



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

IX. Of the general conduct and inequality of men's lives.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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

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.

L E T T E R IX.

Aug. 19, 1709.

IF 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
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very frank with you, Sir, I must own, that where I receiv'd so much civility at first, I could hardly have expected so much sincerity afterwards. But now I have only to wish, that the last were but equal to the first, and that as you have omitted nothing to oblige me, so you would omit nothing to improve me.

I caus'd an acquaintance of mine to enquire twice of your welfare, by whom I have been inform'd, that you have left your speculative angle in the Widow's Coffee-house, and bidding adieu for some time to all the Rehearsals, Reviews, Gazettes, &c. have march'd off into Lincolnshire. Thus I find you vary your life in the scene at least, tho' not in the action; for tho' life for the most part, like an old play, be still the same, yet now and then a new scene may make it more entertaining. As for myself, I would not have my life a very regular play, let it be ^a a good merry farce, a G-d's name, and a fig for the critical unities! For the generality of men, a true modern life is like a true modern play, neither tragedy, comedy, nor farce, nor one, nor all of these; every actor is much better known by his having the same face, than by keeping the same character: for we change our minds as often as they can their

^a *Tolerable farce*, in the Author's own Edit. a *God's* name omitted there. P.

parts, and he who was yesterday Cæsar, is to day Sir John Daw. So that one might ask the same question of a modern life, that Rich did of a modern play; "Pray do me the favour, " Sir, to inform me; Is this your Tragedy or " your Comedy?"

I have dwelt the longer upon this, because I persuade myself it might be useful, at a time when we have no theatre, to divert ourselves at this great one. Here is a glorious standing comedy of Fools, at which every man is heartily merry, and thinks himself an unconcern'd spectator. This (to our singular comfort) neither my Lord Chamberlain, nor the Queen herself can ever shut up, or silence.—^a While that of Drury (alas!) lies desolate, in the profoundest peace: and the melancholy prospect of the nymphs yet lingering about its beloved avenues, appears no less moving than that of the Trojan dames lamenting over their ruin'd Ilium! What now can they hope, dispossest of their ancient seats, but to serve as captives to the insulting victors of the Hay-market? The afflicted subjects of France do not, in our Postman, so grievously deplore the obstinacy of their arbitrary monarch, as these perishing people of Drury, the obdurate heart of that Pharoah,

^b What follows to the end of this Letter, is omitted in the Author's own Edit.

Rich, who, like him, disdains all proposals of peace and accommodation. Several libels have been secretly affixed to the great gates of his imperial palace in Bridges-street; and a memorial, representing the distresses of these persons, has been accidentally dropt (as we are credibly informed by a person of quality) out of his first minister the chief box-keeper's pocket, at a late conference of the said person of quality and others, on the part of the Confederates, and his Theatrical Majesty on his own part. Of this you may expect a copy, as soon as it shall be transmitted to us from a good hand. As for the late Congress, it is here reported, that it has not been wholly ineffectual; but this wants confirmation; yet we cannot but hope the concurring prayers and tears of so many wretched ladies may induce this haughty prince to reason.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R X.

Oct. 19, 1709.

I May truly say I am more obliged to you this summer than to any of my acquaintance, for had it not been for the two kind letters you sent me, I had been perfectly *oblitus-*

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