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The Works Of Alexander Pope Esq.

In Nine Volumes Complete. With His Last Corrections, Additions, And Improvements; As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death

Being The Third of his Letters

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

V. Dr. Swift to Mr. Pope: An apology for his conduct and writings after the Queen's death: With an account of his principles in politics.

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obscure scene, where you know neither thing nor person. I can only answer yours, which I promise to do after a sort whenever you think fit to employ me. But I can assure you, the scene and the times have depressed me wonderfully, for I will impute no defect to those two paltry years which have slipt by since I had the happiness to see you. I am, with the truest esteem,

Your's, &c.

^a L E T T E R V.

From Dr. SWIFT to Mr. POPE.

Dublin, Jan. 10, 1721.

A Thousand things have vexed me of late years, upon which I am determined to lay open my mind to you. I rather chuse to appeal to you than to my Lord Chief Justice Whithed, under the situation I am in. For, I take this cause properly to lie before you: You are a much fitter Judge of what concerns the credit of a Writer, the injuries that are done him, and the reparations he ought to receive. Besides, I doubt whether the Arguments I could

^a This Letter Mr. Pope never received. P. nor did he believe it was ever sent.

suggest

suggest to prove my own innocence would be of much weight from the gentlemen of the Long-robe to those in Furs, upon whose decision about the difference of Style or Sentiments, I should be very unwilling to leave the merits of my Cause.

Give me leave then to put you in mind (although you cannot easily forget it) that about ten weeks before the Queen's death, I left the town, upon occasion of that incurable breach among the great men at Court, and went down to Berkshire, where you may remember that you gave me the favour of a visit. While I was in that retirement, I writ a Discourse which I thought might be useful in such a juncture of affairs, and sent it up to London; but, upon some difference in opinion between me and a certain great Minister now abroad, the publishing of it was deferred so long that the Queen died, and I recalled my copy, which hath been ever since in safe hands. In a few weeks after the loss of that excellent Princess, I came to my station here; where I have continued ever since in the greatest privacy, and utter ignorance of those events, which are most commonly talked of in the world. I neither know the names nor number of the Royal Family which now reigns, further than the Prayer-book informs me. I cannot tell who is Chancellor,

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who are Secretaries, nor with what nations we are in peace or war. And this manner of life was not taken up out of any sort of Affectation, but merely to avoid giving offence, and for fear of provoking Party-zeal.

I had indeed written some Memorials of the four last years of the Queen's reign, with some other informations, which I receiv'd, as necessary materials to qualify me for doing something in an employment then designed me^a: But, as it was at the disposal of a person, who had not the smallest share of steddiness or sincerity, I disdained to accept it.

These papers, at my few hours of health and leisure, I have been digesting^b into order by one sheet at a time, for I dare not venture any further, lest the humour of searching and seizing

^a Historiographer. P.

^b These papers some years after were brought finished by the Dean into England, with an intention to publish them. But a friend, on whose judgment he relied (the same I suppose whom he mentions above, as being abroad at the time of writing this letter) dissuaded him from that design. He told the Dean, there were several facts he knew to be false, and that the whole was so much in the spirit of party-writing, that, though

it might have made a reasonable pamphlet in support of their Administration it was a dishonour to just history. The Dean would do nothing against his Friend's judgment, yet it extremely chagrined him. And he told a common friend, that since * * did not approve his history, he would cast it into the fire, tho' it was the best work he had ever written. However it did not undergo this fate, and is said to be yet in being.

papers,

papers should revive; not that I am in pain of any danger to myself (for they contain nothing of present Times or Persons, upon which I shall never lose a thought while there is a Cat or a Spaniel in the house) but to preserve them from being lost among Messengers and Clerks.

I have written in this kingdom, a ^c discourse to persuade the wretched people to wear their own Manufactures instead of those from England. This Treatise soon spread very fast, being agreeable to the sentiments of the whole nation, except of those gentlemen who had employments, or were Expectants. Upon which a person in great office here immediately took the alarm: he sent in haste for the Chief Justice, and informed him of a seditious, factious, and virulent Pamphlet, lately published with a design of setting the two Kingdoms at variance; directing at the same time that the Printer should be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of law. The Chief Justice had so quick an understanding, that he resolved, if possible, to out-do his orders. The Grand-Juries of the county and city were practised effectually with to represent the said Pamphlet with all aggravating Epithets, for which they had thanks sent them from England, and their Presentments published for several weeks in all the news-papers. The Printer

^c A Proposal for the universal Use of Irish Manufactures. P.

was seized, and forced to give great bail: after his trial the Jury brought him in Not Guilty, although they had been cull'd with the utmost industry; the Chief Justice sent them back nine times, and kept them eleven hours, until being perfectly tired out, they were forced to leave the matter to the mercy of the Judge, by what they call a special Verdict. During the trial, the Chief Justice, among other singularities, laid his hand on his breast, and protested solemnly that the Author's design was to bring in the Pretender; although there was not a single syllable of Party in the whole Treatise, and although it was known that the most eminent of those who professed his own principles, publickly disallow'd his proceedings. But the cause being so very odious and unpopular, the trial of the Verdict was deferred from one Term to another, until upon the Duke of G--ft-n the Lord Lieutenant's arrival, his Grace, after mature advice, and permission from England, was pleas'd to grant a *noli prosequi*.

