



## **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

Containing The First of his Letters

**Pope, Alexander**

**London, 1751**

Letters to and from Mr. Wycherley. From the Year 1704 to 1710.

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# LETTERS

TO AND FROM

## Mr. WYCHERLEY<sup>a</sup>.

From the Year 1704 to 1710.

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### LETTER I.

Binfield in Windsor Forest, Dec. 26, 1704<sup>b</sup>.

**I**T was certainly a great satisfaction to me to see and converse with a Man, whom in his writings I had so long known with pleasure; but it was a high addition to it, to hear

<sup>a</sup> If one were to judge of this set of Letters by the manner of thinking and turn of expression, one should conclude they had been all mis-titled; and that the Letters given to the boy of sixteen, were written by the man of seventy, and so on the contrary: such sober sense, such gravity of manners, and so much judgment, and knowledge of composition, enlivened with the sprightliness of manly wit,

distinguish those of Mr. Pope: while, on the other hand, a childish jealousy, a pueriel affectation, an attention and lying at catch for *turns* and *points*, together with a total ignorance of order, of method, and of all relation of the parts to one another to compose a reasonable whole, make up the character of those of Mr. Wycherley.

<sup>b</sup> The author's Age then Sixteen. P.



you, at our very first meeting, doing justice to your dead friend Mr. Dryden. I was not so happy as to know him: *Virgilium tantum vidi*<sup>c</sup>. Had I been born early enough, I must have known and lov'd him: For I have been assured, not only by yourself, but by Mr. Congreve and Sir William Trumbul, that his personal Qualities were as amiable as his Poetical, notwithstanding the many libellous misrepresentations of them, against which the former of these Gentlemen has told me he will one day vindicate him<sup>d</sup>. I suppose those injuries were begun by the violence of Party, but 'tis no doubt they were continued by envy at his success and fame<sup>e</sup>: And those Scriblers who attacked him in his latter times, were only like gnats in a summer's evening, which are never very troublesome but in the finest and most glorious season; for his fire, like the sun's, shined clearest towards its setting.

You must not therefore imagine, that when you told me my own performances were

<sup>c</sup> When a very young Boy, he prevailed with a friend to carry him to a Coffee-house which Dryden frequented; where he had the satisfaction he speaks of.

<sup>d</sup> He since did so, in his dedication to the Duke of Newcastle, prefix'd to the

duodecimo Edition of Dryden's Plays, 1717. P.

<sup>e</sup> The fact seems to have been just the reverse. One of the first Satires against him was the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal*; and one of the last, Montague's parody of his *Hind and Panther*.



above those Critics, I was so vain as to believe it; and yet I may not be so humble as to think myself quite below their notice. For critics, as they are birds of prey, have ever a natural inclination to carrion: and tho' such poor writers as I are but beggars, no beggar is so poor but he can keep a cur, and no author is so beggarly but he can keep a critic. I am far from thinking the attacks of such people either any honour or dishonour even to me, much less to Mr. Dryden. I agree with you, that whatever lesser Wits have risen since his death, are but like stars appearing when the sun is set, that twinkle only in his absence, and with the rays they have borrowed from him. Our wit (as you call it) is but reflection or imitation, therefore scarce to be called ours. True Wit, I believe, may be defined a justness of thought, and a facility of expression; or (in the midwives phrase) a perfect conception, with an easy delivery<sup>f</sup>. However, this is far from a complete definition; pray help me to a better<sup>g</sup>, as, I doubt not, you can.

I am, &c.

<sup>f</sup> This is no definition of wit at all, but of good writing in general.

<sup>g</sup> Mr. Locke had given a better. But his Essay was a

work our young Poet did not then relish. He had met with it early; but he used to say, it was quite insipid to him.



## L E T T E R   I I.

From Mr. W Y C H E R L E Y.

Jan. 25, 1704-5.

**I** Have been so busy of late in correcting and transcribing some of my madrigals for a great man or two who desired to see them, that I have (with your pardon) omitted to return you an answer to your most ingenious letter: so scriblers to the public, like bankers to the public, are profuse in their voluntary loans to it, whilst they forget to pay their more private and particular, as more just debts, to their best and nearest friends. However, I hope, you who have as much good-nature as good sense (since they generally are companions<sup>a</sup>) will have patience with a debtor who has an inclination to pay you his obligations, if he had wherewithal ready about him; and in the mean time should consider, when you have obliged me beyond my present power of returning the favour, that a debtor may be an honest man, if he but intends to be just when he is able, tho' late. But I should be less just to you, the more I thought I could make a return to so much profuseness of Wit and Humanity together; which tho' they seldom accompany each other in other men<sup>a</sup>, are

<sup>a</sup> Good-nature and good sense generally are companions, yet wit and humanity seldom accompany each other.



in you so equally met, I know not in which you most abound. But so much for my opinion of you, which is, that your Wit and Ingenuity is equalled by nothing but your Judgment, or Modesty, which (tho' it be to please myself) I must no more offend, than I can do either right.

Therefore I will say no more now of them; than that your good wit never forfeited your good judgment, but in your partiality to me and mine; so that if it were possible for a hardened scribler to be vainer than he is, what you write of me would make me more conceited than what I scribble myself: yet, I must confess, I ought to be more humbled by your praise than exalted, which commends my little sense with so much more of yours, that I am disparaged and disheartened by your commendations; who give me an example of your wit in the first part of your letter, and a definition of it in the last; to make writing well (that is, like you) more difficult to me than ever it was before. Thus the more great and just your example and definition of wit are, the less I am capable to follow them. Then the best way of shewing my judgment, after having seen how you write, is to

But they might keep com- | pleased, for the Author was  
pany or not, just as they | gone in search of Witticisms.



8 L E T T E R S T O A N D

leave off writing; and the best way to shew my friendship to you, is to put an end to your trouble, and to conclude

Yours, &c.

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L E T T E R III.

March 25, 1705.

WHEN I write to you, I foresee a long letter, and ought to beg your patience before-hand; for if it proves the longest, it will be of course the worst I have troubled you with. Yet to express my gratitude at large for your obliging letter, is not more my duty than my interest; as some people will abundantly thank you for one piece of kindness, to put you in mind of bestowing another. The more favourable you are to me, the more distinctly I see my faults: Spots and blemishes, you know, are never so plainly discovered as in the brightest sunshine. Thus I am mortified by those commendations which were designed to encourage me: for praise to a young wit, is like rain to a tender flower; if it be moderately bestowed, it cheers and revives; but if too lavishly, overcharges and depresses him. Most men in years, as they are generally discouragers of youth, are like old trees, that, being past bearing



ing themselves, will suffer no young plants to flourish beneath them: but, as if it were not enough to have out-done all your coevals in wit, you will excel them in good-nature too. As for <sup>a</sup> my green essays, if you find any pleasure in them, it must be such as a man naturally takes in observing the first shoots and bud-dings of a tree which he has raised himself: and 'tis impossible they should be esteemed any otherwise, than as we value fruits for being early, which nevertheless are the most insipid, and the worst of the year. In a word, I must blame you for treating me with so much compliment, which is at best but the smoke of friendship. I neither write, nor converse with you, to gain your praise, but your Affection. Be so much my friend as to appear my enemy, and tell me my faults, if not as a young Man, at least as an unexperienced Writer.

