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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

LVI. Mr. Gay to Dr. Swift. His account of himself: his last fables: His œconomy - Postscript by Mr. Pope, of their common ailments, and œconomy; and against party-spirit in writing.

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LETTER LVI.

Mr. GAY to Dr. SWIFT.

Decemb. 1, 1731.

YOU us'd to complain that Mr. Pope and I would not let you speak: you may now be even with me, and take it out in writing. If you don't send to me now and then, the post-office will think me of no consequence, for I have no correspondent but you. You may keep as far from us as you please, you cannot be forgotten by those who ever knew you, and therefore please me by sometimes shewing that I am not forgot by you. I have nothing to take me off from my friendship to you: I seek no new acquaintance, and court no favour; I spend no shillings in coaches or chairs to levees or great visits, and, as I don't want the assistance of some that I formerly convers'd with, I will not so much as seem to seek to be a dependant. As to my studies, I have not been entirely idle, though I cannot say that I have yet perfected any thing. What I have done is something in the way of those fables I have already publish'd. All the money I get is by saving, so that by habit there may be some hopes (if I grow richer) of my becoming a miser. All

misers have their excuses; the motive to my parsimony is independance. If I were to be represented by the Duchess (she is such a downright niggard for me) this character might not be allow'd me; but I really think I am covetous enough for any who lives at the court-end of the town, and who is as poor as myself: for I don't pretend that I am equally saving with S—k. Mr. Lewis desired you might be told that he hath five pounds of yours in his hands, which he fancies you may have forgot, for he will hardly allow that a Verse-man can have a just knowledge of his own affairs. When you got rid of your law-suit, I was in hopes that you had got your own, and was free from every vexation of the law; but Mr. Pope tells me you are not entirely out of your perplexity, though you have the security now in your own possession; but still your case is not so bad as Captain Gulliver's, who was ruined by having a decree for him with costs. I have had an injunction for me against pirating-bookfellers, which I am sure to get nothing by, and will, I fear, in the end drain me of some money. When I began this prosecution, I fancy'd there would be some end of it; but the law still goes on, and 'tis probable I shall some time or other see an Attorney's bill as long as the Book. Poor Duke Disney is dead, and hath left what he
had

had among his friends, among whom are Lord Bolingbroke 500 *l.* Mr. Pelham 500 *l.* Sir William Wyndham's youngest son, 500 *l.* Gen. Hill, 500 *l.* Lord Massam's son, 500.

You have the good wishes of those I converse with; they know they gratify me, when they remember you; but I really think they do it purely for your own sake. I am satisfied with the love and friendship of good men, and envy not the demerits of those who are most conspicuously distinguish'd. Therefore as I set a just value upon your friendship, you cannot please me more than letting me now and then know that you remember me (the only satisfaction of distant friends!)

P. S. Mr. Gay's is a good letter, mine will be a very dull one; and yet what you will think the worst of it, is what should be its excuse, that I write in a head-ach that has lasted three days. I am never ill but I think of your ailments, and repine that they mutually hinder our being together: tho' in one point I am apt to differ from you, for you shun your friends when you are in those circumstances, and I desire them; your way is the more generous, mine the more tender. Lady—took your letter very kindly, for I had prepared her to expect no answer under a twelve-month; but kindness perhaps is

a word not applicable to courtiers. However she is an extraordinary woman there, who will do you common justice. For God's sake why all this scruple about Lord B——'s keeping your horses, who has a park; or about my keeping you on a pint of wine a day? We are infinitely richer than you imagine; John Gay shall help me to entertain you, tho' you come like King Lear with fifty knights—Tho' such prospects as I wish, cannot now be formed for fixing you with us, time may provide better before you part again: the old Lord may die, the benefice may drop, or, at worst, you may carry me into Ireland. You will see a work of Lord B——'s and one of mine; which, with a just neglect of the present age, consult only posterity; and, with a noble scorn of politics, aspire to philosophy. I am glad you resolve to meddle no more with the low concerns and interests of Parties, even of Countries (for Countries are but larger parties) *Quid verum atque decens, curare, et rogare, nostrum sit.* I am much pleased with your design upon Rochefoucault's maxim, pray finish it^a. I am happy whenever you join our names together: so would Dr. Arbuthnot be, but at this time he can be pleas'd with nothing: for his darling son is dying in

^a The Poem on his own death, formed upon a maxim of Rochefoucault.

all probability, by the melancholy account I received this morning.

The paper you ask me about is of little value. It might have been a seasonable satire upon the scandalous language and passion with which men of condition have stoop'd to treat one another: surely they sacrifice too much to the people, when they sacrifice their own characters, families, &c. to the diversion of that rabble of readers. I agree with you in my contempt of most popularity, fame, &c. even as a writer I am cool in it, and whenever you see what I am now writing, you'll be convinced I would please but a few, and (if I could) make mankind less Admirers, and greater Reasoners^b. I study much more to render my own portion of Being easy, and to keep this peevish frame of the human body in good humour. Infirmities have not quite unmann'd me, and it will delight you to hear they are not increas'd, tho' not diminish'd. I thank God, I do not very much want people to attend me, tho' my Mother now cannot. When I am sick, I lie down; when I am better, I rise up: I am used to the head-ach, &c. If greater pains arrive,

^b The Poem he means is the *Essay on Man*. But he could never compass his Purpose; His readers would in spite of him *admire* his poetry, and would not understand his *reasoning*.

(such

(such as my late rheumatism) the servants bathe and plaster me, or the surgeon scarifies me, and I bear it, because I must. This is the evil of Nature, not of Fortune. I am just now as well as when you was here: I pray God you were no worse. I sincerely wish my life were past near you, and, such as it is, I would not repine at it.—All you mention remember you, and wish you here.

LETTER LVII.

Dr. SWIFT to Mr. GAY.

Dublin, May 4, 1732.

I Am now as lame as when you writ your letter, and almost as lame as your letter itself, for want of that limb from my Lady Duchefs, which you promis'd, and without which I wonder how it could limp hither. I am not in a condition to make a true step even on Aimsbury Downs, and I declare that a corporeal false step is worse than a political one; nay worse than a thousand political ones, for which I appeal to Courts and Ministers, who hobble on and prosper, without the sense of feeling. To talk of riding and walking is insulting me, for I can as soon fly as do either. It is your pride
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