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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

Letter XXVII. Dr. Swift to Mr. Gay. On the refusal of that employment, and his quitting the Court. Of the Beggars Opera.

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FROM DR. SWIFT, etc. 99

as you will not much grieve to wear in that company. Adieu, and God bless you, and give you health and spirits,

*Whether thou chuse Cervantes' serious air,
Or laugh and shake in Rab'lais' easy chair,
Or in the graver Gown instruct mankind,
Or, silent, let thy morals tell thy mind.*

These two verses are over and above what I've said of you in the Poem. Adieu.

L E T T E R XXVII.

Dr. SWIFT to Mr. GAY.

Dublin, Nov. 23, 1727.

I Entirely approve your refusal of that employment, and your writing to the Queen. I am perfectly confident you have a keen enemy in the Ministry. God forgive him, but not till he puts himself in a state to be forgiven. Upon reasoning with myself, I should hope they are gone too far to discard you quite, and that they will give you something; which, although much less than they ought, will be (as far as it is worth) better circumstantiated: And since you already just live, a middling help will make you just tolerable. Your lateness in life (as you so soon call it) might be improper to begin the world with, but almost the eldest men

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may

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may hope to see changes in a Court. A Minister is always seventy: You are thirty years younger; and consider, Cromwel himself did not begin to appear till he was older than you. I beg you will be thrifty, and learn to value a shilling, which Dr. Birch said was a serious thing. Get a stronger fence about your 1000*l.* and throw the inner fence into the heap, and be advised by your Twickenham landlord and me about an annuity. You are the most refractory, honest, good-natur'd man I ever have known; I could argue out this paper — I am very glad your Opera is finished, and hope your friends will join the reader to make it succeed, because you are ill-used by others.

I have known Courts these thirty-six years, and know they differ; but in some things they are extremely constant: First, in the trite old maxim of a Minister's never forgiving those he hath injured; Secondly, in the insincerity of those who would be thought the best friends: Thirdly, in the love of fawning, cringing, and tale-bearing: Fourthly, in sacrificing those whom we really wish well, to a point of interest, or intrigue: Fifthly, in keeping every thing worth taking, for those who can do service or dis-service.

Now why does not Pope publish his dulness? the rogues he marks will die of themselves

selves in peace, and so will his friends, and so there will be neither punishment, nor reward. — Pray enquire how my Lord St. John does? there's no man's health in England I am more concerned about than his. — I wonder whether you begin to taste the pleasure of Independency? or whether you do not sometimes leer upon the Court, *oculo retorto*? Will you not think of an Annuity, when you are two years older, and have doubled your purchase-money? Have you dedicated your Opera, and got the usual dedication-fee of twenty guineas? How is the Doctor? does he not chide that you never called upon him for hints? Is my Lord Bolingbroke at the moment I am writing, a planter, a philosopher, or a writer? Is Mr. Pultney in expectation of a son, or my Lord Oxford of a new old Manuscript?

I bought your Opera to-day for sixpence, a cursed print. I find there is neither dedication nor preface, both which wants I approve; it is in the *grand gout*.

We are as full of it *pro modulo nostro* as London can be; continually acting, and houses cramm'd, and the Lord Lieutenant several times there laughing his heart out. I did not understand that the scene of Locket and Peachum's quarrel was an imitation of one between Brutus and Cassius, till I was told it.

I wish Mackheath, when he was going to be hang'd, had imitated Alexander the great when he was dying: I would have had his fellow-rogues desire his commands about a Successor, and he to answer, Let it be the most worthy, &c. We hear a million of stories about the Opera, of the applause at the song, *That was level'd at me*, when two great Ministers were in a box together, and all the world staring at them. I am heartily glad your Opera hath mended your purse, though perhaps it may spoil your court.

Will you desire my Lord Bolingbroke, Mr. Pultney, and Mr. Pope, to command you to buy an annuity with two thousand pounds? that you may laugh at courts, and bid Ministers —

Ever preserve some spice of the Alderman, and prepare against Age and Dulness, and Sickness, and Coldness or Death of Friends. A Whore has a resource left, that she can turn bawd; but an old decay'd Poet is a creature abandon'd, and at mercy, when he can find none. Get me likewise Polly's Meffo-tinto, Lord, how the school-boys at Westminster, and University-lads adore you at this juncture! Have you made as many men laugh, as Ministers can make weep?

I will

I will excuse Sir — the trouble of a letter: When Ambassadors came from Troy to condole with Tiberius upon the death of his Nephew, after two years; the Emperor answered, that he likewise condoled with them for the untimely death of Hector. I always loved and respected him very much, and do still as much as ever; and it is a return sufficient, if he pleases to accept the offers of my most humble service.

The Beggar's Opera hath knock'd down Gulliver; I hope to see Pope's Dulness knock down the Beggar's Opera, but not till it hath fully done its jobb.

To expose vice, and make people laugh with innocence, does more public service than all the Ministers of state from Adam to Walpole, and so adieu.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

Lord BOLINGBROKE to Dr. SWIFT.

POPE charges himself with this letter; he has been here two days, he is now hurrying to London, he will hurry back to Twickenham in two days more, and before the end of the week he will be, for ought I know, at

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Dublin.