I am, &c.

#### LETTER IV.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

March 29, 1705.

**Y**OUR letter of the twenty-fifth of March I have received, which was more wel-

<sup>a</sup> His Pastorals, written at sixteen years of age. P.  
come



come to me than any thing could be out of the country, tho' it were one's rent due that day; and I can find no fault with it, but that it charges me with want of sincerity, or justice, for giving you your due; who should not let your modesty be so unjust to your merit, as to reject what is due to it, and call that compliment, which is so short of your desert, that it is rather degrading than exalting you. But if compliment be the smoke only of friendship (as you say) however, you must allow there is no smoke but there is some fire; and as the sacrifice of incense offered to the Gods would not have been half so sweet to others, if it had not been for its smoke; so friendship, like love, cannot be without some incense, to perfume the name it would praise and immortalize. But since you say you do not write to me to gain my praise, but my affection, pray how is it possible to have the one without the other? we must admire before we love. You affirm, you would have me so much your friend as to appear your enemy, and find out your faults rather than your perfections; but (my friend) that would be so hard to do, that I, who love no difficulties, can't be persuaded to it. Besides, the vanity of a scribler is such, that he will never part with his own judgment to gratify another's; especially when he must take pains to do it: and tho' I

I  
am



FROM MR. WYCHERLEY. 11

am proud to be of your opinion, when you talk of any thing or man but yourself, I cannot suffer you to murder your fame with your own hand, without opposing you ; especially when you say your last letter is the worst (since the longest) you have favoured me with ; which I therefore think the best, as the longest life (if a good one) is the best ; as it yields the more variety, and is the more exemplary ; as a chearful summer's day, tho' longer than a dull one in the winter, is less tedious and more entertaining. Therefore let but your friendship be like your letter, as lasting as it is agreeable, and it can never be tedious, but more acceptable and obliging to

Your, &c.

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L E T T E R V.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

April 7, 1705.

I Have received yours of the fifth, wherein your modesty refuses the just praises I give you, by which you lay claim to more, as a bishop gains his bishopric by saying he will not episcopate ; but I must confess, whilst I displease you by commending you, I please myself : just as incense is sweeter to the offerer than



than the deity to whom 'tis offered, by his being so much above it: For indeed every man partakes of the praise he gives, when it is so justly given.

As to my enquiry after your intrigues with the Muses, you may allow me to make it, since no old man can give so young, so great, and able a favourite of theirs, jealousy. I am, in my enquiry, like old Sir Bernard Gascoign, who used to say, that when he was grown too old to have his visits admitted alone by the ladies, he always took along with him a young man to ensure his welcome to them; for had he come alone he had been rejected, only because his visits were not scandalous to them. So I am (like an old rook, who is ruined by gaming) forced to live on the good fortune of the pushing young men, whose fancies are so vigorous that they ensure their success in their adventures with the Muses, by their strength of imagination.

Your papers are safe in my custody (you may be sure) from any one's theft but my own; for 'tis as dangerous to trust a scribler with your wit, as a gamester with the custody of your money.—If you happen to come to town, you will make it more difficult for me to leave it, who am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R



## LETTER VI.

April 30, 1705.

I Cannot contend with you : You must give me leave at once to wave all your compliments, and to collect only this in general from them, that your design is to encourage me. But I separate from all the rest that paragraph or two, in which you make me so warm an offer of your Friendship. Were I possessed of that, it would put an end to all those speeches with which you now make me blush ; and change them to wholesome advices, and free sentiments, which might make me wiser and happier. I know 'tis the general opinion, that friendship is best contracted betwixt persons of equal age ; but I have so much interest to be of another mind, that you must pardon me if I cannot forbear telling you a few notions of mine, in opposition to that opinion.

In the first place 'tis observable, that the love we bear to our friends, is generally caused by our finding the same dispositions in them, which we feel in ourselves. This is but self-love at the bottom : whereas the affection betwixt people of different ages cannot well be so, the inclinations of such being commonly various. The friendship of two young men is often occasioned



caſioned by love of pleaſure or voluptuouſneſs, each being deſirous for his own ſake of one to aſſiſt or encourage him in the courſes he purſues ; as that of two old men is frequently on the ſcore of ſome profit, lucre, or deſign upon others. Now, as a young man who is leſs acquainted with the ways of the world, has in all probability leſs of intereſt ; and an old man, who may be weary of himſelf, has, or ſhould have leſs of ſelf-love ; ſo the friendship between them is the more likely to be true, and unmixed with too much ſelf-regard. One may add to this, that ſuch a friendship is of greater uſe and advantage to both ; for the old man will grow gay and agreeable to pleaſe the young one ; and the young man more diſcreet and prudent by the help of the old one : ſo it may prove a cure of thoſe epidemical diſeaſes of age and youth, ſourneſs and madneſs. I hope you will not need many arguments to convince you of the poſſibility of this ; one alone abundantly ſatiſfies me, and convinces to the heart ; which is, that <sup>a</sup> young as I am, and old as you are, I am your entirely affectionate, &c.

<sup>a</sup> Mr. Wycherley was at this time about ſeventy years old,  
Mr. Pope under ſeventeen. P.



## LETTER VII.

June 23, 1705.

I Should believe myself happy in your good opinion, but that you treat me so much in a style of compliment. It hath been observed of women, that they are more subject in their youth to be touched with vanity, than men, on account of their being generally treated this way; but the weakest women are not more weak than that class of men, who are thought to pique themselves upon their Wit. The world is never wanting, when a coxcomb is accomplishing himself, to help to give him the finishing stroke.

Every man is apt to think his neighbour overstock'd with vanity, yet, I cannot but fancy there are certain times, when most people are in a disposition of being informed; and 'tis incredible what a vast good a little truth might do, spoken in such seasons. A small alms will do a great kindness, to people in extreme necessity.

I could name an acquaintance of yours, who would at this time think himself more obliged to you for the information of his faults, than the confirmation of his follies. If you would make those the subject of a letter, it might be as long as I could wish your letters always were.

