

STUDENT'S LIBRARY SERIES

英美名人書牘

LETTERS FROM
BRITISH AND
AMERICAN AUTHORS

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(1) JOHN MILTON TO RICHARD JONES

You send me a modest apology for not writing sooner, when you might more justly have accused me of the same offense; so that I hardly know whether I should choose that you had not committed the offense, or not written the apology.

Never for a moment believe that I measure your gratitude, if any gratitude be due to me, by the assiduity of your epistolary communications. I shall perceive all the ardor of your gratitude, since you will extol the merit of my services, not so much in the frequency of your letters, as in the excellency of your habits, and the degree of your moral and intellectual proficiency.

On the theater of the world on which you have entered, you have rightly chosen the path of virtue; but know there is a path common to virtue and to vice; and that it behooves you to advance where the way divides. Leaving the common track of pleasure

and amusement, you should cheerfully encounter the toils and the dangers of that steep and rugged way which leads to the pinnacle of virtue. This, believe me, you will accomplish with more facility since you have got a guide of so much integrity and skill.

Adieu!

Yours ever truly,

J. MILTON.

(2) JAMES HOWELL TO H. W.

WESTMINSTER, September 25, 1629.

SIR,

They say in Italy, that "*deeds are men, and words are but women.*" I have had your word often to give me a visit: I pray you turn your female promises to masculine performances, else I shall think you have lost your being; for you know it is a rule in law: *Idem est non esse, et non apparere.**

Yours, etc.

(3) FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

SIR,

It is a rule in friendship, "When distress enters at the door, love goes out at the window"; it is as true a rule that dubitation is the beginning of all

*Not to appear is the same as not to be.

knowledge. I confess this true in the first election and coöperation of a friend, to come to the true knowledge of him by queries and doubts; but when there is a perfect contract made, confirmed by experience, and a long tract of time, distrust is then poison to friendship; therefore if it be as I am told, I am unfit to be your friend, but your servant.

(4) J. HOWELL TO R. FLOYD

COUSIN FLOYD,

The first part of wisdom is to give good counsel, the second is to take it, and the third to follow it. Though you be young, yet you may be already capable of the two latter parts of wisdom, and it is the only way to attain the first: therefore I wish you to follow the good counsel of your uncle, for I know him to be a very discreet, well-weighed gentleman, and I can judge something of men, for I have studied many. Therefore, if you steer by the compass in this great business you have undertaken, you need not fear shipwreck. This is the advice of your truly affectionate cousin.

(5) MR. HOWELL TO MR. STONE

SIR,

I heartily rejoice, with the rest of your friends, that you are safely returned from your travels,

especially that you have made so good returns of the time of your travel, being, as I understand, come home freighted with observations, and languages. Your father tells me, that he finds you are so wedded to the Italian and French that you utterly neglect the Latin tongue, that is not well. I know you are so discreet in the course and method of your studies, that you will make the daughters wait upon their mother, and love still your old friend. To truck the Latin for any other vulgar language, is but an ill barter; it is as bad as that which Glaucus made with Diomedes, when he parted with his golden arms for brazen ones. The proceed of this exchange will come far short of any gentleman's expectation, though haply it may prove advantageous to a merchant, to whom common languages are more useful. I am big with desire to meet you, and to mingle a day's discourse with you, if not two; how you escaped the claws of the inquisition, whereinto I understand you were like to fall; and of other traverses of your peregrination.

Farewell, my precious Stone, and believe it, the least grain of those high respects you please to profess unto me, is not lost, but answered with so many carats. So I rest your most affectionate.

(6) MR. HOWELL TO MR. W. B.

LONDON, May 30.

SIR,

Your last lines were to me as delightful as the season, they were as sweet as flowers in May; nay, they were far more fragrant than those fading vegetables; they cast a greater suavity than the Arabian spices *use to do* in Grand Cairo, where, when the wind is southward, they say the air is as sweet as a perfumed Spanish glove. The air of this city is not so, especially in the heart of the city, in and about St. Paul's church, where horse dung is a yard deep, insomuch that to cleanse it, would be as hard a task as it was for Hercules to cleanse the Augean stable, by drawing a great river through it which was accounted one of his twelve labors.

But it was a bitter taunt of the Italian, who passing by St. Paul's church, and seeing it full of horses:* "Now I perceive," said he, "that in England men and beasts serve God alike." No more now, but that I am your humble servant.

*During the time of Cromwell, the church was served for a stable for the cavaliers.

(7) DR. MOLYNEUX TO MR. LOCKE

DUBLIN, Dec. 20, 1692.

SIR,

I am much concerned to hear that you have your health no better, and on this occasion cannot but deplore the great losses the intellectual world, in all ages, has suffered by the strongest and soundest minds possessing the most infirm and sickly bodies. Certainly there must be some very powerful cause for this in nature, or else we could have so many instances where *the knife cuts the sheath*, as the French materially express it: and if so, this must be reckoned among the many other inseparable miseries that attend human affairs.

(8) MR. LOCKE TO DR. MOLYNEUX

LONDON, June 28, 1694.