This is the more remarkable, because it is said that the man is no ill decider in common cases of property, where Party is out of the question; but when that intervenes, with ambition at heels to push it forward, it must needs confound any man of little spirit, and low birth, who hath no other endowment than that sort
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of Knowledge, which, however possessed in the highest degree, can possibly give no one good quality to the mind^d.

It is true, I have been much concerned, for several years past, upon account of the publick as well as for myself, to see how ill a taste for wit and sense prevails in the world, which Politics, and South-sea, and Party, and Opera's, and Masquerades have introduced. For, besides many insipid papers which the malice of

^d This is a very strange assertion. To suppose that a consummate knowledge of the Laws, by which civilized societies are governed, can give no one good quality to the mind, is making Ethics (of which public laws are so considerable a part) a very unprofitable study. The best division of the sciences is that old one of Plato, into Ethics, Physics, and Logic. The severer Philosophers condemn a total application to the two latter, because they have no tendency to mend the heart; and recommend the first as our principal study, for its efficacy in this important service. And sure, if any human speculations can mend the heart, they must be those which have Man for their object, as a reasonable, a so-

cial, and a civil being. And these are all included under *Ethics*; whether you call the science *Morality* or *Law*. And with regard to the Law of England, we must be much prejudiced against it not to allow that what Tully affirms concerning the Law of the twelve tables, may be modestly applied to ours. "Fremant omnes licet, dicam quod sentio: bibliothecas mehercule omnium Philosophorum unum mihi videtur Pandectarum volumen et autoritatis pondere et utilitatis ubertate superare." But the best proof of its moral efficacy is the manners of its professors: and these, in every age, hath been such as were the first improved, or the last corrupted.

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some hath entitled me to, there are many persons appearing to wish me well, and pretending to be judges of my style and manner, who have yet ascribed some writings to me, of which any man of common sense and literature would be heartily ashamed. I cannot forbear instancing a Treatise called a *Dedication upon Dedications*, which many would have to be mine, although it be as empty, dry, and sterile a composition, as I remember at any time to have read. But above all, there is one Circumstance which makes it impossible for me to have been Author of a Treatise, wherein there are several pages containing a Panegyric on King George, of whose character and person I am utterly ignorant, nor ever had once the curiosity to enquire into either, living at so great a distance as I do, and having long done with whatever can relate to public matters.

Indeed I have formerly delivered my thoughts very freely, whether I were asked or no; but never affected to be a Councillor, to which I had no manner of call. I was humbled enough to see myself so far out-done by the Earl of Oxford in my own trade as a Scholar, and too good a Courtier not to discover his contempt of those who would be men of importance out of their sphere. Besides, to say the truth, although I have known many great Ministers ready e-
nough

nough to hear Opinions, yet I have hardly seen one that would ever descend to take Advice; and this pedantry ariseth from a Maxim themselves do not believe at the same time they practise by it, that there is something profound in Politics, which men of plain honest sense cannot arrive to.

I only wish my endeavours had succeeded better in the great point I had at heart, which was that of reconciling the Ministers to each other. This might have been done, if others, who had more concern and more influence, would have acted their parts; and, if this had succeeded, the public interest both of Church and State would not have been the worse, nor the Protestant Succession endangered.

But, whatever opportunities a constant attendance of four years might have given me for endeavouring to do good offices to particular persons, I deserve at least to find tolerable quarter from those of the other Party; for many of which I was a constant advocate with the Earl of Oxford, and for this I appeal to his Lordship: He knows how often I pressed him in favour of Mr. Addison, Mr. Congreve, Mr. Row, and Mr. Steel; although I freely confess that his Lordship's kindness to them was altogether owing to his generous notions, and the esteem he had for their wit and parts, of which

I could only pretend to be a remembrancer. For I can never forget the answer he gave to the late Lord Hallifax, who upon the first change of the Ministry interceded with him to spare Mr. Congreve: It was by repeating these two lines of Virgil,

*Non obtusa adeo gestamus pectora Pœni,
Nec tam aversus equos Tyria Sol jungit ab urbe.*

Pursuant to which, he always treated Mr. Congreve with the greatest personal civilities, assuring him of his constant favour and protection, and adding that he would study to do something better for him.