I do



I do not wonder you have hitherto found some difficulty (as you are pleased to say) in writing to me, since you have always chosen the task of commending me : take but the other way, and, I dare engage, you will find none at all.

As for my verses, which you praise so much, I may truly say they have never been the cause of any vanity in me, except what they gave me when they first occasioned my acquaintance with you. But I have several times since been in danger of this vice; as often, I mean, as I received any letters from you. 'Tis certain, the greatest magnifying glasses in the world are a man's own eyes when they look upon his own person; yet even in those, I cannot fancy myself so extremely like Alexander the great, as you would persuade me. If I must be like him, 'tis you will make me so, by complimenting me into a better opinion of myself than I deserve: They made him think he was the son of Jupiter, and you assure me I am a man of parts. But is this all you can say to my honour? you said ten times as much before, when you call'd me your friend. After having made me believe I possess'd a share in your affection, to treat me with compliments and sweet sayings, is like the proceeding with poor Sancho Panca: they persuaded him that he enjoy'd a great dominion,



minion, and then gave him nothing to subsist upon but wafers and marmalade. In our days the greatest obligation you can lay upon a Wit, is to make a fool of him. For as when madmen are found incurable, wise men give them their way, and please them as well as they can; so when those incorrigible things, Poets, are once irrecoverably be-mus'd, the best way both to quiet them, and secure yourself from the effects of their frenzy, is to feed their vanity; which indeed, for the most part, is all that is fed in a poet.

You may believe me, I could be heartily glad that all you say were as true, applied to me, as it would be to yourself, for several weighty reasons; but for none so much as that I might be to you what you deserve; whereas I can now be no more than is consistent with the small tho' utmost capacity of &c.

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## LETTER VIII.

Oct. 26, 1705.

I Have now changed the scene from the town to the country; from Will's coffee-house to Windsor-forest. I find no other difference than this, betwixt the common town-wits, and the downright country fools; that the first are

C

pertly



pertly in the wrong, with a little more flourish and gayety; and the last neither in the right nor the wrong, but confirmed in a stupid settled medium betwixt both. However, methinks, these are most in the right, who quietly and easily resign themselves over to the gentle reign of dulness, which the Wits must do at last, tho' after a great deal of noise, and resistance. Ours are a sort of modest inoffensive people, who neither have sense, nor pretend to any, but enjoy a jovial sort of dulness: They are commonly known in the world by the name of honest, civil gentlemen: They live, much as they ride, at random; a kind of hunting life, pursuing with earnestness and hazard something not worth the catching; never in the way, nor out of it. I can't but prefer solitude to the company of all these; for tho' a man's self may possibly be the worst fellow to converse with in the world, yet one would think the company of a person whom we have the greatest regard to and affection for, could not be very unpleasant. As a man in love with a mistress, desires no conversation but hers, so a man in love with himself (as most men are) may be best pleased with his own. Besides, if the truest and most useful knowledge be the knowledge of ourselves, solitude, conducing most to make us look into ourselves, should be the



the most instructive state of life. We see nothing more commonly, than men, who for the sake of the circumstantial part and mere outside of life, have been half their days rambling out of their nature, and ought to be sent into solitude to study themselves over again. People are usually spoiled, instead of being taught, at their coming into the world; whereas by being more conversant with Obscurity, without any pains, they would naturally follow what they were meant for. In a word, if a man be a coxcomb, Solitude is his best School; and if he be a fool, it is his best Sanctuary.

These are good reasons for my own stay here, but I wish I could give you any for your coming hither, except that I earnestly invite you. And yet I can't help saying I have suffered a great deal of discontent that you do not come, tho' I so little merit that you should.

I must complain of the shortness of your last. Those who have most wit, like those who have most money, are generally most sparing of either.



## L E T T E R I X.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

Nov. 5, 1705.

Yours of the 26th of October I have received, as I have always done yours, with no little satisfaction, and am proud to discover by it, that you find fault with the shortness of mine, which I think the best excuse for it: And tho' they (as you say) who have most wit or money are most sparing of either; there are some who appear poor to be thought rich, and are poor, which is my case. I cannot but rejoice, that you have undergone so much discontent for want of my company; but if you have a mind to punish me for my fault (which I could not help) defer your coming to town, and you will do it effectually. But I know your charity always exceeds your revenge, so that I will not despair of seeing you, and, in return to your inviting me to your forest, invite you to my forest, the town; where the beasts that inhabit, tame or wild, of long ears or horns, pursue one another either out of love or hatred. You may have the pleasure to see one pack of blood-hounds pursue another herd of brutes, to bring each other to their fall, which is their whole sport: Or if you affect a  
less



less bloody chace, you may see a pack of spaniels, called Lovers, in a hot pursuit of a two-legged vixen, who only flies the whole loud pack to be singled out by one dog, who runs mute to catch her up the sooner from the rest, as they are making a noise to the loss of their game. In fine, this is the time for all sorts of sport in the town, when those of the country cease; therefore leave your forest of beasts for ours of brutes, called men, who now in full cry (pack'd by the court or country) run down in the house of commons a deserted horned beast of the Court, to the satisfaction of their spectators: Besides, (more for your diversion) you may see not only the two great play-houses of the nation, those of the lords and commons, in dispute with one another; but the two other play-houses in high contest, because the members of one house are remov'd up to t'other, as it is often done by the court for reasons of state. Inasmuch that the lower houses, I mean the play-houses, are going to act tragedies on one another without doors, and the Sovereign is put to it (as it often happens in the other two houses) to silence one or both, to keep peace between them. Now I have told you all the news of the town.

I am, &c.



## LETTER X.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

Feb. 5, 1705-6.

I Have receiv'd your kind Letter, with my paper <sup>a</sup> to Mr. Dryden corrected. I own you have made more of it by making it less, as the Dutch are said to burn half the spices they bring home, to inhance the price of the remainder, so to be greater gainers by their loss, (which is indeed my case now.) You have prun'd my fading lawrels of some superfluous, sapless, and dead branches, to make the remainder live the longer; thus, like your master Apollo, you are at once a poet and a physician.

Now, Sir, as to my impudent invitation of you to the town, your good nature was the first cause of my confident request; but excuse me, I must (I see) say no more upon this subject, since I find you a little too nice to be dealt freely with; tho' you have given me some encouragement to hope, our friendship might be without shyness, or criminal modesty; for a

<sup>a</sup> The same which was printed in the Year 1717, in a Miscellany of Bern. | Lintot's, and in the Post-humous Works of Mr. Wycherly.

