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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

XIV. Expectations of Dr. Swift's journey to England. Character of low enemies and detractors; with what temper they are to be born. The amusements of his friends in England. - Lord B's postscript on ...

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FROM DR. SWIFT, etc. 65

Take care the bad Poets do not out-wit you, as they have served the good ones in every age, whom they have provok'd to transmit their names to posterity. Mœvius is as well known as Virgil, and Gildon will be as well known as you, if his name gets into your Verses: and as to the difference between good and bad fame, 'tis a perfect trifle. I ask a thousand pardons, and so leave you for this time, and will write again without concerning myself whether you write or no.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R X I V .

Decemb. 10, 1725.

I Find myself the better acquainted with you for a long Absence, as men are with themselves for a long Affliction: Absence does but hold off a Friend, to make one see him the more truly. I am infinitely more pleas'd to hear you are coming near us, than at any thing you seem to think in my favour; an opinion which has perhaps been aggrandized by the distance or dulness of Ireland, as objects look larger thro' a medium of Fogs: and yet I am infinitely pleas'd with that too. I am much the happier for finding (a better thing than our
F Wits)

Wits) our Judgments jump, in the notion that all Scriblers should be past by in silence. To vindicate one's self against such nasty slander, is much as wise as it was in your country-man, when the people imputed a stink to him, to prove the contrary by shewing his backside. So let Gildon and Philips rest in peace! what Virgil had to do with Mœvius, that he should wear him upon his sleeve to all eternity, I don't know. I've been the longer upon this, that I may prepare you for the reception both you and your works may possibly meet in England. We your true acquaintance will look upon you as a good man, and love you; others will look upon you as a Wit, and hate you. So you know the worst; unless you are as vindicative as Virgil, or the aforesaid Hibernian.

I wish as warmly as you for an Hospital in which to lodge the Despisers of the world; only I fear it would be fill'd wholly like Chelsea, with maimed Soldiers, and such as had been disabled in its service. I would rather have those, that, out of such generous principles as you and I, despise it, fly in its face, than retire from it. Not that I have much anger against the Great, my spleen is at the little rogues of it; it would vex one more to be knock'd on the head with a Piss-pot, than by a Thunder-bolt. As to great Oppressors, they are like
Kites

Kites or Eagles, one expects mischief from them; but to be squirted to death (as poor Whycherly said to me on his death-bed) by Apothecaries Apprentices, by the understrappers of under-secretaries to secretaries who were no secretaries—this wou'd provoke as dull a dog as Ph—s himself.

So much for enemies, now for friends. Mr. L— thinks all this indiscreet: the Dr. not so; he loves mischief the best of any good-natur'd man in England. Lord B. is above trifling: when he writes of any thing in this world, he is more than mortal; *if ever he trifles, it must be when he turns a Divine*. Gay is writing Tales for Prince William: I suppose Mr. Philips will take this very ill, for two reasons; one that he thinks all childish things belong to him, and the other because he'll take it ill to be taught that one may write things to a child without being childish. What have I more to add? but that Lord Oxford desires earnestly to see you: and that many others whom you do not think the worst of, will be gratified by it: none more, be assured, than Yours, &c.

P. S. Pope and you are very great Wits, and I think very indifferent Philosophers: If you despised the world as much as you pretend, and perhaps believe, you would not be so angry

with it. The founder of your sect, that noble Original whom you think it so great an honour to resemble^a, was a slave to the worst part of the world, to the Court; and all his big words were the language of a slighted Lover, who desired nothing so much as a reconciliation, and feared nothing so much as a rupture. I believe the world hath used me as scurvily as most people, and yet I could never find in my heart to be thoroughly angry with the simple, false, capricious thing. I should blush alike, to be discover'd fond of the world, or piqued at it. Your definition of *Animal Rationis capax*, instead of the common one *Animal Rationale*, will not bear examination: define but Reason, and you will see why your distinction is no better than that of the Pontiff *Cotta*; between *mala ratio*, and *bona ratio*. But enough of this: make us a visit, and I'll subscribe to any side of these important questions which you please. We differ less than you imagine, perhaps, when you wish'd me banish'd again: but I am not less true to you and to Philosophy in England, than I was in France.

Yours, &c. B.

^a Seneca.

L E T T E R