SIR,

Since the receipt of yours of the second instant, I have made what inquiries I can for a tutor for your son. The most likely I have met with, and the best commended, you will receive account of from himself in the inclosed, to which I need add little but these two things; first, that Mr. Fletcher, who is a good judge, and a person whose word I can rely on, gave

me a very good character of him, both as to his manners and abilities, and said he would be answerable for him: the other is, that however it come to pass, the Scotch have now a far greater reputation for this sort of employment than our own countrymen. I am sorry it is so, but I have found it in many instances.

I wish the endeavors I have used to procure you a tutor for your son may be successful. It is a business of great concern to both you and your son; but governors that have right thoughts concerning education are hard to be found. It is happy for your son that a good part of it is to be under your eye. I shall be very glad if in this, or any other occasion, I may be able to do you any service; for with the greatest sincerity I am,

Sir, etc.

(9) ALEXANDER POPE TO H. CROMWELL

March 18, 1708.

I have nothing to say to you in this letter, but I was resolved to write to tell you so. Why should not I content myself with so many great examples of deep divines, profound casuists, grave philosophers, who have written, not letters only, but whole *tomes*, and

voluminous treatises, about nothing? Why should a fellow like me, who all his life does nothing, be ashamed of writing nothing? and that to one who has nothing to do but to read it? But perhaps you'll say, the whole world has something to do, something to talk of, something to wish for, something to be employed about: but pray, sir, cast up the account, put all the things together, and what is the sum total but just nothing? I have no more to say, but to desire you to give my service (that is nothing) to your friends, and to believe I am nothing more than yours, etc.

*Ex nihilo nihil fit.**

(10) MR. ADDISON TO MR. POPE

November 2, 1715.

I have received your letter, and am glad to find that you have laid so good a scheme for your great undertaking. I question not but the prose will require as much care as the poetry; but the variety will give you some relief, and more pleasure to your readers.

You gave me leave once to take the liberty of a friend, in advising you not to content yourself with one half of the nation for your admirers, when you might have them all.

*Out of nothing comes nothing.

If I might take the freedom to repeat it, I would on this occasion. I think you are very happy to be out of the fray, and I hope all your undertakings will turn to better account for it.

You see how I presume on your friendship in taking all this freedom with you; but I already fancy that we have lived many years together in an unreserved conversation, and that we may do so many more, is the sincere wish of your, etc.

(11) LADY MONTAGUE TO LADY RICH

COLOGNE, Aug. 16, 1716.

If my lady Rich could have any notions of the fatigues that I have suffered these two last days, I am sure she would own it a great proof of regard that I now sit down to write to her. We hired horses from N. hither, not having the conveniency of the post, and found but very indifferent accommodations at Reinberg, our first stage; but it was nothing to what I suffered yesterday. We were in hopes to reach Cologne; our horses tired at Stamel, three hours from it, where I was forced to pass the night in my clothes, in a room not at all better than a hovel; for though I have my bed with me, I had no mind to undress, where the wind came from a thousand places. We left this wretched lodging at daybreak, and about six

this morning arrived here, where I got immediately into bed. I slept so well for three hours, that I found myself quite recovered, and have had spirits enough to go and see all that is curious in the town; that is to say the churches, for there is nothing else worth seeing. This is a very large town, but the most part of it is old built. The Jesuits' church, which is the neatest, was shewed me in a very complaisant manner by a handsome young Jesuit, who, not knowing who I was, took a liberty in his compliments and railleries which very much diverted me.

Having never before seen any thing of the kind, I could not enough admire the magnificence of the altars, the rich images of the saints, all in massy silver, and the enchassures* of the relics; but I must reserve a more minute description for my next letter, as I am just going to supper, where I shall drink your health in an admirable sort of Lorraine wine, which I am sure is the same you call Burgundy in London.

(12) LADY MONTAGUE TO MR. POPE

VIENNA, January 16, 1717.

DEAR SIR,

I have not time to answer your letter, being in the hurry of preparing for my journey; but I think I

* Enchassures; reliqueries, small caskets.

ought to bid adieu to my friends with the same solemnity as if I were going to mount a breach; at least if I am to believe the information of the people here, who denounce all sorts of terrors to me; and indeed the weather is at present such as very few ever set out in. I am threatened at the same time with being frozen to death, buried in the snow, and taken by the Tartars, who ravage that part of Hungary I am to pass. 'Tis true we shall have a very considerable escort, so that possibly I may be diverted with a new scene, by finding myself in the midst of a battle. How my adventures will conclude, I leave it entirely to Providence: if comically, you shall hear of them. Pray be so good as to tell M *** I have received his letter. Make him my adieus; if I live I will answer it. The same compliment to My-lady R.

Yours, etc.

(13) MR. POPE TO LADY MONTAGUE

MADAM,

I could quarrel with you quite through this paper, upon a period in yours, which bids me remember you if I possibly *can*. You would have shown more knowledge both of yourself and of me, had you bid me forget if possibly I *could*. When I do, may this hand (as the Scripture says) forget its cunning, and this

heart its—folly, I was going to say—but I mean its reason, and the most rational sentiment it ever had—that of your merit.

