



## **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**

VIII. Of Mr. Wycherley's coldness.

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**Nutzungsbedingungen**

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FROM H. CROMWELL, Esq. 91

could hardly be ; for the Isthmus of Corinth is full five miles over : And *caligantes abrupto sole Mycenæ*, is not consistent with what he tells us, in lib. iv. lin. 305. “ that those of  
“ Mycenæ came not to the war at this time,  
“ because they were then in confusion by the  
“ divisions of the brothers, Atreus and Thy-  
“ estes.” Now from the raising the Greek army against Thebes, back to the time of this journey of Polynices, is (according to Statius’s own account) three years.

Yours, &c.

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L E T T E R VIII.

July 17, 1709.

**T**HE morning after I parted from you, I found myself (as I had prophesied) all alone, in an uneasy Stage-coach ; a doleful change from that agreeable company I enjoy’d the night before ! without the least hope of entertainment but from my last recourse in such cases, a book. I then began to enter into acquaintance with your Moralists, and had just receiv’d from them some cold consolation for the inconveniencies of this life, and the uncertainty of human affairs ; when I perceiv’d my vehicle to stop, and heard from the side of it the dreadful



dreadful news of a sick woman preparing to enter it. 'Tis not easy to guess at my mortification, but being so well fortify'd with philosophy, I stood resign'd with a stoical constancy to endure the worst of evils, a sick woman. I was indeed a little comforted to find, by her voice and dress, that she was young and a gentlewoman; but no sooner was her hood remov'd, but I saw one of the finest faces I ever beheld, and, to increase my surprize, heard her salute me by my name. I never had more reason to accuse nature for making me short sighted than now, when I could not recollect I had ever seen those fair eyes which knew me so well, and was utterly at a loss how to address myself; till with a great deal of simplicity and innocence she let me know (even before I discover'd my ignorance) that she was the daughter of one in our neighbourhood, lately marry'd, who having been consulting her physicians in town, was returning into the country, to try what good air and a husband could do to recover her. My father, you must know, has sometimes recommended the study of physic to me, but I never had any ambition to be a doctor till this instant. I ventur'd to prescribe some fruit (which I happen'd to have in the coach) which being forbidden her by her doctors, she had the more inclination to. In short, I tempted,



I tempted, and she eat ; nor was I more like the Devil than she like Eve. Having the good success of the 'foresaid Tempter before my eyes, I put on the gallantry of the old serpent, and in spite of my evil form accosted her with all the gaiety I was master of ; which had so good effect, that in less than an hour she grew pleasant, her colour return'd, and she was pleas'd to say my prescription had wrought an immediate cure : In a word, I had the pleasantest journey imaginable.

Thus far (methinks) my letter has something of the air of a romance, tho' it be true. But I hope you will look on what follows as the greatest of truths, that I think myself extremely obliged by you in all points ; especially for your kind and honourable information and advice in a matter of the utmost concern to me, which I shall ever acknowledge as the highest proof at once of your friendship, justice, and sincerity. At the same time be assur'd, that Gentleman<sup>a</sup> we spoke of, shall never by any alteration

<sup>a</sup> Mr. Wycherley.—From his last letters to Mr. Pope, the Reader may perceive something of a growing coldness and disgust, apparently proceeding from the liberties his young friend had taken with his versification and

composition. Little virtue, and an excessive affectation of being witty, joined to the common infirmities of old age, jealousy and loss of memory, are sufficient to account for the instability of his friendship, tho' we were



in me discover my knowledge of his mistake; the hearty forgiving of which is the only kind of return I can possibly make him for so many favours: And I may derive this pleasure at least from it, that whereas I must otherwise have been a little uneasy to know my incapacity of returning his obligations, I may now, by bearing his frailty, exercise my gratitude and friendship more, than himself either is, or perhaps ever will be, sensible of.

*Ille meos, primus qui me sibi junxit, amores  
Abstulit; ille habeat secum, servetque sepulchro!*

But in one thing, I must confess you have yourself obliged me more than any man, which is, that you have shew'd me many of my faults, to which as you are the more an implacable enemy, by so much the more you are a kind friend to me. I could be proud, in revenge, to find a few slips in your verses, which I read in London, and since in the country, with more application and pleasure: the thoughts are very just, and you are sure not to let them suffer by the versification. If you would oblige me with the trust of any thing of yours, I should be glad to execute any commissions you would

not to suppose (what was the fact) that our Poet had ill offices done him by those who were generally about	the old man. For, (as Mr. Pope rightly observes) <i>each ill Author is as bad a friend.</i>
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give



give me concerning them. I am here so perfectly at leisure, that nothing would be so agreeable an entertainment to me ; but if you will not afford me that, do not deny me at least the satisfaction of your letters as long as we are absent, if you would not have him very unhappy, who is very sincerely

Your, &c.

Having a vacant space here, I will fill it with a short Ode on Solitude, which, I found yesterday by great accident, and which I find by the date, was written when I was not twelve years old ; that you may perceive how long I have continued in my passion for a rural life, and in the same employments of it.

Happy the man, whose wish and care,

A few paternal acres bound,

Content to breathe his native air

In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,

Whose flocks supply him with attire,

Whose trees in summer yield him shade,

In winter, fire.

Blest, who can unconcern'dly find

Hours, days, and years slide soft away,

In health of body, peace of mind,

Quiet by day.

Sound



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Sound sleep by night ; study and ease,  
Together mix'd ; sweet recreation,  
And innocence which most does please,  
With meditation.

Thus, let me live, unseen, unknown,  
Thus, unlamented let me die,  
Steal from the world, and not a stone  
Tell where I lie.

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L E T T E R IX.

Aug. 19, 1709.

**I**F I were to write to you as often as I think of you, my letters would be as bad as a rent-charge ; but tho' the one be but too little for your good-nature, the other would be too much for your quiet, which is one blessing good-nature should indispensably receive from mankind, in return for those many it gives. I have been inform'd of late, how much I am indebted to that quality of yours, in speaking well of me in my absence ; the only thing by which you prove yourself no wit nor critic : tho' indeed I have often thought, that a friend will show just as much indulgence (and no more) to my faults when I am absent, as he does severity to 'em when I am present. To be  
very