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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

LIX. From the same to Mr. Gay, and a postscript to the Duchess, on various subjects.

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LETTER LIX.

Dublin, Aug. 12, 1732.

I Know not what to say to the account of your stewardship, and it is monstrous to me that the South-sea should pay half their debts at one clap. But I will send for the money when you put me into the way, for I shall want it here, my affairs being in a bad condition by the miseries of the kingdom, and my own private fortune being wholly embroiled, and worse than ever; so that I shall soon petition the Dukes, as an object of charity, to lend me three or four thousand pounds to keep up my dignity. My one hundred pound will buy me six hogsheds of wine, which will support me a year; *provisæ frugis in annum Copia*. Horace desired no more; for I will construe *frugis* to be wine. You are young enough to get some lucky hint, which must come by chance, and it shall be a thing of importance, *quod & hunc in annum vivat & in plures*, and you shall not finish it in haste, and it shall be diverting, and usefully satirical, and the Dukes shall be your critic; and betwixt you and me, I do not find she will grow weary of you till this time seven years. I had lately an offer

to change for an English living, which is just too short by 300*l.* a year: and that must be made up out of the Duchess's pin-money before I can consent. I want to be Minister of Aimsbury, Dawley, Twickenham, Riskins, and Prebendary of Westminster, else I will not stir a step, but content myself with making the Duchess miserable three months next summer. But I keep ill company: I mean the Duchess and you, who are both out of favour; and so I find am I, by a few verses wherein Pope and you have your parts. You hear Dr. D——y has got a wife with 1600*l.* a year; I, who am his governor, cannot take one under two thousand; I wish you would enquire of such a one in your neighbourhood. See what it is to write godly books! I profess I envy you above all men in England; you want nothing but three thousand pounds more, to keep you in plenty when your friends grow weary of you: To prevent which last evil at Aimsbury, you must learn to domineer and be peevish, to find fault with their victuals and drink, to chide and direct the servants, with some other lessons, which I shall teach you, and always practised myself with success. I believe I formerly desired to know whether the Vicar of Aimsbury can play at back-gammon? pray ask him the question, and give him my service.

To the Duchess.

Madam,

I was the most unwary creature in the world, when, against my old maxims, I writ first to you upon your return to Tunbridge. I beg that this condescension of mine may go no farther, and that you will not pretend to make a precedent of it. I never knew any man cured of any Inattention, although the pretended causes were removed. When I was with Mr. Gay last in London, talking with him on some poetical subjects, he would answer; "Well, I am determined not to accept the employment of Gentleman-usher:" and of the same disposition were all my poetical friends, and if you cannot cure him, I utterly despair. — As to yourself, I will say to you (though comparisons be odious) what I said to the —, that your quality should be never any motive of esteem to me: My compliment was then lost, but it will not be so to you. For I know you more by any one of your letters than I could by six months conversing. Your pen is always more natural and sincere and unaffected than your tongue; in writing you are too lazy to give yourself the trouble of acting a part, and have indeed acted so indiscreetly that I have you at mercy; and although you should arrive to such
a height

a height of immorality as to deny your hand, yet, whenever I produce it, the world will unite in swearing this must come from you only.

I will answer your question. Mr. Gay is not discreet enough to live alone, but he is too discreet to live alone; and yet (unless you mend him) he will live alone even in your Grace's company. Your quarrelling with each other upon the subject of bread and butter, is the most usual thing in the world; Parliaments, Courts, Cities, and Kingdoms quarrel for no other cause; from hence, and from hence only arise all the quarrels between Whig and Tory; between those who are in the Ministry, and those who are out; between all pretenders to employment in the Church, the Law, and the Army: even the common proverb teaches you this, when we say, It is none of my bread and butter, meaning it is no business of mine: Therefore I despair of any reconciliation between you till the affair of bread and butter be adjusted, wherein I would gladly be a mediator. If Mahomet should come to the mountain, how happy would an excellent lady be, who lives a few miles from this town? As I was telling of Mr. Gay's way of living at Aimsbury, she offer'd fifty guineas to have you both at her house for one hour over a bottle of Burgundy, which we were then drinking. To

your question I answer, that your Grace should pull me by the sleeve till you tore it off, and when you said you were weary of me, I would pretend to be deaf, and think (according to another proverb) that you tore my cloaths to keep me from going. I never will believe one word you say of my Lord Duke, unless I see three or four lines in his own hand at the bottom of yours. I have a concern in the whole family, and Mr. Gay must give me a particular account of every branch, for I am not ashamed of you tho' you be Duke and Duchefs, tho' I have been of others who are, &c. and I do not doubt but even your own servants love you, even down to your postilions; and when I come to Aimsbury, before I see your Grace I will have an hour's conversation with the Vicar, who will tell me how familiarly you talk to Goody Dobson and all the neighbours, as if you were their equal, and that you were god-mother to her son Jacky.

I am, and shall be ever, with the greatest respect, your Grace's most obedient, &c.

LETTER