



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

XXVII. To Mr. Congreve. Of sincerity; the scurrilities of abusive critics; what
ought to be the temper of an author.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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“minister, but to the friend^b.” However it is some mark of uncommon regard to the minister that I steal an expression from a Secretary of State.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

To Mr. CONGREVE.

Jan. 16, 1714-15.

MEthinks when I write to you, I am making a confession; I have got (I can't tell how) such a custom of throwing myself out upon paper without reserve. You were not mistaken in what you judged of my temper of mind when I writ last. My faults will not be hid from you, and perhaps it is no dispraise to me that they will not: the cleanness and purity of one's mind is never better proved, than in discovering its own fault at first view; as when a stream shews the dirt at its bottom, it shews also the transparency of the water.

My spleen was not occasioned, however, by any thing an abusive angry critic could write of me. I take very kindly your heroic manner

^b Alluding to St. John's Letter to Prior, published in the *Report of the Secret Committee*.

of congratulation upon this scandal ; for I think nothing more honourable, than to be involved in the same fate with all the great and the good that ever lived ; that is, to be envied and censured by bad writers.

You do no more than answer my expectations of you, in declaring how well you take my freedom, in sometimes neglecting, as I do, to reply to your letters so soon as I ought. Those who have a right taste of the substantial part of friendship, can wave the ceremonial : a friend is the only one that will bear the omission ; and one may find who is not so, by the very trial of it.

As to any anxiety I have concerning the fate of my Homer, the care is over with me : the world must be the judge, and I shall be the first to consent to the justice of its judgment, whatever it be. I am not so arrant an Author as even to desire, that if I am in the wrong, all mankind should be so.

I am mightily pleas'd with a saying of Monsieur Turreil : " When a man writes, he ought
" to animate himself with the thoughts of pleas-
" ing all the world : but he is to renounce that
" desire or hope, the very moment the book
" goes out of his hands."

I write this from Binfield, whither I came yesterday, having pass'd a few days in my way
with

with my Lord Bolingbroke; I go to London in three days time, and will not fail to pay a visit to Mr. M——, whom I saw not long since at my Lord Hallifax's. I hoped from thence he had some hopes of advantage from the present administration: for few people (I think) but I, pay respects to great men without any prospects. I am in the fairest way in the world of being not worth a groat, being born both a Papist and a Poet. This puts me in mind of re-acknowledging your continued endeavours to enrich me. But, I can tell you, 'tis to no purpose, for without the *Opes, æquum mi animum ipse parabo.*

L E T T E R XXVIII.

To Mr. CONGREGVE.

March 19, 1714-15.

THE Farce of the What-d'ye-call-it^a has occasioned many different speculations in the town. Some look'd upon it as a mere jest upon the Tragic poets, others as a satire upon the late War. Mr. Cromwell, hearing none of the words, and seeing the action to be tragical, was much astonished to find the audience laugh;

^a Written by Gay.