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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

XII. To Dr. Swift. Character of some of his friends in England; with further invitations.

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Are you altogether a country gentleman? that I must address to you out of London, to the hazard of your losing this precious letter, which I will now conclude altho' so much paper is left. I have an ill Name, and therefore shall not subscribe it, but you will guess it comes from one who esteems and loves you about half as much as you deserve, I mean as much as he can.

I am in great concern, at what I am just told is in some of the news-papers, that Lord Bolingbroke is much hurt by a fall in hunting. I am glad he has so much Youth and vigour left (of which he hath not been thrifty) but I wonder he has no more Discretion.

LETTER XII.

Oct. 15, 1725.

I Am wonderfully pleas'd with the suddenness of your kind answer. It makes me hope you are coming towards us, and that you incline more and more to your old friends, in proportion as you draw nearer to them; and are getting into our Vortex. Here is One, who was once a powerful planet, but has now (after long experience of all that comes of shining) learned to be content, with returning to his
first

first point, without the thought or ambition of shining at all. Here is Another, who thinks one of the greatest glories of his Father was to have distinguish'd and loved you, and who loves you hereditarily. Here is Arbuthnot, recovered from the jaws of death, and more pleas'd with the hope of seeing you again, than of reviewing a world every part of which he has long despis'd, but what is made up of a few men like yourself. He goes abroad again, and is more chearful than even health can make a man, for he has a good conscience into the bargain (which is the most Catholic of all remedies, tho' not the most Universal.) I knew it would be a pleasure to you to hear this, and in truth that made me write so soon to you.

I'm sorry poor P. is not promoted in this age; for certainly if his reward be of the next, he is of all Poets the most miserable. I'm also sorry for another reason; if they don't promote him, they'll spoil the conclusion of one of my Satires, where, having endeavour'd to correct the Taste of the town in wit and criticism, I end thus,

*But what avails to lay down rules for sense?
In —'s Reign these fruitless lines were writ,
When Ambrose Philips was preferr'd for Wit!*

Our

Our friend Gay is used as the friends of Tories are by Whigs (and generally by Tories too.) Because he had humour, he was supposed to have dealt with Dr. Swift; in like manner as when any one had learning formerly, he was thought to have dealt with the Devil. He puts his whole trust at Court in that Lady whom I describ'd to you, and whom you take to be an allegorical creature of fancy: I wish she really were Riches for his sake; though as for yours, I question whether (if you knew her) you would change her for the other?

Lord Bolingbroke had not the least harm by his fall, I wish he had receiv'd no more by his other fall; Lord Oxford had none by his. But Lord Bolingbroke is the most improved Mind since you saw him, that ever was improved without shifting into a new body, or being: *paullo minus ab angelis*. I have often imagined to myself, that if ever all of us meet again, after so many varieties and changes, after so much of the old world and of the old man in each of us has been alter'd, that scarce a single thought of the one, any more than a single atome of the other, remains just the same; I've fancy'd, I say, that we should meet like the righteous in the Millennium, quite in peace, divested of all our former Passions, smiling at our past follies, and content to enjoy the kingdom of the
Just

Just in tranquillity. But I find you would rather be employ'd as an avenging Angel of wrath, to break your Vial of Indignation over the heads of the wretched creatures of this world; nay, would make them *Eat your Book*, which you have made (I doubt not) as bitter a pill for them as possible.

I won't tell you what designs I have in my head (besides writing a set of Maxims in opposition to all Rochefoucault's principles^a) till I see you here, face to face. Then you shall have no reason to complain of me, for want of a generous disdain of this world, though I have not lost my Ears in yours and their service. Lord Oxford too (whom I have now the third time mention'd in this Letter, and he deserves to be always mention'd in every thing that is address'd to you, or comes from you) expects you: That ought to be enough to bring you hither; 'tis a better reason than if the Nation expected you. For I really enter as fully as you can desire, into your principle of Love of Individuals: and I think the way to have a public spirit is first to have a private one; for who can believe (said a friend of mine) that any man

^a This was only said as an oblique reproof of the horrid misanthropy in the foregoing Letter; and which he supposed, might be chiefly occasioned by the Dean's fondness for *Rochefoucault*, whose *Maxims* are founded on the principle of an universal selfishness in human nature.

can

can care for a hundred thousand people, who never cared for one? No ill-humour'd man can ever be a Patriot, any more than a Friend.

I designed to have left the following page for Dr. Arbuthnot to fill, but he is so touch'd with the period in yours to me concerning him, that he intends to answer it by a whole letter. He too is busy about a book, which I guess he will tell you of. So adieu—what remains worth telling you? Dean Berkley is well, and happy in the prosecution of his Scheme. Lord Oxford and Lord Bolingbroke in health, Duke Disney so also; Sir William Wyndham better, Lord Bathurst well. These and some others, preserve their ancient honour and ancient friendship. Those who do neither, if they were d—d, what is it to a Protestant priest, who has nothing to do with the dead? I answer for my own part as a Papist, I would not pray them out of Purgatory.

My name is as bad an one as yours, and hated by all bad Poets, from Hopkins and Sternhold to Gildon and Cibber. The first pray'd against me with the Turk; and a modern Imitator of theirs (whom I leave you to find out) has added the Christian to 'em, with proper definitions of each in this manner,

*The Pope's the Whore of Babylon,
The Turk he is a Jew:
The Christian is an Infidel
That sitteth in a Pew.*

LETTER