



## **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**

II. Concerning a public, private, or mixed life.

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**Nutzungsbedingungen**

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## LETTER II.

## The Answer.

June 18, 1712.

YOU have oblig'd me with a very kind letter, by which I find you shift the scene of your life from the town to the country, and enjoy that mix'd state which wise men both delight in, and are qualified for. Methinks the moralists and philosophers have generally run too much into extremes in commending entirely either solitude, or publick life. In the former, men for the most part grow useles by too much rest, and in the latter are destroy'd by too much precipitation; as waters lying still, putrify, and are good for nothing, and running violently on do but the more mischief in their passage to others, and are swallow'd up and lost the sooner themselves. Those indeed who can be useful to all states, should be like gentle streams, that not only glide thro' lonely valleys and forests amidst the flocks and the shepherds, but visit populous towns in their course, and are at once of ornament and service to them. But there are another sort of people who seem design'd for solitude, such, I mean, as have more to hide than to show. As for my own part, I am one of those of whom Seneca says, *Tam umbratiles*

*umbratiles sunt, ut putent in turbido esse quicquid in luce est.* Some men, like some pictures, are fitter for a corner than a full light; and, I believe, such as have a natural bent to solitude (to carry on the former similitude) are like waters, which may be forced into fountains, and exalted into a great height, may make a noble figure and a louder noise, but after all they would run more smoothly, quietly, and plentifully, in their own natural course upon the ground<sup>a</sup>. The consideration of this would make me very well contented with the possession only of that Quiet which Cowley calls the companion of Obscurity. But whoever has the Muses too for his companions, can never be idle enough, to be uneasy. Thus, Sir, you see, I would flatter myself into a good opinion of my own way of living. Plutarch just now told me, that 'tis in human life as in a game at tables, where a man may wish for the highest cast, but, if his chance be otherwise, he is e'en to play it well as he can, and to make the best of it. I am,

Your, &c.

<sup>a</sup> The foregoing Similitudes our Author had put into verse some years before, and inserted into Mr. Wycherley's poem on *Mix'd*

*Life*. We find them in the versification very distinct from the rest of that poem. See his posthumous works, octavo, Page 3 and 4. P.

L E T T E R