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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

XLIV. Of the style of his Letters, of his condition of life, his past friendships, dislike of party-spirit, and thoughts of pensions and preferment.

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execution. This flatters his laziness, it flatters my judgment, who always thought that (universal as his talents are) this is eminently and peculiar his, above all the writers I know living or dead; I do not except Horace.

Adieu.

LETTER XLIV.

Nov. 28, 1729.

THIS letter (like all mine) will be a Rhapsody; it is many years ago since I wrote as a Wit^a. How many occurrences or informations must one omit, if one determin'd to say nothing that one could not say prettily? I lately receiv'd from the widow of one dead correspondent, and the father of another, several of my own letters of about fifteen and twenty years old; and it was not unentertaining to myself to observe, how and by what degrees I ceas'd to be a witty writer; as either my experience grew on the one hand, or my affection to my correspondents on the other. Now as I love you better than most I have ever met with in the world, and esteem you too the more, the longer I have compar'd you with the rest of the world; so inevitably I write to you more negligently, that is, more openly, and what

^a He us'd to value himself on this particular.

all

all but such as love one another will call writing worse. I smile to think how Curl would be bit, were our Epistles to fall into his hands, and how gloriously they would fall short of ev'ry ingenious reader's expectations?

You can't imagine what a vanity it is to me, to have something to rebuke you for in the way of Oeconomy. I love the man that builds a house *subito ingenio*, and makes a wall for a horse: then cries, "We wise men must think "of nothing but getting ready money." I am glad you approve my annuity; all we have in this world is no more than an annuity, as to our own enjoyment: but I will encrease your regard for my wisdom, and tell you, that this annuity includes also the life of another^b, whose concern ought to be as near me as my own, and with whom my whole prospects ought to finish. I throw my javelin of Hope no farther, *Cur brevi fortes jaculamur ævo—&c.*

The second (as it is called, but indeed the eighth) edition of the Dunciad, with some additional notes and epigrams, shall be sent you, if I know any opportunity; if they reprint it with you, let them by all means follow that octavo edition.—The Drapier's letters are again printed here, very laudably as to paper, print, &c. for you know I disapprove Irish politics, (as my Commentator tells you) being a strong

^b His Mother's,

and

and jealous subject of England. The Lady you mention, you ought not to complain of for not acknowledging your present; she having lately receiv'd a much richer present from Mr. Knight of the S. Sea; and you are sensible she cannot ever return it to one in the condition of an outlaw. It's certain, as he can never expect any favour^c, his motive must be wholly disinterested. Will not this Reflection make you blush? Your continual deplorings of Ireland, make me wish you were here long enough to forget those scenes that so afflict you: I am only in fear if you were, you would grow such a patriot here too, as not to be quite at ease, for your love of old England.—It is very possible, your journey, in the time I compute, might exactly tally with my intended one to you; and if you must soon again go back, you would not be un-attended. For the poor woman decays perceptibly every week; and the winter may too probably put an end to a very long, and a very irreproachable life. My constant attendance on her does indeed affect my mind very much, and lessen extremely my desires of long life; since I see the best that can come of it is a miserable benediction. I look upon myself to be many years older in two years since you

^c He was mistaken in this. Mr. Knight was pardoned, and came home in the year 1742.

saw

saw me: The natural imbecillity of my body,
 join'd now to this acquir'd old age of the mind,
 makes me at least as old as you, and we are the
 fitter to crawl down the hill together: I only
 desire I may be able to keep pace with you.
 My first friendship at sixteen, was contracted
 with a man of seventy, and I found him not
 grave enough or consistent enough for me, tho'
 we lived well to his death. I speak of old Mr.
 Wycherly; some letters of whom (by the by)
 and of mine, the Booksellers have got and
 printed, not without the concurrence of a no-
 ble friend of mine and yours^d. I don't much
 approve of it; tho' there is nothing for me to
 be ashamed of, because I will not be ashamed
 of any thing I do not do myself, or of any
 thing that is not immoral but merely dull (as
 for instance, if they printed this letter I am
 now writing, which they easily may, if the un-
 derlings at the Post-office please to take a copy
 of it.) I admire on this consideration, your send-
 ing your last to me quite open, without a seal,
 wafer, or any closure whatever, manifesting the
 utter openness of the writer. I would do the
 same by this, but fear it would look like affec-
 tation to send two letters so together.—I will
 fully represent to our friend (and, I doubt not, it

^d See the occasion, in the | of the Preface to the first
 second and third Paragraphs | Volume of Letters. P.

will

will touch his heart) what you so feelingly set forth as to the badness of your Burgundy, &c. He is an extreme honest man, and indeed ought to be so, considering how very indiscreet and unreserved he is : But I do not approve this part of his character, and will never join with him in any of his idleneffes in the way of wit. You know my maxim to keep as clear of all offence, as I am clear of all interest in either party. I was once displeas'd before at you, for complaining to Mr. * of my not having a pension, and am so again at your naming it to a certain Lord. I have given proof in the course of my whole life, (from the time when I was in the friendship of Lord Bolingbroke and Mr. Craggs, even to this when I am civilly treated by Sir R. Walpole) that I never thought myself so warm in any Party's cause as to deserve their money ; and therefore would never have accepted it : But give me leave to tell you, that of all mankind the two persons I would least have accepted any favour from, are those very two, to whom you have unluckily spoken of it. I desire you to take off any impressions which that dialogue may have left on his Lordship's mind, as if I ever had any thought of being beholden to him, or any other, in that way. And yet, you know I am no enemy to the present Constitution ; I believe, as sincere a well-wisher to it, nay, even
to

to the church establish'd, as any Minister in, or out of employment whatever ; or any Bishop of England or Ireland. Yet am I of the Religion of Erasmus, a Catholic ; so I live, so I shall die ; and hope one day to meet you, Bishop Atterbury, the younger Craggs, Dr. Garth, Dean Berkeley, and Mr. Hutchenon, in that place, To which God of his infinite mercy bring us, and every body !

Lord B's answer to your letter I have just receiv'd, and join it to this packet. The work he speaks of with such abundant partiality, is a system of Ethics in the Horatian way.

L E T T E R XLV.

April 14, 1730.

THIS is a letter extraordinary, to do and say nothing but recommend to you (as a Clergyman, and a charitable one) a pious and a good work, and for a good and an honest man : Moreover he is above seventy, and poor, which you might think included in the word honest. I shall think it a kindness done myself ; if you can propagate Mr. Westley's subscription for his Commentary on Job, among your Divines, (Bishops excepted, of whom there is no hope) and among such as are believers, or readers, of Scripture. Even the curious