P.  
friend,



friend, like a mistress, tho' he is not to be mercenary, to be true, yet ought not to refuse a friend's kindness because it is small or trivial: I have told you (I think) what a Spanish lady said to her poor poetical gallant, that a Queen if she had to do with a groom, would expect a mark of his kindness from him, though it were but his curry-comb. But you and I will dispute this matter when I am so happy as to see you here; and perhaps 'tis the only dispute in which I might hope to have the better of you.

Now, Sir, to make you another excuse for my boldness in inviting you to town, I design'd to leave with you some more of my papers, (since these return so much better out of your hands than they went from mine) for I intended (as I told you formerly) to spend a month, or six weeks this summer, near you in the country. You may be assured there is nothing I desire so much, as an improvement of your friendship.



## L E T T E R X I.

April 10, 1706.

**B**Y one of yours of the last month, you desire me to select, if possible, some things from the <sup>a</sup> first volume of your Miscellanies, which may be alter'd so as to appear again. I doubted your meaning in this; whether it was to pick out the best of those verses (as those on the Idleness of business, on Ignorance, on Laziness, &c.) to make the method and numbers exact, and avoid repetitions? For tho' (upon reading 'em on this occasion) I believe, they might receive such an alteration with advantage; yet they would not be changed so much, but any one would know 'em for the same at first sight. Or if you mean to improve the worst pieces? which are such, as, to render them very good, would require great addition, and almost the entire new writing of them. Or, lastly, if you mean the middle sort, as the Songs and Love-verses? For these will need only to be shortened, to omit repetition; the words remaining very little different from what they were before. Pray let me know your mind in this, for I am utterly at a loss.

<sup>a</sup> Printed in folio, in the year 1704. P.

Yet



Yet I have try'd what I could do to some of the songs, and the poems on Laziness and Ignorance, but can't (even in my own partial judgment) think my alterations much to the purpose. So that I must needs desire you would apply your care wholly at present to those which are yet unpublished, of which there are more than enough to make a considerable volume, of full as good ones, nay, I believe, of better than any in Vol. I. which I could wish you would defer, at least 'till you have finish'd these that are yet unprinted.

I send you a sample of some few of these; namely, the verses to Mr. Waller in his old age; your new ones on the Duke of Marlborough, and two others. I have done all that I thought could be of advantage to them: some I have contracted, as we do sun-beams, to improve their energy and force: some I have taken quite away, as we take branches from a tree, to add to the fruit; others I have entirely new express'd, and turned more into poetry. Donne (like one of his successors) had infinitely more wit than he wanted versification: for the great dealers of wit, like those in trade, take least pains to set off their goods; while the haberdashers of small wit, spare for no decorations or ornaments. You have commission'd me to paint your shop, and I have done  
my



my best to brush you up like your neighbours\*. But I can no more pretend to the merit of the production, than a midwife to the virtues and good qualities of the child she helps into the light.

The few things I have entirely added, you will excuse; you may take them lawfully for your own, because they are no more than sparks lighted up by your fire: and you may omit them at last, if you think them but squibs in your triumphs.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R   X I I .

From Mr. W Y C H E R L E Y .

Nov. 11, 1707.

**I** Receiv'd yours of the 9<sup>th</sup> yesterday, which has (like the rest of your letters) at once pleas'd and instructed me; so that, I assure you, you can no more write too much to your absent friends, than speak too much to the present. This is a truth that all men own who have either seen your writings, or heard your dis-

\* Several of Mr. Pope's lines, very easy to be distinguished, may be found in the Posthumous Editions of

Wycherley's Poems: particularly in those *on Solitude*, *on the Public*, and *on the Mixed life*.

course;



course; enough to make others show their judgment, in ceasing to write or talk, especially to you, or in your company. However, I speak or write to you, not to please you, but myself; since I provoke your answers; which whilst they humble me, give me vanity; tho' I am lessen'd by you even when you commend me: since you commend my little sense with so much more of yours, that you put me out of countenance, whilst you would keep me in it. So that you have found a way (against the custom of great wits) to shew even a great deal of good nature with a great deal of good sense.

I thank you for the book you promis'd me, by which I find you would not only correct my lines, but my life.

As to the damn'd verses I entrusted you with, I hope you will let them undergo your purgatory, to save them from other people's damning them: since the critics, who are generally the first damn'd in this life, like the damn'd below, never leave to bring those above them under their own circumstances. I beg you to peruse my papers, and select what you think best or most tolerable, and look over them again; for I resolve suddenly to print some of them, as a harden'd old gamester will (in spite of all former ill usage by fortune) push on an ill hand in expectation of recovering himself; especially



cially since I have such a *Croupier* or Second to stand by me as Mr. Pope.

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L E T T E R   XIII.

Nov. 20, 1707.

**M**R. Englesfild being upon his journey to London, tells me I must write to you by him, which I do, not more to comply with his desire, than to gratify my own; tho' I did it so lately by the messenger you sent hither: I take it too as an opportunity of sending you the fair copy of the poem<sup>a</sup> on Dulness, which was not then finish'd, and which I should not care to hazard by the common post. Mr. Englesfild is ignorant of the contents, and I hope your prudence will let him remain so, for my sake no less than your own: since if you should reveal any thing of this nature, it would be no wonder reports should be rais'd, and there are those (I fear) who would be ready to improve them to my disadvantage. I am sorry you told the great man, whom you met in the court of requests, that your papers were in my hands: no man alive shall ever know any

<sup>a</sup> The original of it in blots, and with figures of the References from copy to copy, in Mr. Pope's hand, is yet extant, among other such Brouillons of Mr. Wycherley's poems, corrected by him.

P.  
such



such thing from me; and I give you this warning besides, that tho' yourself should say I had any ways assisted you, I am notwithstanding resolv'd to deny it.

The method of the copy I send you is very different from what it was, and much more regular: for the better help of your memory, I desire you to compare it by the figures in the margin, answering to the same in this letter. The poem is now divided into four parts, mark'd with the literal figures 1. 2. 3. 4. The first contains the Praise of Dulness, and shews how upon several suppositions it passes for 1. religion. 2. philosophy. 3. example. 4. wit. and 5. the cause of wit, and the end of it. The second part contains the Advantages of Dulness; 1st, in business; and 2dly, at Court; where the similitudes of the Byass of a bowl, and the Weights of a clock, are directly tending to the subject, tho' introduced before in a place where there was no mention made of those advantages (which was your only objection to my adding them.) The third contains the Happiness of Dulness in all stations, and shews in a great many particulars, that it is so fortunate as to be esteem'd some good quality or other in all sorts of people; that it is thought quiet, sense, caution, policy, prudence, majesty, valour, circumspection, honesty, &c. The  
fourth



fourth part I have wholly added, as a climax which fums up all the praise, advantage, and happiness of Dulness in a few words, and strengthens them by the opposition of the disgrace, disadvantage, and unhappiness of Wit, with which it concludes <sup>b</sup>.

