



## **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**

VII. Against Compliment.

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**Nutzungsbedingungen**

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## 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.

## 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  
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