



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

XXXI.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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in all your wishes you will be attended with
those of

Your, &c.

L E T T E R XXXI.

Dec. 21, 1711.

IF I have not writ to you so soon as I ought, let my writing now atone for the delay; as it will infallibly do, when you know what a sacrifice I make you at this time, and that every moment my eyes are employ'd upon this paper, they are taken off from two of the finest faces in the universe. But indeed 'tis some consolation to me to reflect, that while I but write this period, I escape some hundred fatal darts from those unerring eyes, and about a thousand deaths or better. Now you, that delight in dying, would not once have dreamt of an absent friend in these circumstances; you that are so nice an admirer of beauty, or (as a Critic would say after Terence) *so elegant a spectator of forms*; you must have a sober dish of coffee, and a solitary candle at your side, to write an epistle lucubratory to your friend; whereas I can do it as well with two pair of radiant lights, that outshine the golden god of day and silver goddesses of night, and all the refulgent eyes of
the

the firmament.—You fancy now that Sappho's eyes are two of these my tapers, but it is no such matter; these are eyes that have more persuasion in one glance than all Sappho's oratory and gesture together, let her put her body into what moving postures she pleases. Indeed, indeed, my friend, you could never have found so improper a time to tempt me with interest or ambition: let me but have the reputation of these in my keeping, and as for my own, let the devil, or let Dennis, take it for ever. How gladly would I give all I am worth, that is to say, my Pastorals, for one of them, and my Essay for the other? I would lay out all my Poetry in Love; an Original for a Lady, and a Translation for a Waiting-maid! Alas! what have I to do with Jane Gray, as long as Miss Molly, Miss Betty, or Miss Patty are in this world? Shall I write of beauties murdered long ago, when there are those at this instant that murder me? I'll e'en compose my own Tragedy, and the poet shall appear in his own person to move compassion: 'Twill be far more effectual than Bays's entring with a rope about his neck, and the world will own, there never was a more miserable object brought upon the stage.

Now you that are a critic, pray inform me, in what manner I may connect the foregoing part of this letter with that which is to follow,

according to the rules? I would willingly return Mr. Gay my thanks for the favour of his poem, and in particular for his kind mention of me; I hoped, when I heard a new Comedy had met with success upon the stage, that it had been his, to which I really wish no less; and (had it been any way in my power) should have been very glad to have contributed to its introduction into the world. His verses to Lintot^a have put a whim into my head, which you are like to be troubled with in the opposite page: take it as you find it, the production of half an hour t'other morning. I design very soon to put a task of a more serious nature upon you, in reviewing a piece of mine that may better deserve criticism; and by that time you have done with it, I hope to tell you in person with how much fidelity I am

Your, &c.

^a These verses are printed in Dr. Swift's, and our Author's Miscellanies.