Tho' the whole be as short again as at first, there is not one thought omitted, but what is a repetition of something in your first volume, or in this very paper: some thoughts are contracted, where they seem'd encompass'd with too many words; and some new express'd, or added, where I thought there wanted heightning, (as you'll see particularly in the Simile of the clock-weights<sup>c</sup>) and the versification through-

<sup>b</sup> This is totally omitted in the present Edition: Some of the lines are these:

" Thus Dulness, the safe opiate of the mind,  
 " The last kind refuge weary wit can find;  
 " Fit for all stations, and in each content,  
 " Is satisfy'd, secure, and innocent;  
 " No pains it takes, and no offence it gives,  
 " Unfear'd, unhated, undisturb'd it lives, &c.

<sup>c</sup> It was originally thus express'd:

" As Clocks run fastest when most lead is on."

in a Letter of Mr. Pope to Mr. Wycherley, dated April 3, 1705, and in a paper of verses of his, To the Author of a poem call'd Successio, which got out in a Miscellany

in 1712, three years before Mr. Wycherley died, and two after he had laid aside the whole design of publishing any poems. P.

These two similes of the  
 out



FROM MR. WYCHERLEY. 31

out is, I believe, such as no body can be shock'd at. The repeated permissions you give me of dealing freely with you, will (I hope) excuse what I have done: for if I have not spar'd you when I thought severity would do you a kindness, I have not mangled you where I thought there was no absolute need of amputation. As to particulars, I can satisfy you better when we meet; in the mean time pray write to me when you can, you cannot too often.

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L E T T E R XIV.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

Nov. 22, 1707.

YOU may see by my style, I had the happiness and satisfaction to receive yesterday, by the hands of Mr. Englesyld, your extreme kind and obliging letter of the 20th of this month; which, like all the rest of yours, did at once mortify me, and make me vain; since it tells me with so much more wit, sense, and kindness than mine can express, that my letters

<i>Bias of a Bowl</i> , and the <i>Weights of a Clock</i> were at length put into the first book of the <i>Dunciad</i> . And thus we	have the history of their birth, fortunes, and final establishment.
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are



are always welcome to you. So that even whilst your kindness invites me to write to you, your wit and judgment forbid me; since I may return you a letter, but never an answer.

Now, as for my owning your assistance to me, in over-looking my unmusical numbers, and harsher sense, and correcting them both with your genius, or judgment; I must tell you I always own it (in spite of your unpoetic modesty) who would do with your friendship as your charity; conceal your bounty to magnify the obligation; and even whilst you lay on your friend the favour, acquit him of the debt: but that shall not serve your turn; I will always own, 'tis my infallible Pope has, or would redeem me from a poetical damning, the second time; and save my rhimes from being condemn'd to the critics flames to all eternity; but (by the faith you profess) you know your works of supererogation, transfer'd upon an humble, acknowledging sinner, may save even him: having good works enough of your own besides, to ensure yours, and their immortality.

And now for the pains you have taken to recommend my Dulness, by making it more methodical, I give you a thousand thanks; since true and natural dulness is shown more by its pretence to form and method, as the spright-  
linefs



lineſs <sup>a</sup> of wit by its deſpiſing both. I thank you a thouſand times for your repeated invitations to come to Binfield: You will find, it will be as hard for you to get quit of my mercenary kindneſs to you, as it would for me to deſerve, or return to yours; however it ſhall be the endeavour of my future life, as it will be to demonſtrate myſelf

Your, &c.

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L E T T E R XV.

Nov. 29, 1707.

**T**HE compliments you make me, in regard of any inconfiderable ſervice I could do you, are very unkind, and do but tell me in other words, that my friend has ſo mean an opinion of me, as to think I expect acknowledgments for trifles: which upon my faith I ſhall equally take amiſs, whether made to myſelf, or to any other. For God's ſake (my dear friend) think better of me, and believe I deſire no ſort of favour ſo much, as that of ſerving

<sup>a</sup> By *ſprightlineſs* he muſt mean, *extravagance of wit*. For ſober wit would no more deſpiſe *method* than it would

deſpiſe *words*, or any other vehicle it uſes, to make itſelf ſeen to advantage.

D

you



you more considerably than I have been yet able to do.

I shall proceed in this manner with some others of your pieces; but since you desire I would not deface your copy for the future, and only mark the repetitions; I must, as soon as I've mark'd these, transcribe what is left on another paper; and in that, blot, alter, and add all I can devise, for their improvement. For you are sensible, the omission of Repetitions is but one, and the easiest part, of yours and my design; there remaining besides to rectify the Method, to connect the Matter, and to mend the Expression and Versification. I will go next upon the poems of Solitude, on the Public, and on the mixt Life; the bill of Fare; the praises of Avarice, and some others.

I must take notice of what you say, of "my pains to make your dulness methodical;" and of your hint, "that the sprightliness of wit despises method." This is true enough, if by wit you mean no more than fancy or conceit; but in the better notion of wit, consider'd as propriety, surely method is not only necessary for perspicuity and harmony of parts, but gives beauty even to the minute and particular thoughts, which receive an additional advantage from those which precede or follow in their due place. You remember a simile  
Mr.



Mr. Dryden us'd in conversation, of feathers in the crowns of the wild Indians, which they not only chuse for the beauty of their colours, but place them in such a manner as to reflect a lustre on each other. I will not disguise any of my sentiments from you: to methodize in your case, is full as necessary as to strike out; otherwise you had better destroy the whole frame, and reduce them into single thoughts in prose, like Rochefoucault, as I have more than once hinted to you.

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L E T T E R XVI.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

Feb. 28, 1707-8.

I Have had yours of the 23d of this instant, for which I give you many thanks, since I find by it, that even absence (the usual bane of love, or friendship) cannot lessen yours, no more than mine. As to your hearing of my being ill, I am glad, and sorry for the report: in the first place, glad that it was not true; and in the next, sorry that it shou'd give you any disturbance, or concern more than ordinary for me; for which, as well as your concern for my future well-being or life, I think myself most

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eternally



eternally oblig'd to you; assuring, your concern for either will make me more careful of both. Yet for your sake I love this life so well, that I shall the less think of the other; but 'tis in your power to ensure my happiness in one and the other, both by your society, and good example, so not only contribute to my felicity here, but hereafter.

