

世界经典文学名著原版库

LETTERS

《书信集》

北京师联教育科学研究所 编

学苑音像出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

世界经典文学名著原版库/北京师联教育科学研究所编. —北京:学苑音像出版社,2005.3

ISBN 7-88050-270-X

I. 世… II. 北… III. 世界文学—文学—名著 英文 IV. I299-3

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2005)第 187966 号

**世界经典文学名著原版库
北京师联教育科学研究所 编**

出 版 学苑音像出版社

印 刷 北京密云红光印刷厂

开 本 850mmx1168mm 1/16

印 张 2800

字 数 43,000 千字

版 次 2005 年 4 月第 1 版

印 数 1-5,000

书 号 ISBN 7-88050-270-X

定 价 5800.00 元(全 290 册)

LETTERS

by Thomas Jefferson

A YOUTH OF SIXTEEN

To John Harvie

Shadwell, Jan. 14, 1760

SIR, -- I was at Colo. Peter Randolph's about a Fortnight ago,
& my Schooling falling into Discourse, he said he thought it would be
to my Advantage to go to the College, & was desirous I should go, as
indeed I am myself for several Reasons. In the first place as long
as I stay at the Mountains the Loss of one fourth of my Time is
inevitable, by Company's coming here & detaining me from School. And
likewise my Absence will in a great Measure put a Stop to so much
Company, & by that Means lessen the Expences of the Estate in
House-Keeping. And on the other Hand by going to the College I shall
get a more universal Acquaintance, which may hereafter be serviceable
to me; & I suppose I can pursue my Studies in the Greek & Latin as
well there as here, & likewise learn something of the Mathematics. I

shall be glad of your opinion.

OLD COKE AND YOUNG LADIES

To John Page

Fairfield, December 25, 1762

DEAR PAGE, -- This very day, to others the day of greatest mirth and jollity, sees me overwhelmed with more and greater misfortunes than have befallen a descendant of Adam for these thousand years past, I am sure; and perhaps, after excepting Job, since the creation of the world. I think his misfortunes were somewhat greater than mine: for although we may be pretty nearly on a level in other respects, yet, I thank my God, I have the advantage of brother Job in this, that Satan has not as yet put forth his hand to load me with bodily afflictions. You must know, dear Page, that I am now in a house surrounded with enemies, who take counsel together against my soul; and when I lay me down to rest, they say among themselves, come let us destroy him. I am sure if there is such a thing as a Devil in this world, he must have been here last night and have had some hand in contriving what happened to me. Do you think

the cursed rats (at his instigation, I suppose) did not eat up my pocket-book, which was in my pocket, within a foot of my head? And not contented with plenty for the present, they carried away my jemmy-worked silk garters, and half a dozen new minuets I had just got, to serve, I suppose, as provision for the winter. But of this I should not have accused the Devil, (because, you know rats will be rats, and hunger, without the addition of his instigations, might have urged them to do this,) if something worse, and from a different quarter, had not happened. You know it rained last night, or if you do not know it, I am sure I do. When I went to bed, I laid my watch in the usual place, and going to take her up after I arose this morning, I found her in the same place, it's true! but _Quantum mutatus ab illo!_ all afloat in water, let in at a leak in the roof of the house, and as silent and still as the rats that had eat my pocket-book. Now, you know, if chance had had anything to do in this matter, there were a thousand other spots where it might have chanced to leak as well as at this one, which was perpendicularly over my watch. But I'll tell you; it's my opinion that the Devil came and bored the hole over it on purpose. Well, as I was saying, my poor watch had lost her speech. I should not have cared much for this, but something worse attended it; the subtle particles of the water with which the case was filled, had, by their penetration, so overcome the cohesion of the particles of the paper, of which my dear

picture and watch-paper were composed, that, in attempting to take them out to dry them, good God! _Mens horret referre!_ My cursed fingers gave them such a rent, as I fear I never shall get over.

