



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

XV. More concerning corrections of the poems.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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lineſs ^a 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.

L E T T E R X V.

Nov. 29, 1707.

THE 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

^a 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.

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