



## **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**

XX. To a lady abroad.

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**Nutzungsbedingungen**

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ry you so far toward the next world as to make this lose the sight of you; but you'll be like a star, that, while it is fixed to heaven, shines over all the earth.

Wheresoever Providence shall dispose of the most valuable thing I know, I shall ever follow you with my sincerest wishes, and my best thoughts will be perpetually waiting upon you, when you never hear of me nor them. Your own guardian angels cannot be more constant, nor more silent. I beg you will never cease to think me your friend, that you may not be guilty of that which you never yet knew to commit, an injustice. As I have hitherto been so in spite of the world, so hereafter, if it be possible you should ever be more opposed, and more deserted, I should only be so much the more

Your faithful, &c.

LETTER XX.

I Can say little to recommend the letters I shall write to you, but that they will be the most impartial representations of a free heart, and the truest copies you ever saw, tho' of a very mean original. Not a feature will be softened, or any advantageous light employed to make the ugly thing a little less hideous; but

I

you



you shall find it in all respects, most horribly like. You will do me an injustice if you look upon any thing I shall say from this instant, as a compliment, either to you or to myself: Whatever I write will be the real thought of that hour; and I know you'll no more expect it of me to persevere till death, in every sentiment or notion I now set down, than you would imagine a man's face should never change when once his picture was drawn.

The freedom I shall use in this manner of *thinking aloud*, may indeed prove me a fool; but it will prove me one of the best sort of fools, the honest ones. And since what folly we have, will infallibly buoy up at one time or other in spite of all our art to keep it down; methinks, 'tis almost foolish to take any pains to conceal it at all, and almost knavish to do it from those that are our friends. If Momus's project had taken, of having windows in our breasts, I should be for carrying it further, and making those windows, casements; that while a man showed his heart to all the world, he might do something more for his friends; even give it them, and trust it to their handling. I think I love you as well as King Herod did Herodias (tho' I never had so much as one dance with you) and would as freely give you my heart in a dish, as he did another's head.



But since Jupiter will not have it so, I must be content to shew my taste in life, as I do my taste in painting, by loving to have as little drapery as possible. Not that I think every body naked altogether so fine a sight, as yourself and a few more would be, but because 'tis good to use people to what they must be acquainted with; and there will certainly come some day of judgment or other, to uncover every soul of us. We shall then see that the Prudes of this world owed all their fine figure only to their being straiter-laced than the rest; and that they are naturally as arrant squabs as those that went more loose, nay as those that never girded their loins at all.—But a particular reason that may engage you to write your thoughts the more freely to me, is, that I am confident no one knows you better; for I find, when others express their thoughts of you, they fall very short of mine, and, I know, at the same time, theirs are such as you would think sufficiently in your favour.

You may easily imagine how desirous I must be of a correspondence with a person, who had taught me long ago that it was as possible to esteem at first sight, as to love: and who has since ruin'd me for all the conversation of one sex, and almost all the friendship of the other. I am but too sensible thro' your means, that the  
company



company of men wants a certain softness to commend it, and that of women wants every thing else. How often have I been quietly going to take possession of that tranquillity and indolence I had so long found in the Country; when one evening of your conversation has spoil'd me for a Solitaire! Books have lost their effect upon me, and I was convinced since I saw you, that there is one alive wiser than all the sages. A plague of female wisdom! it makes a man ten times more uneasy than his own. What is very strange, Virtue herself (when you have the dressing her) is too amiable for one's repose. You might have done a world of good in your time, if you had allowed half the fine gentlemen who have seen you, to have conversed with you; they would have been strangely bit, while they thought only to fall in love with a fair lady, and you had bewitch'd them with Reason and Virtue (two beauties that the very fops pretend to no acquaintance with.)

The unhappy distance at which we correspond, removes a great many of those restrictions and punctilious decorums, that oftentimes in nearer conversation prejudice truth, to save good-breeding. I may now hear of my faults, and you of your good qualities, without a blush; we converse upon such unfortunate ge-



nerous terms, as exclude the regards of fear, shame, or design, in either of us. And, methinks it would be as paltry a part, to impose (even in a single thought) upon each other in this state of separation, as for spirits of a different sphere, who have so little intercourse with us, to employ that little (as some would make us think they do) in putting tricks and delusions upon poor mortals.

Let me begin then, Madam, by asking you a question, that may enable me to judge better of my own conduct than most instances of my life. In what manner did I behave in the last hour I saw you? What degree of concern did I discover when I felt a misfortune, which, I hope, you will never feel, that of parting from what one most esteems? for if my parting looked but like that of your common acquaintance, I am the greatest of all the hypocrites that ever decency made.

I never since pass by your house but with the same sort of melancholy that we feel upon seeing the tomb of a friend, which only serves to put us in mind of what we have lost. I reflect upon the circumstances of your departure, which I was there a witness of (your behaviour in what I may call your last moments) and I indulge a gloomy kind of pleasure in thinking that those last moments were given to me.



me. I would fain imagine this was not accidental, but proceeded from a penetration, which, I know, you have, in finding out the truth of people's sentiments; and that you were willing, the last man that *would have* parted from you, should be the last that *did*. I really looked upon you just as the friends of Curtius might have done upon that Hero, at the instant when he was devoting himself to glory, and running to be lost out of generosity: I was obliged to admire your resolution, in as great a degree as I deplored it; and had only to wish, that Heaven would reward so much virtue as was to be taken from us, with all the felicities it could enjoy elsewhere!

I am, &c.

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## LETTER XXI.

I Can never have too many of your letters. I am angry at every scrap of paper lost, and tho' it is but an odd compliment to compare a fine lady to a Sibyl, your leaves, methinks, like hers, are too good to be committed to the winds; tho' I have no other way of receiving them but by those unfaithful messengers. I have had but three, and I reckon that short one