This, cried I, was the last stroke Satan had in reserve for me: he knew I cared not for anything else he could do to me, and was determined to try this last most fatal expedient. _"Multis fortunae vulneribus percussus, huic uni me imparem sensi, et penitus succubui!"_ I would have cried bitterly, but I thought it beneath the dignity of a man, and a man too who had read {ton onton, ta men ephemin, ta dok ephemin}. However, whatever misfortunes may attend the picture or lover, my hearty prayers shall be, that all the health and happiness which Heaven can send may be the portion of the original, and that so much goodness may ever meet with what may be most agreeable in this world, as I am sure it must be in the next.

And now, although the picture be defaced, there is so lively an image of her imprinted in my mind, that I shall think of her too often, I fear, for my peace of mind; and too often, I am sure, to get through old Coke this winter; for God knows I have not seen him since I packed him up in my trunk in Williamsburg. Well, Page, I do wish the Devil had old Coke, for I am sure I never was so tired of an old dull scoundrel in my life. What! are there so few inquietudes tacked to this momentary life of our's, that we must need be loading ourselves with a thousand more? Or, as brother Job says, (who, by the bye, I

think began to whine a little under his afflictions,) "Are not my days few? Cease then, that I may take comfort a little before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death." But the old fellows say we must read to gain knowledge, and gain knowledge to make us happy and admired. _Mere jargon!_ Is there any such thing as happiness in this world? No. And as for admiration, I am sure the man who powders most, perfumes most, embroiders most, and talks most nonsense, is most admired. Though to be candid, there are some who have too much good sense to esteem such monkey-like animals as these, in whose formation, as the saying is, the tailors and barbers go halves with God Almighty; and since these are the only persons whose esteem is worth a wish, I do not know but that, upon the whole, the advice of these old fellows may be worth following.

You cannot conceive the satisfaction it would give me to have a letter from you. Write me very circumstantially everything which happened at the wedding. Was she there? because, if she was, I ought to have been at the Devil for not being there too. If there is any news stirring in town or country, such as deaths, courtships, or marriages, in the circle of my acquaintance, let me know it. Remember me affectionately to all the young ladies of my acquaintance, particularly the Miss Burwells, and Miss Potters, and

tell them that though that heavy earthly part of me, my body, be absent, the better half of me, my soul, is ever with them; and that my best wishes shall ever attend them. Tell Miss Alice Corbin that I verily believe the rats knew I was to win a pair of garters from her, or they never would have been so cruel as to carry mine away. This very consideration makes me so sure of the bet, that I shall ask everybody I see from that part of the world what pretty gentleman is making his addresses to her. I would fain ask the favour of Miss Becca Burwell to give me another watch-paper of her own cutting, which I should esteem much more, though it were a plain round one, than the nicest in the world cut by other hands -- however, I am afraid she would think this presumption, after my suffering the other to get spoiled. If you think you can excuse me to her for this, I should be glad if you would ask her. Tell Miss Sukey Potter that I heard, just before I came out of town, that she was offended with me about something, what it is I do not know; but this I know, that I never was guilty of the least disrespect to her in my life, either in word or deed; as far from it as it has been possible for one to be. I suppose when we meet next, she will be endeavouring to repay an imaginary affront with a real one: but she may save herself the trouble, for nothing that she can say or do to me shall ever lessen her in my esteem, and I am determined always to look upon her as the same honest-hearted, good-humored, agreeable lady I ever did. Tell

-- tell -- in short, tell them all ten thousand things more than
either you or I can now or ever shall think of as long as we live.

My mind has been so taken up with thinking of my acquaintances,
that, till this moment, I almost imagined myself in Williamsburg,
talking to you in our old unreserved way; and never observed, till I
turned over the leaf, to what an immoderate size I had swelled my
letter -- however, that I may not tire your patience by further
additions, I will make but this one more, that I am sincerely and
affectionately, Dear Page, your friend and servant.

