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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

LXXXIII. From Dr. Swift. Of old age, and death of friends. More of the Ethic Epistles.

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LETTER LXXXIII.

From Dr. SWIFT.

Decemb. 2, 1736.

I Think you owe me a letter, but whether you do or not, I have not been in a condition to write. Years and Infirmities have quite broke me; I mean that odious continual disorder in my head. I neither read, nor write, nor remember, nor converse. All I have left is to walk and ride; the first I can do tolerably; but the latter, for want of good weather at this season, is seldom in my power; and having not an ounce of flesh about me, my skin comes off in ten miles riding, because my skin and bone cannot agree together. But I am angry, because you will not suppose me as sick as I am, and write to me out of perfect charity, although I should not be able to answer. I have too many vexations by my station and the impertinence of people, to be able to bear the mortification of not hearing from a very few distant friends that are left; and, considering how time and fortune have ordered matters, I have hardly one friend left but yourself. What Horace says, *Singula de nobis anni prædantur*, I feel every month, at farthest; and by this computation, if I hold

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out two years, I shall think it a miracle. My comfort is, you begun to distinguish so confounded early, that your acquaintance with distinguish'd men of all kinds was almost as antient as mine. I mean Wycherly, Row, Prior, Congreve, Addison, Parnel, &c. and in spite of your heart, you have owned me a Cotemporary. Not to mention Lords Oxford, Bolingbroke, Harcourt, Peterborow: In short, I was t'other day recollecting twenty-seven great Ministers, or Men of Wit and Learning, who are all dead, and all of my acquaintance, within twenty years past; neither have I the grace to be sorry, that the present times are drawn to the dregs as well as my own life.—May my friends be happy in this and a better life, but I value not what becomes of Posterity when I consider from what Monsters they are to spring.—My Lord Orrery writes to you to-morrow, and you see I send this under his cover, or at least franked by him. He has 3000*l.* a year about Cork, and the neighbourhood, and has more than three years rent unpaid; This is our condition, in these blessed times. I writ to your neighbour about a month ago, and subscribed my name: I fear he hath not received my letter, and wish you would ask him; but perhaps he is still a rambling; for we hear of him at Newmarket, and that Boerhaave hath restored his health.—How
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my services are lessened of late with the number of my friends on your side! yet, my Lord Bathurst and Lord Masham and Mr. Lewis remain, and being your acquaintance I desire when you see them to deliver my compliments; but chiefly to Mrs. P. B. and let me know whether she be as young and agreeable as when I saw her last? Have you got a supply of new friends to make up for those who are gone? and are they equal to the first? I am afraid it is with friends as with times; and that the *laudator temporis acti se puero*, is equally applicable to both. I am less grieved for living here, because it is a perfect retirement, and consequently fittest for those who are grown good for nothing: for this town and kingdom are as much out of the world as North-Wales—My head is so ill that I cannot write a paper full as I used to do; and yet I will not forgive a blank of half an inch from you.—I had reason to expect from some of your letters, that we were to hope for more Epistles of Morality; and, I assure you, my acquaintance resent that they have not seen my name at the head of one. The subjects of such Epistles are more useful to the public, by your manner of handling them, than any of all your writings; and although, in so profligate a world as ours, they may possibly not much mend our manners, yet posterity will enjoy the benefit, when-

ever a Court happens to have the least relish for
Virtue and Religion.

L E T T E R. LXXXIV.

To Dr. SWIFT.

Decemb. 30, 1736.

YOUR very kind letter has made me more melancholy, than almost any thing in this world now can do. For I can bear every thing in it, bad as it is, better than the complaints of my friends. Tho' others tell me you are in pretty good health, and in good spirits, I find the contrary when you open your mind to me: And indeed it is but a prudent part, to seem not so concern'd about others, nor so crazy ourselves as we really are: for we shall neither be beloved nor esteem'd the more, by our common acquaintance, for any affliction or any infirmity. But to our true friend we may, we must complain, of what ('tis a thousand to one) he complains with us; for if we have known him long, he is old, and if he has known the world long, he is out of humour at it. If you have but as much more health than others at your age, as you have more wit and good temper, you shall not have much of my Pity: But if you ever live
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