I remember it was in those times a usual subject of raillery towards me among the Ministers, that I never came to them without a Whig in my sleeve; which I do not say with any view towards making my Court: For, the new Principles^e fixed to those of that denomination, I did then, and do now from my heart abhor, detest, and abjure, as wholly degenerate from their predecessors. I have conversed in some freedom with more Ministers of State of all parties than usually happens to men of my level, and, I confess, in their capacity as Mi-

^e He means particularly | Enemies, of an intention to
the principle at that time | *proscribe the Tories.*
charged upon them, by their |

nisters, I look upon them as a race of people whose acquaintance no man would court, otherwise than upon the score of Vanity or Ambition. The first quickly wears off (and is the Vice of low minds, for a man of spirit is too proud to be vain) and the other was not my case. Besides, having never received more than one small favour, I was under no necessity of being a slave to men in power, but chose my friends by their personal merit, without examining how far their notions agreed with the politics then in vogue. I frequently conversed with Mr. Addison, and the others I named (except Mr. Steel) during all my Lord Oxford's Ministry, and Mr. Addison's friendship to me continued inviolable, with as much kindness as when we used to meet at my Lord Sommers^f or Hallifax, who were leaders of the opposite Party.

I would infer from all this, that it is with great injustice I have these many years been pelted by your Pamphleteers, merely upon account of some regard which the Queen's last Ministers were pleased to have for me: and yet in my conscience I think I am a partaker in every ill design they had against the Protestant

^f Lord Sommers had very warmly recommended Dr. Swift to the favour of Lord Wharton when he went the Queen's Lieutenant into Ireland, in the year 1709.

Succef-

Succession, or the Liberties and Religion of their Country; and can say with Cicero, "that I should be proud to be included with them in all their actions *tanquam in equo Trojano*." But if I have never discovered by my words, writings, or actions, any Party virulence^g, or dangerous designs against the present powers; if my friendship and conversation were equally shewn among those who liked or disapproved the proceedings then at Court, and that I was known to be a common Friend of all deserving persons of the latter sort, when they were in distress; I cannot but think it hard, that I am not suffered to run quietly among the common herd of people, whose opinions unfortunately differ from those which lead to Favour and Preferment.

I ought to let you know, that the Thing we called a Whig in England is a creature altogether different from those of the same denomination here; at least it was so during the reign of her late Majesty. Whether those on your side have changed or no^h, it hath not been my business to enquire. I remember my excellent friend Mr. Addison, when he first came over hither Secretary to the Earl of Wharton then

^g The *Examiners*, I suppose, were not then published amongst the Dean's works.

^h He says before, that they had changed.

Lord

Lord Lieutenant, was extremely offended at the conduct and discourse of the Chief Managers here: He told me they were a sort of people who seemed to think, that the principles of a Whig consisted in nothing else but damning the Church, reviling the Clergy, abetting the Dissenters, and speaking contemptibly of revealed Religion.

I was discoursing some years ago with a certain Minister about that whiggish or fanatical Genius, so prevalent among the English of this kingdom: his Lordship accounted for it by that number of Cromwell's Soldiers, adventurers established here, who were all of the fourest leven, and the meanest birth, and whose posterity are now in possession of their lands and their principles. However, it must be confessed, that of late some people in this country are grown weary of quarrelling, because interest, the great motive of quarrelling, is at an end; for, it is hardly worth contending who shall be an Exciseman, a Country-Vicar, a Cryer in the Courts, or an Under-Clerk.

You will perhaps be inclined to think, that a person so ill treated as I have been, must at some time or other have discovered very dangerous opinions in government; in answer to which, I will tell you what my Political principles

principles

ciples were in the time of her late glorious Majesty, which I never contradicted by any action, writing, or discourse.

First, I always declared myself against a Popish Successor to the Crown, whatever Title he might have by the proximity of blood: Neither did I ever regard the right line, except upon two accounts: first, as it was established by law; and secondly, as it hath much weight in the opinions of the people. For necessity may abolish any Law; but cannot alter the sentiments of the vulgar; Right of inheritance being perhaps the most popular of all topics: and therefore in great Changes when that is broke, there will remain much heart-burning and discontent among the meaner people; which (under a weak Prince and corrupt Administration) may have the worst consequences upon the peace of any state.

As to what is called a Revolution-principle, my opinion was this; That whenever those evils, which usually attend and follow a violent change of Government, were not in probability so pernicious as the grievance we suffer under a present power, then the public good will justify such a Revolution. And this I took to have been the case in the Prince of Orange's expedition, although in the consequences it produced

duced some very bad effects, which are likely to stick long enough by us.

