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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

LVII. From Dr. Swift to Mr. Gay. Congratulation on Mr. Gay's leaving the Court; Lord Cornbury's refusal of a pension: Character of Mr. Gay.

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(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
or

or laziness, more than chair-hire, that makes the town expensive. No honour is lost by walking in the dark; and in the day, you may beckon a black-guard-boy under a gate, near your visiting place, (*experto crede*) save eleven pence, and get half a crown's worth of health. The worst of my present misfortune is, that I eat and drink, and can digest neither for want of exercise; and, to encrease my misery, the knaves are sure to find me at home, and make huge void spaces in my cellars. I congratulate with you, for losing your Great acquaintance; in such a case, philosophy teaches that we must submit, and be content with Good ones. I like Lord Cornbury's refusing his pension, but I demur at his being elected for Oxford; which, I conceive, is wholly changed; and entirely devoted to new principles; so it appeared to me the two last times I was there.

I find by the whole cast of your letter, that you are as giddy and as volatile as ever, just the reverse of Mr. Pope, who hath always loved a domestic life from his youth. I was going to wish you had some little place that you could call your own, but, I profess, I do not know you well enough to contrive any one system of life that would please you. You pretend to preach up riding and walking to the Dutchess, yet, from my knowledge of you after twenty years, you
always

always joined a violent desire of perpetually shifting places and company, with a rooted laziness, and an utter impatience of fatigue. A coach and six horses is the utmost exercise you can bear, and this only when you can fill it with such company as is best suited to your taste, and how glad would you be if it could waft you in the air to avoid jolting? while I, who am so much later in life, can, or at least could, ride 500 miles on a trotting horse. You mortally hate writing, only because it is the thing you chiefly ought to do; as well to keep up the vogue you have in the world, as to make you easy in your fortune: You are merciful to every thing but money, your best friend, whom you treat with inhumanity. Be assured, I will hire people to watch all your motions, and to return me a faithful account. Tell me, have you cured your Absence of mind? can you attend to trifles? can you at Aimsbury write domestic libels to divert the family and neighbouring squires for five miles round? or venture so far on horseback, without apprehending a stumble at every step? can you set the foot-men a laughing as they wait at dinner? and do the Duchefs's women admire your wit? in what esteem are you with the Vicar of the parish? can you play with him at back-gammon? have the farmers found out that you cannot

not

not distinguish rye from barley, or an oak from a crab-tree? You are sensible that I know the full extent of your country skill is in fishing for Roaches, or Gudgeons at the highest.

I love to do you good offices with your friends, and therefore desire you will show this letter to the Duchess, to improve her Grace's good opinion of your qualifications, and convince her how useful you are like to be in the family. Her Grace shall have the honour of my correspondence again when she goes to Aimsbury. Hear a piece of Irish news, I buried the famous General Meredyth's father last night in my Cathedral, he was ninety-six years old: so that Mrs. Pope may live seven years longer. You saw Mr. Pope in health, pray is he generally more healthy than when I was amongst you? I would know how your own health is, and how much wine you drink in a day? My stint in company is a pint at noon, and half as much at night, but I often dine at home like a hermit, and then I drink little or none at all. Yet I differ from you, for I would have society, if I could get what I like, people of middle understanding, and middle rank. Adieu.

LETTER