P. S. I am now within an easy day's ride of Shadwell, whither I
shall proceed in two or three days.

A VISIT TO ANNAPOLIS

To John Page

Annapolis, May 25, 1766

DEAR PAGE -- I received your last by T. Nelson whom I luckily
met on my road hither. surely never did small hero experience greater
misadventures than I did on the first two or three days of my

travelling. twice did my horse run away with me and greatly endanger the breaking my neck on the first day. on the second I drove two hours through as copious a rain as ever I have seen, without meeting with a single house to which I could repair for shelter. on the third in going through Pamunkey, being unacquainted with the ford, I passed through water so deep as to run over the cushion as I sat on it, and to add to the danger, at that instant one wheel mounted a rock which I am confident was as high as the axle, and rendered it necessary for me to exercise all my skill in the doctrine of gravity, in order to prevent the center of gravity from being left unsupported the consequence of which would according to Bob. Carter's opinion have been the corruition of myself, chair and all into the water. whether that would have been the case or not, let the learned determine: it was not convenient for me to try the experiment at that time, and I therefore threw my whole weight on the mounted wheel and escaped the danger. I confess that on this occasion I was seised with a violent hydrophobia. I had the pleasure of passing two or three days on my way hither at the two Will. Fitzhugh's and Col'o. Harrison's where were S. Potter, P. Stith, and Ben Harrison, since which time I have seen no face known to me before, except Cap't. Mitchell's who is here. -- but I will now give you some account of what I have seen in this metropolis. the assembly happens to be sitting at this time. their upper and lower house, as they call them, sit in different

houses. I went into the lower, sitting in an old courthouse, which, judging from it's form and appearance, was built in the year one. I was surprised on approaching it to hear as great a noise and hubbub as you will usually observe at a publick meeting of the planters in Virginia. the first object which struck me after my entrance was the figure of a little old man dressed but indifferently, with a yellow queue wig on, and mounted in the judge's chair. this the gentleman who walked with me informed me was the speaker, a man of a very fair character, but who by the bye, has very little the air of a speaker. at one end of the justices' bench stood a man whom in another place I should from his dress and phis have taken for Goodall the lawyer in Williamsburgh, reading a bill then before the house with a schoolboy tone and an abrupt pause at every half dozen words. this I found to be the clerk of the assembly. the mob (for such was their appearance) sat covered on the justices' and lawyers' benches, and were divided into little clubs amusing themselves in the common chit chat way. I was surprised to see them address the speaker without rising from their seats, and three, four, and five at a time without being checked. when a motion was made, the speaker instead of putting the question in the usual form, only asked the gentlemen whether they chose that such or such a thing should be done, and was answered by a yes sir, or no sir: and tho' the voices appeared frequently to be divided, they never would go to the trouble of dividing the house,

but the clerk entered the resolutions, I supposed, as he thought proper. in short everything seems to be carried without the house in general's knowing what was proposed. the situation of this place is extremely beautiful, and very commodious for trade having a most secure port capable of receiving the largest vessels, those of 400 hh'ds being able to brush against the sides of the dock. the houses are in general better than those in Williamsburgh, but the gardens more indifferent. the two towns seem much of a size. they have no publick buildings worth mentioning except a governor's house, the hull of which after being nearly finished, they have suffered to go to ruin. I would give you an account of the rejoicings here on the repeal of the stamp act, but this you will probably see in print before my letter can reach you. I shall proceed tomorrow to Philadelphia where I shall make the stay necessary for inoculation, thence going on to New-York I shall return by water to Williamsburgh, about the middle of July, till which time you have the prayers of

Dear Page

Your affectionate friend

P. S. I should be glad if you could in some indirect manner, without discovering that it was my desire, let J. Randolph know when

I propose to be in the city of Williamsburgh.

THE STUDY OF LAW

To Thomas Turpin

Shadwell, Feb. 5, 1769

DEAR SIR, -- I am truly concerned that it is not in my power to undertake the superintendence of your son in his studies; but my situation both present and future renders it utterly impossible. I do not expect to be here more than two months in the whole between this and November next, at which time I propose to remove to another habitation which I am about to erect, and on a plan so contracted as that I shall have but one spare bedchamber for whatever visitants I may have. nor have I reason to expect at any future day to pass a greater proportion of my time at home. thus situated it would even have been injustice to Phill to have undertaken to give him an assistance which will not be within my power; a task which I otherwise should with the greatest pleasure have taken on me, and would have desired no higher satisfaction than to see him hold that rank in the profession to which his genius and application must surely advance him. these however encourage me to hope that the