Now as to your excuse for the plainness of your style, I must needs tell you, that friendship is much more acceptable to a true friend than wit, which is generally false reasoning; and a friend's reprimand often shews more friendship than his compliment: nay love, which is more than friendship, is often seen by our friend's correction of our follies or crimes. Upon this test of your friendship I intend to put you when I return to London, and thence to you at Binfield, which, I hope, will be within a month.

Next to the news of your good health, I am pleas'd with the good news of your going to print some of your Poems, and proud to be known by them to the public for your friend; who intend (perhaps the same way) to be revenged of you for your kindness; by taking your name in vain in some of my future madrigals: yet so as to let the world know, my love or esteem for you are no more poetic than my talent in scribbling. But of all the arts of  
fiction,



FROM MR. WYCHERLEY. 37

fiction, I desire you to believe I want that of  
feigning friendship, and that I am sincerely

Your, &c.

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LETTER XVII.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

May 13, 1708.

I Have receiv'd yours of the first of May.  
Your Pastoral muse outshines in her modest  
and natural dress all Apollo's court-ladies, in  
their more artful, labour'd, and costly finery.  
Therefore I am glad to find by your letter you  
design your country-beauty of a muse shall ap-  
pear at court and in public: to out-shine all the  
farded, lewd, confident, affected Town-dow-  
dies, who aim at being honour'd only to their  
shame: but her artful innocence (on the con-  
trary) will gain more honour as she becomes  
public; and, in spite of custom, will bring mo-  
desty again into fashion, or at least make her  
sister-rivals of this age blush for spite, if not  
for shame. As for my stale, antiquated, poeti-  
cal pufs, whom you would keep in counte-  
nance by saying she has once been tolerable,  
and wou'd yet pass muster by a little licking  
over; it is true that (like most vain antiquated



jades which have once been passable) she yet affects youthfulness in her age, and wou'd still gain a few admirers (who the more she seeks or labours for their liking, are but more her contemners.) Nevertheless she is resolv'd henceforth to be so cautious as to appear very little more in the world, except it be as an Attendant on your Muse, or as a foil, not a rival to her wit, or fame: so that let your Country-gentlewoman appear when she will in the world<sup>a</sup>, my old worn-out jade of a lost reputation shall be her attendant into it, to procure her admirers; as an old whore, who can get no more friends of her own, bawds for others, to make sport or pleasure yet, one way or other, for mankind. I approve of your making Tonsen your muse's introductor into the world, or master of the ceremonies, who has been so long a pimp, or gentleman-usher to the Muses.

<sup>a</sup> This, and what follows, is a full Confutation of John Dennis and others, who asserted that Mr. Pope wrote these verses on himself (tho' publish'd by Mr. Wycherley six years before his death.) We find here, it was a voluntary Act of his, promis'd before-hand, and written while Mr. Pope was absent. The first Brouillon of those

verses, and the second Copy with corrections, are both yet extant in Mr. Wycherley's own hand: In another of his letters of May 18, 1708, are these words. "I have made a damn'd Compliment in verse upon the printing your Pastorals, which you shall see when you see me." P.

I wish



FROM MR. WYCHERLEY. 39

I wish you good fortune; since a man with store of wit, as store of money, without the help of good fortune, will never be popular; but I wish you a great many admirers, which will be some credit to my judgment as well as your wit, who always thought you had a great deal, and am

Your, &c.

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LETTER XVIII.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

May 17, 1709.

I Must thank you for a book of your Miscellanies, which Tonson sent me, I suppose, by your order; and all I can tell you of it is, that nothing has lately been better receiv'd by the public, than your part of it. You have only displeas'd the critics by pleasing them too well; having not left them a word to say for themselves, against you and your performances; so that, now your hand is in, you must persevere, 'till my prophecies of you be fulfill'd. In earnest, all the best judges of good sense or poetry, are admirers of yours; and like your part of the book so well, that the rest is lik'd the worse. This is true upon my word, without

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compl-



compliment; so that your first success will make you for all your life a poet, in spite of your wit; for a poet's success at first, like a gamester's fortune at first, is like to make him a loser at last, and to be undone by his good fortune and merit.

But hitherto your miscellanies have safely run the gantlet, through all the coffee-houses; which are now entertain'd with a whimsical new news-paper, call'd the TATLER, which I suppose you have seen. This is the newest thing I can tell you of, except it be of the Peace, which now (most people say) is drawing to such a conclusion, as all Europe is, or must be satisfy'd with; so Poverty, you see, which makes peace in Westminster-hall, makes it likewise in the camp or field, throughout the world. Peace then be to you, and to me, who am now grown peaceful, and will have no contest with any man, but him who says he is more your friend or humble servant, than

Your, &c.

L E T T E R



## LETTER XIX.

May 20, 1709.

I Am glad you receiv'd the <sup>a</sup> Miscellany, if it were only to show you that there are as bad poets in this nation as your servant. This modern custom of appearing in miscellanies, is very useful to the poets, who, like other thieves, escape by getting into a crowd, and herd together like Banditti, safe only in their multitude. Methinks Strada has given a good description of these kind of collections; *Nullus hodie mortalium aut nascitur, aut moritur, aut præliatur, aut rusticatur, aut abit peregre, aut redit, aut nubit, aut est, aut non est, (nam etiam mortuis isti canunt) cui non illi extemplo cudant Epicedia, Genethliaca, Protreptica, Panegyrica, Epithalamia, Vaticinia, Propemptica, Soterica, Parænetica, Nænicas, Nugas.* As to the success which, you say, my part has met with, it is to be attributed to what you was pleas'd to say of me to the world; which you do well to call your prophecy, since whatever is said in my favour, must be a prediction of things that are not yet; you, like a true Godfather, engage on my part for much more than ever I can per-

<sup>a</sup> Jacob Tonson's sixth Vol. of Miscellany Poems. P.

form.



form. My pastoral Muse, like other country girls, is but put out of countenance, by what you courtiers say to her; yet I hope you would not deceive me too far, as knowing that a young scribler's vanity needs no recruits from abroad: for nature, like an indulgent mother, kindly takes care to supply her sons with as much of their own, as is necessary for their satisfaction. If my verses should meet with a few flying commendations, Virgil has taught me, that a young author has not too much reason to be pleas'd with them, when he considers that the natural consequence of praise is envy and calumny.