When people speak most highly of you, I think them sparing; when I try myself to speak of you, I think I am cold and stupid. I think my letters have nothing in 'em, but I am sure my heart has so much, that I am vexed to find no better name for your friend and admirer than

Your friend and admirer,

A. POPE.

(14) MR. POPE TO MR. DIGBY

August 12th, 1724.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

. I know your love of ease so well, that you might be in danger of being too quiet to enjoy quiet, and too philosophical to be a philosopher, were it not for the ferment Lord B — will put you into. One of his lordship's maxims is, that a total abstinence from intemperance or business is no more philosophy than a total consopition of the senses is repose; one must feel enough of its contrary to have a relish of either. But after all, let your temper work; and be as sedate and contemplative as you will, I will engage you shall be fit for any of us when you come to town

in the winter. Folly will laugh you into all the customs of the company here; nothing will be able to prevent your conversion to her but indisposition, which, I hope, will be far from you. I am telling the worst that can come of you; for as to vice, you are safe; but folly is many an honest man's, nay, every good-humored man's, lot; nay it is the seasoning of life; and fools (in one sense) are the salt of the earth; a little is excellent, though indeed a whole mouthful is justly called the devil.

So much for your diversions next winter, and for mine. I envy you much more at present than I shall then; for if there be on earth an image of Paradise, it is in such perfect union and society as you all possess. I would have my innocent envies and wishes of your state known to you all; which is far better than making you compliments, for it is inward approbation and esteem. My Lord Digby has in me a sincere servant, or would have, were there any occasion for me to manifest it.

Yours, &c.,

A. POPE.

(15) LADY WORTLEY MONTAGUE TO THE
COUNTESS OF BUTE

LOUVÈRE, July 20th, N. S., 1755.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I have now read over the books you were so good to send, and intend to say something of them all, though some are not worth speaking of. I shall begin, in respect to his dignity, with Lord Bolingbroke, who is a glaring proof how far vanity can blind a man, and how easy it is to varnish over, to one's self, the most criminal conduct. He declares he always loved his country, though he confesses he endeavored to betray her to popery and slavery; and loved his friends, though he abandoned them to distress, with all the blackest circumstances of treachery. His account of the Peace of Utrecht is almost equally unfair or partial. I shall allow that, perhaps, the views of the Whigs, at that time, were too vast, and the nation, dazzled by military glory, had hopes too sanguine; but surely the same terms that the French consented to at the Treaty of Gertrudenberg, might have been obtained, or, if the displacing of the Duke of Marlborough raised the spirits of our enemies to a degree of refusing what they had before offered, how can he excuse the guilt of removing him from the head of a victorious army, and

exposing us to submit to any articles of peace, being unable to continue the war? I agree with him, that the idea of conquering France is a wild, extravagant notion, and would, if possible, be impolitic; but she might have been reduced to such a state as would have rendered her incapable of being terrible to her neighbors for some ages: nor should we have been obliged, as we have done almost ever since, to bribe the French ministers to let us live in quiet. So much for his political reasonings, which, I confess, are delivered in a florid easy style; but I cannot be of Lord Orrery's opinion that he is one of the best English writers. Well-turned periods, or smooth lines, are not the perfection either of prose or verse; they may serve to adorn, but can never stand in the place of good sense. Copiousness of words, however ranged, is always false eloquence, though it will ever impose on some sort of understandings. How many readers and admirers has Madame de Sévigné who only gives us, in a lively manner and fashionable phrases, mean sentiments, vulgar prejudices, and endless repetitions? Sometimes the tittle-tattle of a fine lady, sometimes that of an old nurse, always tittle-tattle; yet so well gilt over by airy expressions and a flowing style, she will always please the same people to whom Lord Bolingbroke will shine as a first-rate author. She is so far to be excused, that her

letters were not intended for the press; while he labors to display to posterity all the wit and learning he is master of, and sometimes spoils a good argument by a profusion of words, running out into several pages a thought that might have been more clearly expressed in a few lines, and, what is worse, often falls into contradictions and repetitions, which are almost unavoidable to all voluminous writers, and can only be forgiven to those retailers whose necessity compels them to diurnal scribbling, who load their meaning with epithets, and run into digressions because (in the jockey phrase) it rids ground, that is, it covers a certain quantity of paper, to answer the demand of the day. A great part of Lord Bolingbroke's letters are designed to show his reading, which, indeed, appears to have been very extensive; but I cannot perceive that such a minute account of it can be of any use to the pupil he intends to instruct; nor can I help thinking he is far below either Tillotson or Addison in style, though the latter was sometimes more diffused than his judgment approved to furnish out the length of a daily "Spectator." I own I have small regard for Lord Bolingbroke as an author, and the highest contempt for him as a man. He came into the world greatly favored both by nature and fortune, blest with a noble birth, heir to a large estate, endowed with a strong constitution, and, as I have