I had likewise in those days a mortal antipathy against Standing Armies in times of Peace: Because I always took Standing Armies to be only servants hired by the Master of the family for keeping his own children in slavery; and because I conceived, that a Prince, who could not think himself secure without Mercenary Troops, must needs have a separate interest from that of his Subjects. Although I am not ignorant of those artificial Necessities which a corrupted Ministry can create, for keeping up Forces to support a Faction against the publick Interest.

As to Parliaments, I adored the wisdom of that Gothic Institution, which made them annual: and I was confident our Liberty could never be placed upon a firm foundation until that ancient law were restored among us. For, who sees not, that, while such Assemblies are permitted to have a longer duration, there grows up a commerce of corruption between the Ministry and the Deputies, wherein they both find their accounts, to the manifest danger of Liberty? which Traffic would neither answer the design nor expence, if Parliaments met once a year.

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I ever abominated that scheme of Politics, (now about thirty years old) of setting up a monied Interest in opposition to the landed. For I conceived, there could not be a truer maxim in our Government than this, That the Possessors of the soil are the best Judges of what is for the advantage of the kingdom. If others had thought the same way, Funds of Credit and South-sea Projects would neither have been felt nor heard of.

I could never discover the necessity of suspending any Law upon which the Liberty of the most innocent persons depended; neither do I think this Practice hath made the taste of Arbitrary Power so agreeable, as that we should desire to see it repeated. Every Rebellion subdued and Plot discovered, contribute to the firmer established of the Prince: In the latter case, the knot of Conspirators is entirely broke, and they are to begin their work anew under a thousand disadvantages; so that those diligent enquiries into remote and problematical guilt, with a new power of enforcing them by chains and dungeons to every person whose face a Minister thinks fit to dislike, are not only opposite to that Maxim, which declareth it better that ten guilty men should escape, than one innocent suffer; but likewise leave a gate wide
open

open to the whole Tribe of Informers, the most accursed, and prostitute, and abandoned race, that God ever permitted to plague mankind.

It is true the Romans had a custom of chusing a Dictator, during whose administration the Power of other Magistrates was suspended; but this was done upon the greatest emergencies; a War near their doors, or some civil Dissention: For Armies must be governed by arbitrary power. But when the Virtue of that Commonwealth gave place to luxury and ambition, this very office of Dictator became perpetual in the persons of the Cæsars and their Successors, the most infamous Tyrants that have any where appeared in story.

These are some of the sentiments I had, relating to publick affairs, while I was in the world: what they are at present, is of little importance either to that or myself; neither can I truly say I have any at all, or, if I had, I dare not venture to publish them: For however orthodox they may be while I am now writing, they may become criminal enough to bring me into trouble before midsummer. And indeed I have often wished for some time past, that a political Catechism might be published by authority four times a year, in order to instruct us how we are to speak, write, and act during the current quarter. I have by experience

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rience felt the want of such an instructor: For, intending to make my court to some people on the prevailing side, by advancing certain old whiggish principles, which, it seems, had been exploded about a month before, I have passed for a disaffected person. I am not ignorant how idle a thing it is, for a man in obscurity to attempt defending his reputation as a Writer, while the spirit of Faction hath so universally possessed the minds of men, that they are not at leisure to attend to any thing else. They will just give themselves time to libel and accuse me, but cannot spare a minute to hear my defence. So in a plot-discovering age, I have often known an innocent man seized and imprisoned, and forced to lie several months in chains, while the Ministers were not at leisure to hear his petition, until they had prosecuted and hanged the number they proposed.

All I can reasonably hope for by this letter, is to convince my friends, and others who are pleased to wish me well, that I have neither been so ill a Subject nor so stupid an Author, as I have been represented by the virulence of Libellers, whose malice hath taken the same train in both, by fathering dangerous Principles in government upon me, which I never maintained, and insipid Productions, which I am not capable of writing. For, however I
 may

may have been soured by personal ill treatment, or by melancholy prospects for the public, I am too much a politician to expose my own safety by offensive words. And, if my genius and spirit be sunk by encreasing years, I have at least enough discretion left, not to mistake the measure of my own abilities, by attempting subjects where those Talents are necessary, which perhaps I may have lost with my youth.

L E T T E R VI.

Dr. SWIFT to Mr. GAY.

Dublin, Jan. 8, 1722-3.

C O M I N G home after a short Christmas ramble, I found a letter upon my table, and little expected when I opened it to read your name at the bottom. The best and greatest part of my life, until these last eight years, I spent in England; there I made my friendships, and there I left my desires. I am condemned for ever to another country; what is in prudence to be done? I think, to be *oblitusque meorum, obliviscendus & illis*. What can be the design of your letter but malice, to wake me out of a scurvy sleep, which however is better
D than