

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM

'TIS hard to say if greater waste of time
Is seen in writing or in reading rhyme ;
But, of the two, less dangerous it appears
To tire our own than poison others' ears.
Time was, the owner of a peevish tongue,
The pebble of his wrath unheeding flung,
Saw the faint ripples touch the shore and cease,
And in the duckpond all again was peace.
But since that Science on our eyes hath laid
The wondrous clay from her own spittle made,
We see the widening ripples pass beyond,
The pond becomes the world, the world a pond,
All ether trembles when the pebble falls,
And a light word may ring in starry halls.

When first on earth the swift iambic ran
Men here and there were found but nowhere Man.
From whencesoe'er their origin they drew
Each on its separate soil the species grew,
And by selection, natural or not,
Evolved a fond belief in one small spot.
The Greek himself, with all his wisdom, took
For the wide world his bright Ægean nook,