— *Si ultra placitum laudarit, baccare frontem  
Cingite, ne vati noceat mala lingua futuro.*

When once a man has appear'd as a poet, he may give up his pretensions to all the rich and thriving arts: those who have once made their court to those mistresses without portions, the Muses, are never like to set up for fortunes. But for my part, I shall be satisfy'd if I can lose my time agreeably this way, without losing my reputation: as for gaining any, I am as indifferent in the matter as Falstaffe was, and may say of fame as he did of honour, "If it comes, it comes unlook'd for; and there's an end on't." I can be content with a bare saving game,



FROM MR. WYCHERLEY. 43

game, without being thought an eminent hand, (with which title Jacob has graciously dignify'd his adventurers and voluntiers in poetry.) Jacob creates poets, as Kings sometimes do knights, not for their honour, but for their money. Certainly he ought to be esteem'd a worker of miracles, who is grown rich by poetry.

*What Authors lose, their Booksellers have won,  
So Pimps grow rich, while Gallants are undone.*

I am your, &c.

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LETTER XX.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

May 26, 1709.

THE last I receiv'd from you was dated the 22d of May. I take your charitable hint to me very kindly, wherein you do like a true friend, and a true christian, and I shall endeavour to follow your advice, as well as your example.—As for your wishing to see your friend an Hermit with you, I cannot be said to leave the world, since I shall enjoy in your conversation all that I can desire of it; nay, can learn more from you alone, than from my  
long



long experience of the great, or little vulgar in it.

As to the success of your poems in the late miscellany, which I told you of in my last; upon my word I made you no compliment, for you may be assur'd that all sort of readers like them, except they are writers too; but for them (I must needs say) the more they like them, they ought to be the less pleas'd with 'em: so that you do not come off with a bare saving game (as you call it) but have gain'd so much credit at first, that you must needs support it to the last: since you set up with so great a stock of good sense, judgment, and wit, that your judgment ensures all that your wit ventures at. The salt of your wit has been enough to give a relish to the whole insipid hotch-potch it is mingled with; and you will make Jacob's Ladder raise you to immortality, by which others are turn'd off shamefully to their damnation (for poetic thieves as they are) who think to be sav'd by others good works, how faulty soever their own are: but the coffee-house wits, or rather anti-wits the critics, prove their judgments by approving your wit; and even the news-mongers and poets will own, you have more invention than they; nay, the detractors or the envious, who never speak well of any body (not even of those they think well of



FROM MR. WYCHERLEY. 45

of in their absence) yet will give you even in your absence their good word; and the critics only hate you, for being forced to speak well of you whether they will or no: All this is true upon the word of

Your, &c.

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L E T T E R XXI.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

Aug. 11, 1709.

**M**Y letters, so much inferior to yours, can only make up their scarcity of sense by their number of lines; which is like the Spaniards paying a debt of gold with a load of brass money. But to be a *plain dealer*, I must tell you, I will revenge the raillery of your letters by printing them (as Dennis did mine) without your knowledge too, which wou'd be a revenge upon your judgment for the raillery of your wit; for some dull rogues (that is the most in the world) might be such fools as to think what you said of me was in earnest: It is not the first time, your great wits have gain'd reputation by their paradoxical or ironical praises; your forefathers have done it, Erasmus and others. For all mankind who know me  
must



must confess, he must be no ordinary genius, or little friend, who can find out any thing to commend in me seriously; who have given no sign of my judgment but my opinion of yours, nor mark of my wit, but my leaving off writing to the public now you are beginning to shew the world what you can do by yours: whose wit is as spiritual as your judgment infallible: in whose judgment I have an implicit faith, and shall always subscribe to it to save my works, in this world, from the flames and damnation.—Pray, present my most humble service to Sir William Trumbull; for whom and whose judgment I have so profound a respect, that his example had almost made me marry, more than my Nephew's ill carriage to me; having once resolv'd to have revenged myself upon him by my marriage, but now am resolv'd to make my revenge greater upon him by His marriage.

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L E T T E R   XXII.

From Mr. W Y C H E R L E Y.

April 1, 1710.

**I** Have had yours of the 30th of the last month, which is kinder than I desire it should be, since it tells me you cou'd be better pleas'd to be

be



be sick again in Town in my company, than to be well in the Country without it ; and that you are more impatient to be depriv'd of happiness than of health. Yet, my dear friend, set raillery or compliment aside, I can bear your absence (which procures your health and ease) better than I can your company when you are in pain : for I cannot see you so without being so too. Your love to the Country I do not doubt, nor do you (I hope) my love to it or you, since there I can enjoy your company without seeing you in pain to give me satisfaction and pleasure ; there I can have you without rivals or disturbers ; without the too civil, or the too rude : without the noise of the loud, or the censure of the silent : and wou'd rather have you abuse me there with the truth, than at this distance with your compliment : since now, your business of a friend, and kindness to a friend, is by finding fault with his faults, and mending them by your obliging severity. I hope (in point of your goodness) you will have no cruel charity for those papers of mine, you are so willing to be troubled with ; which I take most infinitely kind of you, and shall acknowledge with gratitude, as long as I live. No friend can do more for his friend than preserving his reputation (nay, not by preserving his life) since by preserving his



his life he can only make him live about three-score or fourscore years; but by preserving his reputation, he can make him live as long as the world lasts; so save him from damning, when he is gone to the devil. Therefore, I pray, condemn me in private, as the Thieves do their accomplices in Newgate, to save them from condemnation by the public. Be most kindly unmerciful to my poetical faults, and do with my papers, as you country-gentlemen do with your trees, slash, cut, and lop off the excrescencies and dead parts of my wither'd bays, that the little remainder may live the longer, and increase the value of them by diminishing the number. I have troubled you with my papers rather to give you pain than pleasure, notwithstanding your compliment, which says you take the trouble kindly: such is your generosity to your friends, that you take it kindly to be desired by them to do them a kindness; and you think it done to you, when they give you an opportunity to do it them. Wherefore you may be sure to be troubled with my letters out of interest, if not kindness; since mine to you will procure yours to me: so that I write to you more for my own sake than yours; less to make you think I write well, than to learn from you to write better. Thus you see interest in my kindness, which is like

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FROM MR. WYCHERLEY. 49

the friendship of the world, rather to make a friend than be a friend ; but I am yours, as a true Plain-dealer.

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L E T T E R XXIII.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

April 11, 1710.

