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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 I. To Dr. Swift. Retired from Court some months before the Queen's Death.

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LETTERS

TO AND FROM

Dr. JONATHAN SWIFT, etc.

From the Year 1714 to 1737.

LETTER I.

Mr. POPE to Dr. SWIFT.

June 18, 1714.

WHATEVER Apologies it might become me to make at any other time for writing to you, I shall use none now, to a man who has own'd himself as splenetic as a Cat in the Country. In that circumstance, I know by experience a letter is a very useful, as well as amusing thing: If you are too busied in State affairs to read it, yet you may find entertainment in folding it into divers figures, either doubling it into a pyramidal, or twisting it into a serpentine form:

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or,

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or, if your disposition should not be so mathematical, in taking it with you to that place where men of studious minds are apt to sit longer than ordinary; where, after an abrupt division of the paper, it may not be unpleasant to try to fit and rejoin the broken lines together. All these amusements I am no stranger to in the Country, and doubt not but (by this time) you begin to relish them, in your present contemplative situation.

I remember a man, who was thought to have some knowledge in the world, used to affirm, that no people in town ever complained they were forgotten by their Friends in the country: but my encreasing experience convinces me he was mistaken, for I find a great many here grievously complaining of you, upon this score. I am told further, that you treat the few you correspond with in a very arrogant style, and tell them you admire at their insolence in disturbing your meditations, or even enquiring of your^a retreat: but this I will not positively assert, because I never received any such insulting Epistle from you. My Lord Oxford says you have not written

^a Some time before the Death of Queen *Anne*, when her Ministers were quarrelling, and the Dean could not reconcile them, he retired to a Friend's House in Berkshire, and never saw them after. S.

to him once since you went: but this perhaps may be only policy, in him or you: and I, who am half a Whig, must not entirely credit any thing he affirms. At Button's it is reported you are gone to Hanover, and that Gay goes only on an Embassy to you. Others apprehend some dangerous State treatise from your retirement; and a Wit, who affects to imitate Balsac, says, that the Ministry now are like those Heathens of old, who received their Oracles from the Woods. The Gentlemen of the Roman Catholic persuasion are not unwilling to credit me, when I whisper, that you are gone to meet some Jesuits commissioned from the Court of Rome, in order to settle the most convenient methods to be taken for the coming of the Pretender. Dr. Arbuthnot is singular in his opinion, and imagines your only design is to attend at full leisure to the life and adventures of Scriblerus^b. This indeed must be granted of greater importance than all the rest;

^b This project (in which the principal persons engaged were Dr. Arbuthnot, Dr. Swift, and Mr. Pope) was a very noble one. It was to write a complete satire in prose upon the abuses in every branch of science, comprised in the history of the

life and writings of Scriblerus; of which only some detached parts and fragments were done, such as the *Memoirs of Scriblerus*, the *Travels of Gulliver*, the *Treatise of the Profund*, the *literal Criticisms on Virgil*, &c.

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and I wish I could promise so well of you. The top of my own ambition is to contribute to that great work, and I shall translate Homer by the by. Mr. Gay has acquainted you what progress I have made in it. I can't name Mr. Gay, without all the acknowledgments which I shall ever owe you, on his account. If I writ this in verse, I would tell you, you are like the sun, and while men imagine you to be retir'd or absent, are hourly exerting your indulgence, and bringing things to maturity for their advantage. Of all the world, you are the man (without flattery) who serve your friends with the least ostentation; it is almost ingratitude to thank you, considering your temper; and this is the period of all my letter which I fear you will think the most impertinent. I am with the truest affection,

Your's, &c.

L E T T E R