presence of an assistant will be little necessary. I always was of opinion that the placing a youth to study with an attorney was rather a prejudice than a help. we are all too apt by shifting on them our business, to incroach on that time which should be devoted to their studies. the only help a youth wants is to be directed what books to read, and in what order to read them. I have accordingly recommended strongly to Phill to put himself into apprenticeship with no one, but to employ his time for himself alone. to enable him to do this to advantage I have laid down a plan of study which will afford him all the assistance a tutor could, without subjecting him to the inconvenience of expending his own time for the emolument of another. one difficulty only occurs, that is, the want of books. but this I am in hopes you will think less of remedying when it is considered that had he been placed under the care of another, a proper collection of books must have been provided for him before he engaged in the practice of his profession; for a lawyer without books would be like a workman without tools. the only difference then is that they must now be procured something earlier. should you think it necessary, it would be better to consider the money laid out in books as a part of the provision made for him and to deduct it from what you intended to give him, than that he should be without them. I have given him a catalogue of such as will be necessary, amounting in the whole to about pound 100 sterling, but divided into four

invoices. Should Phill enter on the plan of study recommended, I shall endeavor as often as possible to take your house in on my way to and from Williamsburgh as it will afford me the double satisfaction of observing his progress in science and of seeing yourself, my aunt, and the family. I am Dear Sir with great respect

Your most humble servant

A GENTLEMAN'S LIBRARY

To Robert Skip with a List of Books

Monticello, Aug. 3, 1771

I sat down with a design of executing your request to form a catalogue of books to the amount of about 50 lib. sterl. But could by no means satisfy myself with any partial choice I could make. Thinking therefore it might be as agreeable to you I have framed such a general collection as I think you would wish and might in time find convenient to procure. Out of this you will chuse for yourself to the amount you mentioned for the present year and may hereafter as shall be convenient proceed in completing the whole. A view of the second column in this catalogue would I suppose extort a smile from

the face of gravity. Peace to its wisdom! Let me not awaken it. A little attention however to the nature of the human mind evinces that the entertainments of fiction are useful as well as pleasant. That they are pleasant when well written every person feels who reads. But wherein is its utility asks the reverend sage, big with the notion that nothing can be useful but the learned lumber of Greek and Roman reading with which his head is stored?

I answer, everything is useful which contributes to fix in the principles and practices of virtue. When any original act of charity or of gratitude, for instance, is presented either to our sight or imagination, we are deeply impressed with its beauty and feel a strong desire in ourselves of doing charitable and grateful acts also. On the contrary when we see or read of any atrocious deed, we are disgusted with it's deformity, and conceive an abhorrence of vice. Now every emotion of this kind is an exercise of our virtuous dispositions, and dispositions of the mind, like limbs of the body acquire strength by exercise. But exercise produces habit, and in the instance of which we speak the exercise being of the moral feelings produces a habit of thinking and acting virtuously. We never reflect whether the story we read be truth or fiction. If the painting be lively, and a tolerable picture of nature, we are thrown into a reverie, from which if we awaken it is the fault of the

writer. I appeal to every reader of feeling and sentiment whether the fictitious murder of Duncan by Macbeth in Shakespeare does not excite in him as great a horror of villany, as the real one of Henry IV. by Ravaillac as related by Davila? And whether the fidelity of Nelson and generosity of Blandford in Marmontel do not dilate his breast and elevate his sentiments as much as any similar incident which real history can furnish? Does he not in fact feel himself a better man while reading them, and privately covenant to copy the fair example? We neither know nor care whether Lawrence Sterne really went to France, whether he was there accosted by the Franciscan, at first rebuked him unkindly, and then gave him a peace offering: or whether the whole be not fiction. In either case we equally are sorrowful at the rebuke, and secretly resolve _we_ will never do so: we are pleased with the subsequent atonement, and view with emulation a soul candidly acknowledging it's fault and making a just reparation. Considering history as a moral exercise, her lessons would be too infrequent if confined to real life. Of those recorded by historians few incidents have been attended with such circumstances as to excite in any high degree this sympathetic emotion of virtue. We are therefore wisely framed to be as warmly interested for a fictitious as for a real personage. The field of imagination is thus laid open to our use and lessons may be formed to illustrate and carry home to the heart every moral rule of life.