplation of those unfortunate mortals who are necessitated to undergo the criticism of *lords*, this pair of anecdotes—

Solderini, the Gonfalonière of Florence, having had a statue made by the great *Michael Angelo*, when it was finished came to inspect it; and having for some time sagaciously considered it, poring now on the face, then on the arms, the knees, the form of the leg, and at length on the foot itself; the statue being of such perfect beauty, he found himself at a loss to display his powers of criticism, only by lavishing his praise. But only to praise, might appear as it there had been an obtuseness in the keenness of his criticism. He trembled to find a fault, but a fault must he find. At length he ventured to mutter something concerning the nose; it might, he thought, be something more Grecian. *Angelo* differed from his grace, but he would attempt to gratify his taste. He took up his chisel, and concealed some marble-dust in his hand; feigning to retouch the part, he adroitly let fall some of the dust he held concealed. The cardinal observing it as it fell, transported at the idea of his critical acumen, exclaimed—“Ah, *Angelo!* you now have given an inimitable grace!”

When Pope was first introduced to read his *Iliad* to lord Halifax, the noble critic did not venture to be dissatisfied with so perfect a composition: but, like the cardinal, this passage, and that word, this term, and that expression, formed the broken cant of his criticisms. The honest poet was stung with vexation; for, in general, the parts at which his lordship hesitated were those with which he was most satisfied. As he returned home with Sir Samuel Garth, he revealed to him the anxiety of his mind. “Oh,” replied Garth, laughing, “you are not so well acquainted with his lordship as myself; he must Criticise. At your next visit read to him those very passages as they now stand; tell him that you have recollected his criticisms; and I’ll warrant you of his approbation of them. This is what I have done a hundred times myself.” *Pope* made use of this stratagem; it took, like the marble-dust of *Angelo*, and my lord, like the cardinal, exclaimed—“Dear *Pope*, they are now inimitable!”