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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

XC. Of a new edition of his letters, and the use of them.

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LETTER XC.

Mr. POPE to Mr. ALLEN.

Southampton, June 5, 1736.

I Need not say I thank you for a Letter, which proves so much friendship for me. I have much more to say upon it than I can, till we meet. But, in a word, I think your notion of the value of those things ^a is greatly too high, as to any service they can do to the public; and, as to any advantage they may do to my own Character, I ought to be content with what they have done already. I assure you, I do not think it the least of those advantages that they have occasioned me the good-will (in so great a degree) of so worthy a man ^b. I fear (as I must rather retrench than add to their number, unless I would publish my own commendations) that the common run of Subscribers would think themselves injured by not having every thing, which discretion must suppress; and this, they (without any other consideration than as buyers of a book) would call giving them an imperfect collection; whereas the only use to my own character, as

^a His Letters.

^b Mr. Allen's friendship with the Author was contracted on the sight of his

Letters, which gave the former the highest opinion of the other's general benevolence and goodness of heart.

an Author, of such a publication, would be the suppression of many things: and as to my character as a Man, it would be but just where it is; unless I could be so vain, for it could not be virtuous, to add more and more honest sentiments; which, when done *to be printed*, would surely be wrong and weak also.

I do grant it would be some pleasure to me to expunge several idle passages, which will otherwise, if not go down to the next age, pass, at least, in this, for mine; altho' many of them were not, and, God knows, none of them are my present sentiments, but, on the contrary, wholly disapproved by me.

And I do not flatter you when I say, that pleasure would be increased to me, in knowing I should do what would please *you*. But I cannot persuade myself to let the whole burden, even tho' it were a public good, lie upon you, much less to serve my private fame entirely at another's expence^c.

But, understand me rightly: Did I believe half so well of them as you do, I would not scruple your assistance; because I am sure, that to occasion you to contribute to a real good would be the greatest benefit I could oblige you in. And I hereby promise you, if ever I

^c Mr. A. offered to print the Letters at his own expence.

am so happy as to find any just occasion where your generosity and goodness may unite for such a worthy end, I will not scruple to draw upon you for any sum to effect it.

As to the present affair ; that you may be convinced what weight your opinion and your desires have with me, I will do what I have not yet done : I will tell my Friends I am as willing to publish this book as to let it alone. And, rather than suffer you to be taxed at your own rate, will publish, in the News, next winter, the Proposals, &c.

I tell you all these particulars to shew you how willing I am to follow your advice, nay, to accept your assistance in any moderate degree. But I think you should reserve so great a proof of your benevolence to a better occasion.

Since I wrote last, I have found, on further inquiry, that there is another fine picture on the subject of Scipio and the Captive, by Pietro da Cortona, which Sir Paul Methuen has a sketch of : and, I believe, is more expressive than that of Ricci, as Pietro is famous for expression. I have also met with a fine Print of the discovery of Joseph to his Brethren, a design, which, I fancy, is of La Sueur, and will do perfectly well.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R