



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

IV. Against compliment, and vanity; the praise of sincerity and friendship.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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with the stream, and approve of what all men of good taste (notwithstanding the jarring of Parties) must and do universally applaud. I now come to what is of vast moment, I mean the preservation of your health, and beg of you earnestly to get out of all Tavern-company, and fly away *tanquam ex incendio*. What a misery is it for you to be destroy'd by the foolish kindness ('tis all one whether real or pretended) of those who are able to bear the poison of bad wine, and to engage you in so unequal a combat? As to Homer, by all I can learn, your business is done: therefore come away and take a little time to breathe in the country. I beg now for my own sake, but much more for yours; methinks Mr. — has said to you more than once,

Hæu fuge, nate dea, teque his, ait, eripe flammis!

I am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R I V.

To Sir WILLIAM TRUMBULL.

March 12, 1713.

THough any thing you write is sure to be a pleasure to me, yet I must own your last letter made me uneasy; you really use a style

style of compliment, which I expect as little as I deserve it. I know 'tis a common opinion that a young scribler is as ill pleas'd to hear truth as a young lady. From the moment one sets up for an author, one must be treated as ceremoniously, that is as unfaithfully,

As a King's Favourite, or as a King.

This proceeding, join'd to that natural vanity which first makes a man an author, is certainly enough to render him a coxcomb for life. But I must grant it is a just judgment upon poets, that they, whose chief pretence is Wit, should be treated as they themselves treat Fools, that is, be cajol'd with praises. And, I believe, Poets are the only poor fellows in the world whom any body will flatter.

I would not be thought to say this, as if the obliging letter you sent me deserv'd this imputation, only it put me in mind of it; and I fancy one may apply to one's friend what Cæsar said of his wife: "It was not sufficient that he knew her to be chaste himself, but she should not be so much as suspected."

As to the wonderful discoveries, and all the good news you are pleas'd to tell me of myself, I treat it, as you who are in the secret, treat common news, as groundless reports of things at a distance; which I, who look into the true

springs of the affair, in my own breast, know to have no foundation at all. For Fame, tho' it be (as Milton finely calls it) *the last infirmity of noble minds*, is scarce so strong a temptation as to warrant our loss of time here: it can never make us lie down contentedly on a death-bed, (as some of the Ancients are said to have done with that thought.) You, Sir, have yourself taught me, that an easy situation at that hour can proceed from no ambition less noble than that of an eternal felicity, which is unattainable by the strongest endeavours of the wit, but may be gain'd by the sincere intentions of the heart only. As in the next world, so in this, the only solid blessings are owing to the goodness of the mind, not the extent of the capacity: friendship here is an emanation from the same source as beatitude there: the same benevolence and grateful disposition that qualifies us for the one, if extended farther, makes us partakers of the other. The utmost point of my desires in my present state terminates in the society and good-will of worthy men, which I look upon as no ill earnest and foretaste of the society and alliance of happy souls hereafter.

The continuance of your favours to me is what not only makes me happy, but causes me to set some value upon myself as a part of your
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care. The instances I daily meet with of these agreeable awakenings of friendship, are of too pleasing a nature not to be acknowledged whenever I think of you. I am

Your, &c.

LETTER V.

April 30, 1713.

I Have been almost every day employ'd in following your advice, and amusing myself in painting, in which I am most particularly obliged to Mr. Jervas, who gives me daily instructions and examples. As to poetical affairs, I am content at present to be a bare looker-on, and from a practitioner turn an admirer, which is (as the world goes) not very usual. Cato was not so much the wonder of Rome in his days, as he is of Britain in ours; and though all the foolish industry possible has been used to make it thought a party-play, yet what the author once said of another may the most properly in the world be apply'd to him, on this occasion,

*Envy itself is dumb, in wonder lost,
And Factions strive, who shall applaud him most.*

The numerous and violent claps of the Whig-party on the one side of the theatre, were echo'd