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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

LXVI. From Dr. Swift. Of the paper called The Life and character of Dr. Swift. Of Mr. Gay, and the care of his papers. Of a libel against Mr. Pope. Of the edition of the Dean's works in Ireland, how ...

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LETTER LXVI.

TO MR. POPE.

Dublin, May 1, 1733.

I Answer your Letter the sooner because I have a particular reason for doing so. Some weeks ago came over a Poem call'd, *The Life and Character of Dr. S. written by himself*. It was reprinted here, and is dedicated to you. It is grounded upon a Maxim in Rochefoucault, and the dedication, after a formal story, says, that my manner of writing is to be found in every line. I believe I have told you, that I writ a year or two ago near five hundred lines upon the same Maxim in Rochefoucault, and was a long time about it, as that Impostor says in his Dedication, with many circumstances, all pure invention. I desire you to believe, and to tell my friends, that in this spurious piece there is not a single line, or bit of a line, or thought, any way resembling the genuine Copy, any more than it does Virgil's *Æneis*; for I never gave a Copy of mine, nor lent it out of my sight. And although I shew'd it to all common acquaintance indifferently, and some of them (especially one or two females) had got many lines by heart, here and there, and repeated them

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them often; yet it happens that not one single line, or thought is contained in this Imposture, although it appears that they who counterfeited me, had heard of the true one. But even this trick shall not provoke me to print the true one, which indeed is not proper to be seen, till I can be seen no more: I therefore desire you will undeceive my friends, and I will order an Advertisement to be printed here, and transmit it to England, that every body may know the delusion, and acquit me, as, I am sure, you must have done yourself, if you have read any part of it, which is mean, and trivial, and full of that Cant that I most despise: I would sink to be a Vicar in Norfolk rather than be charged with such a performance. Now I come to your letter.

When I was of your age, I thought every day of death, but now every minute; and a continual giddy disorder more or less is a greater addition than that of my years. I cannot affirm that I pity our friend Gay, but I pity his friends, I pity you, and would at least equally pity myself, if I liv'd amongst you; because I should have seen him oftner than you did, who are a kind of Hermit, how great a noise soever you make by your Ill nature in not letting the honest Villains of the times enjoy themselves in this world, which is their only happiness, and
terrifying

terrifying them with another. I should have added in my libel, that of all men living you are the most happy in your Enemies and your Friends: and I will swear you have fifty times more Charity for mankind than I could ever pretend to. Whether the production you mention came from the Lady or the Lord, I did not imagine that they were at least so bad versifiers. Therefore, *facit indignatio versus*, is only to be apply'd when the indignation is against general Villainy, and never operates when some sort of people write to defend themselves. I love to hear them reproach you for dulness; only I would be satisfy'd, since you are so dull, why are they so angry? Give me a shilling, and I will ensure you, that posterity shall never know you had one single enemy, excepting those whose memory you have preserv'd.

I am sorry for the situation of Mr. Gay's papers. You do not exert yourself as much as I could wish in this affair. I had rather the two sisters were hang'd than see his works swell'd by any loss of credit to his memory. I would be glad to see the most valuable printed by themselves, those which ought not to be seen burn'd immediately, and the others that have gone abroad, printed separately like opuscula, or rather be stifled and forgotten. I thought your Epitaph was immediately to be engrav'd,

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and therefore I made less scruple to give a Copy to Lord Orrery, who earnestly desir'd it, but to no body else; and, he tells me, he gave only two, which he will recall. I have a short Epigram of his upon it, wherein I would correct a line, or two at most, and then I will send it you (with his permission.) I have nothing against yours, but the last line, *Striking their acting*; the two participles, as they are so near, seem to sound too like. I shall write to the Duchess, who hath lately honoured me with a very friendly letter, and I will tell her my opinion freely about our friend's papers. I want health, and my affairs are enlarged: but I will break through the latter, if the other mends. I can use a course of medicines, lame and giddy. My chief design, next to seeing you, is to be a severe Critic on you and your neighbour; but first kill his father, that he may be able to maintain me in my own way of living, and particularly my horses. It cost me near 600*l.* for a wall to keep mine, and I never ride without two servants for fear of accidents; *hic vivimus ambitiosa paupertate*. You are both too poor for my acquaintance, but he much the poorer. With you I will find grass, and wine, and servants, but with him not.—The Collection you speak of is this. A Printer came to me to desire he might print my works (as he call'd them) in
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four volumes, by subscription. I said I would give no leave, and should be sorry to see them printed here. He said they could not be printed in London. I answer'd, they could, if the Partners agreed. He said he " would be glad of
 " my permission, but as he could print them
 " without it, and was advis'd that it could do
 " me no harm, and having been assur'd of nu-
 " merous subscriptions, he hoped I would not be
 " angry at his pursuing his own interest, &c." Much of this discourse past, and he goes on with the matter, wherein I determine not to intermeddle, though it be much to my discontent; and I wish it could be done in England, rather than here, although I am grown pretty indifferent in every thing of that kind. This is the truth of the story.

My Vanity turns at present on being personated in your *Quæ Virtus*, &c. You will observe in this letter many marks of an ill head and a low spirit; but a Heart wholly turned to love you with the greatest Earnestness and Truth.

L E T T E R LXVII.

May 28, 1733.

I Have begun two or three letters to you by snatches, and been prevented from finishing them by a thousand avocations and dissipations.

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