I F I can do part of my business at Shrewsbury in a fortnight's time (which I propose to do) I will be soon after with you, and trouble you with my company, for the remainder of the summer : in the mean time I beg you to give yourself the pains of altering, or leaving out what you think superfluous in my papers, that I may endeavour to print such a number of them as you and I shall think fit, about Michaelmas next. In order to which (my dear friend) I beg you to be so kind to me, as to be severe to them ; that the critics may be less so ; for I had rather be condemn'd by my friend in private, than expos'd to my foes in public, the critics, or common judges, who are made such by having been old offenders themselves. Pray, believe I have as much faith in your friendship and sincerity, as I have deference to your judgment ; and as the best mark

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of



of a friend is telling his friend his faults in private, so the next is concealing them from the public, 'till they are fit to appear. In the mean time I am not a little sensible of the great kindness you do me, in the trouble you take for me, in putting my Rhimes in tune, since good sounds set off often ill sense, as the Italian songs, whose good airs, with the worst words or meaning, make the best music; so by your tuning my Welsh harp, my rough sense may be the less offensive to the nicer ears of those critics, who deal more in sound than sense. Pray then take pity at once both of my readers and me, in shortning my barren abundance, and increasing their patience by it, as well as the obligations I have to you: And since no madrigaller can entertain the head, unless he pleases the ear; and since the crowded Opera's have left the best Comedies with the least audiences, 'tis a sign sound can prevail over sense; therefore soften my words, and strengthen my sense, and

*Eris mihi magnus Apollo,*

L E T T E R



## LETTER XXIV.

April 15, 1710.

I Receiv'd your most extreme kind letter but just now. It found me over those papers you mention, which have been my employment ever since Easter-monday: I hope before Michaelmas to have discharg'd my task; which, upon the word of a friend, is the most pleasing one I cou'd be put upon. Since you are so near going into Shropshire, (whither I shall not care to write of this matter for fear of the miscarriage of any letters) I must desire your leave to give you a plain and sincere account of what I have found from a more serious application to them. Upon comparison with the former volume, I find much more repeated than I till now imagin'd, as well as in the present volume, which, if (as you told me last) you would have me dash over with a line, will deface the whole copy extremely, and to a degree that (I fear) may displease you. I have every where mark'd in the margins the page and line, both in this and the other part. But if you order me not to cross the lines, or would any way else limit my commission, you will oblige me by doing it in your next letter; for I am at once equally fearful of sparing you, and



of offending you by too impudent a correction. Hitherto however I have cross'd 'em so as to be legible, because you bade me. When I think all the repetitions are struck out in a copy, I sometimes find more upon dipping in the first volume, and the number encreases so much, that, I believe, more shortning will be requisite than you may be willing to bear with, unless you are in good earnest resolv'd to have no thought repeated. Pray, forgive this freedom, which as I must be sincere in this case so I could not but take; and let me know if I am to go on at this rate, or if you would prescribe any other method.

I am very glad you continue your resolution of seeing me in my Hermitage this summer; the sooner you return, the sooner I shall be happy, which indeed my want of any company that is entertaining or esteemable, together with frequent infirmities and pains, hinder me from being in your absence. 'Tis (I am sure) a real truth, that my sickness cannot make me quite weary of myself when I have you with me; and I shall want no company but yours, when you are here.

You see how freely and with how little care I talk rather than write to you: this is one of the many advantages of friendship, that one can say to one's friend the things that stand in need  
of



of pardon, and at the same time be sure of it. Indeed I do not know whether or no the letters of friends are the worse for being fit for none else to read. 'Tis an argument of the trust reposed in a friend's good nature, when one writes such things to him as require a good portion of it. I have experienced yours so often and so long, that I can now no more doubt of the greatness of it, than I hope you do of the greatness of my affection, or of the sincerity with which I am, &c.

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L E T T E R XXV.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

April 27, 1710.

YOU give me an account in your letter of the trouble you have undergone for me, in comparing my papers you took down with you, with the old printed volume, and with one another, of that bundle you have in your hands; amongst which (you say) you find numerous Repetitions of the same thoughts and subjects; all which, I must confess, my want of memory has prevented me from imagining, as well as made me capable of committing: since, of all figures, that of Tautology is the last I would



use, or least forgive myself for. But seeing is believing; wherefore I will take some pains to examine and compare those papers in your hands with one another, as well as with the former printed copies, or books of my damn'd Miscellanies; all which (as bad a memory as I have) with a little more pains and care I think I can remedy. Therefore I would not have you give yourself more trouble about them, which may prevent the pleasure you have, and may give the world in writing upon new subjects of your own, whereby you will much better entertain yourself and others. Now as to your remarks upon the whole volume of my papers; all that I desire of you is to mark in the margin (without defacing the copy at all) either any repetition of words, matter, or sense, or any thoughts, or words too much repeated; which if you will be so kind as to do for me, you will supply my want of Memory with your good one, and my deficiencies of sense, with the infallibility of yours; which if you do, you will most infinitely oblige me, who almost repent the trouble I have given you, since so much. Now as to what you call freedom with me, (which you desire me to forgive) you may be assur'd I would not forgive you unless you did use it; for I am so far from thinking your plainness an offence to me, that  
I think



I think it a charity and an obligation ; which I shall always acknowledge, with all sort of gratitude to you for it ; who am, &c.

All the news I have to send you, is, that poor Mr. Betterton is going to make his Exit from the stage of this world, the Gout being gotten up into his head, and (as the Physicians say) will certainly carry him off suddenly.

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L E T T E R XXVI.

May 2, 1710.

I Am sorry you persist to take ill my not accepting your invitation, and to find (if I mistake not) your exception not unmix'd with some suspicion. Be certain I shall most carefully observe your request, not to cross over, or deface the copy of your papers for the future, and only to mark in the margin the Repetitions. But as this can serve no further than to get rid of those repetitions, and no way rectify the Method, nor connect the Matter, nor improve the Poetry in expression or numbers, without further blotting, adding, and altering ; so it really is my opinion and desire, that you should take your papers out of my hands into your own, and that no alterations may be made but when both us are present ; when you may be satisfied with every blot, as well as



every addition, and nothing be put upon the papers but what you shall give your own sanction and assent to, at the same time.

Do not be so unjust, as to imagine from hence that I would decline any part of this task; on the contrary you know, I have been at the pains of transcribing some pieces, at once to comply with your desire of not defacing the copy, and yet to lose no time in proceeding upon the correction. I will go on the same way, if you please; tho' truly it is (as I have often told you) my sincere opinion, that the greater part would make a much better figure as Single Maxims and Reflections in prose, after the manner of your favourite Rochefoucault, than in verse<sup>a</sup>: And this, when nothing more is done but marking the repetitions in the margin, will be an easy task to proceed upon, notwithstanding the bad Memory you complain of. I am unfeignedly, dear Sir, Your, &c.

A. POPE.

<sup>a</sup> Mr. Wycherley lived five years after, to December, 1715, but little progress was made in this design, thro' his Old age, and the increase of his infirmities. However, some of the Verses, which had been touch'd by Mr. P. with

cccviii of these Maxims in Prose were found among his papers, which having the misfortune to fall into the hands of a Mercenary, were published in 1728 in octavo, under the Title of The Posthumous Works of William Wycherley, Esq. P.

LETTERS