



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

Letter XVII. Witty letters undervalued in comparison of sincere ones.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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LETTER XVII.

I Am not at all concern'd to think that this letter may be less entertaining than some I have sent: I know you are a friend that will think a kind letter as good as a diverting one. He that gives you his mirth makes a much less present than he that gives you his heart; and true friends would rather see such thoughts as they communicate only to one another, than what they squander about to all the world. They who can set a right value upon any thing, will prize one tender, well-meant word, above all that ever made them laugh in their lives. If I did not think so of you, I should never have taken much pains to endeavour to please you, by writing, or any thing else. Wit, I am sure, I want; at least in the degree that I see others have it, who would at all seasons alike be entertaining; but I would willingly have some qualities that may be (at some seasons) of more comfort to myself, and of more service to my friends. I would cut off my own head, if it had nothing better than wit in it; and tear out my own heart, if it had no better dispositions than to love only myself, and laugh at all my neighbours.

I know you'll think it an agreeable thing to hear that I have done a great deal of Homer.

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If it be tolerable, the world may thank you for it: for if I could have seen you every day, and imagin'd my company could have every day pleas'd you, I should scarce have thought it worth my while to please the world. How many verses could I gladly have left unfinish'd, and turn'd into it, for people to say what they would of, had I been permitted to pass all those hours more pleasingly? Whatever some may think, Fame is a thing I am much less covetous of, than your Friendship; for that, I hope, will last all my life; the other I cannot answer for. What if they should both grow greater after my death? alas! they would both be of no advantage to me! Therefore think upon it, and love me as well as ever you can, while I live.

Now I talk of fame, I send you my Temple of Fame, which is just come out: but my sentiments about it you will see better by this Epigram.

*What's Fame with Men, by custom of the Nation,
Is call'd in Women only Reputation:
About them both why keep we such a potter?
Part you with one, and I'll renounce the other.*