



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 Second of his Letters

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

Letter XXIII. The author's last letter to the Bishop of Rochester.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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FROM DR. ATTERBURY. 131

my most lively, and in my most thoughtful hours, I shall equally bear about me, the impressions of you: And perhaps it will not be in This life only, that I shall have cause to remember and acknowledge the friendship of the Bishop of Rochester.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

To the same.

May, 1723.

ONCE more I write to you, as I promis'd, and this once, I fear, will be the last! the Curtain will soon be drawn between my friend and me, and nothing left but to wish you a long good-night. May you enjoy a state of repose in this life, not unlike that sleep of the soul which some have believ'd is to succeed it, where we lye utterly forgetful of that world from which we are gone, and ripening for that to which we are to go. If you retain any memory of the past, let it only image to you what has pleas'd you best; sometimes present a dream of an absent friend, or bring you back an agreeable conversation. But upon the whole, I hope you will think less of the time past than of the

future; as the former has been less kind to you than the latter infallibly will be. Do not envy the world your Studies; they will tend to the benefit of men against whom you can have no complaint, I mean of all Posterity; and perhaps, at your time of life, nothing else is worth your care. What is every year of a wise man's life but a censure or critic on the past? Those whose date is the shortest, live long enough to laugh at one half of it: the boy despises the infant, the man the boy, the philosopher both, and the Christian all. You may now begin to think your manhood was too much a puerility; and you'll never suffer your age to be but a second infancy. The toys and baubles of your childhood are hardly now more below you, than those toys of our riper and of our declining years, the drums and rattles of Ambition, and the dirt and bubbles of Avarice. At this time, when you are cut off from a little society and made a citizen of the world at large, you should bend your talents not to serve a Party, or a few, but all mankind. Your Genius should mount above that mist in which its participation and neighbourhood with earth long involv'd it; to shine abroad and to heaven, ought to be the business and the glory of your present situation. Remember it was at such a time, that the greatest lights of antiquity dazled and blazed the most,

most, in their retreat, in their exile, or in their death: but why do I talk of dazling or blazing? it was then that they did good, that they gave light, and that they became Guides to mankind.

Those aims alone are worthy of spirits truly great, and such I therefore hope will be yours. Resentment indeed may remain, perhaps cannot be quite extinguished, in the noblest minds; but Revenge never will harbour there: higher principles than those of the first, and better principles than those of the latter, will infallibly influence men, whose thoughts and whose hearts are enlarged, and cause them to prefer the Whole to any part of mankind, especially to so small a part as one's single self.

Believe me, my Lord, I look upon you as a spirit entered into another life^a, as one just upon the edge of Immortality; where the passions and affections must be much more exalted, and where you ought to despise all little views, and all mean retrospects^b. Nothing is

^a The Bishop of Rochester went into exile the month following, and continued in it till his death, which happen'd at Paris on the fifteenth day of February in the year 1732. P.

^b Notwithstanding this, Mr. Pope was convinced, before the Bishop's death,

that during his banishment he was in the intrigues of the Pretender. Tho', when he took his last leave of Mr. Pope, he told him, he would allow him to say his sentence was just, if he ever found he had any concerns with that family in his exile.

worth your looking back; and therefore look forward, and make (as you can) the world look after you. But take care that it be not with pity, but with esteem and admiration.

I am with the greatest sincerity, and passion for your fame as well as happiness,

Your, &c.

L E T T E R X X I V .

From the Bishop of ROCHESTER.

Paris, Nov. 23, 1731.

YOU will wonder to see me in print; but how could I avoid it? The dead and the living, my friends and my foes, at home and abroad, call'd upon me to say something; and the reputation of an ^a History which I and all the world value, must have suffered, had I continued silent. I have printed it here, in hopes that somebody may venture to reprint it in England, notwithstanding those two frightening words at the close of it ^b. Whether that happens or not, it is fit you should have a sight of

^a E. of Clarendon's.

^b The Bishop's Name, set to his Vindication of Bishop Smalridge, Dr. Aldrich, and himself, from the scandalous

Reflections of Oldmixon, relating to the Publication of Lord Clarendon's History. Paris, 1731. 4to. since reprinted in England. P.